

Blog post assignment: Week 8 and 9

Assessing arguments across media

Due Tuesday, 10/20

For our next class, you will read two very different texts on a common topic. Five Mualimm-ak's opinion piece, "Solitary Confinement's Invisible Scars," was published in a blog on *The Guardian* website. As such, it is accessible, informal, and intended to reach a wide audience. Meanwhile, the selections from Lisa Guenther's *Solitary Confinement* are written for a primarily academic audience. Working within the conventions of traditional scholarship, Guenther establishes her credibility, and builds her argument, in a very different way than Mualimm-ak. Nevertheless, the two texts argue for the same general conclusion: the widespread and seemingly arbitrary use of solitary confinement should be abolished.

In your blog post, please assess these arguments. In addition to evaluating them for logical coherence, use of evidence, and persuasiveness, I want to you to pay special attention to the way each text is written for its specific publication venue. In your pre-writing, it may help to consider the following (optional) lines of inquiry:

How does each author speak to his or her anticipated audience?

How does each author manifest expertise or credibility on this topic?

How do the authors justify their claims? When/where do they neglect to do so?

How does each author build a conversation, or engage opposing views?

What particular choices do the authors make in light of their chosen publication venues?

As you consider these questions, consider what their answers reveal about the differences between online public scholarship and traditional academic publications. In light of those differences, you might choose to assess the two arguments according to different criteria. If so, be explicit about this in your post. Alternatively, if you choose to assess the two arguments using consistent criteria, be sure to say why.

Remember that a final comment on a peer's blog post is due in Week 10. I encourage you to read and respond to your peers' assessments of the Maulimm-ak and Guenther texts, with an eye to any differences in how you assess their arguments.