***The Critical Inquiry Project, our course’s final essay assignment, will require you to understand and situate the academic discourse on your subject, pose an original intervention, support your claims with evidence and reflection, and draw thoughtful conclusions about your work. As for subject matter, the only requirement is that your research question(s) must relate to the American Road.***

While similar to a traditional research study, the Critical Inquiry Project emphasizes exploration and the production of new scholarly content. In other words, the assignment is not to immediately choose a familiar text – like with the Deep Dive Archive – and explore many resources related to a single work. Rather, you should make broader inquiries into a subject, uncover and/or suggest connections and concerns to discuss further, and then develop a unique argument that produces new knowledge and perspectives for your reader.

You must research the rhetorical situation for your inquiry, including a brief history of the topic, its existing critical discourse, and why this is a relevant research project at this particular cultural moment. You are welcome to conduct and include your own original research if it will benefit your project. Imagine the audience for this essay as a “general academic” one that includes both your peers and me as your instructor: we hope to be interested in, intrigued by, and ultimately persuaded by the argument that you develop here.

**GRADING EXPECTATIONS**

Please note that this essay will be graded according to the following criteria:

* A thesis statement that includes a strong claim, sound reasoning, and piques reader interest.
* Plenty of specific and vivid evidence drawn from documented sources.
* **Incorporate at least 12 different sources, six of which must be peer-reviewed, scholarly texts.** - Include a Works Cited list (in MLA format) at the end of the essay.
* Topic sentences that organize and introduce the various sections of your discussion.
* Detailed analysis that explains the relationship between your thesis statement and each major piece of evidence that you include.
* Clear organization of your evidence and analysis that answers the questions: How does this information relate to the information included directly before it? Directly after it? To the thesis itself?
* Thorough close readings that unpack and analyze direct quotations and relate their significance to the essay’s larger argument(s).
* Careful attention to the expectations of a general academic audience with regard to language, usage, style, and tone.
* Appropriate length. Not reaching the required number of words will result in a grade deduction, as will exceeding the indicated maximum by more than 300 words.
* The Works Cited list does not count towards the word requirement.
* Evidence that you have reviewed my comments on your previous essays and have attempted to address and improve upon indicated concerns.
* Page numbers and a word count at the top of the essay.
* **Failure to bring a (printed) draft to class for either assigned peer review workshop *and* upload it to Canvas before each class begins will result in the essay receiving a ten-point (letter grade) deduction.**

Be sure to consult the grading rubric on the syllabus for further insight into how this assignment will be assessed.

*Please email me, discuss with me after class, or visit office hours if you have any questions or concerns.*