The second unit of our course has focused on analyzing arguments.  For your second project, I will ask you to take a close look at one argument:  an article titled “The Disadvantages of an Elite Education” by William Deresiewicz. Here is the website link to the text, https://theamericanscholar.org/the-disadvantages-of-an-elite-education/#.VRmbn-EYFQJ

This article was published in The American Scholar in the summer of 2008.

The project consists of two parts:

**Part One (2-3 pages):** Analyze Deresiewicz’s argument. How does Deresiewicz attempt to build a persuasive argument for specific ideas?

You might look at some of the aspects of an argument we have been working with such as:

* the evidence Deresiewicz presents,
* his reasoning,
* his choice of language,
* how he appeals to a specific audience, etc.

(For other ideas, you may want to look back at the notes I posted with my Week 7 podcast.)

You do not need to analyze every aspect of Deresiewicz’s argument; give your paper a focus.  Note that I am not asking you to criticize Deresiewicz’s argument or offer an opinion on the topic.  Analyze:  break down this argument the same way we broke down Letter from Birmingham Jail and other texts.

**Part Two (1-2 pages):**  Analyze the “lens” you brought to this text.  Each of you is a college student.  Your experiences have influenced your beliefs about higher education and your own purposes for pursing a college degree.  How might your own lens have affected the way you read “The Disadvantages of an Elite Education”?

**Some notes that can be used from Week 7 podcast to analyze the authors argument**

* Three basic components of an argument:

**- Conclusions**:  What the author wants the reader to believe, agree with, or do.  (Conclusions are sometimes also referred to as claims or the author’s thesis.)

**- Evidence:**  Information the author provides to support the conclusions.

**- Reasoning:**  The author’s explanation of his or her thought process – his or her logic.  Why the author believes what he or she believes.

Some aspects of an argument we might analyze (and some questions we might ask):

**- Evidence:**  What types of evidence has the author provided?  Is it credible?   Does the evidence actually support the author’s conclusions?

**- Reasoning**:  How solid is the author’s reasoning?  Are there any problems with the reasoning?

**- Language / word choice**:  What language has the author used to attempt to persuade the reader?  What does that language reveal about the author’s bias or “lens” on the subject?

**- Assumptions**:  What has the author assumed or taken for granted?  Are those assumptions ideas we can accept, or does the author need to explain or defend them?

**- Appeals to emotion**:  Has the author used certain types of language or examples to appeal to the reader’s emotions?  If so, why?

**- Credibility / authority**:  Has the author shown that he or she has considered other points of view or other arguments?  Does the author cite other authorities on the subject?

**- Audience:**  Who is the author’s target audience, and how do we know?

**- Context**:  What are the circumstances in which the author made this argument?  Why are those circumstances significant?

As I mentioned in my podcast, we almost never analyze all of these aspects in one text.  You might think of this list as a menu:  items you can choose to look at in order to begin breaking down an author's argument.