A number of you mentioned as “weaknesses” your time management around writing. Let me encourage you to set aside time SOON to review relevant readings, brainstorm about choosing a topic, and pick relevant sections of the texts to discuss. Don’t try writing off the top of your head (unless you have a fantastic memory). Allow time for breaks and revising, even for this first version. It should be readable and complete.

I can help you get started: if you want to work on your own, pick documents for question #1 and start identifying and labeling strategies used in each. Make lists of them. Check for overlap. Answer each question in the prompt. ***Find some interest in the topic. If you love a text, great; if you detest or have trouble with one, analyze it to consider why.

At some point, you will want to outline or draft a beginning, body, and conclusion, perhaps starting with the body. Organize quotations and points so you move from less important to more important; ending with less important points can undermine the impact of the earlier ones, leaving less of an impression on readers.

If you want to start with the introduction, remember that you will have a clearer sense of the thesis or main idea after you complete your draft, so leave room and time to revise the thesis. Focus the introduction on the language (texts and authors of the prompt), not the entire history of women’s oppression, of revolution, or other large topics. Provide context for the documents, give the authors’ full names, and cite the dates. Ideally, a specific thesis at the end of the first paragraph conveys your main ideas clearly.

Other tips about introductions: they introduce the subject, establish a writer’s approach, provide context for the discussion, and state a thesis (main idea of the paper). To some extent, the introduction parallels an abstract or scientific document’s start: all state a problem or area of interest, contextualize the topic or problem, give a methodology, and state the findings or main ideas. Introductions often forecast organization, too.

Several of you listed conclusions as a weakness, so here are some ideas. You’ll want to “land” or cement your paper’s main ideas; don’t assume that readers remember them. Summarize the main ideas, but aim to go beyond summary: synthesize the ideas (pull them together) and consider their implications. If several authors used similar strategies, speculate about why they did so. If authors used widely different strategies, consider possible reasons for their doing so. If the DOS imitates the DOI for several reasons, mention them all. *Rigorous arguments elaborate on the implications in the conclusion.

Remember to eliminate extraneous information.

Nota Bene: Remember that we can’t know each writer’s effect on an audience without further research, but we can analyze the attempt. What’s the difference? Instead of saying, “Cady Stanton changed the minds of many people,” you might say, “Cady Stanton used A, B, and C to impress the audience with her logic, education, and fairness.”