# Lens Assignment: “Smith’s “Managing Men, Marriage, and Modern Love” in Nigeria”

## Overview

During this first unit, we will begin a semester-long discussion about how to read closely and apply that knowledge to other texts. For the primary text of the lens essay we will read anthropologist Daniel Jordan Smith’s chapter “Managing Men, Marriage, and Modern Love: Women’s Perspectives on Intimacy and Male Infidelity in Southeastern Nigeria,” which describes his research among contemporary Nigerians. For the lens texts, please use Ilan Stavans’s interview from the book *Love and Language*. You are welcome to add James Schultz’s chapter from *Courtly Love*, “Chivalric Couples: Knights, Ladies, and Marriage.”

### Using one or both of these lenses, please make an argument about how behaviors of the Igbo people of Nigeria in Smith’s chapter add to, complicate, or challenge Stavans’s claim that “In general, love is a performance.” (You have the option of choosing one of the following groups of people to focus on: unmarried young women, husbands, or wives.) Your aim is to synthesize your understanding of Stavans’s and/or Schultz’s writings with your interpretation of the Smith chapter in order to construct an argument that you could not have made through close reading alone. You should seek to inform your readers, to open up Smith’s description in new ways for them by exploring in what ways his chapter complicates the Stavans and/or Schultz writings and in what ways their work complicates the Smith chapter. Some questions to consider (remember that a good essay almost always begins with good questions):

* What does love mean and do in Smith’s contexts? Does it evolve, or not?
* Does money affect relationships? How?
* Does mobility or migration affect relationships? If so, how?
* What is the role of individual freedom and social conformity in Smith?
* How are pressures different or the same for different social and gender groupings?
* Why did Smith do the research and write the chapter?

### Essay Length:

* 6-7 pages

**The first draft of the essay must be submitted electronically to your peers and me no later than 11:55 PM on Thursday, October 3.** Essays must use 1-inch margins and 12-point Times New Roman font. Please do not enlarge your punctuation—I can tell. Essays must have a title and be double-spaced. Pre-drafts will be submitted in hard copy in class and must be typed and stapled.

## Goals of the Essay

1. **Open with an engaging introduction that makes your motive clear.**

Motive, according to Gordon Harvey, is “the intellectual context that you establish for your topic and thesis at the start of your essay, in order to suggest why someone besides your instructor might want to read an essay on this topic or need to hear your particular thesis argued—why your thesis isn’t just obvious to all, why other people might hold other theses that you think are wrong.” So please ask of your thesis, “So what? Why would someone care? What’s unexpected here? How is this interesting?” until you can respond with a satisfying answer. The answer will lead you to your motive. Underline your motive in all drafts and the revision of this paper so it can be quickly identified.

1. **Create a dialogue between the texts.**

Don’t settle for a baseline reading of the points of connection between Smith’s “Managing Men, Marriage, and Modern Love” in Nigeria and the lens. Rather, devise a thesis that identifies how (and how well) Stavans (possibly with Schultz) explains the form and function in the Smith chapter. You will also want to identify a “twist,” a place where your case and the lens don’t match up. This is your opportunity to revise, refine, or even critique the lens—you need not agree with Stavans wholeheartedly, just remember to explain why you disagree and to examine the merits and faults of his argument logically. Essentially, you are being asked to *interpret the chapter and reflect on your lens.* As always, close readings of specific passages are required to support and/or complicate your argument.

1. **Grapple with the lens’s central ideas, rather than taking isolated passages out of context to support your ideas.**

Whenever you are called on to bring a critical text into an assignment, your essay will not only be judged on the merit of your original ideas but also on how accurately you represent and make use of the critical text. Even when you disagree with the author, you must explain why you disagree, and that requires you to fully understand the author’s position. When you refer to Stavans, be sure you engage his main ideas and not a side detail of those ideas.

1. **Document quotations using MLA in-text citation method.**

This citation method requires that you cite your sources parenthetically in the text of your essay (as opposed to using footnotes or endnotes).

### For example:

Smith interviewed men while his female assistants interviewed women. This was the best method, Smith believed, because “people would converse more comfortably about intimate subjects like marriage, sexuality, and infidelity with someone of the same sex” (158).

## Pre-Draft 1.1: Close Reading a Passage from “Managing Men, Marriage, and Modern Love”

Your lens essay will use close reading both of the chapter and Stavans (possibly including Schultz). The first step in a close reading is to be sure that you have a clear understanding of the text that you are evaluating. To that end, your first assignment will be to analyze a single paragraph from “Managing Men, Marriage, and Modern Love” that presents evidence that you might use for your essay. In other words, choose any paragraph that might have some bearing on your argument about how behaviors of the Igbo people of Nigeria in Smith’s chapter add to, complicate, or challenge Stavans’s claim that “In general, love is a performance.” Go sentence by sentence through the paragraph and:

* Analyze the word choice: why did Smith and the people he talked with choose certain words? What is the effect?
* Look for any repetition in the words or concepts: what purpose does that serve?
* What is the tone? Does this influence the reader?
* Are there any contradictions? What purpose do these serve?
* Look at the form: how does Smith quote people’s own words, and when?

Your analysis should be one double-spaced page in length and should quote directly from the paragraph (cite page numbers).

### PRE-DRAFT 1.1 DUE IN CLASS ON WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11

## Pre-Draft 1.2: Mini Lens Analysis

### Lens analysis asks you to put two or more texts in conversation in order to produce a reading that you couldn’t have made through close reading alone. For this assignment, first review your notes about the arguments made by Stavans. Second, identify one or two paragraphs from “Managing Men, Marriage, and Modern Love” that are relevant to Stavans’s claim. Finally:

### With the one or two paragraphs, make a mini-argument (two paragraphs) using Stavans’s argument about love as performance. Be sure to cite at least one piece of evidence in your analysis.

### This exercise provides an opportunity to practice applying the lens to the primary text, and you may be able to use your reading for this pre-draft in the final essay.

### PRE-DRAFT 1.2 DUE IN CLASS ON WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18

## Pre-draft 1.3: Outline for Rough Draft

### A comprehensive outline will ensure that your paper has a logical structure and evidence that is relevant to your argument. Each paragraph should have a separate claim that supports the thesis, as well as evidence and analysis. In order to organize your paragraphs, you will have to select and analyze quotations. The argument should develop as the paper unfolds. In other words, paragraphs should not be interchangeable. The outline should follow the format below:

### I. Introduction

1. Motive
2. Thesis

### II. Paragraph #1 (Lens paragraph)

1. Topic Sentence: This should summarize the main idea of the paragraph: What does your lens argue?
2. Evidence: include the quotation and the page numbers for each idea that is relevant to your paper (you will need 2-3 quotations).
3. Analysis: briefly explain in your own words what you’ve quoted
4. Relevance: a brief statement of how the evidence relates to your thesis

### III. Paragraph #2 (Evidence)

1. Topic Sentence: This should summarize the main idea of the paragraph
2. Contextualization: When you cite your evidence, what is happening in the Smith chapter?
3. Evidence: include the quotation (use just one quotation)
4. Analysis: brief statement of how you will close read the evidence
5. Relevance: a brief statement of how the evidence relates to your thesis

### IV. Paragraph #3 (Evidence)

1. Topic Sentence: This should summarize the main idea of the paragraph
2. Contextualization: When you cite your evidence, what is happening in the Smith chapter?
3. Evidence: include the quotation (use just one quotation) or describe the moment you’ll be analyzing if no quotation you’d like to use
4. Analysis: brief statement of how you will close read the evidence.
5. Relevance: a brief statement of how the evidence relates to your thesis.

Etc… for ALL of the body paragraphs. You should have a minimum of 7 body paragraphs. The remaining four paragraphs should either provide evidence to support your thesis or a counter argument (no more than one counter-argument). Evidence should be organized from weakest to strongest.

### V: Conclusion

1. What are the larger implications of your argument? How does the text comment on a broader theme than just your specific claims?

### OUTLINES ARE DUE BY 11:55 PM ON FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 27

## Essay 1 Rough Draft Cover Letter

Please write a draft cover letter, addressed to your readers (i.e., “Dear Reader”), in which you answer the following questions and present any other concerns that you have. This letter should be typed and should be about three-quarters to a full page long, single spaced. Attach it to the front of your essay.

* 1. What do you see as your thesis or main idea? How does this thesis engage both “Managing Men, Marriage, and Modern Love” and the lens and texts?
  2. Select your motivating idea from the worksheet distributed in class and report it in your letter. What is your motive? Underline it in your rough draft.
  3. How well do you feel you have represented and engaged with Stavans (and Schultz)?
  4. How well do you feel you have performed a close reading of “Managing Men, Marriage, and Modern Love”?
  5. What are the biggest problems you’re having at this point in the writing process? What have you accomplished most successfully?
  6. What’s the number one concern about your essay—thesis, structure, use of evidence, persuasiveness, style, and so on—that you’d like your reader(s) to focus their comments on for you?
  7. When you revise, what’s the one biggest thing you intend to focus on? How?

### DRAFT DRAFT OF ESSAY #1 PLUS COVER LETTER DUE IN A WORD DOCUMENT ON LATTE BY 11:55 PM ON THURSDAY, 10/3.

### PLEASE ALSO EMAIL YOUR PEERS A GOOGLE DOC.

## Essay 1 Peer Review

Your goal during peer review is to offer the writer constructive comments that will help him or her revise, literally to “see again,” from a fresh perspective. This is an opportunity to help your partner become a better writer by pushing for true revision, rather than cosmetic tweaking. As you carefully read each essay you have been given:

* Draw a line under awkwardly expressed sentences and phrases whose meanings are unclear.
* Write marginal notes to the writer on anything that puzzles you, explaining why.
* Label the topic of each paragraph; if you cannot determine the topic, put a question mark.

After you have marked it up, read the essay one more time and then write a letter in which you address the following questions:

* 1. *Thesis and motive*: What is the essay’s thesis or controlling idea? How compelling is the thesis? How arguable is it? What motivating idea from the list distributed in class do you feel the essay adopts, if any? What is the essay’s motive? Restate these in your own words. Don’t assume the writer knows what his or her own essay is about!
  2. *Introduction*: Does the essay invite you in with an effective opener? Are context, motive and thesis clear and effective? What could the writer do to improve the introduction?
  3. *Lens*: Are Stavans’s ideas represented accurately? Are they engaged with in a full and meaningful way? Are they put in a productive interpretive conversation with Smith’s “Managing Men, Marriage, and Modern Love,” or are they simply inserted for the sake of the assignment? Could the lens be removed from the essay without much injury?
  4. *Case*: How well does the essay close-read specific details from “Managing Men, Marriage, and Modern Love”? Are textual details tagged to the lens’s concepts in laundry list format, or are they analyzed in a thoughtful, unexpected way (i.e., is this just a baseline reading)? Can you identify a “twist”? How effectively is it explored?
  5. *Quotation and Citation*: How has the writer incorporated material from their sources into the flow of the paper? Are all three components of a quotation (lead-in, citation, analysis) present? How well are quotations explained and analyzed? Any MLA citation mistakes?
  6. The writer has asked you one or more questions in their cover letter. What answers do you have to offer?

### POST YOUR PEER LETTERS TO LATTE BY 11:55 PM ON SUNDAY, OCTOBER 6. + EMAIL THE MARKED-UP ESSAYS TO EACH PEER BY 11:55 PM ON.

### PLEASE BRING YOUR LAPTOPS TO CLASS ON MONDAY, OCTOBER 7.

## Essay 1 Revision and Cover Letter

Each time you hand in a revision, you’ll hand in a cover letter (1 page single-spaced) along with it and your peer reviews. For this revision, please answer the following questions and discuss any other concerns you have.

1. What is your thesis? How has it changed from draft to revision?
2. What other changes have you made? Why?
3. What are you most pleased with in this revision?
4. What would you work on, if you had the chance to keep revising?
5. What was most challenging in your drafting and revision process? How did you approach those challenges?
6. Choose two “Elements of the Academic Essay” (Gordon Harvey)—one that you think works well, and one that feels less successful—and describe, in each case, why.

Be sure to re-read the information on grading criteria to make sure your paper fulfills the requirements.

### REVISION OF ESSAY #1 PLUS COVER LETTER AND PEER REVIEW LETTERS THAT YOU WROTE DUE ELECTRONICALLY BY 11:55 PM ON TUESDAY, OCTOBER 15