

Common Reading Program 2017 Essay Competition Writing Prompts

The Common Reading Program is sponsoring an essay competition in conjunction with the Common Reading book, *Citizen: An American Lyric*, by Claudia Rankine. Four scholarship prizes will be awarded for the Spring semester 2018:

First Prize: \$500 scholarship

Second Prize: \$250 scholarship

Third and Fourth Prizes: \$125 scholarships each

Eligibility:

Student must be a first-semester SCSU or SCTCC Connections student this fall, continuing for their studies at SCSU in Spring 2018, and they must submit an essay to the Common Reading Program Essay Competition according to the guidelines laid out herein.

Students may choose one (1) of the prompts below:

- A. *Citizen's* discussion of Serena and Venus Williams includes the Zora Neale Hurston quote, "I feel most colored when I am thrown against a sharp white background." The artwork on pp. 52-53 incorporates this quote, too. How could you argue that this quote encapsulate Rankine's critique in *Citizen* as a whole? How might we as a community positively engage with that critique to effect social change?
- B. The [Our Husky Compact](#) dimension highlighted this academic year is THINK Creatively and Critically. *Citizen* was nominated for the National Book Critics Circle Awards in both Poetry and Criticism. Critics have pointed to how Rankine's work defies established distinctions between genres. How does the fact that it is poetry shape it as social critique? How does the critique shape it as poetry? Do these distinctions matter? What is the effect on the reader of collapsing these distinctions?

To be eligible to win, essays must respond to all aspects of the prompt chosen from the above options.

Selected essays will demonstrate the following standards: Essays should be a maximum of 5 pages, double spaced. They must be free of spelling and grammatical errors. They must be well-written and organized. This includes proper citation of resources used. Excellent essays will demonstrate clear engagement with the common reading book and display evidence of a thoughtful engagement with various themes introduced by the book.

Submission details:

Submissions must adhere to the following:

- Your submission **should include a separate cover sheet** (just one) which includes your personal information: Name, Tech ID Number, HuskyNet email address, Local phone number, and Essay Title.
- **Four copies** of the essay must be submitted for **blind review**. **Blind review** means that each copy of the essay should have a title, but be free of any and all identifying information (i.e., name, tech ID number, and so on should NOT appear on the actual essays themselves).
- Submissions should be sent via campus mail or hand delivered to the Common Reading Program, Centennial Hall 208. If sent via campus mail, please allow ample time for your essay to arrive no later than Monday, November 6.

Submission deadline is: Monday, November 6, at 4 PM in Centennial Hall 208.

Late submissions will not be considered.