

### THIRD ANALYTICAL PAPER

**Objective:** Historians often describe journalism as the “first draft of history.” When a major speech is delivered, newspapers attempt to interpret its significance for readers encountering the event in real time. In this assignment you will examine how a significant American speech was interpreted in contemporary media coverage and develop your own analysis of what the speech meant at that moment in history.

**Due:** Wednesday, April 8, 2026 (annotated bibliography)  
Wednesday, April 15, 2026 (polished essay)

**Length:** AT LEAST 4-6 full pages of text, double spaced, following MLA format, including a correct Works Cited page. A template is still available on my website, <http://citizen.obenauf.net>. I will not grade any paper that fails to meet these minimum requirements. This part is mandatory.

**Instructions:** Analyze a significant American speech from the twentieth century in its historical context. It can be one I assigned from A Documentary History of the United States or another you have cleared with me by email.

Begin with a close reading of the speech itself. Then, analyze and compare its coverage in at least **five** contemporary sources, including at least two national daily publications such as The New York Times or The Washington Post (available online) or The Wall Street Journal (available on microfilm); a local newspaper where the speech took place; and at least two others of your choosing, such as the local newspaper in your hometown or a well-known weekly or monthly magazine like The Atlantic, The Nation, Time Magazine, etc. You should limit your analysis to no more than one syndicated story (AP, UPI, Knight-Ridder, Reuters, or other wire report), and if you analyze such material you should explain how it was tailored for a national audience.

Your **annotated bibliography**, due on April 8<sup>th</sup>, should give a one-paragraph summary of each of the sources you plan to use, including a reputable source for the full text of the speech. It is OK to submit more entries than you end up using, and I actually recommend finding more material than required so that you can choose the best.

I am asking you to use the following ten constructions in your paper to help guide your reader through a clear progression of ideas:

Additionally/In addition	Furthermore/Further
Moreover/What’s more	First, Second, Third...
Likewise/Similarly	...in contrast.../...on the other hand...
Not only...but also...	...as well as...
Hence/Thus/Therefore	...however...

**Notes:** You should choose a topic that interests you, since you will be expanding this essay into a term paper in which you evaluate your text's legacy. For now, you will simply be researching a topic to see where the evidence leads you, as free from your own bias as possible. **You should not consult secondary scholarship about your speech before submitting this essay.** The goal of this assignment is for you to form your own interpretation based on the primary evidence. (After you submit this paper, you will begin examining what historians and scholars have written about your speech as you expand this essay into your final project.)

You will need to cite a complete version of your speech, found in a reputable source, either in print or online, such as a presidential archive or other government website (rather than A Documentary History of the United States, Project Gutenberg, or Wikisource, for example).

**You will want to use newspaper coverage from the day after the speech, not the day it was given. This is very, very, very, very super important.**

Do **not** break your paper up into sections with subheadings; instead, make smooth transitions between each major component of your essay.

As a reminder, the use of AI for any stage of the research, writing, and revision process is considered a violation of academic integrity policy.

### Sample Outline

You will need an **introduction** with key context like who gave the speech, where, when (giving a specific date), why, who was in the audience, what was its purpose, etc. You should also summarize how the speech was received at the time, but you do not need to mention every newspaper and magazine that you subsequently analyze—paint broadly here. End with the thesis (though that'll actually be the last thing you write).

The **body** of your paper will first need to explain the main points of the speech and develop your own interpretation of it, much as we've been practicing in class to offer a hypothesis about what the speech signals about the world at a particular point in time based solely on internal evidence within the speech itself (approx. 2 pages). Second, your essay will highlight how the speech was interpreted and framed by contemporary media outlets (2-4 pages or more). You can raid your annotated bibliography for material to paste in and develop into an argument. For each of the sources you review, you should examine which details it emphasizes, what it omits, and what these choices suggest about the era; you may also consider the audience and bias of these sources. **You should explain what these findings suggest about the country at that time.**

You should **conclude** by discussing what the print media coverage of the speech suggests about the world at the time and compare those implications with the hypothesis you developed about the era based on the speech itself. You may also wish to reflect on how your interpretation developed as you worked through the evidence—including any tensions, surprises, or limits you encountered—as you arrive at the larger implications of your analysis.