Please read the directions carefully and be sure to thoroughly complete all parts of the assignment. This assignment is due the first day of school and will be worth 150 points toward your first marking period grade. It can significantly impact the way you begin the year. If you have any questions, feel free to e-mail me.

Part I. *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft* by Stephen King

**Total Possible Points: 50**

While reading and annotating King’s memoir, answer the following 5 questions with specific references to the text and MLA citation/format. Responses should be about one substantive paragraph per question and should be typed.

1. Discuss King’s ‘toolbox’ analogy. What tools do you find most indispensable when you write?
2. King doesn’t read in order to ‘study the craft’ but believes that there is a “learning process going on” when he reads. Are you conscious of the writer’s craft while you read? Think about the last book you read. How did the writer craft his or her work? What did you learn from it?
3. Why do you think King structures his memoir the way he does?
4. How much of King’s advice was new to you? What did you learn about writing from King’s memoir?
5. Throughout his memoir King fuses “writing” with “life” and vice versa. What is his point in doing this? What is the relationship between the two?

Part II: *The New York Times* Columnist

**Total Possible Points: 100**

**Step 1: Select a *New York Times* Columnist**

You must collect five current, preferably consecutive columns by your author. Print out the columns. Highlight and annotate them as you read. You must bring your annotated articles to our first day of class.

Below, you will find a list of columnists, their current schedules, and links to brief biographies. I would suggest reading one or two columns before deciding. Check your columnist’s work weekly, as some columnists take frequent breaks during the summer. Get to know their schedules so you can fit in the number of columns that you need for this assignment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Charles M. Blow (Monday, Thursday)</th>
<th>Ross Douthat (Sunday, Wednesday)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Politics, public opinion, social justice</em></td>
<td><em>Politics, religion, moral values</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Brooks (varies)</td>
<td>Maureen Dowd (Sunday)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Politics, culture, social sciences</em></td>
<td><em>American politics, pop culture, international affairs</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Frank Bruni (Sunday, Wednesday)</td>
<td>Thomas L. Friedman (Sunday, Wednesday)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Politics, social issues, education</em></td>
<td><em>Foreign Affairs, globalization, technology</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roger Cohen (Wednesday, Saturday)</td>
<td>Nicholas D. Kristof (Sunday, Thursday)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>International affairs and diplomacy</em></td>
<td><em>Human Rights, women’s rights, health, global affairs</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gail Collins (varies)</td>
<td>Paul Krugman (varies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>American politics and culture</em></td>
<td><em>Economics, trade, health care</em></td>
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</tbody>
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**Step 2: Write Précis**

This portion of the assignment must be typed. After reading and annotating your chosen columns, write a four-sentence précis for each one, following the example given below.
What is a précis? A précis reveals your understanding of the arguments and points authors make in a specific piece. When writing your précis, objectively summarize the article in your own words.

### Example Précis

1. **The first sentence** identifies the essay’s author and title, provides the article’s date in parentheses, uses some form of the verb “says” (claims, asserts, suggests, argues) followed by “that,” and explains the essay’s thesis (paraphrased or quoted).

   Example: In his “In Defense of Prejudice” (1995), Jonathan Rauch argues that prejudice in society should not be eliminated.

2. **The second sentence** describes the author’s support for the thesis, usually in chronological order.

   Example: Rauch supports his position by providing anecdotal and historical evidence culled from segments of society which illustrates the futility and harm associated with attempts to eliminate prejudice.

3. **The third sentence** analyzes the author’s purpose using an “in order to” statement.

   Example: Rauch hopes to shift the paradigm away from absolutism, the idea of punitive action against racism and prejudice, in order to move society toward rejection, the idea of societal pressure when grappling with racist and prejudicial attitudes.

4. **The fourth sentence** describes the essay’s intended audience and the relationship the author establishes with the audience.

   Example: The author uses an erudite yet defensive tone, indicating that he primarily addresses a rather liberal intellectual audience.

### Step 3: Respond to the Articles

Below each précis, compose a one-paragraph response, noting any questions, objections, or enlightenment the column generated. Some questions you might want to think about/comment on:

- Do you agree or disagree with the editorial’s viewpoints? Why?
- Did the editorial make you want to know more about the issue?
- What are some of the author’s best arguments? What makes them valid?
- Which arguments or points made by the author do not make sense to you and why?
- How does this editorial connect with other knowledge that you have from other sources?

### A NOTE ABOUT PLAGIARISM:

This assignment is INDIVIDUAL. You MAY NOT work with another student or group of students on this assignment. Students caught cheating or sharing work will be referred for disciplinary action and will receive a 0 for the assignment.