This assignment involves writing a compare and contrast essay. The words “compare” and “contrast” are often used interchangeably to mean “to set side by side in order to show differences and likenesses.” Sometimes the word “compare” is used to emphasize likenesses or similarities, and the word “contrast” is used to emphasize differences.

When writing a compare and contrast essay it is important that the things being compared (and/or contrasted) belong to the same general class. For example, you could compare the rights and status of women in the United States to those of women in Saudi Arabia, or you could compare organic food to non-organic food, or you could compare college basketball to professional basketball, or you could compare The Lord of the Rings story as it appears on film to The Lord of the Rings books. But obviously you wouldn’t want to compare the rights and status of women in the United States with organic food because the classes of things being compared are so completely different.

In a compare and contrast essay you’ll want to do more than simply list the characteristics that distinguish each subject. It helps to explain why you think these similarities or differences are meaningful. This may involve providing new and useful information, answering a challenging question, or even offering a solution to a problem. For example, if you were to compare the legal rights and status of contemporary American women to that of women 150 years ago, you would probably emphasize the differences between the two time periods, but it would help to have a significant point that you’re making. Perhaps this could include describing the cultural consequences of this change in women’s status for modern women, men, and children.

Although a compare/contrast essay can resemble an argumentative essay in many ways, the difference is that in an argumentative essay you’re trying to persuade people to accept your position by offering reasons; whereas in a compare/contrast essay your main purpose is to inform the reader through the information you present, rather than to persuade them to believe a certain way.

Approximate Length: at least 1,500 words, double spaced. The final draft must include the word count on the front page (in MSWord the word count feature is in the Tools pulldown menu).
You will write two drafts of the essay. Your first draft you will share with your workshop group where you will discuss your draft and receive feedback, comments, and suggestions. You will then revise that draft based on the feedback of your workshop group members and your own insights.
Bring four (4) copies of your first draft to class for the peer-response workshop day.

If you paraphrase or quote any outside sources, you must document those sources using the MLA or APA format.