Response Paper #1

Due Monday January 28!

Work to explain one or more of Saussure's ideas about the linguistic sign. You may answer **any or all parts of any or all of these questions**; they are designed to give you some flexibility in your answers. Questions 1 and 2 asks for some basic information about the theory we're looking at; question 3 asks for some expansion of that understanding; question 4 asks for applications, comparisons, or other more extended uses of the theory, and question 5 asks for self-reflection and analysis of your own processes of understanding.

Your answer should be a minimum of one full typed page, and no more than three pages. While you should use correct grammar, spelling, and sentence structures, you need not write a formal essay; no thesis statement is required. Rather, try to discuss the question as clearly as possible in your own words. In formulating your answer, first be sure you specify what question or questions you are answering. Remember that your answers will be evaluated for **clarity** and **completeness**. The most important thing to focus on in answering any of these questions is to explain the ideas in your own language. Using direct quotes from the text, or from the lecture notes, can supplement, but not substitute for, your own explanations. Come up with your own specific examples wherever possible.

1.What are the two parts of the sign? How do they differ? What are the main characteristics of the linguistic sign?

2.How is linguistic value created? What is the difference between "value" and "signification"? What's the difference between "langue" and "parole," and how are they related to "value"?

3. Discuss Saussure's assertion that the linguistic sign is always arbitrary. Look at the counter-examples he offers, and disproves; can you think of other counter-examples that might be more persuasive?

4. Discuss Saussure's idea of structure. Why does he insist that the structure of language is always linear? Is he right? What, besides language, might be investigated from a structuralist perspective? What is gained, and/or lost, by examining the world in terms of structure?

5.Pick something in Saussure’s theory that you don’t fully understand, and try to explain where and why your understanding stops. Warning: this is more challenging that it may seem!