Writing 2, L. Miller
Essay #2 “Natural Law: A Social Observation”

Is the natural state of humans one where we have the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness? Are we born to fall from grace? Is our natural state one of struggle against one another? These are the questions people ask when they discuss natural law. This essay asks you to ask them yourself, not with regard to Adam and Eve, Thomas Jefferson, or Karl Marx, but with regard to the world around you.

For this assignment, you will study a social group around you and determine what the behavior of that social group indicates about the natural state of humans. Are we collaborative? Selfish? Cruel? Competitive? Kind?

Your methodology will be as follows:
1. Choose a group to study of which you are not a member. This could be a club on campus, a sports team, a floor of a dormitory, the patrons of a coffee-shop, a fraternity or sorority, an apartment building, or any other group. You will probably not want to have a group with much more than 10-20 people in it.
2. Observe the group as much as you can, as objectively as you can, and as anonymously as you can. Be quiet and observant and take lots of notes. Pay particular attention to the ways people behave when they forget you are watching them. Do not observe someone who is unwilling to be observed.
3. Interview several (4-5) members of the group. Ask them questions about themselves (we’ll draft these in class). Be friendly but impartial. Write it all down.
4. Review your data. See if you spot any trends. If not, what might this suggest about human nature?
5. Now review the readings we prepared for this unit. Which of them seem to fit? Highlight any passages that seem relevant. You must use at least one of the sources from class when you analyze your findings.
6. Now you’re ready to write down your findings in a focused, well-organized 4-5 page paper. (CMS Format, 1” margins, double spaced)

Readings:
October 23
1. Readings from the book of Genesis (643-647)
2. The Iroquois story of creation, (651-653)
3. The sayings of Lao-Tsu (669-676)

October 25
Film: Syriana

November 1
1. The Declaration of Independence (53-57)
2. Bourgeois and Proletarians (66-76)
3. Women in Athens (202-205)