Assignment for Short Papers

In lieu of a longer paper, you will be writing four short papers over the course of the quarter on texts of your choice from the class. Together, these papers will make up 30% of your final grade for the course. These essays are intended to be focused on a specific analytic task and should not spend valuable space summarizing the text. You must write one close reading, one narrative analysis, and one critique of scholarly secondary sources (see details about each type of paper below), however you may select the order in which you write them and which texts you choose to write about. The fourth paper is your choice of format. For instance, a student may first write a narrative analysis of *St. Mawr*, followed by a close reading of *Orlando*, and ending with a critique of Dina Al-Kassim’s treatment of *Two Serious Ladies*. Papers are due on Saturdays at regular intervals throughout the quarter and should be uploaded in a Word document (.doc or .docx format) to the designated Dropbox on EEE by midnight. The due dates are as follows:

- ✓ January 17 (end of Week 2)
- ✓ January 31 (end of Week 4)
- ✓ February 28 (end of Week 8)
- ✓ March 14 (end of Week 10)

Each short paper should be approximately 500-750 words (two to three typed, double-spaced pages). As this class is only open to upper-division English majors, it should go without saying that all written work should be closely proofread. Errors in grammar and mechanics are entirely unacceptable at this level. All written work should follow Modern Language Association (MLA) formatting and style and should be typed, double-spaced, and use a legible, 12-point font (e.g., Times New Roman, Arial, or Helvetica). The margins of your document should be set to one inch on all sides, the first line of paragraphs one half-inch from the left margin. On the upper left-hand corner of the first page, list your name, your instructor’s name, the course title, and the date in day/month/year format. Create a header that gives your last name and numbers all pages consecutively in the upper right-hand corner, one-half inch from the top and flush with the right margin. All written work should follow MLA guidelines for both parenthetical in-text citation and the list of works cited. This is a mandatory component of the course, and essays that do not use MLA format will be ineligible for a passing grade. You should consult the Purdue Online Writing Lab for any MLA formatting questions: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/

Descriptions of each paper type:

1. **Close reading.** Select a passage no longer than two pages from the text for close reading. Your response should (a) give a formal description of a passage and (b) pose an interpretive statement on the text. While all formal features (i.e. figurative language, imagery, tone, narrative voice, etc.) contribute to our experience of a piece of prose or poetry, your interpretive thesis should allow you to select which features are most relevant to your claim and to organize your description of the passage in a logical fashion.
2. Narrative analysis. This response paper will take a text as a whole and comment on the narrative structure of the text and how it affects the reader’s perception. First, evaluate the text from a traditional narrative standpoint. Is there a conventional narrative point of view? Does the narrator speak in the first, second, or third person, or are there shifts in point of view? Is the story narrated in the past or present tense? Does the verb tense affect your reading of it in any way? Does the narrator use a distinctive vocabulary, style, and tone, or is the language more standard and neutral? Are there shifts in vernacular or style? Is the narrator identified as a character, and if so, how much does he or she participate in the action? Does the narrator ever address the reader directly or explicitly state opinions or values? Is the narrator omniscient to all characters’ thoughts, or is the narrative perspective limited? Does the narrative voice or focus shift during the story remain consistent? Do the narrator, the characters, and the reader all perceive matters in the same way, or are there differences in levels of understanding? How are events sequenced? Does the plot follow any common plot pattern?

Second, think about how the narrative strategies of the text be conceived as distinctly “modernist” (i.e., use stream-of-consciousness, interior monologue, multiple points-of-view, impressionism, fragmentation, abstraction, quotation, absurdism; absence of linear narrative, etc.). Moreover, how might experiments in narrative form in the text make as their goal the depiction of a particular form of subjectivity? As Tamar Katz¹ observes,

Modernist experiments in narrative form often take as their goal the reshaping of narrative to a newly-envisioned subjectivity. Stream-of-consciousness, impressionism, point-of-view narration—a range of narrative strategies offer the perceptual processes of the subject as the real story, and in doing so raise the question of just what shape subjectivity might possess. It is a question that has been central to critical assessments of the modernist novel’s political affiliations. Do such narratives locate the subject beneath the shaping forces of the social world and the shaping order of conventional narrative, proposing the self as abstracted from the world, autonomous or transcendent? Or, conversely, does the very impressibility of the subject in such narratives, its all-too-malleable openness to impressions or conventions, mark the absence of any autonomy, signaling instead the subject’s thorough implication in cultural stories? (232-3)

You need not come down on one side of this central problem, but it is worth thinking through how the narrative strategies and depictions of perception in the text you are examining in your response relates to the larger question of modernist subjectivity and culture. If you are new to narratological analysis, I would suggest that you consult J. Hillis Miller’s introductory essay on “Narrative”² (available in PDF on the course website).

3. Critique of scholarly secondary source. In an effort to prepare you for your capstone research projects in English 106—and for many of you, future graduate work in English literature—you will be required to closely read and engage with scholarly articles relevant to the primary texts in the course. Not only will this help you to get a sense for the larger terrain of

modernist studies in the academy, but it will also acquaint you with the rhetorical maneuvers and style of scholarly writing.

For most of the primary texts in this class, I have made available a related scholarly article or book chapter on the course website. I will be referencing these secondary sources in lecture and would encourage you to read as many of them as possible. You are required to read at least one of these scholarly texts and write a critical evaluation in conversation with the primary text. Your critique should identify the scholar’s central claims, use of evidentiary support (both what type of evidence and how it is deployed), and any theoretical lenses that operate in the argument. Then, you should evaluate his or her argument regarding the text. Your evaluation need not be wholly positive or negative – rather I would like to see you engage in a critical discussion of the primary text using the secondary source as your interlocutor.

All secondary sources are available on the course website under the “Writing Assignments” tab. Moving chronologically, their bibliographic information is as follows:

In conjunction with D.H. Lawrence’s *St. Mawr*:

In conjunction with Wyndham Lewis’s *Tarr*:

In conjunction with Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando*:

In conjunction with Mina Loy’s *Insel*:

In conjunction with H.D.’s *Tribute to Freud*:

In conjunction with Djuna Barnes’s *Nightwood*:

In conjunction with Jane Bowles’s *Two Serious Ladies*: