

Interpretation of Literature 8G:1/Smith: Essay #2

For your second major writing assignment, you will continue to hone the interpretive skills you used in the first essay. In addition to discussing your own interpretation, you will engage in dialog with the interpretations of others.

You can find critical perspectives by doing a bit of careful research, using the resources available through the University Library. You'll compile this research in the form of an **annotated bibliography, which will be worth 30% of the final essay grade.** Guidelines for the annotated bibliography are attached separately.

The project will culminate in **an essay in which you enter into an ongoing literary conversation by presenting and supporting your own reading of a text.** This final essay will be worth 70% of the overall project grade. As the schedule below demonstrates, you will need to proceed in several stages:

Step 1—Proposal: First, you will generate a **proposal** that tells me, in a paragraph or so 1) what text you have chosen as your focus 2) what research questions you are pursuing—what themes, questions, controversies, or other aspects of the text interest you most? 3) what direction you see yourself taking as you develop a potential thesis.

- Spend some time considering the texts we've read this semester—thinking about your own readerly response is a great starting point. Which texts did you find most enjoyable? Most or least interesting? Most frustrating, intimidating, illuminating, challenging, or applicable to your own life? Looking over our readings, can you see any patterns in which texts grab your attention or make the most lasting impact? Which texts would you be interested in finding out more about? Use these hunches to figure out your research question and approach.

- **Step 2—Annotated Bibliography:** Second, you will use the library stacks and databases to generate an **annotated bibliography** that shows your knowledge of other critical responses to your text. **Instructions for the bibliography, as well as examples, are attached on a separate page.**
- **Step 3—Outline:** Third, you will generate a **detailed outline** of the your overall argument and the structure of your essay. What points will you make, and in what sequence? How will you support these points? Where will you need to include transitions? **Upload your outline to ICON by May 7.**
- **Step 4—Drafting:** Fourth, you will begin the **drafting** process. Once you have your outline, flesh out your thoughts via a rough draft and one or more revised drafts.
- You may notice that there is no official due date for the rough draft. However, **I do** recommend that you complete a draft or two on your own timeline and consult me, via office hours and email, as the essay progresses. I am happy to look at multiple stages of a draft and give you my feedback as many times as you wish.

- The **final draft** should be 6-8 pages in length, and properly formatted using MLA style. It will be **due on the last day of finals week, via ICON only**. I will return essays and feedback electronically.

Your **final draft** should **articulate an interpretive claim** about your chosen text. Deepen your initial question or claim by **discussing the critical responses you have researched**—what have scholars written about this text? How have they responded to the text as a whole, and/or to the question you pose? What are the merits and weaknesses of these responses? Use well-placed quotes and passages from the text, accompanied by your own commentary, to support your reading of the text and your evaluations of other scholars' interpretations. Finally, tell the reader **what interpretative conclusions you draw** about the text, and why we should see this discussion, and your argument, as significant or memorable.

This essay is an opportunity to explore scholarly resources you may not have previously used, but which may be useful for future courses. It also asks you to use skills that are applicable to many situations: not only academic projects but jobs in the professional world will ask you to efficiently digest a set of materials, evaluate their usefulness for your purposes, and mobilize your knowledge to increase your credibility and inform your thinking.

Important Dates:

Essay Assigned: Monday, April 14

Proposal due in Dropbox: Wednesday, April 16, by 5 p.m.

Annotated Bibliography Due in Dropbox: Wednesday, April 30 by 5 p.m.

Outline due in Dropbox: Wednesday, May 7 by 5 pm.

Final Essay Draft Due in Dropbox: Friday, May 16 by 5 p.m

Other Requirements:

- The essay should be **1600-2000 words (around 6-8 pages)** in length. This means you will need to engage in in-depth analysis and discussion of your primary and secondary texts. Take your time, break up your paragraphs so that each point gets its own spotlight, and when in doubt, **read closely!**
- It should be **double spaced**, using **12 pt font, 1-inch margins**, and other requirements for **MLA formatting**.
- It **MUST** include a **Works Cited page**. For help with formatting, please refer to the example sheet on ICON, or the Purdue OWL website.
- The paper should be **clearly written, free from errors, and written in a professional tone**. It should have a **strong thesis statement, fully developed ideas** supported by evidence in the form of well-placed **quotes from the text**, and **logical organization with clear transitions**.
- Capture the reader's attention with **an intriguing introduction**, and leave the reader with something to think about in your **conclusion**.
- Don't forget to give your work a **title!**

08G:1/Smith Interpretation of Literature Major Essay 2: Annotated Bibliography Instructions

What is an annotated bibliography?

An annotated bibliography is an academic tool. Its framework helps you **research, summarize, and evaluate** scholarly sources. Just as your reading responses can help prepare you to discuss texts in class, completing an annotated bibliography will help you discuss texts in your essay. Your annotated bibliography will constitute **30%** of the final essay grade. The final annotated bibliography should:

- **Begin** with a paragraph that briefly introduces your project. Tell me what text you are discussing, what aspect of that text will be your focus, and what sort of sources you have been looking for. Please include your thesis, which may be a work-in-progress.
- Cite **three** scholarly sources using correct MLA format. For each source, write a concise one-paragraph annotation. In 100-150 words or so, **summarize** the author's main argument and supporting points, and **evaluate** the strengths and weaknesses of the argument. Finally, **assess** the source's usefulness for your own purposes—tell me why it is or is not useful *for you*, and which parts in particular you might wish to discuss.
- **Conclude** with a brief comment on how the three sources relate to one another—what sort of conversation is going on about your text? How do you see yourself jumping in?

Process:

- Your **first** step should be to use Smart Search and other library resources to gather a pool of sources. Cast a wide net and collect anything that seems interesting or relevant. As you search, make sure to click "Peer Reviewed" on the sidebar options in order to ensure that you come up with scholarly sources.
- **Second**, glance over your sources—don't take time, at this point, to read entire articles or book chapters. Instead, skim enough to narrow down your options. Eliminate any sources that are not specific enough to your text, or that don't fit with the theme in which you are interested. Be discerning—some articles or books may be very interesting, but not right for your purposes in this particular essay.
- **Third**, settle on **three** peer-reviewed, scholarly sources to read carefully and closely. Take detailed notes, and highlight and annotate the texts, either by hand or electronically.
- **Fourth**, cite each source using **proper MLA format** and **compose an annotation for each**. Draw on your notes, along with your own reactions and opinions about each source. (Refer to the guidelines above for more detailed instructions).
- **Fifth**, tie together your annotations using the introductory and concluding framework described above.

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Essay 2 Rubric: Spring 2014

Excellent

Argument: The essay has a clear thesis. The writer's main interpretive claim is stated relatively early, and is a unifying thread throughout the essay. Body paragraphs are relevant to, and support, the thesis. The conclusion elaborates and strengthens the initial claim, and reflects on its larger significance.

Literary Analysis: The essay presents a thoughtful reading of the text(s), using source material as a jumping-off point for original insights. The author has clearly spent time with the text, refining and elaborating his/her interpretive ideas.

Research: The author cites three or more scholarly sources. S/he engages with their arguments thoroughly, conveying an idea of the larger critical conversation about the primary text and responding to other readings in a way that enriches his/her own claims. Relevant quotes are well-integrated and correctly cited.

Developing & Supporting: The essay's ideas are fully articulated. The author uses strategic analysis, relevant quotes, and fully-elaborated author commentary.

Organizing: The essay has a clear, effective structure. Points are coherent and linked by effective transitions.

Describing: When necessary, the essay provides brief background in the form of insightful, focused depiction of the text.

Style: The essay's expression is clear & engaging, demonstrating strong audience awareness. The author's tone is professional. The essay is free, or nearly free, from errors.

Very Good

Argument: The essay has a clear and unifying thesis. Body paragraphs are relevant to, and support, the thesis. The conclusion reiterates, elaborates, and strengthens the initial claim.

Literary Analysis: The essay presents a thoughtful reading of the text(s) and foregrounds the author's original insights. Most interpretation is thoughtful and well-considered.

Research: The author cites three or more scholarly sources. S/he discusses their arguments thoughtfully and thoroughly and places them in conversation with his/her own claims. Relevant quotes are well-integrated and correctly cited.

Developing & Supporting: Most of the essay's ideas are fully articulated using strategic analysis, relevant quotes, and extensive author commentary.

Organizing: Overall, clearly structured. All or most points are coherent and linked by effective transitions.

Describing: The essay helpfully depicts the text(s) at hand.

Style: Expression is clear overall; good audience awareness. The author's tone is generally professional. The essay contains few errors.

Good

Argument: The essay's argument is essentially sound. At times its logic is weak, needs more explanation, or relies too much on summarizing or explaining.

Literary Analysis: The essay presents the author's interpretation of some aspect of the text. Some interpretive points could be more original or fully-explored.

Research: The author cites three or more scholarly sources. The essay conveys a basic sense of the sources' arguments, but may not treat them as fully as possible or give a thorough sense of the larger critical conversation. Relevant quotes are integrated into the essay and correctly-cited.

Developing & Supporting: The essay contains emerging ideas; some analysis and discussion may be thin.

Organizing: Some structure; areas may lack coherence or relevance.

Describing: The essay adequately depicts the text(s).

Style: Adequate expression; basic audience awareness. The essay lapses into an overly-informal tone. At times, errors may interfere with the reader's understanding.

Weak

Argument: The essays' interpretive argument is not readily apparent or effectively supported.

Literary Analysis: The essay is not consistently interpretive, and/or does not follow through on interpretive claims. Analysis may be dominated by description or restating.

Research: The essay cites fewer than three scholarly sources. The writer may not engage fully with their arguments; quotes are not fully integrated, are used arbitrarily, or not fully introduced and commented upon.

Developing & Supporting: Ideas are incomplete or unclear; minimal support.

Organizing: The order of ideas may be arbitrary or incoherent at times.

Describing: Insufficient or inaccurate depiction of the text(s).

Style: Ineffective expression indicating little audience awareness. Informal tone. Repeated or significant errors severely interfere with the reader's understanding.

acceptable Essay does not meet the requirements of the assignment.

MLA Formatting: Acceptable/Requires Corrections

Comments:

Essay grade:

Annotated Bibliography grade:

Overall Essay 2 grade:

