

Paper Topics, Analytic Essay #1  
DUE: Friday October 11, 2013 by 10:30 AM

Submit to ICON **and** bring a hard copy to class. If, for some reason, you can't do both of these things, completing either one by the deadline will suffice as submitting the paper on time.

This is the first of two major analytic papers. The second paper will require a first draft and then resubmission of a final draft, but this paper will require only one version. Please look at this paper as practice writing an extensive paper and developing a complex argument about a text over many pages of writing.

Your papers should be 6 to 8 pages, double-spaced, one-inch margins, Times New Roman 12-point font. Please number your pages, and remember to include parenthetical citations of the texts. The author's last name (or Norton) plus the page number is sufficient for a parenthetical citation.

6-8 pages is a lot of writing! Please don't leave this until the last minute because no one can write an effective full paper in one day. We'll be using some in-class time to help you make progress on your paper. Also, don't forget about my office hours, and try to take advantage of them sooner rather than later, so you have time to make changes and reevaluate your paper.

Your argument should focus thoughtfully and deeply on a handful of key passages. Don't be afraid to refer to other parts of the novel, short story, or poem, but remember to provide close readings and thorough reflection on the main passages whose content and literary techniques support your argument.

Please avoid focusing on the same text you discussed in your short 2-3 page paper. **If you choose to answer an essay question that closely resembles a topic discussed in class, you must provide further analysis of this idea. Feel free to refer to arguments or ideas discussed in class, or to use these as jumping off points, but remember that your paper must feel substantially new and substantially your own.**

\*\*\*Paper length (within the specified 6-8 page margin) will not correlate to your grade. If you make an argument that is lacking in thought and unique analysis and is barely 6 pages, then your grade will reflect this, but if you draw out a paper to 8 pages through summary and "filler" language, then this is also not ideal. The length of your paper should be guided by the worthwhile claims you have to make and should feature concise and direct writing.\*\*\*

Topics:

1) Franz Kafka's "A Hunger Artist" recounts the fall of a master of fasting from a life of fame to an anonymous death. What is Kafka implying about art with this account of the hunger artist? How does art rely on the spectators who witness the performance or observe the art piece? How does art depend upon the artist's commitment to his task and his creativity?

2) In Flannery O'Connor's "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" the moral concepts of "good" and

“bad” are frequently invoked by the characters. What, according to this short story as a whole, is the definition of “good” and what is the definition of “bad”? Keep in mind that the author’s perspective may be different than the perspective articulated by any one character. What qualities can be attributed to goodness or badness? Are these concepts even relevant (or how are they relevant) when discussing the lives of human beings?

3) The dynamic between the grandmother and The Misfit in “A Good Man Is Hard To Find” is bizarre and memorable: why does The Misfit spend time bantering with the grandmother as her family is slaughtered? Provide a reading of Flannery O’Connor’s short story that analyzes this relationship. Is there a connection between the grandmother and The Misfit? Are they similar or different? Did either of them deserve the life they lived, and why?

4) Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s “The Yellow Wallpaper” has a shocking and sudden resolution as the narrator and the woman creeping in the wallpaper resolve into one figure. Provide an interpretation of the ending of the short story. What occurs with John’s attempted intervention? What is the meaning of the woman’s repetitive creeping? What is the meaning of the figure in the wallpaper and her imprisonment and subsequent escape?

5) By using two or more poems read for this class, develop a definition of poetry. What is poetry, according to some of the poets encountered in this class? What qualities does poetry possess and what makes these qualities significant and meaningful? Do other poets disagree? Choose one understanding of poetry and argue for it, drawing upon evidence and analysis from at least two different poems.

6) Willa Cather, the author of O Pioneers!, was strongly influenced by her own life spent on the prairie frontier; the relationships between the setting and the lives of characters play significant roles in her novel. Choose one character from O Pioneers! and discuss his/her relationship with the Nebraskan prairie. Is this relationship unique? How does it impact that character over the course of his or her lifetime?

7) The family often takes center stage in Willa Cather’s O Pioneers! The relationships between parents and children, brothers and sisters, wives and husbands, and friends evolve over the course of the novel. Choose a significant familial relationship from O Pioneers! and make an argument for its effectiveness. What is this relationship like? Is it healthy or unhealthy? How does it change over time? Do the characters benefit or suffer from this relationship?

8) Who in Willa Cather’s aptly titled novel is a pioneer? What are the qualities that a pioneer must possess, according to this novel? Is being a pioneer dependent upon one’s circumstances or one’s situation? What role do pioneers play in history, as demonstrated by this novel?

9) Choose your own topic. If you do so, you must clear this topic with me. So don’t get too involved with a topic before you do this!