

# English 124.009: Arguing about Interpretations

Monday/Wednesday/Friday 1:10 – 2:00  
2462 Mason Hall

Brian S. Matzke

Office: 3137 Angell Hall

Office Hours: Mondays 3:00 - 5:00

Email: [bmatzke@umich.edu](mailto:bmatzke@umich.edu)

(Please allow for up to 24 hours for a response to any email)

## Departmental Course Description:

This class is about writing and academic inquiry, with a special emphasis on literature. Good arguments stem from good questions, and academic essays allow writers to write their way toward answers, toward figuring out what they think. In this writing-intensive course, students focus on the creation of complex, analytic, well-supported arguments addressing questions that matter in academic contexts. The course also hones students' critical thinking and reading skills. Working closely with their peers and the instructor, students develop their essays through workshops and extensive revision and editing. Readings cover a variety of genres and often serve as models or prompts for assigned essays; the specific questions students pursue in essays are guided by their own interests.

## Section Description:

Have you ever watched a movie or TV show with a friend and gotten into a debate, where one of you loved it and the other hated it, and as you discussed it you realized that you had radically different interpretations of the story—different points of emphasis, different ideas about the underlying message, different standards by which you were evaluating it, etc.? This class is all about those kinds of debates. Just about everything in our culture is open to interpretation. Consequently, the ability to develop smart, logically sound interpretations and the capacity to argue persuasively for those interpretations are highly valuable skills. In this class, we will examine films and novels (as well as essays, poems, and short stories) in order to hone those analytical and rhetorical skills. Our goal is not only to understand those stories better, but to think more critically and write and speak more persuasively about the world around us. Work commitments for this course will include reading, large- and small-group discussion, peer reviews and workshops of one another's work, small-scale writing assignments, and several extended essays.

## Required Texts:

- *They Say, I Say* by Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein
- *The Sun Also Rises* by Ernest Hemingway
- *The Turn of the Screw* by Henry James
- *Beloved* by Toni Morrison
- *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins

You should also have a style or grammar guide such as *The Little, Brown Essential Handbook for Writers* by Jane E. Aaron or *The Elements of Style* by William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White, or consult an online style guide such as Grammar Girl (<http://grammar.quickanddirtytips.com/>) or The Purdue Online Writing Lab (<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>).

## Work Commitments

- **Paper 1: Movie Review.** This paper should evaluate a film of your choosing and argue for that evaluation. 5 pages.
- **Paper 2: Close Reading.** This paper should argue for a detailed, focused interpretation of *The Sun Also Rises* based on close reading. 6 pages.
- **Paper 3: Comparative Analysis.** This paper should argue that comparing and/or contrasting *The Turn of the Screw* and *Beloved* yields a useful insight into one or both novels. 7 pages.
- **Paper 4: Theory Paper.** This paper should argue for an interpretation of *The Hunger Games* from a particular theoretical perspective. 7 pages.
- **Written Peer Critiques.** Critiques should identify both the strengths and the weaknesses of an essay. You should offer your overall impression of the work, tie your comments to specific examples from the essay, and make tangible suggestions for improvement. One page, single-spaced.
- **Participation.** Participation in this course means actively engaging in discussion and contributing your thoughts to workshops. Shorter homework assignments and in-class writing assignments also constitute a significant portion of your participation grade. Participation does not simply mean attendance.
- **Theory Presentation.** This is a one-time presentation on a particular scholarly approach to the study of literature and culture. The presentation should be clear, entertaining, and informative.

Assignment sheets with more detailed guidelines will be handed out for each of the papers, the peer critiques, and the presentation. All written work should be typed in Times New Roman font with one-inch margins on all sides. Papers should be double-spaced. Peer critiques should be single-spaced. All papers should include page numbers and a title, but not a separate title page. Improperly formatted papers will not be accepted.

Grades		Grades			
Paper 1	= 150	931 – 1000	A	731 – 769	C
Paper 2	= 150	900 – 930	A-	700 – 730	C-
Paper 3	= 200	870 – 899	B+	670 – 699	D+
Paper 4	= 200	831 – 869	B	631 – 669	D
Peer Critiques	= 80	800 – 830	B-	600 – 630	D-
Participation	= 150	770 – 799	C+	0 – 599	E
Presentation	= 70				
<b>Total</b>	= 1000				

## Course Policies

- **Attendance**

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class by way of either a sign-in sheet or a pop quiz on the day's readings. If you are late to class and miss the sign-in sheet or quiz, it is your responsibility to make sure that your attendance is recorded, either by approaching me at the end of class or emailing me that same day.

Students are allowed three unexcused absences without any consequences. More than three unexcused absences will lower your final grade by 1/3 of a letter grade per additional absence. Absences will be excused only if you ask to be excused in advance. I will grant such an excuse when class conflicts with a religious holiday or on a case-by-case basis with regard to other events that make missing class unavoidable. I may ask for documentation to confirm the justification for the absence. Absences for medical or family emergencies are, of course, understandable and will be excused if acceptable documentation is provided.

If you are late to class three times, that will count as one unexcused absence.

- **Late Papers and Peer Critiques**

Late Papers will incur a loss of 1/3 of a letter grade per class day late. However, as workshoping drafts is an integral component of the course, late paper *drafts* will incur a loss of 1/3 of a letter grade per *day* late. I will offer extensions on papers on a case-by-case basis, but only if you speak with me prior to the due date.

Late Peer Critiques will not be accepted for credit.

- **Food and Drink**

Feel free to eat or drink in class, so long as it is not loud or otherwise distracting and you keep the classroom clean.

- **Laptops, Cell Phones, MP3 Players, etc.**

Pretend this is an airplane and turn off all electronic devices before class begins.

- **Pen and Paper**

Remember to always bring a pen and paper to class.

- **Disabilities**

If you would like accommodation for a disability, please contact me as soon as possible. Any information you give me will be treated as strictly confidential. I also encourage you to contact the office of Services for Students with Disabilities in order to obtain disability verification and assistance in determining reasonable accommodations. Their website can be found at: <http://www.umich.edu/~sswd/>.

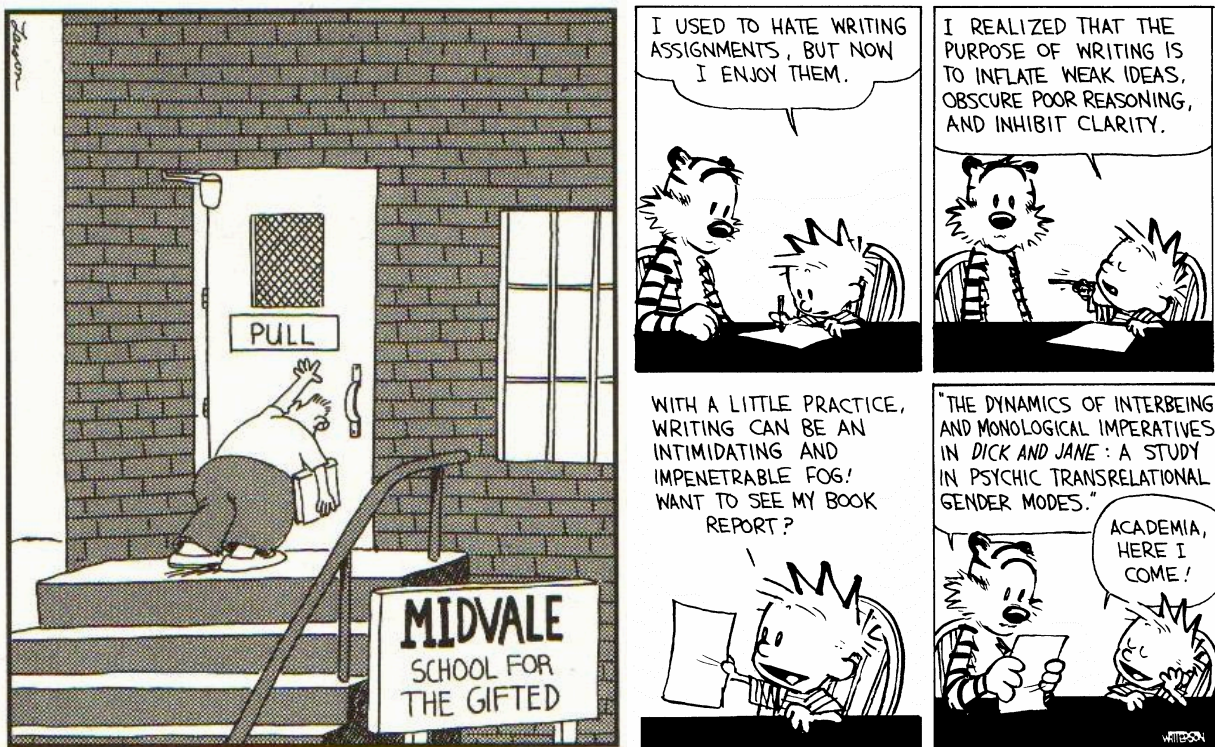
- **Plagiarism**

The definition of and department policy about plagiarism are available online at: <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/english/undergraduate/advising/plagNote.asp>.

Department policy states that if you plagiarize, you will fail the assignment and the course. In addition, your case will be sent to the Dean of Student Affairs, who will review the case and may recommend further penalty.

- **The Sweetland Writing Center**

The Sweetland Writing Center is an excellent resource for developing your writing. They can offer you expert one-on-one assistance at all stages of the writing process. Their offices are located in **1310 North Quad**. Their website can be found at: <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/sweetland>. You can also call them at **734-764-0429** to make an appointment.



## Weekly Schedule

### Week 1: Introductions

Sept 4 Introductions and course goals

Sept 6 Read: “‘The Lone Ranger’: Rip-roaring adventure meets dark political parable”  
“Lone Ranger is Johnny Depp's tribute to shitty superhero origin films”  
*They Say, I Say* Preface, Introduction, Chapter 1, Chapter 11

### Week 2:

Sept 9 NO CLASS—INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCES INSTEAD  
Due: Idea for paper 1

Sept 11 Read: “‘Zero Dark Thirty’ Is Osama bin Laden's Last Victory Over America”  
“In Defense of ‘Zero Dark Thirty’”  
“Torture and Tough Questions”  
*They Say, I Say* Chapter 4

Sept 13 Read: “The Dark Knight Rises” by Dana Stevens  
“The Dark Knight Rises” by Peter Travers  
*They Say, I Say* Chapter 6  
Due: Paper 1 rough draft (to CTools by the end of the day)

### Week 3: Workshops

Sept 16 Workshops for \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_  
Due: Peer critiques

Sept 18 Workshops for \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_  
Due: Peer critiques

Sept 20 Close reading activity; Small group workshops

### Week 4:

Sept 23 Read: “Hills Like White Elephants”  
Due: Paper 1 final draft (hard copy in class and electronic copy to CTools)

Sept 25 Read: *The Sun Also Rises* pages 1-51

Sept 27 Read: *The Sun Also Rises* pages 52-102  
*They Say, I Say* Chapter 7

**Week 5:**

- Sept 30      Read: *The Sun Also Rises* pages 103-146  
*They Say, I Say* Chapter 2
- Oct 2        Read: *The Sun Also Rises* pages 147-205  
*They Say, I Say* Chapter 3
- Oct 4        Read: *The Sun Also Rises* pages 206-247  
Due: Paper 2 rough draft (to CTools by the end of the day)

**Week 6: Workshops**

- Oct 7        Workshops for \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_  
Due: Peer critiques
- Oct 9        Workshops for \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_  
Due: Peer critiques
- Oct 11       Logic activity; Small group workshops

**Week 7:**

- Oct 14       FALL STUDY BREAK
- Oct 16       Read: *The Turn of the Screw* pages 1-46  
Due: Paper 2 final draft (hard copy in class and electronic copy to CTools)
- Oct 18       Read: *The Turn of the Screw* pages 47-87  
*They Say, I Say* Chapter 5

**Week 8:**

- Oct 21       Read: *Beloved* pages 1-56
- Oct 23       Read: *Beloved* pages 57-113  
*They Say, I Say* Chapter 8
- Oct 25       Read: *Beloved* pages 114-165  
*They Say, I Say* Chapter 10

**Week 9:**

- Oct 28       Read: *Beloved* pages 167-199
- Oct 30       Read: *Beloved* pages 200-235  
*They Say, I Say* Chapter 9
- Nov 1        Read: *Beloved* pages 236-275  
Due: Paper 3 rough draft (due to CTools by the end of the day)

**Week 10: Workshops**

Nov 4 Workshops for \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_  
Due: Peer critiques

Nov 6 Workshops for \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_  
Due: Peer critiques

Nov 8 Audience activity; Small group workshops

**Week 11:**

Nov 11 Read: *The Hunger Games* pages 1-85  
Due: Paper 3 final draft (hard copy in class and electronic copy to CTools)

Nov 13 Read: *The Hunger Games* pages 86-194

Nov 15 Read: *The Hunger Games* pages 195-289

**Week 12:**

Nov 18 Read: *The Hunger Games* pages 290-374

Nov 20 Presentations: Marxism, Ecocriticism

Nov 22 Presentations: Critical Race Theory, Feminism

**Week 13:**

Nov 25 Presentations: Disability Studies, Postcolonial criticism

Nov 27 Movie: *The Hunger Games*  
Due: Paper 4 rough draft (due to CTools by the end of the day)

Nov 29 THANKSGIVING BREAK

**Week 14: Workshops**

Dec 2 Workshops for \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_  
Due: Peer critiques

Dec 4 Workshops for \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_  
Due: Peer critiques

Dec 6 Workshops for \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_  
Due: Peer critiques

**Week 15: Conclusions**

Dec 9 Genre activity

Dec 11 Due: Paper 4 final draft (hard copy in class and electronic copy to CTools)



## English 124 Paper #1: Movie Review

For your first paper, you will be writing a review of a movie of your choice. Chose a movie that you have seen before and that you have easy access to. This should not be difficult—if the movie is available on Blu-ray or DVD, there will almost certainly be a copy available at the Askwith Media Library or the Ann Arbor Public Library, or through Netflix or another streaming service. I do not advise you to chose a film simply because you like it, however. As the examples we read in class show, negative reviews can be just as well-written as positive reviews and are arguably even more fun to read and write.

Some movie reviews are published before the movie is released, and are directed at readers who are deciding whether or not they should see the movie. Some reviews are published after a movie is released and are directed at readers who are forming an opinion about the movie after they have seen it. Your review should be the second type. Do not try to avoid spoilers; analyze the film in its entirety.

You can think of your argument as having three levels:

Level 1: What is your evaluation of the movie? Is it good or bad? Smart or stupid? Important or trivial?

Level 2: What is the basis for your evaluation? Does the movie have a political subtext that you agree or disagree with? Does the plot make logical sense? Is it original or is it derivative? Does it have an emotional impact? (Note: These are just examples of the sorts of questions you should be asking as you think about your paper. This is not an exhaustive list of questions, nor should you necessarily try to answer all of these questions).

Level 3: What is your evidence? You will need to include specific examples from the film that help your argument: descriptions of what things look like, summaries of the plot and/or of individual scenes, quotations from lines of dialogue, etc. You will need to analyze those examples to show how they support your evaluation of the movie.

I will be holding individual conferences with students on September 9. At those conferences, you must know what movie you will be writing on, know whether it will be a positive or negative review, and have some ideas for how you will make your argument. A rough draft of the paper is due to CTools on September 13 by the end of the day. We will workshop those rough drafts the following week, and the final draft is due on September 23.

**Length:** 5 pages

**Idea due:** September 9

**Rough draft due:** September 13

**Final draft due:** September 23

## English 124 Paper #2: Close Reading

The second paper asks you to argue for an interpretation of *The Sun Also Rises*. Interpretation does not mean summary (though summarizing the work can be an important part of developing your argument). Rather, interpretation means looking beyond the obvious and analyzing the meanings and ideas that are *implicit* in the work. Your paper should closely read the text so as to show how Hemingway's language contributes to his meaning.

This paper is only six pages long, which is not a lot of space in which to develop a solid literary analysis, so you will probably be better off focusing your argument rather narrowly. Consider honing in on a single character, location, motif, image, or scene, then come up with a claim about the role that that small element plays in the novel. See the "Five Ways of Looking at a Thesis" handout for ideas as to how you might want to structure your argument.

To practice close reading skills, bring detailed annotations of one page from chapters 1-6 of the novel to class on September 25. These annotations can be informal and don't need to be complete sentences. On September 27, bring a more polished, one-paragraph close reading of a passage from chapters 7-10. A provisional thesis statement is due in class on September 30. An electronic copy of the rough draft is due to CTools by the end of the day on October 4. The final draft of the paper is due on October 16. You should both turn a hard copy of the paper in to me at the beginning of class that day and post a copy to CTools.

**Length:** 6 pages

**Annotations:** September 25

**Close reading:** September 27

**Thesis:** September 30

**Rough draft due:** October 4

**Final draft due:** October 16

## English 124 Paper #3: Comparative Analysis

The third paper asks you to argue for an interpretation of *The Turn of the Screw* and *Beloved* viewed together. A significant component of this paper will be comparing and contrasting the two novels, but a simple compare/contrast argument will not be enough to succeed on this assignment. Rather than just making observations about how the two works are similar or different, the paper should argue that viewing these two novels alongside one another yields a better understanding of them than could be achieved if either were read on their own.

As with paper #2, your argument should be an interpretation of what the novels themselves are saying, and you should frame that argument in such a way that no outside sources are necessary to make your point. Your evidence should be from the texts themselves, and the paper should make its case by close reading passages from the texts. This paper utilizes the same analytical skills as paper #2, but with two novels instead of one.

A good place to start with this paper would be to think of an individual point of comparison that could lend the paper focus. This could be a character trait, a setting, an image, a theme, a feature of the authors' writing style, or any other story element that is in some way present in both novels. Chose something about these novels that you find striking or interesting and brainstorm how James and Morrison do it differently.

Your paper should analyze both novels, but you should not feel the need to give both novels equal weight. In fact, it might be more useful to think about one as subordinate to the other. Say you are interested in writing a paper about how the governess and Sethe compare to one another as maternal figures, and you have these two possible thesis sentences:

- The governess and Sethe are both failed maternal figures who fail as caregivers in part due to their lower social status, but *The Turn of the Screw* shows that failure, while *Beloved* focuses on the aftermath.
- By looking at the governess's descent into madness in *The Turn of the Screw*, we can better understand Sethe's maternal failings in *Beloved* by seeing how success as a caregiver is tied to social status.

Both of these theses make a similar point and are likely to use the same textual evidence, but the second one sounds a lot more interesting. The first one treats the two texts as equal, but the second one is using an analysis of *The Turn of the Screw* in order to further its analysis of *Beloved*. Also note how the second one more closely follows the "Magic Thesis Sentence" format.

**Length:** 7 pages

**Rough draft due:** November 1

**Final draft due:** November 11

## English 124 Paper #4: Theory Paper

The fourth paper asks you to argue for an interpretation of *The Hunger Games* from a particular theoretical perspective.

Literary theory is the study of what literature is and how it shapes and is shaped by the culture. It draws on ideas from philosophy, history, and the social sciences in order to interpret literature more fully. There are many schools of literary theory, but six popular schools are:

- Marxism explores class conflict in literature and culture
- Ecocriticism explores humans' relationship with nature
- Critical race theory explores the construction of race
- Feminism explores the construction of gender
- Disability studies explores illness, disability, and the construction of health
- Postcolonial criticism explores nationality, imperialism, and colonialism

All of these schools of criticism can inform a reading of *The Hunger Games*. Before writing your theory paper, however, you will research and present on one of these six schools. You will present in a group with two other classmates, and the presentations will need to take 20-25 minutes of class time. In those presentations, you need to:

- Discuss the history of your school of theory
- Explain the sorts of questions that your school asks about literature and culture, and the sorts of analyses they perform
- Provide at least three open-ended discussion questions about the school
- Present an interpretation of *The Hunger Games* from this theoretical perspective, including a close reading of one passage from the novel
- Point to two other relevant passages from the novel that the class can collectively discuss and interpret
- Provide at least three open-ended discussion questions about how to interpret *The Hunger Games* from this theoretical perspective

**Length:** 7 pages

**Rough draft due:** November 1

**Final draft due:** November 11

**English 124.019**  
**Books of the Grotesque**

Monday/Wednesday 4:10 - 5:30  
Mason Hall 2469

Dr. Brian S. Matzke

Office: 1329 North Quad (inside the Sweetland Writing Center)

Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:30 - 12:30 and Wednesdays 9:00 - 10:00

Email: [bmatzke@umich.edu](mailto:bmatzke@umich.edu)

**Departmental Course Description:**

This class is about writing and academic inquiry, with a special emphasis on literature. Good arguments stem from good questions, and academic essays allow writers to write their way toward answers, toward figuring out what they think. In this writing-intensive course, students focus on the creation of complex, analytic, well-supported arguments addressing questions that matter in academic contexts. The course also hones students' critical thinking and reading skills. Working closely with their peers and the instructor, students develop their essays through workshops and extensive revision and editing. Readings cover a variety of genres and often serve as models or prompts for assigned essays; the specific questions students pursue in essays are guided by their own interests.

**Section Description:**

In this class, we will practice creating smart, logically sound interpretations of literary texts and arguing persuasively for those interpretations. By practicing the craft of developing and arguing for interpretations of literary texts, our goal is not only to understand literature better, but to think more critically and write and speak more persuasively about the world around us. We will examine five books, each of which are "novels" consisting of separate but interlocking short stories. Sherwood Anderson called his book "The Book of the Grotesque," implying that the characters' inability to communicate with one another made them somehow "grotesque." To focus our analysis, this class will continually return to the questions, how do these grotesque stories work individually, and how do they work together to create a sum that is greater than its parts? Work commitments for this course will include reading, large- and small-group discussion, peer reviews and workshops of one another's work, small-scale writing assignments, and several extended essays.

**Required Texts:**

- *Winesburg, Ohio* by Sherwood Anderson
- *Three Lives* by Gertrude Stein
- *Cane* by Gene Toomer
- *The Martian Chronicles* by Ray Bradbury
- *The Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan

## Work Commitments

- **Paper 1: Close Reading.** This paper should argue for a detailed, focused interpretation of a story from *Winesburg, Ohio* based on close reading. 5 pages.
- **Paper 2: Comparative Analysis.** This paper should argue that interpreting stories by two different authors alongside one another yields a useful insight into one or both stories. 6 pages.
- **Paper 3: Theory Paper.** This paper should argue for an interpretation of a story from a particular theoretical perspective. 7 pages.
- **Paper 4: Research Paper.** This paper should argue for an interpretation of a story and support that interpretation by engaging with outside sources. 7 pages.
- **Written Peer Critiques.** Critiques should identify both the strengths and the weaknesses of an essay. You should offer your overall impression of the work, tie your comments to specific examples from the essay, and make tangible suggestions for improvement. One page, single-spaced.
- **Participation.** Participation in this course means actively engaging in discussion and contributing your thoughts to workshops. Shorter homework assignments and in-class writing assignments also constitute a significant portion of your participation grade. Participation does not simply mean attendance.
- **Theory Presentation.** This is a one-time presentation on a particular scholarly approach to the study of literature and culture. The presentation should be clear, entertaining, and informative.

Assignment sheets with more detailed guidelines will be handed out for each of the papers, the peer critiques, and the presentation. All written work should be typed in Times New Roman font with one-inch margins on all sides. Papers should be double-spaced. Peer critiques should be single-spaced. All papers should include page numbers and a title, but not a separate title page. Improperly formatted papers will not be accepted.

Grades		Grades			
Paper 1	= 150	970 – 1000	A+	770 – 799	C+
Paper 2	= 150	931 – 969	A	731 – 769	C
Paper 3	= 200	900 – 930	A-	700 – 730	C-
Paper 4	= 200	870 – 899	B+	670 – 699	D+
Peer Critiques	= 100	831 – 869	B	631 – 669	D
Participation	= 150	800 – 830	B-	600 – 630	D-
Presentation	= 50			0 – 599	E
<b>Total</b>	<b>= 1000</b>				

## Course Policies

- **Attendance**

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class by way of a sign-in sheet. If you are late to class and miss the sign-in sheet, it is your responsibility to make sure that your attendance is recorded by approaching me at the end of class.

An excused absence is an absence that is due to an unavoidable commitment. These include religious observances, doctor's appointments, travel for a university activity such as an athletic competition, and family emergencies such as a hospitalization or death in the family. In the case of a religious observance or university-related travel, you must notify me of the absence in advance in order for the absence to be marked as excused. In the case of a doctor's appointment, university-related travel, or family emergency, you must provide documentation in order for the absence to be marked as excused.

Unexcused absences are absences for all other reasons, including visiting relatives, travel for personal reasons, performing volunteer work, feeling sick but not going to the doctor, and meeting with your academic advisor.

Students are allowed two unexcused absences without any consequences. Each additional unexcused absence will lower your final grade by  $\frac{1}{3}$  of a letter grade (so, an A would become an A-, an A- would become a B+, and so on).

If you are late to class three times, that will count as one unexcused absence.

- **Email**

My email is [bmatzke@umich.edu](mailto:bmatzke@umich.edu), but I strongly encourage students to speak with me in person rather than via email.

If you know that you will be absent from class for a reason that is covered by the "excused absences" policy, come to me in office hours or after class before the day of the absence to inform me in person, and I will excuse the absence. If you are absent due to an emergency, come to me in office hours or after class at a later date with documentation of the emergency, and I will excuse the absence. Do not inform me of an absence via email. If you are absent for a reason that is not covered by the "excused absences" policy, you do not need to inform me at all. If you are absent from class for any reason, contact a classmate for the material you missed. Do not email me to ask what you missed in class.

If you have a question about an assignment or a course policy, ask during or after class, or in office hours. If you have a longer question or would like feedback on a paper draft, come to my office hours, which do not require an appointment. If you are unable to attend my regularly scheduled office hours, come to me after class to schedule an appointment to meet with me in my office at another time.

- **Preparedness**

Before the start of class you are expected to put away your phone, laptop, and any other electronic devices, and take out a pen, notebook, the assignment due that day (if any) and your copy of the books and/or papers to be discussed in class that day. Not doing these things before 4:10 amounts to being late for class, and will be marked as such on the attendance sheet. Using your phone during class or not bringing your copy of the books and/or papers to be discussed to class that day amounts to being absent and will be marked as such on the attendance sheet.

- **Late Assignments**

Paper rough drafts must be uploaded to CTools by 5pm on the day that they are due. The final grade on the paper will incur a loss of  $\frac{1}{3}$  a letter grade per day late (that's per day--seven days a week).

Paper final drafts must be turned in as a hard copy at the start of class and must be uploaded to CTools by 5pm on the day that they are due. The final grade on the paper will incur a loss of  $\frac{1}{3}$  a letter grade per two days late (the penalty is more severe for rough drafts because the workshop schedule depends on students having time to read each others' rough drafts).

I will offer extensions on papers on a case-by-case basis, but only if you speak with me prior to the due date.

Late Peer Critiques will not be accepted for credit.

- **Disabilities**

If you would like accommodation for a disability, please contact me as soon as possible. Any information you give me will be treated as strictly confidential. I also encourage you to contact the office of Services for Students with Disabilities in order to obtain disability verification and assistance in determining reasonable accommodations. Their website can be found at: <http://www.umich.edu/~sswd/>.

- **Plagiarism**

The definition of and department policy about plagiarism are available online at: <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/english/undergraduate/advising/plagNote.asp>.

If you plagiarize, you will fail the course and your case will be sent to the Dean of Student Affairs, who will review the case and may recommend further penalty.

- **The Sweetland Writing Center**

The Sweetland Writing Center can offer you expert one-on-one assistance at all stages of the writing process. You can schedule an appointment via their website: <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/sweetland>. You can also call them at **734-764-0429**. Their offices are located at **1310 North Quad**.



## Weekly Schedule

### Week 1     **Introductions**

Jan 7     Introductions

### UNIT 1:     **CLOSE READING**

### Week 2     ***Winesburg, Ohio* by Sherwood Anderson**

Jan 12     Read: “The Book of the Grotesque”; “Hands”; “Paper Pills”; “Mother”;  
                  “The Philosopher”; “Nobody Knows”; “Godliness”  
Due: Close reading annotations activity

Jan 14     Read: “A Man of Ideas”; “Adventure”; “Respectability”; “The Thinker”;  
                  “Tandy”; “The Strength of God”; “The Teacher”; “Loneliness”  
Due: Close reading paragraph

### Week 3     ***Winesburg, Ohio* by Sherwood Anderson**

Jan 19     No class -- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Jan 21     Read: “An Awakening”; “Queer”; “The Untold Lie”; “Drink”; “Death”;  
                  “Sophistication”; “Departure”  
Due: Paper 1 thesis statement and outline

Jan 23     Due: Paper 1 rough draft due to CTools by 5pm

### Week 4     **Workshops**

Jan 26     Workshops for \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_  
Due: Peer critiques

Jan 28     Workshops for \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_  
Due: Peer critiques

**UNIT 2: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

**Week 5** *Three Lives* by Gertrude Stein and *Cane* by Gene Toomer

Feb 2 Read: *Three Lives* by Gertrude Stein (in its entirety)

Due: Small group workshop summary

Feb 4 Read: *Cane* Pages 1-58

Due: Paper 1 revised draft, hard copy in class and electronic copy to CTools

**Week 6** *Cane* by Gene Toomer

Feb 9 Read: *Cane* Pages 59-117

Due: Comparative analysis activity

Feb 11 Read: *Cane* criticism

Due: Paper 2 thesis and outline

Feb 13 Due: Paper 2 rough draft due to CTools by 5pm

**Week 7** **Workshops**

Feb 16 Workshops for \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

Due: Peer critiques

Feb 18 Free day to work on your theory presentations in class

Read: Your group's theory reading

Due: Presentation ideas

**UNIT 3: CULTURAL THEORY**

**Week 8** *The Martian Chronicles* by Ray Bradbury

Feb 23 Read: "Rocket Summer"; "Ylla"; "The Summer Night"; "The Earth Men";  
"The Taxpayer"; "The Third Expedition"

Due: Small group workshop summary

Due: Presentations on Feminism and Psychoanalysis

- Feb 25      Read: “--And the Moon Be Still as Bright”; “The Settlers”; “The Green Morning”; “The Locusts”; “Night Meeting”; “The Shore”; “Interim”; “The Musicians”  
Due: Paper 2 revised draft, hard copy in class and electronic copy to CTools  
Due: Presentations on Postcolonialism and Ecocriticism

**SPRING BREAK**

**Week 9      *The Martian Chronicles* by Ray Bradbury**

- Mar 9      Read: “Way in the Middle of the Air”; “The Naming of Names”; “Usher II”; “The Old Ones”; “The Martian”; “The Luggage Store”; “The Off Season”  
Due: Presentations on African American Criticism and Marxism
- Mar 11      Read: “The Watchers”; “The Silent Towns”; “The Long Years”; “There Will Come Soft Rains”; “The Million-Year Picnic”  
Due: Presentations on Queer Theory and Disability Studies
- Mar 13      Due: Paper 3 rough draft due to CTools by 5pm

**Week 10      Workshops**

- Mar 16      Workshops for \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_  
Due: Peer critiques
- Mar 18      Workshops for \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_  
Due: Peer critiques

**UNIT 4:      RESEARCH PAPER**

**Week 11      *The Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan**

- Mar 23      Read: “Feathers from a Thousand Li Away”  
Due: Small group workshop summary
- Mar 25      Read: “The Twenty-Six Malignant Gates”  
Due: Paper 3 revised draft, hard copy in class and electronic copy to CTools

**Week 12**    *The Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan

Mar 30    Read: “American Translation”  
Due: Research questions

Apr 1    Library Day  
Due: Paper 4 idea

**Week 13**    *The Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan

Apr 6    Read: “Queen Mother of the Western Skies”  
Due: Annotated bibliography

Apr 8    In-class writing/brainstorming day  
Due: Paper 4 thesis and outline

Apr 10    Due: Paper 4 rough draft due to CTools by 5pm

**Week 14**    **Workshops**

Apr 13    Workshops for \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_  
Due: Peer critiques

Apr 15    Movie day

**Week 15**    **Conclusions**

Apr 20    Due: Small group workshop summary

Apr 22    Due: Paper 4 revised draft, hard copy brought to my office and electronic  
copy turned in to CTools by 5pm  
Due: Movie review (extra credit)

## English 124 Paper #1: Close Reading

The first paper asks you to argue for an interpretation of one or more stories from *Winesburg, Ohio*. Interpretation does not mean summary (though summarizing the work can be an important part of developing your argument). Rather, interpretation means looking beyond the obvious and analyzing the meanings and ideas that are *implicit* in the work. Your paper should closely read the text so as to show how Anderson's language contributes to his meaning.

This paper is only five pages long, which is not a lot of space in which to develop a solid literary analysis, so you will probably be better off focusing your argument rather narrowly. Consider honing in on a single character, location, motif, image, or scene, then come up with a claim about the role that that small element plays in the novel. See the "Five Ways of Looking at a Thesis" handout for ideas as to how you might want to structure your argument.

To practice close reading skills, bring detailed annotations of one page from the book to class on January 12. These annotations can be informal and don't need to be complete sentences. On January 14, bring a more polished, one-paragraph close reading of a passage from the book. A provisional thesis statement and outline is due in class on January 21. An electronic copy of the rough draft is due to CTools by 5pm on January 23. The final draft of the paper is due on February 4. You should both turn a hard copy of the paper in to me at the beginning of class that day and post a copy to CTools.

**Length:** 6 pages

**Annotations:** January 12

**Close reading:** January 14

**Thesis and outline:** January 21

**Rough draft due:** January 23 (to CTools by 5pm)

**Final draft due:** February 4

## English 124 Paper #1 Grading Rubric

- **Argument** \_\_\_\_\_/50  
The argument is clear, fresh, and insightful. All subsidiary parts of the paper from the title to the concluding sentence either clearly develop the argument or consider counterarguments. The paper devotes sufficient space to developing and responding to counterarguments. The stakes of the argument are clear (that is, the argument has a clear point to it) and the paper shows how and why that argument matters to its target readers.
- **Use of Evidence** \_\_\_\_\_/40  
The paper incorporates relevant textual evidence to support its argument. There is enough evidence for the author to make their case, and no plainly evident points of consideration are missing or underdeveloped. No space is given to redundant, or extraneous evidence. The paper smoothly integrates evidence into the argument and gives sufficient space to analyzing and interpreting the evidence.
- **Organization** \_\_\_\_\_/30  
The paper is structured in a logical manner. Ideas throughout the body of the paper appear in an order that makes sense and is easy to follow. Transitions from one idea to the next are smooth. The introduction is attention-getting and leads naturally into the argument, and the conclusion provides a sense of closure to the argument.
- **Mechanics** \_\_\_\_\_/20  
There are few if any stylistic or grammatical errors.
- **Formatting** \_\_\_\_\_/10  
The paper is double-spaced in Times New Roman font with one inch margins on all sides. The paper contains page numbers, a title, and a proper heading.
- **Total** \_\_\_\_\_/150

**Comments:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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## English 124 Paper #2: Comparative Analysis

The second paper asks you to argue for an interpretation of two works by two different authors viewed together. A significant component of this paper will be comparing and contrasting the two works, but a simple compare/contrast argument will not be enough to succeed on this assignment. Rather than just making observations about how the two works are similar or different, the paper should argue that viewing these two novels alongside one another yields a better understanding of them than could be achieved if either were read on their own.

As with paper #1, your argument should be an interpretation of what the stories themselves are saying, and you should frame that argument in such a way that no outside sources are necessary to make your point. Your evidence should be from the texts themselves, and the paper should make its case by close reading passages from the texts. This paper utilizes the same analytical skills as paper #1, but with two works instead of one.

A good place to start with this paper would be to think of an individual point of comparison that could lend the paper focus. This could be a character trait, a setting, an image, a theme, a feature of the authors' writing style, or any other story element that is in some way present in both novels. Chose something about these novels that you find striking or interesting and brainstorm how the two authors do it differently.

Your paper should analyze both works, but you should not feel the need to give both novels equal weight. In fact, it might be more useful to think about one as subordinate to the other. Say you are interested in writing a paper comparing Sherwood Anderson's "Mother" and Jean Toomer's "Carma," and you have these two possible thesis sentences:

- "Mother" and "Carma" both depict women who have become weary in the face of a disintegrating marriage, but Carma maintains a strength in the face of that disintegration which Elizabeth Willard lacks.
- By examining Elizabeth Willard's sense of defeat in "Mother," we can better appreciate Carma's strength in Carma; this contrast highlights how marital alienation operates differently in different racial and socioeconomic contexts.

Both of these theses make a similar point and are likely to use the same textual evidence, but the second one sounds a lot more interesting. The first one treats the two texts as equal, but the second one is using an analysis of *Winesburg, Ohio* in order to further its analysis of *Cane*. Also note how the second one more closely follows the "Magic Thesis Sentence" format.

**Length:** 6 pages

**Rough draft due:** February 13 (to CTools by 5pm)

**Final draft due:** February 25

## English 124 Paper #2 Grading Rubric

- **Argument** \_\_\_\_\_/50  
The argument is clear, fresh, and insightful. All subsidiary parts of the paper from the title to the concluding sentence either clearly develop the argument or consider counterarguments. The paper devotes sufficient space to developing and responding to counterarguments. The stakes of the argument are clear (that is, the argument has a clear point to it) and the paper shows how and why that argument matters to its target readers.
- **Use of Evidence** \_\_\_\_\_/50  
The paper incorporates relevant textual evidence to support its argument. There is enough evidence for the author to make their case, and no plainly evident points of consideration are missing or underdeveloped. No space is given to redundant, or extraneous evidence. The paper smoothly integrates evidence into the argument and gives sufficient space to analyzing and interpreting the evidence.
- **Organization** \_\_\_\_\_/40  
The paper is structured in a logical manner. Ideas throughout the body of the paper appear in an order that makes sense and is easy to follow. Transitions from one idea to the next are smooth. The introduction is attention-getting and leads naturally into the argument, and the conclusion provides a sense of closure to the argument.
- **Mechanics** \_\_\_\_\_/10  
There are few if any stylistic or grammatical errors.
- **Total** \_\_\_\_\_/150

**Comments:** \_\_\_\_\_

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## English 124 Paper #3: Theory Presentation/Discussion

The third paper asks you to argue for an interpretation of *The Martian Chronicles* from a particular theoretical perspective.

Literary theory is the study of what literature is and how it shapes and is shaped by the culture. It draws on ideas from philosophy, history, and the social sciences in order to interpret literature more fully. There are many schools of literary theory, but eight popular schools are:

- Psychoanalysis explores unconscious psychological influences on culture
- Feminism explores the construction of gender
- Postcolonial criticism explores nationality, imperialism, and colonialism
- Ecocriticism explores humans' relationship with nature
- Marxism explores class conflict in literature and culture
- African American criticism explores the construction of race in America
- Disability studies explores illness, disability, and the construction of health
- Queer theory explores the construction of sexual orientation

All of these schools of criticism can inform a reading of *The Martian Chronicles*. Before writing your theory paper, however, you will research and present on one of these eight schools. You will present in a group with one or two other classmates. In those presentations, you need to:

- Briefly discuss the history of your school of theory (3-5 minutes)
- Explain the sorts of questions that your school asks about literature and culture, and the sorts of analyses they perform (3-5 minutes)
- Present an interpretation of *The Martian Chronicles* from this theoretical perspective, including a close reading of one passage from the book (3-5 minutes)
- Point to two other relevant passages from the novel that the class can collectively discuss and interpret (5-10 minutes)
- Provide at least five open-ended discussion questions about how to interpret *The Martian Chronicles* from this theoretical perspective (10-15 minutes)

Your "presentation" should take 30-40 minutes, but should only briefly involve your presenting information to the class, and should primarily consist of leading discussion on the book. I will assign your group via a CTools announcement on February 13, and will provide you with a brief reading on your school of theory via CTools as well. On February 18, come to class having read the reading on your school of theory, and class will be a free day to discuss your presentation with your group. I will be available to work through ideas and answer questions in class.

48 hours before you are scheduled to present, you are required to email me a handout (one page single spaced) that outlines your presentation, provides page numbers for the passages you will discuss, and lists your discussion questions.

## **Presentations Schedule**

February 23: Psychoanalysis and Feminism

February 25: Postcolonialism and Ecocriticism

March 9: Marxism and African American Criticism

March 11: Disability Studies and Queer Theory

## English 124 Paper #3: Theory Paper

The third paper asks you to argue for an interpretation of *The Martian Chronicles* from a particular theoretical perspective.

Literary theory provides models for how literature and culture works; it poses questions about how certain aspects of our society influence and are influenced by art and literature; and it provides “lenses” with which to bring certain aspects of literature and culture into focus.

Over the course of four class sessions, we’ve looked at *The Martian Chronicles* using eight of the most common theoretical “lenses”: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, Postcolonial criticism, Ecocriticism, Marxism, African American Criticism, Queer theory, and Disability studies. Choose one of these lenses and use it to develop an argument about *The Martian Chronicles*. You do not need to write your paper from the same theoretical perspective that you presented on. If you were assigned the Marxism group but really wanted to write a paper about race in *The Martian Chronicles*, you are free to do so.

Like your first paper, the argument should be based primarily on the close reading of quotations from *The Martian Chronicles*. The purpose of the theory is to guide your paper’s focus, and the novel should provide your primary evidence to make your argument. No outside sources are necessary; however, you should cite outside sources if you are applying an specialized terms or concepts. That can come from your theory reading on CTools or from another source. If you are uncertain if outside sources are necessary for you to make your argument, please ask me in class or in office hours.

You may also cite *Winesburg, Ohio* or *Cane* if comparisons to either of those novels will help you develop your argument further, but this is not required, and your argument should primarily focus on *The Martian Chronicles*.

**Length:** 7 pages

**Rough draft due:** March 13 (to CTools by 5pm)

**Final draft due:** March 25

## English 124 Paper #3 Grading Rubric

- **Argument** \_\_\_\_\_/50  
The argument is clear, fresh, and insightful. All parts of the paper clearly develop the argument. The paper devotes sufficient space to developing and responding to counterarguments. The stakes of the argument are clear and clearly matter to its target readers.
- **Use of Evidence** \_\_\_\_\_/50  
The paper incorporates enough textual evidence. No plainly evident points of consideration are missing or underdeveloped. No space is given to extraneous evidence. The paper smoothly integrates evidence and gives sufficient space to analyzing and interpreting the evidence.
- **Organization** \_\_\_\_\_/40  
The paper is structured in a logical manner. Ideas appear in an order that makes sense and is easy to follow. Transitions are smooth. The introduction is attention-getting and leads naturally into the argument, and the conclusion provides a sense of closure to the argument.
- **Theory** \_\_\_\_\_/40  
The paper uses the theory in a way that makes sense and is appropriate to the argument being made. Its characterization of the theory is accurate and relevant. Specialized terms and concepts are defined accurately and cited properly where necessary.
- **Complexity** \_\_\_\_\_/20  
The paper persuasively shows how its topic is more complex than it might first appear to be.
- **Total** \_\_\_\_\_/200

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
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## English 124 Paper #4: Research Paper

The fourth paper asks you to argue for an interpretation of *The Joy Luck Club* utilizing both evidence from the novel and outside research. Like your previous papers, this paper should make an interpretive claim about the novel, not another kind of claim, like a policy claim or value claim. The paper should support that claim by close reading details from the text, but must also incorporate at least three scholarly sources.

There are different kinds of sources you can employ for this paper:

- **Literary Theory.** If you would like, you can approach this paper like Paper 3, and interpret *The Joy Luck Club* from a particular theoretical lens. If you wanted to write a psychoanalytic interpretation of the novel, for example, you could cite a psychoanalytic theorist's definition of the unconscious, then apply that definition to the novel. A good place to find these kinds of sources would be the bibliographies at the back of the theory readings.
- **Literary Criticism.** It is a good idea to look up articles and books that have been written about Amy Tan and *The Joy Luck Club*, and to cite the interpretations that they provide. You can cite other literary critics' interpretation to support your argument, but you shouldn't feel obligated to agree with other critics; in fact, it can be very useful to use other critics as counterarguments. Often, an effective way to start a paper is to cite a critic and then set up your thesis by disagreeing with that critic's interpretation, saying they have the focus in the wrong place, saying that they have overlooked something important, or saying that you are going to add something to their interpretation.
- **History.** It might help your argument to provide background information on Chinese culture, the experience of Chinese American immigrants, or any other aspects of the novel's historical context that are relevant to your argument.

You can use all three kinds of sources in your paper, or just one, or two--whatever is most useful in making a convincing case for your interpretation. After you find your sources, you must write an annotated bibliography--a bibliography with 2-3 sentences describing each source and how it is useful to your argument. Your final paper must be formatted using MLA style and must include a Works Cited page, which does not count towards the page count.

**Length:** 7 pages

**Research question due:** March 30

**Annotated bibliography due:** April 6

**Thesis and outline due:** April 8

**Rough draft due:** April 10 (to CTools by 5pm)

**Final draft due:** April 22

## English 124 Paper #3 Grading Rubric

- **Argument** \_\_\_\_\_/50  
The argument is clear, fresh, and insightful. All parts of the paper clearly develop the argument. The paper devotes sufficient space to developing and responding to counterarguments. The stakes of the argument are clear and clearly matter to its target readers.
- **Analysis** \_\_\_\_\_/50  
The paper incorporates enough textual evidence and provides clear, logical, relevant, and persuasive close readings. No plainly evident points of consideration are missing or underdeveloped. No space is given to extraneous evidence. The paper smoothly integrates evidence.
- **Secondary Sources** \_\_\_\_\_/50  
The paper uses at least three sources in a way that makes sense for the argument. The sources are scholarly and relevant. The paper clearly and thoroughly analyzes the sources and integrates them smoothly. No research that would be needed to make the argument is missing.
- **Organization** \_\_\_\_\_/40  
The paper is structured in a logical manner. Ideas appear in an order that makes sense and is easy to follow. Transitions are smooth. The introduction is attention-getting and leads naturally into the argument, and the conclusion provides a sense of closure to the argument.
- **MLA Format** \_\_\_\_\_/10  
The Works Cited page and parenthetical citations follow MLA format.
- **Total** \_\_\_\_\_/200

**Comments:** \_\_\_\_\_

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