

THE SECOND PAPER

Five to seven pages

Due Monday, November 24 at 5 p.m. on Sakai

Preliminary work due in class on Thursday, November 20

Write a focused, analytic paper making an interpretive argument about a problem, device, or pattern in a single text. You may write about Joyce, Sayers, Hemingway, Woolf, Faulkner, Anand, or Hurston. You need not consult scholarly sources, including those assigned in the course; however, if you use a secondary source, you must cite it responsibly. Your paper, when formatted according to the guidelines described under “Format” below, should be at least five full pages and no more than seven full pages.

TOPICS

You may choose to write about one of the following topics. You may also devise your own *highly focused* topic; use the suggested topics as a model. Evan and I will gladly give feedback on self-designed topics up to two days before the due date.

1. *Narrative, history, memory.* Analyze the difference between the order in which events happen (*fabula*) and the order in which they are narrated (*sjuzet*) in one of our texts. Develop an argument about the way the disarrangement of chronology represents memory, knowledge, or the experience of history in a particular way; analyze specific examples of moments that are emplotted out of order to support your interpretation.
2. *Same-gender relations.* Choosing one of our texts, develop an argument about that text’s representation of same-gender characters’ relationships and desires. Remember that intimacies and desires cannot always be clearly categorized as sexual or not. If there is more than one homosocial relation of interest, use a comparison among pairings to sharpen your claims about the novel’s representation of such relationships. Pay special attention to the distinction between what is explicit and what is suggested, what is socially legitimate and what is illicit. Bad papers on this topic are characterized by generalizations or “outing” gestures (“X is secretly gay”): write a better paper than that. Possible authors include but are not limited to: Woolf, Hurston, Faulkner.
3. *Crowd scene.* Though the novels we have read focus our attention on the inner life of exceptional individuals, many of them also devote narrative space to scenes of collective activity. We discussed the responses to the sky-writing plane in *Mrs. Dalloway* in class, but you might consider the party in that novel; the mob scene and the political rally in *Untouchable*; or the several communal gatherings in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. How does the narrative form change to accommodate collective activity? What makes groups dangerous or energizing in these novels? What does the turn to collectives reveal that the individual protagonist cannot?
4. *So funny it hurts.* Several of our texts (e.g., Sayers, Faulkner, Joyce) make considerable use

of morbid or dark humor—the kind of humor that laughs at occasions of pain, harm, absurdity, disgust, and failure. Develop an argument about dark humor in one of these texts. Where does humor appear? How does it work? Why is pain the occasion for humor in that text? Make sure to explain all the jokes carefully.

5. *Faulkner's structure (a challenge)*. Using the analysis of the structure of Joyce's *Portrait* that we carried out in class as a model, analyze the construction of *As I Lay Dying* by tallying key features of each of the book's short chapters. Then make an argument about the novel on the basis of your analysis of this tabulation. One page of your paper may be taken up by the tabulation, if you wish to include it. How does Faulkner's narrative procedure shape his treatment of a particular theme or problem? What is the content of Faulkner's form?
6. *Silence, exile, and cunning*. These are the three "arms" Stephen Dedalus claims he will use at the end of *Portrait*. What do they have to do with the way Joyce writes his novel? What do they have to do with one another? Interpret Stephen's credo at the end of *Portrait* as both a potential explanation of Joyce's Bildungsroman and as a potential blind alley. Give serious weight to both possibilities in your argument. Do not write one paragraph on silence, one on exile, and one on cunning. What is the underlying principle (in Stephen, in Joyce, in the novel)?

PRELIMINARY WORK

On Thursday, November 20, we will workshop arguments in class. Bring a draft of your introductory paragraph. This draft does not commit you to a topic, but it should be a thoughtful attempt to articulate both a *motive* (what makes the topic interesting) and an *argument* in precise terms. Use a striking example from your chosen text as part of your way into the topic. If you do not turn in a draft introduction in hard-copy at the end of class on November 20, your paper grade will be lowered by 0.3 points (7.5%).

WRITING GUIDELINES

Careful analysis of textual evidence is central to this paper. We have been modeling this mode of analysis in class. Your claims should be supported by extensive *quotation*. To support a claim, it is not enough simply to quote; once you quote, you must *analyze* what you have quoted, paying close attention to the significance of individual words, of syntactical and rhetorical patterns, of nuances and implications. Instead of attempting to paraphrase what a text means or summarize what it's about, *show how it works*. Do not take for granted that your reader will see the text the way you do: point out the details that can *convince* the reader of what you say.

You are particularly encouraged to look back over your own commonplace-book entries, as well as your classmates', to search for evidence of the patterns, recurring themes, or insistent problems that you might write about.

Your interpretation must be organized into an *argument* with a meaningful *motive*. In other

words, your paper must address a significant, interesting, non-obvious question about one of the texts, and it must propose a clearly articulated, non-simplistic answer to that question. In order to find a motive in this sort of single-text assignment, think about what is most *surprising* about what you have to say. You may take for granted that your reader has in mind what has been discussed in class. (That also means that you should not repeat material from class.)

Relate your focused claims to broader questions about the author, genre, or theme your paper discusses, and show how paying attention to the particular, *highly specific* argument you are making changes how readers should think about the broader questions. It will also help to ask yourself what alternative arguments someone might raise about your topic and to anticipate objections to your claims.

Motive is often established at the start of an essay. *Avoid writing a generalizing introduction.* Begin your essay with a surprising piece of evidence or observation of your own that immediately frames the topic you are going to address and establishes its interest. Expanding on that piece of evidence, forecast the terms of your argument, then state the central, argumentative claim of the essay.

Spending too much of your paper on material or arguments already extensively discussed in class will weaken your motive.

Think carefully about the *line of thought* of your writing, the way one claim leads to the next. “Transition sentences” are less important than your sense of the overall *logic* of your argument: it may help to think of the essay as a story you have to tell about the text you are analyzing, one with an arc from beginning to end. One of the most compelling ways to tell such a story is by thinking carefully about the *order of presentation of evidence*: indeed, you can “outline” a paper by first choosing the five or six passages that are most essential to your thinking and then deciding what sequence they should be presented in.

DRAFTS

Plan to draft and revise. You may submit partial or full drafts to either of us for brief comments, as long as you do so at least two days before the deadline. We will answer questions, time permitting, up through the day before the deadline.

FORMAT

Your paper should have between 1.0 and 1.25-inch margins on all sides, with text in twelve-point serif font (e.g.: Garamond, Hoefler Text, Palatino, Baskerville, or, less appealingly, Cambria, Times), and between one-and-a-half and double spacing. *Number all pages.* The paper should have your name and the date on the first page. Title your paper.

Submit your paper electronically via the Sakai Assignments 2 tool. E-mail submissions are not acceptable. If you wish to turn in your paper in hard copy to my mailbox in Murray Hall, please e-mail me to say you have done so.

Digital submissions should be in Portable Document Format (PDF) if at all possible. Native word-processor formats (.doc, .docx, .pages, .odt) are a second-best alternative. All word processors are capable of producing PDF files, through either a “Save As...” option, an “Export” command, or a “Print to PDF” option in the print dialog. For more detail, see: <http://andrewgoldstone.com/pdf>.

STYLE

You must proofread carefully.

Quotations should be carefully transcribed, punctuated, and attributed. In a paper on a single text, you may give a full citation only once, either in an MLA-style “Work Cited” bibliography or in a Chicago-style footnote to the first quotation. After that, page numbers may be given in parentheses. Secondary sources are not required in this paper; but if you use someone else’s work, including someone’s informal comments inside class or out, *you must cite that work*. Using someone else’s work without specific citation is plagiarism. Consistency and thoroughness in citation is more important than exact fidelity to either MLA or Chicago style.

Please follow the conventions of standard written American English. I am non-prescriptive about things like the split infinitive, the sentence-final preposition, and “they” used as a gender-neutral singular pronoun. The passive voice is an excellent grammatical resource and can be used freely, provided it is used wisely.

The best resource on matters of usage is the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary of English Usage*, also available in a wonderful paperback Concise Edition. For detailed information about current and past word uses, the fundamental source is the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

For grammar, I consider *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* by Rodney Huddleston and Geoffrey Pullum to be the reference standard; it is condensed in their slightly less daunting *Student’s Introduction to English Grammar*.

LATE POLICY

Late papers will be graded. If I receive your late paper less than 48 hours after the deadline, your maximum grade is 3.0. A paper that is more than 48 hours late can receive no higher than a 2.0. You may turn in a late paper any time until December 8.

Computer problems are not a valid excuse for lateness. Plan ahead. Back up frequently.

GRADING

The syllabus explains the general meaning of marks on the four-point scale. The chief criteria of assessment are:

1. Evidence: has textual evidence been used extensively, chosen well, and interpreted effectively in support of claims?
2. Motive: does the paper make its central problem interesting?
3. Argument: is the argument focused, logical, convincing, surprising?
4. Line of thought: does the paper develop its ideas in connected, orderly fashion? Does the conclusion follow from (and differ from) the opening?
5. Style: is the paper clearly written? Is it free from typographical, grammatical, and other errors?

In general, an A-range (3.5–4.0) paper is strong by all these criteria; a B-range (2.5–3.5) paper has well-chosen, well-analyzed evidence but does not fully develop its argument or its motive; a C-range (1.5–2.5) paper lacks evidence or uses evidence only to summarize plot; and a D-range (0.5–1.5) paper is too short or ignores the assignment.

If you submit work that is not your own, you will not receive credit for the assignment, and you will face disciplinary consequences. See the Rutgers academic integrity policy on the website <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>.