English 346

John Ernest, ENGL 346, Fall 2007

English 346: American Literature, 1800-1865

The 1850s

Tuesday and Thursday, 10:00-11:15 320 Clark Hall
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The decade of the 1850s was one of the most explosive periods of United States history, beginning with the Compromise of 1850 and concluding with John Brown's attack on Harpers Ferry, with civil war all but inevitable at the decade's end. This decade was also, interestingly, one of the most creative periods in American literary history. Many of the works associated with what we have come to call the "American Renaissance" were published during this period. African American writers, often left out of this picture, were equally active: the decade saw the publication of fiction, drama, travel narratives, and histories by Black authors.

In this course, we will encounter writers both famous (Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Walt Whitman) and infamous (you'll see), known (Frederick Douglass) and relatively obscure (Fanny Fern, who was more widely read than was Hawthorne in her own time). We will think about the ways in which literature was shaped by and responded to the increasingly vigorous exchanges (legal, verbal, and physical) between proslavery and antislavery forces and the increasing political tensions between the northern and the southern states. We'll follow writers who broke the rules to give voice to a new generation of women. We'll enter into confusion (ever read *The Confidence-Man*?), but we'll find our way out again (mostly). We'll follow the trail that begins on the night before Christmas and ends in our old Kentucky home. We'll read a mix of novels, poems, autobiographical narratives, and one play.

Our goal will be to think about the complex relations among history, literature, and culture, so as to come to an understanding of how events shape literature and how literature shapes individuals

and events. To meet this goal, we will be guided by the following questions:

(1) What conceptual, narrative, or stylistic features emerge and develop during this decade in American literary history?

(2) What contesting or mutually-supportive visions of nationality or community become evident in this diverse collection of writings, and what roles do religion, politics, race, gender, or economics play in those visions?

(3) What role has literature played in the nation's greatest challenges, successes, and failures (the promotion of representative governance, the construction of race, the system of slavery, or the realization of women's rights, to name only a few of the concerns we will consider)?

(4) What role has literature played in the realization or strategic revisions of national ideals?

(5) If there is such a thing as American literature, then what challenges and responsibilities follow for American and international readers?

By the end of the semester, you might not have any firm answers to these questions–though if you do, it would be a great help to me if you could let me know what they are. However, you should have the background, the conceptual frameworks, and the practical skills you need to approach these questions in your scholarship and in your lives. Specifically:

(1) you should have a good bit of information about the literature and history of the U.S. 1850s;

(2) you should have some experience in applying this information to analyses of specific issues or historical events;

(3) you should be comfortable and even adept at close readings and contextualized considerations of literary texts; and

(4) you should be comfortable writing in a range of different settings and styles–from informal to formal, from making compelling assertions to presenting persuasive arguments.

You will have a variety of forums for demonstrating your development in meeting these course goals, including class discussion, individual conferences, informal writing assignments, "meditative" essays, and a formal essay.

Words of Wisdom to Guide Our Journey This Semester

Academic institutions offer myriad ways to protect ourselves from the threat of a live encounter. To avoid a live encounter with teachers, students can hide behind their notebooks and their silence. To avoid a live encounter with students, teachers can hide behind their podiums, their credentials, their power. To avoid a live encounter with one another, faculty can hide behind their academic specialties.

To avoid a live encounter with subjects of study, teachers and students alike can hide behind the pretense of objectivity: students can say, “Don’t ask me to think about this stuff--just give me the facts,” and faculty can say, “Here are the facts--don’t think about them, just get them straight.” To avoid a live encounter with ourselves, we can learn the art of self-alienation, of living a divided life.

This fear of the live encounter is actually a sequence of fears that begins in the fear of diversity. As long as we inhabit a universe made homogeneous by our refusal to admit otherness, we can maintain the illusion that we possess the truth about ourselves and the world--after all, there is no “other” to challenge us! But as soon as we admit pluralism, we are forced to admit that ours is not the only standpoint, the only experience, the only way, and the truths we have built our lives on begin to feel fragile.

If we embrace diversity, we find ourselves on the doorstep of our next fear: fear of the conflict that will ensue when divergent truths meet. Because academic culture knows only one form of conflict, the win-lose form called competition, we fear the live encounter as a contest from which one party emerges victorious while the other leaves defeated and ashamed. To evade public engagement over our dangerous differences, we privatize them, only to find them growing larger and more diverse.

If we peel back our fear of conflict, we find a third layer of fear, the fear of losing identity. Many of us are so deeply identified with our ideas that when we have a competitive encounter, we risk losing more than the debate: we risk losing our sense of self.

Of course, there are forms of conflict more creative than the win-lose form called competition, forms that are vital if the self is to grow. But academic culture knows little of these alternative forms--such as consensual decision making--in which all can win and none need lose, in which “winning” means emerging from the encounter with a larger sense of self than one brought into it, in which we learn that the self is not a scrap of turf to be defended but a capacity to be enlarged.

If we embrace the promise of diversity, of creative conflict, and of “losing” in order to “win,” we still face one final fear--the fear that a live encounter with otherness will challenge or even compel us to change our lives. This is not paranoia: the world really is out to get us! Otherness, taken seriously, always invites transformation, calling us not only to new facts and theories and values but also to new ways of living our lives--and that is the most daunting threat of all.

--Parker J. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher’s Life*

In my belief, few books on education published in the past ten years are ethical books. They are not ethical because they are not invocations to lived visions. They *tell* of challenges, *refer* to agonies, *comment* on difficulties. They do not ask an answer in the form of action from the reader. Their power begins and ends within the world of words and paragraphs alone.

If the present book does not compel transformed behavior, in the life of its own author and in that of its authentic reader too, then it does not merit the expense of labor which it now commands and has commanded for the past five years; nor can it justify the pain and anguish I would wish it to provoke within the conscience of an undefended reader.

People who are looking for "a lot of interesting ideas," and hope to dabble here for little more, offend the author and degrade themselves. They would do well to stop right now. Those who read in order to take action on their consequent beliefs--these are the only readers I respect or look for. Atrocities, real and repeated, proliferate within this social order. The deepest of all lies in our will not to respond to what we see before us. When we declare that we are troubled by the lockstep life that has been charted for us by the men and women who now govern and control our public schools, what we are doing is to state our disavowal of an evil and unwanted patrimony. We are not living in an ordinary time, but in an hour of intense and unrelenting pain for many human beings. It is not good enough to favor justice in high literary flourish and to feel compassion for the victims of the very system that sustains our privileged position. We must be able to disown and disavow that privileged position. If we cannot we are not ethical men and women, and do not lead lives worth living.

. . . .

Prison bars do not need to be made of steel and concrete. They can be fashioned also out of words and hesitations: an "interesting seminar on hunger," "a reasonable exchange of views about despair." The language that we learn in public school is one of ethical antisepsis and of political decontamination. It is the language of an intellectual cease-fire while the victims are still dying. It is also a language which, by failing to concede real oppositions, denies a child or adult right or power to make strong, risk-taking choices. The student learns to step back and to steer away from moral confrontations. He learns to ascertain the quickest highway and the best approach to middle places of inert compassion and dysfunctional concern: places where choice does not reside and anger does not threaten.

If the child studies hard, if he assimilates the language well, and if he should grow up by any chance to be a writer, teacher, commentator or a critic even of such areas as social justice in this nation, he will have learned by then the proper means by which to make himself provocative, but not unsettling: fashionable and delightful, but not feared. He will have become, by grotesque sequences of North American recirculation, a perfect item in the same machine that polished him to size. At worst he will be somebody like Moynihan. At best he may be somebody like Galbraith. There is no danger he will be Thoreau.

--Jonathan Kozol. *The Night Is Dark and I Am Far from Home*

For three hundred years black Americans insisted that "race" was no usefully distinguishing factor in human relationships. During those same three centuries every academic discipline, including theology, history, and natural science, insisted "race" was *the* determining factor in human development. When blacks discovered they had shaped or become a culturally formed race, and that it had specific and revered difference, suddenly they were told there is no such

thing as “race,” biological or cultural, that matters and that genuinely intellectual exchange cannot accommodate it.

Toni Morrison, “Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature”

James Harvey Robinson has reminded us that “history books are a poor place to look for history.” They are an even poorer place to search for African-American history and African-American women’s history.

—Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, “The Politics of ‘Silence’: Dual-Sex Political Systems and Women’s Traditions of Conflict in African-American Religion”

The woman’s place of power within each of us is neither white nor surface; it is dark, it is ancient, and it is deep.

. . . . . .

When we view living in the european mode only as a problem to be solved, we rely solely upon our ideas to make us free, for these were what our white fathers told us were precious. . . . But as we come more into touch with our own ancient, noneuropean consciousness of living as a situation to be experienced and interacted with, we learn more and more to cherish our feelings, and to respect those hidden sources of our power from where true knowledge and, therefore, lasting action comes.

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I speak here of poetry as a revelatory distillation of experience, not the sterile word play that, too often, the white fathers distorted the word *poetry* to mean–in order to cover a desperate wish for imagination without insight.

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For women, then, poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence. It forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action. Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought.

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The white fathers told us: I think, therefore I am. The Black mother within each of us–the poet–whispers in our dreams: I feel, therefore I can be free. Poetry coins the language to express and charter this revolutionary demand, the implementation of that freedom.

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Sometimes we drug ourselves with dreams of new ideas. The head will save us. The brain alone will set us free. But there are no ideas still waiting in the wings to save us as women, as human. There are only old and forgotten ones, new combinations, extrapolations and recognitions from within ourselves–along with the renewed courage to try them out.

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In the forefront of our move toward change, there is only poetry to hint at possibility made real.

Our poems formulate the implications of ourselves, what we feel within and dare make real (or bring action into accordance with), our fears, our hopes, our most cherished terrors.
. . . . . .
For within living structures defined by profit, by linear power, by institutional dehumanization, our feelings were not meant to survive.
. . . . . .
If what we need to dream, to move our spirits most deeply and directly toward and through promise, is discounted as a luxury, then we give up the core–the fountain–of our power, our womanness; we give up the future of our worlds.

–Audre Lorde, “Poetry Is Not a Luxury”

I used to think that I talked to the reader and in a sense perhaps that was true but it is really the work that talks to the reader as it was the work that talked to the writer. The work and the artist say each other as I think lovers do and, in later contact, it is the work and the reader that say each other. Or the work may be mute and the reader stone deaf.

Insofar as there can be anything about me worth writing about it would have to be the work and the importance of the work can only be to the reader who has entered into a relation with it. This is at variance with the generally—not only academically—held idea that works of art can be examined, described and assessed as though they were precious stones. Or houses. But the importance of houses is lost in their selling price. We live in them. Or we don’t.

--William Bronk

The quality of light by which we scrutinize our lives has direct bearing upon the product which we live, and upon the changes which we hope to bring about through those lives. It is within this light that we form those ideas by which we pursue our magic and make it realized. This is poetry as illumination, for it is through poetry that we give name to those ideas which are—until the poem—nameless and formless, about to be birthed, but already felt. That distillation of experience from which true poetry springs births thought as dream births concept, as feeling births idea, as knowledge births (precedes) understanding.

As we learn to bear the intimacy of scrutiny and to flourish within it, as we learn to use the products of that scrutiny for power within our living, those fears which rule our lives and form our silences begin to lose their control over us.

–Audre Lorde, “Poetry Is Not a Luxury”

Required Texts

John Ernest, ed. *The Pearson Custom Library of American Literature* (Prof. John R. Ernest, The 1850s). ISBN: 0536378266

William Wells Brown, *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter* (1853). Penguin Books. Edited by M. Giulia Fabi. ISBN 0142437727

William Wells Brown, *The Escape; Or, A Leap for Freedom* (1858). The University of Tennessee Press. ISBN 1572331062

Fanny Fern, *Ruth Hall and Other Writings* (1855). Rutgers University Press. Edited by Joyce W. Warren. ISBN 0813511682

Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Blithedale Romance* (1852). The Bedford Cultural Edition. Edited by William E. Cain. ISBN 0312118031

Herman Melville, *The Confidence-Man* (1857). The Norton Critical Edition. Edited by Hershel Parker and Mark Niemeyer. ISBN 039397927X

Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). The Norton Critical Edition. Edited by Elizabeth Ammons. ISBN 0393963039

Harriet E. Wilson, *Our Nig; or, Sketches in the Life of a Free Black* (1859). Penguin Classics. Edited by P. Gabrielle Foreman and Reginald Pitts. ISBN 0142437778

Policies

1. If you fail to fulfill any of the course requirements, you will fail the course.

2. Social Justice. West Virginia University is committed to social justice. I concur with that commitment and expect to maintain a positive learning environment based upon open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. Our University does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, veterans status, religion, sexual orientation, color or national origin. Any suggestions as to how to further such a positive and open environment in this class will be appreciated and given serious consideration.

If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Disability Services (293-6700).

3. If your writing suffers from serious grammatical errors, the best grade I will be able to give to you for the paper, exams, and for the course is a "C-". If you would like help with grammar or with your writing in general, or if you want to build on your strengths, please visit the WVU Writing Center in 44 Stansbury Hall. For an appointment, call 293-3107 ext. 33400, or stop by 44 Stansbury to see if tutors are available.

Please note that for your course paper you are also required to read and follow the guidance of the "Guide for Papers" attached to this syllabus.

4. Revisions: You are allowed to revise your first two essays. If you decide to revise, your grade will be the average of the two versions of the paper. You must hand in the original with the revision. Please note that I will be happy to help you plan, revise, and refine your paper before the original due date, making significant revisions unnecessary. Your final essay is due at the end of the semester, so you won't be able to revise that, so it is important to talk with me early in the process of preparing and writing the paper, and at any or every stage after that. At the very least, you should show me a copy of your introduction to the essay before you write the rest.

5. I will subtract one-third of a grade for each calendar day that your paper is late.

6. Expectations Concerning Plagiarism: You are required to read the following statement on plagiarism–but here's the short version:
If you claim (explicitly or implicitly, intentionally or unintentionally) as your own something written in whole or in part by someone else, or if you claim as your own someone else's ideas or observations, or if you claim as your own someone else's line of thought or of argument, then you are guilty of plagiarism. If you have been influenced by someone else's ideas, cite your source. If you present information–biographical, historical, scientific, etc., cite your sources. If you discuss the work of another scholar or writer, be sure to use quotation marks to identify significant words and phrases taken from that source–and, of course, cite the source. If you draw any information, ideas, phrases, or inspiration from the internet, cite your sources. In short, identify the authorities you are drawing from at all times–and when in doubt, cite your source. It is always better to be overly cautious in this regard.

Multiple submissions will be treated as plagiarized papers. That is, you cannot submit work in this course that you have submitted in another course.

Confirmed plagiarists will fail this course.

Plagiarism*
*This Plagiarism Statement was prepared by Professor Jessica Enoch (University of Pittsburgh), who has given me permission to reprint it on my syllabus.

Plagiarism is the act of passing off someone else's work as your own. Sometimes plagiarism is simple dishonesty. People who buy, borrow, or steal a paper to turn in as their own work know they are plagiarizing. Those who copy word-for-word—or who change a word here and there while copying—without enclosing the copied passage in quotation marks and identifying the author should know that they are plagiarizing.

But plagiarism can be more complicated in act and intent. Paraphrasing, which is stating someone else's ideas, can be a useful way to support your own ideas, but it can lead to unintentional plagiarism. Jotting down notes and ideas from sources and thoughtlessly using them without proper attributions to the authors or titles of those sources may result in a paper that is only a mosaic of your words and those of others that appear, nonetheless, to be yours.

Another innocent way to plagiarize is to allow your fellow students and friends—those outside your peer-review group—to give you too much rhetorical help or do too much editing and proofreading of your work. If you think you have received substantial help in any way from people whose names will not appear as authors of the paper, acknowledge that help in a short sentence at the end of the paper or in your list of works cited. If you are not sure how much help is too much, talk with me, so that we can decide what kind of outside-of-class help (and how much) is proper, and how to give credit where credit is due.

As they are drafting their work, conscientious writers keep careful track of when they use ideas and or words from sources. They diligently try to distinguish between their own ideas, those of others, and common knowledge. They try to identify which part of their work comes from an identifiable source and then document their use of that source in accordance with established academic or professional conventions, such as a parenthetical citation and a works cited list. If you are in doubt about what needs documenting, talk with your instructor.

When thinking about plagiarism, it is hard to avoid talking about ideas as if they were objects like tables and chairs. Of course they are not. You should not feel that you are under pressure to invent new ideas—which is probably impossible. So-called original writing consists of thinking through ideas and expressing them in your own way. The result may not be new, but if honestly done, it may well be interesting and worthwhile reading. Print or electronic sources, as well as other people, may add good ideas to your own thoughts. When they do so in identifiable and specific ways, give them the credit they deserve.

The following examples should clarify the difference between dishonest and proper uses of sources:

Original Source:

- It is not generally recognized that at the same time when women are making their way into every corner of our work world, only one percent of the professional engineers in the nation are female. A generation ago this statistic would have raised no eyebrows, but today it is hard to believe. The engineering schools, reacting to social and governmental pressures, have opened wide their gates and are recruiting women with zeal. The major corporations, reacting to even more intense pressures, are offering attractive employment opportunities to practically all women engineering graduates.

--From Samuel C. Florman, "Engineering and the Female Mind" Copyright by *Harper's Magazine*

Word-for-Word Plagiarizing:
In the following example, the writer devises part of the first sentence in hopes the reader won't notice that the rest of the paragraph is simply copied from the source. The plagiarized words are italicized.

- Because women seem to be taking jobs of all kinds, *few people realize that only 1 percent of the professional engineers in the nation are female. A generation ago this statistic would have raised no eyebrows, but today it is hard to believe. The engineering schools, reacting to social and governmental pressures, have opened wide their gates and are recruiting women with zeal. The major corporations, reacting to even more intense pressures, are offering attractive employment opportunities to practically all women engineering graduates.*

Quotation marks around all the copied text, followed by a parenthetical citation, would avoid plagiarism. But even if that were done, a reader might well wonder why so much was quoted from Florman. Beyond that, a reader will wonder why the writer chose to quote instead of paraphrase this passage (which would then require an endnote or footnote, citing Florman as the source of this information). Furthermore, a paper consisting largely of quoted passages would be relatively worthless.

Plagiarizing by Paraphrasing:
In this case the writer follows the progression of ideas in the source very closely-too closely-by substituting his or her own words and sentences for those of the original.

Original	**Paraphrase**
It is not generally recognized that at the same time when women are making their way into every corner of our work-world, only 1 percent of the professional engineers in the nation are female.	Few people realize, now that women are finding jobs in all fields, that a tiny percentage of the country's engineers are women.
A generation ago this statistic would have raised no eyebrows, but today it is hard to believe.	Years ago this would have surprised no one but no it seems incredible.
The engineering schools, reacting to societal and governmental pressures, have opened wide their gates and are recruiting women with zeal. The major corporations, reacting to even more intense pressure, are offering attractive employment opportunities to practically all women engineering graduates.	Under great pressure, engineering schools are searching out women, and big companies are offering good jobs to practically all women who graduate with engineering degrees.

The writer appears to be generating his or her own ideas. In fact, they are Florman's ideas presented in the writer's words without acknowledgment. The writer could avoid plagiarism here by introducing the paraphrase with an attribution to Florman and following them with a parenthetical citation. Such an introduction is underlined here: _Samuel Florman points out that few people realize_…(page number).

Properly used, paraphrase is a valuable technique. You should use it to simplify or summarize so that the ideas or information, properly attributed in the introduction and documented in a parenthetical citation, may be woven into the pattern of your own ideas. You should not use paraphrase simply to avoid quotation; you should use it to express another's ideas in your own words when those ideas are not worth quoting verbatim.

Mosaic Plagiarism: With this more sophisticated kind of plagiarism, the writer lifts phrases and terms from the source and embeds them into his or her own prose. Words and phrases that the writer lifts verbatim or with slight changes are italicized:

- The pressure is on to get more women into engineering. *The engineering schools and major corporations have opened wide their gates and are recruiting women* zealously. *Practically all women engineering graduates* can find attractive jobs. Nevertheless, at the moment, *only 1 percent of the professional engineers in the* country *are female*.

Even though mosaic plagiarism may be caused by sloppy note taking, *it always looks thoroughly dishonest* and will be judged as such. In the example above, just adding an introduction and a parenthetical citation will not eliminate the plagiarism since quotation marks are not used where required. But adding them would raise the question of why the writer thinks those short phrases and basic statements of fact and opinion are worth quoting. The best solution, then, is to paraphrase everything: recast the plagiarized parts in your own words, introduce the passage properly, and add a parenthetical citation.

Summary
Using quotation marks around original wording avoids the charge of plagiarism, but when overdone, makes for a patchwork paper. When most of what you want to say comes from a source, either quote directly or paraphrase. In both cases, introduce your borrowed words or ideas by attributing them to the author and follow them with a parenthetical citation.

The secret to using sources productively is to make them work to support and amplify your ideas. If you find, as you work at paraphrasing, quoting, and citing, that you are only pasting sources together with a few of your own words and ideas—that too much of your paper comes from your sources and not enough from your own mind—then go back to the drawing board. Try redrafting the paper without looking at your sources, using your own ideas. Only after completing a draft should you add the specific words and ideas from your sources to support what you want to say. *If you have any doubts, talk with me asap.*

Course Requirements:

1. Oral Presentation: Keeping It Real (5% of final grade)
We cannot afford to allow literary history to be locked in the past, and it is important to think about how this literature can help us read and understand our world today–both how the world got this way (good and bad) and where we can go from here. Moreover, literature is a dynamic art, one that requires your active participation in mind, heart, and spirit. Through the dynamic activities of literary expression, artistic creation, and social observation—activities both private and social, both individual and communal—one learns how to envision and negotiate one's way through a complex world in which identity is always a work in progress, and in which hope for the future depends upon a liberating but difficult understanding of the past and present. Culture shapes our lives; art is an attempt to define and reconstitute the forces of culture so as to assert control over our lives.

Your assignment for the oral presentation is to bring your own perspective, your own voice, and perhaps even your own creative spirit to class. You can read a poem (your own or someone else's); you can testify to the truth as you see it; you can simply state your views on current events; you can even sing, act, or dance if you feel so moved. There are many ways to respond to and apply what you've learned to see and understand through literature, and all are welcome for this assignment. Regardless of what you do, though, **your presentation should deal with issues related to our readings and/or discussions, and you should be prepared to explain how your presentation deals with those issues, and what the issues are**.

Because your voice is important in this process, I do not want you to play recorded music or show films or videos for this presentation–that is, unless the recorded music or the film is your own creation.

Your presentation should last no more than 5-10 minutes. As with other things in life, timing is essential, and you should practice your presentation to be sure that you stay within the allotted time.

The grading for this assignment is simple. If you do it, you will receive an A. If you don't do it, you will receive an F.

2. A Teamwork Presentation on an Historical Event, Cultural Movement, or Activist Forum (15%)

We are looking at a body of writing that was part of a very complex, divisive, hopeful, and (in many ways) incoherent culture. Accordingly, we will want to know something about some of the newspapers and magazines published during this period, and we will want to know something as well about certain significant events, governmental policies, and people. Again, we will share the labor on this. These presentations will provide us with an opportunity to address not only events and community forums but also misrepresentations of American history.

I'm open to a wide range of topics for this. You might report on mainstream newspapers, or on the antislavery press; you might report on the developing women's movement or the antislavery movement; you might report on important organizations; you might report on important events or legal decisions; you might report on utopian communities; you might report on developing

religious groups; or you might report on a scholarly text on the period. These examples are only a few of the many I could offer, so let me know if you'd like some help coming up with a topic. The multivolume *Dictionary of Literary Biography* might be a useful source for some of the publishers and literary figures, and the reference section of the library is rich in other sources that can help you find a topic and help you get started on your research for the presentation. It can be useful, for example, to leaf through a time-line of American history.

You will work in two-person teams, and divide the labor. It might help to choose a topic, then, that invites a clean division of labor, or perhaps even different sides. For example, one person could summarize proslavery arguments, and one antislavery arguments, or you could present different views on the developing women's movement.

Each person will prepare a handout for the class, and each person should be solely responsible for her or his handout. Your grade for this presentation will be based in part on the quality of your individual handout, and also on the quality of the joint presentation (including how well you work as a team).

Again, you should prepare a one-page handout for the class with basic information–and, again, this report should last about 5-10 minutes–meaning no more than 5 minutes for each person, and no more than 10 minutes for the entire presentation.

3. Daily Responses . . .
OR, Literary Analysis on the Installment Plan: the Lay-Away "A"
OR, How to Dig Deeply into the Fields of Literature and Culture in the Comfort of Your Own Home (10% of final grade)

Before each class (or right after you read the assignment), jot down your observations and reflections about that day's readings. I will collect these observations **at the beginning of each class** and read them before the next class.

Your responses should be *at least* 1 page long, handwritten (assuming that your handwriting is not as large as the page or is not spaced too generously). This is only the minimum requirement, though; you are welcome to write very long responses if you like.

Place the due date (as listed on the syllabus) at the top of each response, and note the title of the text or texts to which you are responding. I need to keep an accurate record of the responses, and you can help me on this by being clear about the assignment date at the top of each response.

What if you get it wrong? That's the beauty of this assignment: *You can't get it wrong!* You do not have to worry about whether you are "right" or "wrong" in these observations. Just pay attention to detail and write down what you observe. In fact, you do not have to worry about grammar or style or argumentation or anything. Just jot things down in the grammar-free zone of your choice. Just notice things, notice more things, play with ideas, speculate, and respond. Don't spend too much time on this; just get it down. Intellectual, ethical, and cultural exploration is the point here.

I will read all the responses carefully. Unfortunately, I will not be able to comment on them, though I wish I could–and I would welcome the opportunity to talk with you about your responses. I will read all the responses and take general notes on what everyone in the class has to say, and I'll report on the responses at the beginning of each class. The responses can also provide the basis for your papers, for you will find yourself writing your way into ideas and insights that you will want to explore more fully in an essay.

This assignment is particularly important to me, as I hope will be clear throughout the semester. I recommend that you come to talk with me about your responses every now and again (perhaps at least once each month?). If this is inconvenient for you, you can also check in with me on e-mail or on the phone (at my office or at home–I'd love to hear from you, and I'd welcome the opportunity to talk with you).

Evaluation of Daily Responses
If you turn in all of the responses, you will receive an "A" for this portion of the course (10% of the final grade).

Responses are not due when your essays are due.

If you enter the course late, you must make up the responses you'**ve missed. You are allowed to miss only 3 responses over the course of the semester. For each missing response beyond those three, your grade for the responses will be lowered slightly, from an "A" to an "A-" to a "B+," etc. (depending on the quality of the responses), up to 6 responses; beyond that (if you miss 7 or more responses), you will receive an "F" for this assignment.**

4. One 5-Page Meditative Essay (20%). Due Tuesday, October 2

I am asking you to enter into a complex field of study, and one with which you might not be familiar. Accordingly, I want to use this assignment to facilitate your development as scholars in this field. This means that instead placing a great deal of weight on a formal essay early in the semester, we need to attend to the process of scholarship by way of a writing assignment that gives us the opportunity to talk about the process, and to consider together what we find along the way. I want you to use the meditative essay to think about the material we have discussed, our approach to that material, and what this means in terms of your own literary scholarship. I want you to bring things together, identify patterns and concerns, or take things apart, looking for the underlying questions that we need to ask. Look for recurring concerns, for persistent questions, and then use the essay to try to put together a basic framework for addressing those questions. What should we think about? What information do we need? What methods should we use? Are there, say, conventions or assumptions in literary scholarship (or in our conceptions of literary history, and our approach to determining the significance of individual texts) that keep us from addressing our course texts adequately or responsibly? How do the various writers we are studying help us to adopt a different cultural perspective on the issues we face? Why does any of this matter?

The voice of the essay can be informal, even autobiographical, for you should think of this as

part of a series of scholarly reflections–the stage of research in which the scholar steps back, examines and integrates the material, and plans for the next step . . . often in search of a thesis that, to this point, resists expression and defies one's attempts to achieve clarity and coherence. This is not to say, however, that you should not present an argument of some sort in these essays, or that your essay shouldn't have a thesis. But your argument needn't be conclusive. Instead of a conclusive thesis, think in terms of a working hypothesis--and you can present it and discuss it in this way in your essay. Please consult the Guide for Papers for guidance.

You might devote your essay to a single text. What is the author trying to achieve, and how does she or he craft the text so as to work towards those goals? Are there significant contradictions or other tensions in the text that undermine the coherence of the author's argument? What is the author's central point, and how is the text designed to get readers to understand that point?

You might devote your essay to a larger cultural concern. What is race, for example, and why do our definitions of this concept matter? How does a careful study of American literary history change our understanding of U.S. history? How does literature guide us (or misguide us) as citizens in a republic? What is American about American literature, history, or culture, and what are the problems and possibilities of thinking in these terms?

As you explore literary and cultural history, it is good to remember that what *and how* you see can depend significantly on what you know. You will need some historical and cultural background. I expect you to support any assertion you make about the past.

This assignment will provide me with an opportunity to help you prepare for the major course essay. Please keep that in mind as you write this essay, and let me know if there is anything in particular you would like me to attend to in my response to your essay.

Each essay must be at least 5 full pages long, not counting the title or the Works Cited pages. **Shorter papers will receive lower grades**, since those papers will either lack a sufficiently ambitious thesis or will lack the support and explanation required for a persuasive argument. For specific requirements concerning your presentation of this essay, see the Guide for Papers included in this syllabus.

5. One 5-page Essay on Scholarship (20%). Due Tuesday, October 30

When you read a text critically and then publish your views (by way of a course assignment, for example), you also enter into a community of readers. Accordingly, you should know something about what other scholars have said about the text you are reading. For this assignment, I want you to examine the critical essays included in our editions of *The Confidence-Man* or *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Choose only one of these texts, and only about three critical essays. Be sure that you are looking at a relatively recent work of literary scholarship. In our edition of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, these essays are gathered under the heading of "Modern Critical Views," but in *The Confidence-Man* they are mixed together with other essays. **Let me know what essays you will discuss before you write your paper, so that I can be sure that you have avoided looking at older essays or historical background material.** Summarize the main argument of each of the essays you choose, and then comment on the ways in which the different arguments raise

questions about how to approach the novel, the extent to which the essays together offer possible answers to those questions (answers that they fail to offer individually), and then your own sense of how these interpretive issues can be resolved.

If you would prefer, you could write an essay instead examining the historical debates presented in the "Cultural Contexts" section of *The Blithedale Romance*. These essays are usefully divided into different concerns: "Prospects for Change," "The Idea of Community," "Life at Brook Farm," and "Women's Roles and Rights." Choose one of these topics, and summarize the different views, explaining the challenges faced at the time and the different perspectives brought to these challenges.

Like the Meditative Essay, this assignment will provide me with an opportunity to help you prepare for the major course essay (in which research, both critical and historical, is required). Please keep that in mind as you write this essay, and let me know if there is anything in particular you would like me to attend to in my response to your essay.

Each essay must be at least 5 full pages long, not counting the title or the Works Cited pages. **Shorter papers will receive lower grades**, since those papers will either lack a sufficiently ambitious thesis or will lack the support and explanation required for a satisfying treatment of the texts and a persuasive argument about them. For specific requirements concerning your presentation of this essay, see the Guide for Papers included in this syllabus.

6. One 10-page Research/Analytical Essay (30%). Due Tuesday, December 3

You must present a careful analysis (usually called close reading) of some aspect of a single course text (a poem, short story, etc.), and you must place this reading in its appropriate historical and cultural context. You must also account for some of the recent scholarship on the text you select for this essay.

Note: 10 pages (not counting the title page and the Works Cited page) is the *minimum* length. I will lower your grade if your paper does not meet the minimum length requirement. The purpose is not to encourage fluff (there are other names for it, of course), but rather to emphasize that I want you to devote yourself to a topic, thesis, and analytical task that requires a 10-page analysis. See the Guide for Papers on how to approach this kind of assignment.

Reading Assignments

Some Historical Background

By the 1850s, both ethical and political tensions brought the issue to the forefront of national life, as proslavery and antislavery tensions became increasingly heated, and as regional tensions between the northern and southern states made civil war seem increasingly inevitable. The decade began with the Compromise of 1850, an attempt to resolve sectional conflicts that served largely to heighten them. The Compromise included an updated and strengthened Fugitive Slave Act–an act which, many northerners argued, required all American citizens to become slave

catchers. The law placed the issue of runaway slaves under federal jurisdiction, allowing federal commissioners to force citizens to aid in the recapture of those slaves who reached the north while also denying fugitive slaves trial by jury or the right to testify on their own behalf. A revealing detail of this law is that the federal commissioners who oversaw this process were paid five dollars if they decided in favor of the black person in question, but they were paid ten dollars if they were to "return" the alleged fugitive to a slaveholder. Many fugitive slaves left for Canada or England following the passage of this law, as did many African Americans in the North who either wanted to join their fugitive relatives or who feared for their own security in a nation which didn't recognize or protect their rights.

To be sure, both white and black northerners resisted this law. Large mobs formed in Boston to protest the re-enslavement of Thomas Sims in 1851 and Anthony Burns in 1854, to mention two of the most famous and, for the federal government, expensive of these cases. In 1851, a determined gathering met a band of slave catchers in Christiana, Pennsylvania, and forced them to retreat; and in that same year a large number of black and white protesters (some estimate the number to be as high as ten thousand) stormed a courtroom in Syracuse, New York and rescued a fugitive slave, William "Jerry" Henry. 1858 was the year of the famous Oberlin-Wellington rescue, in which Professor Simon M. Bushnell and a group of students (black and white) from Oberlin College, Ohio, came to the aid of a fugitive named John Price. Many of those involved in these efforts suffered for their actions, but the fame of these episodes was preserved carefully in the pages of the antislavery press.

The national determination to preserve and protect the system of slavery, however, was great, making these local confrontations seem like a prelude to a larger battle for political and ideological control over the nation's future. The Compromise of 1850 was followed by other measures that added to the violations of African American rights and civil security. In 1854, Congress approved the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which allowed voting citizens of those regions (and the vote was, of course, restricted) to determine themselves whether their territory would enter the Union as a slave or a free state. This act led to increased violence in the territories, and contributed to the formation of the Republican Party as an antislavery political force. In 1857, the Supreme Court announced its decision in the case of *Dred Scott v. Sanford,* in which Chief Justice Roger B. Taney declared that African Americans had no rights which white Americans were obligated to respect. The political and ideological debates that followed this decision helped to further define the already sharp divisions that were leading the nation towards open conflict. When John Brown led his group of black and white soldiers in the raid at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, in 1859, what had long been an open if localized war became sharply focused. John Brown became a white martyr to a cause that had, by this time, a long history of soldiers and martyrs. In that year, the *Anglo-African Magazine,* an African American publication in New York, published the public reports of an early revolutionary with those of a later one, placing Nat Turner next to John Brown, black militancy next to white, and called for Americans to recognize the inevitable struggle ahead and to decide what role they would play in that struggle. The time had come, argued many, to complete the still-unfinished work of the American Revolution.

Note: You are expected to read all of the introductions to the texts, and all of the biographical headnotes in the anthology.

Tu, 8/21: Introductions

Th, 8/23: "A House Divided": Opening Lecture
1. skim-read Lincoln's "A House Divided" and "First Joint Debate" (anthology, pp. 1-44)
2. skim-read William Wells Brown, "A Lecture Delivered Before the Female Anti-Slavery Society" (anthology, pp. 45-66)
3. skim-read Frederick Douglass, "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" (anthology, pp. 67-73 & 150-173)

Tu, 8/28: William Wells Brown, *Clotel; Or, The President's Daughter* (1853), Fabi's introduction, and Brown's Preface and "Narrative of the Life and Escape of William Wells Brown," and chapters 1-3 (pp. vii-63)

Some Historical Background

1853: Congress authorizes survey for a transcontinental railroad route to the Pacific.

Uncle Tom's Cabin has now sold 1,200,000 copies. She writes the *Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* to verify her sources of factual evidence in writing the original novel.

Yellow fever epidemic hits New Orleans, La. During the next two years more than 5000 people are killed by the disease.

Th, 8/30: Brown, *Clotel*, chapters 4-18 (pp. 64-138)

Tu, 9/4: Brown, *Clotel*, chapter 19-29 (pp. 139-235)

Th, 9/6: Herman Melville, *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade* (1857), Parker's Preface, and chapters 1-15 (pp. ix-82)

Some Historical Background

1857: Dred Scott decision by the U.S. Supreme Court holds that a Negro slave's residence in free territory does not make him free. It declares the Missouri Compromise unconstitutional and says that Congress has no right to prohibit slavery in the territories.
(In 1820, Congress passed the Missouri Compromise, whereby slavery was prohibited in the Louisiana Territory north of latitude 36°30'. Maine was admitted to the Union as free state; Missouri as slave state in 1821)

Indians and whites under John D. Lee, Mormon fanatic, massacre about 140 non-Mormon emigrants at Mountain Meadows, Utah.
Kansas elects Free State legislature. Pro-slavery delegates meet at Lecompton, Kansas, and draw up constitution rigged so that slavery could not be eliminated from the territory.

Pres. Buchanan consents to Lecompton Constitution in Kansas, thus splitting the Democratic Party.

Abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison is one of the main speakers at a Massachusetts Disunion Convention held in Worcester. Their slogan becomes "No union with slaveholders."

Tu, 9/11: Melville, *The Confidence-Man*, chapters 16-29 (pp. 82-172)

Th, 9/13: Melville, *The Confidence-Man*, chapters 30-45 (pp. 172-251)

Tu, 9/18: 1. James Monroe Whitfield, “America,” “Self-Reliance,” “Yes! Strike Again That Sounding String,” “How Long,” and “The Misanthropist” (pp. 362-386)
2. Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, “The Slave Mother,” “An Appeal to the American People,” “Free Labor,” and “The Tennessee Hero” (pp. 290-294 & 309-316)
3. “The Fluid Text: Stephen Foster’s & Henry ‘Box’ Brown’s ‘Old Uncle Ned’” (pp. 317-320)

Some Historical Background

1850: Pres. Taylor dies and Fillmore becomes President.

Congress bitterly debates the right of states and territories to permit or prohibit slavery. Compromise of 1850 passes: California is admitted as a free state; New Mexico and Utah territories are formed and allowed to make their own decision about slavery; more effective Fugitive Slave Act is set up; and slave trade is abolished in the District of Columbia.

Clayton-Bulwer Treaty is signed. U.S. and Britain agree to neutrality of canal project across the Isthmus of Panama; neither country is to occupy any part of Central America.

U.S. population is 23.1 million, including about 3.2 million slaves and about 1.7 million immigrants.

First national convention of women advocating woman suffrage is held in Worcester, Mass.

Th, 9/20: Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly* (1852), Ammons's Preface, Stowe's Preface, and chapters 1-10 (pp. vii-89)

Some Historical Background

1852: Democrats and Whigs adopt party platforms accepting Compromise of 1850. Democrats also endorse Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions of 1798. Free Soil Party opposes the Compromise and slavery itself.

Franklin Pierce and William R. King are elected President and Vice President, respectively, on the Democratic ticket.

Pres. Louis Napoleon (France) proclaims himself Emperor Napoleon III.

Hawthorne writes Life of Benjamin Pierce, a campaign biography for the future president.

A rather amorphous group called "Young America," which evolved from the Democratic party in the 1840s, is highlighted in the first of a series of articles by George N. Sanders. These appear in the movement's organ, Democratic Review. Younger men such as Stephen A. Douglas are leaders of the group which espouses a philosophy of a romantic yet aggressive nationalism, manifest destiny and strong support for European revolutions.

A popular stage play is made from Stowe's novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

Tu, 9/25: Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, chapters 11-19 (pp. 89-206)

Th, 9/27: Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, chapters 20-30 (pp. 206-291)

Tu, 10/2: **Meditative Essay Due**
Stowe, Uncle Tom's Cabin, chapters 31-Concluding Remarks (pp. 291-388)

Th, 10/4: 1. Fanny Fern, "Other Writings: Newspaper Articles," Warren's Introduction and the following newspaper articles: "The Model Husband," "Thoughts on Dress," "Deacon's Daughters and Ministers' Sons," and "Aunt Hetty on Matrimony" (pp. 215-221); "Hints to Young Wives," "Insignificant Love," "Mistaken Philanthropy," "Woman's Wickedness," and "A Whisper to Romantic Young Ladies" (pp. 224-230); "When Men Are Sick" and "All About Satan" (pp. 239-240); "Mrs. Stowe's Uncle Tom," "Leaves of Grass," and "Male Criticism on Ladies' Books" (pp. 255-257, 274-277, & 285-286; and "A Law More Nice Than Just," both articles (pp. 299-304). All articles are included in Ruth Hall and Other Writings. 2. Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, "The Two Offers" (anthology, pp. 300-308)

Tu, 10/9: William Wells Brown, *The Escape; or, A Leap for Freedom* (1858), (my introduction

and the complete play)

Some Historical Background

1858: Minnesota becomes 32nd state.

Abraham Lincoln debates Sen. Douglas on the slavery issue during senatorial contest in Illinois. Douglas wins reelection, but Lincoln gains national reputation.

People of Kansas reject the Lecompton Constitution, and the territory becomes non-slaveholding.

Religious revival, starting in New York and Pennsylvania, sweeps across the country. It is accompanied by daily prayer meetings in every major city, and conversions to the various churches reach great numbers.

U.S. troops suppress the Mormon militia and restore order in the Utah Territory. Opposed to non-Mormon settlers, the Mormons had rebelled in 1857 against the appointed non-Mormon territorial governor.

Th, 10/11: Guest Teacher
1. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, all poems (anthology, pp. 321-332)
2. John Greenleaf Whittier, all poems (anthology, pp. 346-361)

Tu, 10/16: Fanny Fern, *Ruth Hall, A Domestic Tale of the Present Time* (1855), Fern's Preface-chapter 53 (pp. 3-109)

Th, 10/18: Fanny Fern, *Ruth Hall*, chapters 54-90 (pp. 109-211)

Some Historical Background

1855: Settlement of Kansas under Douglas doctrine of "popular sovereignty" leads to bloody war between pro- and anti-slavery factions for control of the territorial government ("Bleeding Kansas")

William Walker, who previously tried to set up his own state in Mexico in 1853, lands with a small force in Nicaragua, overthrows the government, and makes himself president in 1856. He is forced out of power by a coalition of Central American states in 1857. Some Northerners believe that Walker is supported by a slaveholding plot to extend slavery, but he is actually backed by the Accessory Transit Company which is interested in travel routes across the Central American isthmus.

First oil business in the U.S., the Pennsylvania Rock Oil Co., is formed by George H. Bissell and Johnathan J. Eveleth.
Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper (later *Leslie's Weekly*), the most successful of the early illustrated papers, begins publication in New York City.

Approximately 400,000 immigrants arrive in New York City.

Tu, 10/23: Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Blithedale Romance* (1852), Cain's "Introduction: Cultural and Historical Background," Hawthorne's Preface, and chapters 1-6 (pp. 3-72)

Th, 10/25: Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Blithedale Romance*, chapters 7- 16 (pp. 72-144)

Tu, 10/30: **Essay on Scholarship Due** Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Blithedale Romance*, chapters 17-29 (pp. 144-218)

Some Historical Background

1856: Pres. Pierce recognizes pro-slavery legislature in Kansas Territory.

Border Ruffians (pro-slavery) sack Lawrence, Kansas. In return, abolitionist John Brown, with four of his sons and three other men, murders five pro-slavery colonists at Pottawatomie Creek. Civil war continues between Free State and pro-slavery factions until federal troops restore peace.

Sen. Sumner makes anti-slavery speech bitterly criticizing Sen. Andrew P. Butler and Stephen A. Douglas. Rep. Preston S. Brooks, Butler's nephew, severely beats Sumner with a cane in the Senate chamber. It will be three years before Sumner fully recovers. Sumner's slander and Brooks's brutality show the deep rift between North and South.

James Buchanan and John C. Breckinridge are elected President and Vice President, respectively, on the Democratic ticket.

Stowe publishes *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp*, in which she suggests that slavery is causing the deterioration of society.

Th, 11/1: 1. Henry David Thoreau, "Slavery in Massachusetts" (anthology, pp. 206-210 & 278-289) 2. Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, "The Colored People in America" and "Speech: On the Twenty-Fourth Anniversary of the American Anti-Slavery Society" (anthology, pp. 295-299)

Tu, 11/6: Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (1854), “Economy,” and “Where I Lived, and What I Lived for” (anthology, pp. 211-247)

Some Historical Background

1854: Kansas-Nebraska Act, introduced by Sen. Stephen A. Douglas, repeals the Missouri Compromise of 1820. Congress establishes the territories of Kansas and Nebraska. All territories can decide whether to permit or prohibit slavery. Act is condemned by abolitionists. Douglas, an Illinois senator, is motivated in part by his desire to have the transcontinental railroad route pass through the Great Plains region.

Republican Party is formed as a reaction against the Kansas-Nebraska Act. It calls for the abolition of slavery, high protective tariffs, and a transcontinental railroad.

Massachusetts Emigrant Aid Society is organized to encourage anti-slavery emigration to Kansas.

Arrival of 13,000 Chinese marks the beginning of large-scale immigration from China. The highest number in any previous year has been 42. Chinese workers are employed largely in building the transcontinental railroad.

U.S. ministers to Britain, France, and Spain draw up the Ostend Manifesto saying that the U.S. should seize Cuba by force if Spain refuses to sell it.

Native American, or Know-Nothing Party, wins many local offices in New York, Massachusetts, and Delaware. The party wants to exclude Catholics and foreigners from public office and wants a 21-year resident requirement for citizenship.

Th, 11/8: Thoreau, Walden, “Higher Laws,” “The Pond in Winter,” and “Spring” (anthology, pp. 247-277)

Tu, 11/13: Frederick Douglass, The Heroic Slave (anthology, pp. 173-205; and read or review the biographical headnote, pp. 67-73)

Th, 11/15: Walt Whitman, Preface and both poems, from *Leaves of Grass* (1855), (anthology, pp. 387-475)

Tu, 11/20 & Th, 11/22: **Thanksgiving Break**

Tu, 11/27: Harriet E. Wilson, *Our Nig; Or, Sketches from the Life of a Free Black* (1859), Foreman & Pitts’s Introduction, Wilson’s Preface, and chapters 1-3 (pp. xxiii-22)

Some Historical Background

1859: Kansas ratifies anti-slavery constitution at Wyandotte.

Edwin L. Drake, N.Y. industrialist, drills America's first successful oil well at Titusville, Pa.

Darwin publishes his famous Origin of Species, in which his theories of evolution and natural selection are presented.

Th, 11/29: Harriet E. Wilson, *Our Nig*, chapters 4-Appendix (pp. 23-80)

Tu, 12/3: **Research/Analytical Essay Due**
Emily Dickinson, all poems and related material (anthology, pp. 476-506)

Some Historical Background

1860: Abraham Lincoln (Republican) is elected President, defeating Stephen A. Douglas (Democrat), John C. Breckinridge (National Democrat), and John Bell (Constitutional Union). Hannibal Hamlin (Republican) is elected Vice President. Lincoln receives no support from slave states; vote is purely sectional.

John J. Crittenden proposes resolution for amending the Constitution in order to conciliate the North and South. The Crittenden Compromise, calling for 36°30' parallel as the boundary between free and slave states, is rejected by Lincoln and by Congress in 1861.

South Carolina secedes from the Union, affirming the doctrine of states' rights and condemning the North's and Lincoln's attack on slavery.

South Carolina troops capture the U.S. arsenal at Charleston.

Cotton production in the U.S. is more than 2 billion pounds per year.

U.S. Secret Service is established.

Th, 12/6: 1. Washington Allston, all poems (anthology, pp. 333-338); 2. Phoebe Cary, all poems (anthology, pp. 339-344)

Handy

GUIDE FOR PAPERS

Part 1: Evaluation

I will evaluate your performance in three basic categories of concern: structure, content, and presentation. Each category will count for approximately one third of your grade for the paper—though, of course, poor performance in one category inevitably will affect the success of the others. That is, don't assume that I can or will "just read for the ideas" in a poorly presented or illogically constructed essay. I am particularly dismayed when I see errors that are repeated from one draft to the next, so make a special effort to apply criticisms of earlier drafts to later writing assignments in the class. Please remember that I would love to talk with you about your paper at any and all stages of its development.

I've indicated throughout this Guide my standards for evaluation, but I will summarize a few points here, which I've adapted from similar summaries put together by friends and colleagues.

An "A" essay:
(1) has a clearly indicated thesis (or working hypothesis) to which all elements of the essay are relevant;
(2) has focused topic sentences that announce the central argument of each paragraph, connecting this new stage of the analysis to that of the previous paragraph;
(3) supports its argumentative claim with evidence from the text, and avoids being simply mechanical in citing evidence;
(4) attends to the implications of the central argument;
(5) is thoughtful and deliberate in its use of language, essay structure, and evidence;
(6) considers, if only implicitly, the evidence and arguments that might undermine or challenge the essay's argument, and doesn't ignore important evidence or complications;
(7) is free of recurring surface errors or errors of fact;
(8) is professional in its presentation—including the title of the essay, page numbers, works-cited format, and other issues of manuscript form;
(9) makes no unsupported claims about history, and demonstrates that the essay's author is aware of larger cultural and ideological concerns that might distort her or his judgment;
(10) is equally attentive to detail and to the big picture;
(11) is compelling in its intellectual and ethical commitment to the essay's subject.

Here is another way to think about these concerns–this time with greater emphasis on your responsibilities as a scholar:

1. Focus. You should narrow down your concerns to a reasonably focused set of questions and/or concerns, and then use the essay to explore those concerns.

2. Specificity. You should be as specific as you can about the questions you have. If you have questions about religion, for example, you should focus on specific historical periods, specific situations, and perhaps even specific denominations or manifestations of religion. If you have questions about the system of slavery, push yourself to look beyond the abstract level and at specific issues within the system.

3. Literary Skill. You should include in your paper a discussion of at least one (and, depending on the length and complexity of the work, perhaps more) work of literature. We are reading literature as part of our effort to "read" U.S. history and culture. Present examples of literature that pertain to questions you raise about history and culture, and think about how the author's handling of the work of literature provides insights into, for example, how to interpret the workings of culture.

4. Use of Information. The various texts we are reading provide a great deal of useful information. I expect you to make use of this information in your papers. Moreover, when you raise questions that can be answered by a quick look at an encyclopedia (especially specialized ones–for example, the *Encyclopedia of African American Culture and History*), I expect you to look at that encyclopedia. In other words, I expect you to do basic research on matters of simple information (people and events in history, for example).

5. Complexity. These papers should be challenging, for we are reading about and discussing challenging issues. I expect to encounter a certain intensity of thought in your essays, and I will be critical of any tendency to simplify the issues.

6. Grammar and Style. Your writing should be clear and correct, and I should be able to follow your line of thought without using a map.

7. Presentation. Remember to cite your sources, both in the body of the essay and in the bibliography or "works cited" page. For essays on literature, scholars generally use the Modern Language Association (MLA) or the Chicago format for citing sources.

Part 2: Manuscript Form and Presentation (and other important details)

Your paper must meet the grammatical and formal standards of academic prose. Leave yourself time to revise, and revise with a grammar handbook close by. Type carefully, and double-space the lines. For conventions concerning the proper handling of quotations, the presentation of titles of works, and the documentation of sources, see the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. A copy should be available in the library, or you could borrow mine. If you are an English major (or planning to be one) and do not yet own a copy of this book, buy one.

Remember also that academic conventions of clarity and formality are important. Avoid hazy generalizations and other forms of vagueness. A good way to check for this problem is to look at the main verbs and nouns in your sentences: do they tend to be abstract and general, or specific? If the former, change the noun or verb to something more specific rather than adding adjectives or adverbs. One source of ambiguity can be pronouns: make sure that your reader clearly knows what "this" and "that" refer to or, better yet, include clarifying nouns along with the pronouns

("this idea," "that action"). "This" or "that" should not be the subject of any sentence in your essay.

Avoid also cliches, jargon, reductive expressions, and hollow modifiers like "interesting," "positive," "negative," or "successful." Please use gender-neutral language: he or she, hers or his, etc. Remember that there is nothing that warms a professor's heart so much as the carefully, memorably turned phrase or well-written passage. Good writing simply gives your argument more authority and weight and demonstrates your care as an scholar (as well as stylist). All the elements that make for good creative writing also make for good academic writing, so show some creativity and care in your prose. Working within the formal conventions of academic writing does not need to be restrictive; working with and against those conventions—fulfilling them, following the rules (and knowing when, how, and why to break the rules at times), while also speaking with an individual voice—can be a very creative process.

You are required to follow MLA format for citing your sources. I have used this format in this guide so that you will have a model to follow. At the end of this guide is a sample "Works Cited" page.

The following are special instructions or reminders—which means that ignoring them might have a special effect on your grade. **If you do not follow these guidelines concerning spacing, citation, and/or page numbering, then the best grade you can get on your paper is an** "**A-**".

1. Your essay must be typed, and double-spaced. You should have standard 1-inch margins on the top, bottom, and sides.
2. Note the proper form of parenthetical citation demonstrated in this guide. Remember to indent long quotations. Remember also to provide page numbers for all quotations.
3. Your essay should have a title. An intriguing title can actually add to the power of an argument.
4. Number the pages of your paper (upper right-hand corner; include your last name).
5. Please do not present your paper in a plastic cover. Simply staple the pages once, on the upper left-hand corner.
6. Keep a copy of your paper. I've never lost a paper, but you are required keep a copy just in case. Even if I lose your paper, you are still responsible for it.
7. **Proofread your paper before you submit it.** Correct errors before you hand in the paper. If you spot some at the last minute, when it is too late to print a new copy of the paper, please correct the errors neatly with a pen. Spelling and grammar count.
8. Use brackets when you insert something into or change something in a quotation.

- **example:** At first, Douglass seems optimistic, for his "new mistress [proves] to be all she appeared when [he] first met her at the door . . ." (77). In this case, I use brackets to indicate changes I have made to fit the quotation to the grammatical structure of my sentence.

Part 3: Assignment

You are required to write an analytical essay, not an informal discussion of or response to literature. An analytical essay presents an argument about how and why an author does certain things in his or her work; it examines the work's thematic, conceptual, or rhetorical infrastructure (infrastructure means "the basic, underlying framework or features of a system"). Textual analysis is not limited to discovering "what the author intended"; often, the purpose of textual analysis is to explore the cultural, historical, and/or philosophical implications of the text's apparent or implicit design–the patterns of ideas, images, language, and/or themes in the text, and the gaps or breaks in those patterns. In this way, reading a text is a way to learn how to be a better reader of one's world, of the cultural forces that shape one's thinking, one's personality, even one's adopted role in life. Textual analysis can make one conscious of all those things that one sees and does unconsciously on a daily basis; it can help us defamiliarize and thereby see and think about our familiar customs and surroundings.

I expect you to write a formal analytical essay even if you have not done so before. If you have never written this kind of paper, and if you have no experience reading texts analytically, I recommend that you look at Mortimer J. Adler's and Charles Van Doren's *How to Read a Book*, an excellent book (and not as simplistic as its title suggests). If you are an experienced analytical reader, and if you would like to develop your skills by thinking about theoretical approaches to literary criticism, I recommend that you look at Critical Terms for Literary Study. Finally, if you would like to increase your critical vocabulary, develop your understanding of terms that I mention in class, familiarize yourself with literary genres and periods, and read introductions to various critical theories, look through M. H. Abrams's *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (especially the sixth edition). All of these books are listed in the Works Cited at the end of this guide, and all should be available at our library, or you could order your own copies.

Remember that textual analysis is a formal academic discipline and that every paper you write will test your mastery of its principles. Let me stress that point: the papers are tests. When you write, then, your task is to demonstrate your ability to present a persuasive analysis, as well as to present your analysis in a coherent and grammatically correct format.

If you are not sure that you know how to write the kind of paper I am requiring, please don't hesitate to ask for advice or help. I will be happy to help you with each stage of the writing process.

Part 4: The Introduction

Your introductory paragraph should have three stages (three stages but only one paragraph). In a longer essay (20 pages or more), you would cover these same stages but in three or more paragraphs. The three stages are as follows:

1) Subject. In the first stage, you introduce your subject—the text itself. In a few (2-4) sentences, you should present the author and title of the work, along with a general overview of the work's plot, outstanding themes, or general achievement. The shorter the paper, the shorter this introductory passage should be; and in a very long essay (25-30 pages), the first few pages might well be devoted to this introductory passage.

2) Topic. In the next stage, you present your topic—the interpretive issue to which your paper is devoted. In a sense, you need to show that there is cause for confusion and misunderstanding, or that there is a dimension of the work that is not clear unless one looks at it a certain way (for example, by viewing it within its historical context). You might establish the interpretive problem or issue in a number of ways:
* explain the problem or issue for the reader.
* open with a question which you develop in the opening paragraph.
* use a passage from the work to illustrate the problem or issue.

3) In the third stage, you present your thesis—your answer to the questions or issues you raise in stage 2. Your thesis should be explicit and specific. Consider carefully the following discussion of the thesis.

Do not begin your essay from the beginning of time. Postpone your comments about your personal feelings or response to the work, and postpone also your comments on the twentieth century when writing on literature from previous centuries. Usually, you can present material like this in your concluding paragraph, as you indicate the implications of the argument you have just presented. Get to the point elegantly, gracefully, directly, and quickly.

Part 5: The Thesis
An argument demonstrates the justice, value, and logical coherence of a thesis. Remember that a thesis is different from a subject or topic. The subject is the text you are analyzing. The topic is the interpretive issue you are trying to address. The thesis is the stand you take on that issue. A subject is what you are talking about; a topic is why you are talking about it; a thesis is what you are trying to say about that topic. A thesis is debatable; a topic is not, for a topic simply identifies—notes the existence of—grounds for debate or cause for confusion. A topic is something you can mention to a professor without feeling nervous; a thesis keeps you up at night.

This is not a thesis: "Melville uses symbolism in *Moby-Dick*." What kind of symbolism? How does he use it? To what purpose? Will you examine all examples of symbolism in the novel? Again, this is not a thesis: "Hawthorne examines history in *The Marble Faun*." You might develop this observation into a thesis by establishing the specific issue and taking a clear stand. Consider, for example, this statement from a published essay:

> When Hawthorne says that those who object to the unresolved mysteries of *The Marble Faun*'s ending do "not know how to read a Romance," he means, as his work itself shows, that insofar as they expect definite answers to their questions or an unambiguous moral to the story, they do not know how to read history either. (Michael 150)

True, this is a long thesis; and, true, it makes the idea behind it sound more complicated than it actually is. Still, this scholar's purpose is clear, and one can anticipate what he will argue in the rest of the essay, and why.

--If you present your topic in the form of a question, your topic and thesis might look like this: What are we to make of Melville's emphasis on "The Whiteness of the Whale" in *Moby-Dick*; *or, The Whale*? Although it is tempting to assert that this "whiteness" has nothing to do the

complex and contested racial landscape of the nineteenth-century United States, the novel offers significant evidence that race is indeed the issue to which all other concerns in this novel must be related.

--If you present your topic by quoting a sentence from the text, your topic and thesis might look like this: In his appendix to *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*, Douglass seems to worry about the implications of his comments on religion throughout the body of this text. “I have,” he notes, “in several instances, spoken in such a tone and manner, respecting religion, as may possibly lead those unacquainted with my religious views to suppose me an opponent of all religion.” But as he explains his distinction between “the Christianity of this land” and “the Christianity of Christ,” Douglass reapplies his concerns and suggests that the white Christian reader is actually the one who should worry about being considered an opponent of all religion.

Part 6: Structure

Academic writing is very basic and straightforward. It is designed to allow one to read subtle arguments quickly. Accordingly, the structure of your argument is very important. Each paragraph should present a unified block of thought, a clear and significant stage of your argument. You should therefore avoid paragraphs that are too long (in a short essay, page-long paragraphs are too long, often a sign of unfocused thinking) or too short. As a general rule, each paragraph should have at least five sentences. Paragraphs with fewer sentences often indicate undeveloped or unsubstantiated thought. Each paragraph should build on what you have done in the previous paragraph, and should prepare your reader for what you will argue in the next paragraph. If you can move your paragraphs around without disturbing the nature of your argument, then you have not paid sufficient attention to the structure of your argument or have simply repeated yourself in the course of your paper.

My term for the structure of an academic essay is the “intellectual matrix” of the essay. The “intellectual matrix” is what you get when you read only the thesis statement and the topic sentence of each of your paragraphs (normally the first sentence of the paragraph). Just as your thesis indicates clearly the argumentative purpose of your paper, so should the first sentence of each paragraph, the topic sentence, indicate the argumentative purpose of that paragraph. I should be able to read only these sentences to determine the logical design of your argument. In other words, I should be able to summarize your argument from those sentences alone. Roughly one third of your grade will be based on the extent to which the “intellectual matrix” of your paper provides me with an accurate overview of your argument, and also on your ability to construct a systematic, unified argument that builds from one stage (one paragraph) to the next.

Part 7: Content

Remember that your assignment is textual, historical, and/or cultural analysis, not plot summary, and not simply general or subjective historical commentary. In textual analysis, your task is to show the connections between *what* the author says and *how* she or he says it—in other words, to identify and examine the implications of the author’s strategies (style, themes, images, patterns of thought and of argument, etc.).

Remember that your reader has read and thought about the text to which your paper is devoted,

and therefore does not need to be reminded of the plot. **Do not simply summarize the plot**.

Historical commentary is useful, usually even necessary (in small doses), but use it wisely, make sure you know what you are talking about, and do not allow it to distract you from your main task: informed analysis. Typically, the more general and abstract the historical context, the less useful it will be. Keep in mind that all people in a given time period did not think the same way, even if there are issues and ideas that did preoccupy many. Be attentive, in other words, to conflicts, differences, and changes among groups within a period, and never claim that "nineteenth-century Americans believed that . . .". Even more important, if you introduce historical commentary, you must take care that you provide some evidence for your historical claims and that you establish your historical context efficiently and succinctly. If you are using elements from an author's biography, for example, choose those elements that are relevant to your thesis and make sure that you establish why those elements are important for understanding the work.

Grades for papers based primarily on plot summary or on general historical commentary will begin somewhere in the area of a "C"—and they will go down from there.

You must present your argument carefully, methodically. In the early part of your paper, explain carefully the interpretive problem you intend to solve, and then proceed to solve it in stages. At each point of your paper, think about what your reader needs to know if he or she is to understand what is coming up in the next stage of your paper. At each stage, quote from your sources or from your primary text to show the basis for your interpretation. Show your reader that you are analyzing your topic or text and not just talking about it.

Focus is the key to success. You cannot hope to analyze an entire book, an entire century, or an entire social movement in a short paper. Therefore, you must isolate a representative portion of your topic. If you are writing about a literary text, for example, you might focus on a character, a scene, a rhetorical or ideological pattern, a pattern of allusions, or some other aspect of the author's techniques and strategies. Find something you can examine in detail and explain your interpretation carefully. Justify your choice at the beginning of your essay; at the end of your essay, indicate how your conclusions can enable readers to understand other aspects of the work.

Part 8: Research and Support—A Reminder

It is important to remember that you must support your claims, and that you must not make any claims that you are unable or unwilling to support. When you present an interpretation of a sentence or passage or episode in a text, you must explain carefully how the text supports that interpretation. If you make a point about history, then you must do the necessary historical research, and you must refer to that research in your essay (see me on how to do this if you have not done this before). If you say something about an author, then you must support that point with biographical research. If you say something about how critics have viewed a certain text, then you must support that with research. Avoid making claims about how readers respond to a certain text, for you cannot support such claims.

Part 9: Using Quotations

To present a persuasive argument, you must quote from the text you are analyzing, and you must explain carefully how the evidence you present leads to and supports your interpretation of the work. This is not to say that you should be blatant about this. That is, you shouldn't lead into a quotation by saying, "This interpretation is supported by the following quotation." Consider the following guidelines:

1. I should be convinced of the significance of the textual evidence (quotations from and allusions to the works) you present. In other words, don't just quote. Prepare your reader for the textual evidence you will present; present that evidence briefly (avoid long quotations); and then explicate, analyze, or otherwise explain the significance of that evidence. Never assume that a passage is self-explanatory.

2. Don't just present a quotation without introduction. I shouldn't suddenly encounter a quotation at the beginning of a new sentence, and you should never present a free-standing quotation (that is, a sentence that contains nothing but a quotation); always lead into the quotation in your own words, and then follow it with commentary.

3. Never end a paragraph with a quotation. Always follow with commentary, so that you conclude each of *your* paragraphs with *your* own words.

4. Avoid long quotations. Whenever possible, integrate (with quotation marks) significant phrases from the text in your own sentences as you present and explain your interpretation.

5. Whenever you use a significant word or phrase from the text, use quotation marks to indicate that you are in fact using someone else's words.

The following is taken from one of my essays, "From Mysteries to Histories: Cultural Pedagogy in Frances E. W. Harper's *Iola Leroy*." I present this so that you can have a model for using quotations, but I do not expect you to simply imitate my style. Indeed, I wish you the good fortune of avoiding my overly complex style. Still, I hope you will find it useful to examine (and, perhaps, question) my use of textual evidence.

From the essay:

Harper establishes the terms of this argument, and begins the novel, by confronting her white readers with their inability to interpret culturally-familiar discourse. In the first pages of the first chapter, Harper draws readers into a "shadow" culture—that of the slaves—and introduces her readers to the discursive network of that culture, the "mystery of market speech." Her depiction of slaves talking enthusiastically about "splendid" fish, and about butter "just as fresh, as fresh can be" (7-8) invokes images of the stereotypical Black characters who inhabited the pages of white supremacist fiction gaining popularity at the time. On the novel's second page, though, the narrator wonders at this "unusual interest manifested by these men in the state of the produce market," and raises the question that many readers might well have forgotten to ask: "What did it mean?" (8). The answer is that, during the war, "when the bondman was turning his eyes to the American flag," "some of the shrewder slaves . . . invented a phraseology to convey in the most unsuspected manner news to each other from the battle-field" (8-9). The "mystery of market

speech" is thus solved by learning this phraseology, this cultural discourse that appropriates authorized, and in that sense, legal language for illegal but moral ends.

The primary point here is not that this particular mystery is now clear, nor is it merely that the slaves had to formulate their own language to circumvent the will of the dominant race; rather, the point lies in the discursive nature of the mystery itself, the extent to which one's ability to understand is controlled by one's cultural training. As one reads, one encounters other such mysteries, each of which reveals the cognitive and moral limitations inherent in and enforced by the dominant cultural system. Consider, for example, Dr. Gresham, whom the reader first meets in a field hospital, and who is clearly attracted to Iola Leroy, whom he believes to be a white lady generously lowering herself to serve the needs of the Northern soldiers. Initially, Dr. Gresham cannot understand how Iola can bring herself to kiss a black patient; and as he explains this to Col. Robinson, the reader discovers the terms of his confusion:

> I cannot understand how a Southern lady, whose education and manners stamp her as a woman of fine culture and good breeding, could consent to occupy the position she so faithfully holds. It is a mystery I cannot solve. (57)

This description is essentially a circular equation of cultural identity. If one is a Southern lady, then one must have the advantages of education and good breeding which provide the manners and fine culture that are, by definition, the qualities of a Southern lady. The perfect circle of definition represents the cognitive closure that is the *raison d'etre* of any culture system. When this closure leads to culturally exotic behavior, those within the cultural circle are faced with a mystery they cannot solve. When Col. Robinson provides the essential information, that "Miss Leroy was a slave," Dr. Gresham can relocate her in the cultural formula, and he says revealingly, "What you tell me changes the whole complexion of affairs" (58). Dr. Gresham, in other words, is able to relocate Iola according to existing cultural categories and stereotypes.

Note on using quotations: In the example from my own writing, note how the material from the work is integrated with my own words, and how I combine both block quotations and in-text quotations to incorporate the evidence into the prose. The idea is to make sure that yours is the dominant voice in your writing, that you prepare your reader for the quotations, and that your essay is as smooth as possible. Try these techniques in your own work.

Part 10: A Sample Works Cited Page (MLA format)
Note: Different academic disciplines (Literature, History, etc.) require different approaches to documentation; most do not use the MLA format. Always check your syllabus, or check with your professor, to determine what form you should use.

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