

ENGL 801 – Westman
Paper #2

Length: 10-12 pages

Due: Tuesday, November 28th by 5 p.m. to my mailbox in ECS 119

RATIONALE & OUTCOMES

Your second paper offers the opportunity to enter the current critical conversation about a particular text through a research-based, scholarly argument that intervenes in and advances that conversation. In this goal, the paper represents the kind of writing you will likely do for other graduate courses and possibly for your Writing Project or Thesis; it also represents the primary type of writing that professional academics do towards the study of English.

TOPIC & THESIS

The topic for your paper is your choice, as is the text: you may write about a text we have discussed or will discuss in class, or you may write about another text. (For this assignment, “text” = a literary or cultural text.) Your topic will need to be one that you can address successfully within the page length designated above.

The selection of your text and topic will begin to sketch the boundaries of the conversation you will be entering with your paper. This conversation will, in turn, shape your approach to your selected text and topic, since you will be intervening in and advancing the existing conversation. Your thesis claim will represent your intervention into the conversation.

PREPARATION

In addition to writing the paper itself, you will be completing several separate writing assignments towards the paper:

- A paragraph-length description of your topic (due October 18th)
- A list of five scholarly resources, print or online, formatted in M.L.A. style (due October 23rd)
- An abstract of and response to one scholarly article (due October 30th)
- A draft abstract of your paper and an annotated bibliography (due November 2nd)
- Two copies of your introduction with your thesis, your outline for the paper’s argument, and your “Works Cited” (due November 20th)
- Two copies of your full paper and your “Works Cited” (due November 27th)

Over the next weeks, and especially on those class days designated for “Entering the Conversation,” we will be discussing and practicing the skills and strategies necessary for completing this assignment. These skills include:

- Familiarity with the M.L.A. Bibliography and M.L.A. Style
- Finding the Critical Imperative of a Scholarly Article
- Writing an Abstract of a Scholarly Article
- Writing an Annotated Bibliography
- Familiarity with Print and Online Resources for Scholarly Research
- Refining Your Focus and Developing Your Thesis Claim
- Outlining and Drafting
- Revising

(Over)

FINAL PREPARATION & “SPEECH ACTS”

As indicated on the syllabus, when you turn in your final draft of this paper, you will also be turning in a “Works Cited” in M.L.A. form and an abstract of the paper. The abstract should be 350-500 words in length, single-spaced, and fit onto one page; your paper’s title (but not your name) should appear at the top of the document. Please paper-clip the abstract to the front of the paper, so it can be easily detached from the paper and the “Works Cited.” I need to be able to detach the abstract because....

As the finale to “Entering the Conversation,” six class members will present a short, ten-minute version of their final papers to the class: three on Monday, December 4th and three on Wednesday, December 6th. Three faculty members from the department will review all of the abstracts and determine which six papers should be presented. The selection will be made as it would for a standard academic conference: according to the focus and development of the paper’s ideas (its intervention in/original contribution to a current conversation), the fluency of the writing, and the paper’s fit with the other participants’ papers. Presenters will be announced in class on Friday, November 29th.

QUESTIONS? CONCERNS? NEED ASSISTANCE?

Please let me know in class or over email (westmank@ksu.edu) if you have questions or concerns, or if you would like assistance. I particularly encourage you to meet with me as you select and refine your topic, but I’ll be happy to talk with you about your paper at any stage in the writing process.