

English 67 — Literary Interpretation — Fall 2008
Paper #3 Assignment

The assignment for your final paper of the semester is the most open-ended, with the widest range of possible choices; as the syllabus says, this will be “a 9 to 11 page paper that will bring together a sustained engagement with one or more of the theoretical texts we’re reading this semester, one or more of the literary texts we’ll be reading, and your research into the critical responses to the literary or theoretical texts.” I’m actually going to open things up even a little further than that — rather than working with “one or more of the literary texts we’ll be reading,” you should feel free to select any literary text that you want to work with, a text that you feel will help you explore your argument.

That argument should arise from some issue in the theoretical reading we’ve done this semester, something you want to work with closely. It’s preferable that this be an issue that’s come up for you several times over the course of the semester, a point of contention or discussion that you’ve seen surface in multiple texts and across multiple authors. (I’ll note as well that you may want to read ahead in the syllabus, in the event that topics we’re going to discuss in the coming weeks intersect with your interests.) As with the second paper, the goal here is for you to identify a critical discussion in progress among literary scholars, and to enter into that conversation, staking out your own position on the issue based on the evidence you derive from your readings of those scholars’ writings, of a key literary text, and from your further research into the issue.

Because this is the largest and most complex paper you’ll have written this semester, I’ve built a couple of stages into it, so that you can get some feedback along the way, and so that you can refine and revise your idea as you move toward writing your first draft.

1. On **Wednesday, November 5**, you should bring to class with you a paragraph detailing the research question you are tentatively planning to focus on in this paper. So, as with the second paper, you need to select the issue you plan to work with and the texts that this issue arises from, and you need to begin to think about how you want to enter into that critical conversation in progress. Please really bring this paragraph, in hard copy; we’ll spend some time working with them in class.
2. On **Wednesday, November 12**, you’ll bring me a report on your research progress thus far. This should include a raw list of all of the results from your MLA bibliography and other database searches, as well as some notes about which texts you’ve selected to look further into, and what you hope to glean from them. Included with this report on your research progress should be a restatement or revision of your research question; how is this question beginning to develop into an argument?

Your essay, again, should be 9 to 11 pages long, double-spaced, and should use MLA-style in-text citations for any quotations, plus a list of works cited. You should turn your essay in to the Sakai drop box no later than **5 pm, Wednesday, November 19**. Note that the essay you turn in on the 19th will be a draft, but it must be a completed, polished draft, ready for a reader. In the week and a half that follows, each of you will meet with one of our Writing Fellows, Erin Reeves and Annie Allhoff, to discuss your essay, after which you’ll revise it. The final, revised version of your essay will be due by **5 pm, Wednesday, December 10**.