**Major Essays**

**Purpose:** To write a major argument, sustained with cogent examples and sharp insight, about the representation of religion in a particular text, in fulfillment of the English department’s requirement for E314J and all SWC courses.

**Length:** 5-7 pages, or 1500-2000 words

**Due Dates:** These two essays may be submitted in *any order*, but you should submit one by October 22 and the second by December 3 (preferably earlier if you plan to revise).

**Essay 1 Description:** Expand the analysis of one of your field reports into an extended, 5-7 page argument. **The field report you choose to expand must have already received feedback from the instructor**. There are several possible interpretations of the word “expand.” None of them means “pad your field report with useless, uninspired generalizations until it reaches the required length”:

* Broaden the scope of your thesis in a way that allows you to consider other examples. To take in, for example, an entire film instead of one scene, or a collection of poems or paintings rather than just one. Compare and contrast arguments are welcome here.
* Keep the same scope but perform a much closer, more intricate analysis.
* Include research that you did not have time to do or room to include for the shorter assignment. This would be a particularly effective strategy for an extended historical analysis.

Outside research is not strictly required but is more than welcome for this essay. All citations must be in MLA format, including parenthetical citations and a Works Cited page.

**Essay 2 Description:** Perform an extended, 5-7 page analysis of any of the works we have read in class. This includes shorter readings like “A Model of Christian Charity.” As with the field reports, you may wish to follow one of the Three Critical Approaches we discussed in class. This essay should contain a strong, original thesis and should build upon—not regurgitate—class discussion. Use class discussion as a starting place, but strive to say something unique.

Your thesis must be supported by evidence from the text and should include **a minimum of three scholarly sources.** Refer to the handouts on doing library research and using outside sources.

**The Nuclear Option (may be substituted for either Essay):** This option is for those who have had trouble finding inspiration for field reports, remain unmoved by class readings, or feel like they might have difficulty getting beyond class discussion in their argument. If you select this option, you may read another book that has been approved by the instructor. Some possibilities that are related to our major course topics are:

Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Former slave and abolition activist, uses evangelical tropes throughout her story)

Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (The famous abolition novel, a serious contender for our reading list)

Mark Twain, *Innocents Abroad* (Western tourists in the Holy Land. Hilarity ensues)

Zane Grey, *Riders of the Purple Sage* (A classic cowboy novel, but with Mormons)

Henry James, *The Bostonians* (New Thought, women as public figures)

Jack Kerouac, *Dharma Bums* (More explicit in its Buddhist and Hindu references than *On the Road*)

Sinclair Lewis, *Elmer Gantry* (Satire about a Southern Baptist preacher)

Salman Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children* (One of the definitive novels about post-colonial India)

Salman Rushdie, *Shalimar the Clown* (Terrorism, the Kashmir conflict, all from a post-9/11 viewpoint)

Toni Morrison, *Song of Soloman* (Morrison’s unique retelling of one of the ultimate love stories)

 **Any text that you have discussed with me**

If you are substituting this essay for Essay 2, you must still include outside sources in your analysis.