**Assignments for American Literary Realism**

**Close Reading Essay**

Length: 400-600 words (1-2 pages)

Due Date: May be turned in any time before March 8 at midnight

Select a brief passage (no more than a page) from one of the texts assigned on the syllabus and develop a brief, focused argument that explains how the author’s choices in that passage (use of diction, metaphor, imagery, etc.) effectively establishes a character, sets a scene, or encapsulates the ideas of the larger work. Your thesis should clearly indicate what authorial choices you are analyzing and why you think they are important. “This author uses metaphors” is not an effective thesis. “This author uses the metaphor of X to illustrate the relationship of Y to Z” is better. The best essays will have a high degree of specificity and use appropriate examples from the text. For the purposes of this essay, you should assume an informed reader who has read the book and does not require a plot summary.

**Analysis of a Scholarly Source**

Length: 400-600 words (1-2 pages)

Due Date: May be turned in any time before March 8 at midnight

Select an article from a peer-reviewed journal on one of the texts or authors assigned on the syllabus. You may choose from the sources provided by discussion leaders or find one on your own. The article can but does not have to be about the text(s) you plan to discuss in your final paper. In your essay, you should briefly summarize the author’s argument and explain why it is or is not an effective or compelling reading of the text. You may use examples from the primary text to refute or confirm the author’s argument if you choose.

**Discussion Leading**

Length: Bibliography of 5 scholarly sources + discussion questions

Due Date: On the day you signed up

On your designated day (we will determine these in the first week of class), you will be responsible for kick-starting discussion on that day’s reading by suggesting topics to the class and informing them about a range of scholarly approaches to the text in question or the author’s work more broadly. You must bring to class a 1-2 page handout that includes bibliographic information (in MLA format) for five peer-reviewed scholarly sources (articles, book chapters, etc.). You do not need to include a formal summary of each source, but you should be prepared to explain why they are interesting or helpful to the class. One the same handout, you should offer 4-5 discussion questions. These may be general questions about the work as a whole, questions that direct the class to a particular section or passage in the text, or questions that bring in the secondary sources you included in your bibliography (remember, however, that the class hasn’t read these articles yet). Prior to class, you should add your list of secondary works to the “Bibliography” page on the course wiki, providing links to databases or library resources where appropriate.

**Final Research Paper**

Length: 2500-3000 words (8-10 pages)

Due Date: Final draft due on May 3 at midnight

This is a fairly straightforward assignment. Write an 8-10 page paper (double spaced, standard fonts) that substantially develops an original argument about one or more of the texts we have read this semester. This argument should be informed by secondary sources, 3 of which must be cited directly the in the text of your paper (7 total on the Bibliography or Works Cited page).

**March 29—**Annotated bibliography of no less than seven scholarly sources due. These should be sources you are *considering* as you research your topic and think about your essay. This does not have to be a final list of sources that you will directly cite in your paper. (Remember that you only need to quote three directly). Your seven prospective sources should be from peer-reviewed books (monographs or collections of essays), dissertations, or journals. You should not include general reference sources or websites.

Each source must be cited in MLA format and be immediately followed by a brief paragraph that summarizes the source’s argument and explains its relevance to your project.

**April 12—**First drafts due. This is not a *rough* draft. Your paper should be complete, polished, and well-edited. The feedback you receive on this draft will help you revise for the final draft.

**April 19—**Peer reviews due. A peer review form will be made available on the website, and you will be assigned two classmates to assess. These reviews should be submitted by email to both the author and the instructor.

**May 3—**Final draft due. This draft will be graded more rigorously than the first draft, so simply resubmitting the same essay will yield a lower grade. You will be assessed in part based on how effectively you responded to the feedback of the instructors and peer reviewers.

**General Paper Guidelines**

**Headings:**

No specific heading format is required, but you should, at minimum, include your name, the name of the assignment, and the date. Pages should be numbered. Final papers should have an original title.

**Format:**

Your paper should be double spaced using standard font sizes (11 or 12 point) and margins.

**Citations/Works Cited:**

For this class, we will be using MLA format. All direct quotes should be cited using parenthetical citations, and all papers should include a Works Cited page, even if you are only using one primary source. Papers with an egregious number of missing parenthetical citations will receive a failing grade and, in many cases, be considered an Honor Code violation. Papers with parenthetical citations but no Works Cited page will be deducted one letter grade.