

LITT 4610, Section 001: Senior Seminar—American Postmodern Fiction Paper Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criterion

Step One: Select a Topic and Write a Short Topic Description

Due: October 4

Topic Description: At least a one-paragraph topic description of the final paper. This description should name the primary text or texts your final paper will analyze. It should also describe the focus of the analysis and how this topic relates to postmodernism.

When you select your topic, you might first frame it as a question. In other words, we love to read and write about literature not because we are primarily fascinated with theory. (Although, as you dig into theory, you may find it as fascinating as literature.) Theory is a tool that help us get at the issues that really matter—what are these works saying about humanity and how do these works contribute to literary or human history?

General Topic Ideas: This list aims to inspire, not limit your choices.

- Definitional Argument: Postmodernism's Definitions
- Literary Theory Analysis: Postmodernism and Feminism/Marxism/New Historicism/Queer Theory
- Specific Author/Text Study: analyze theme/form; discuss Literary, Cultural, Historical Significance
- Teaching Applications: Postmodern Pedagogy and the Language Arts Classroom; issues in teaching postmodern literature
- Genre Study: Postmodern Novel/Short Story
- Period Study: Postmodernism vs. Modernism/Realism
- New Media Genre Study: hypertext, podcasts, etc.
- Film/Television: Postmodern Movies/TV/Radio
- Creative Writing Connections: influence of postmodern theory in the construction of contemporary fiction; write a postmodern short story and analyze its content and form (Second Option available only to students in the CW Track.)
- Connection with Other Disciplines: Postmodern Literature and the Visual Arts, Dance, Psychology, Architecture, Geography, Biology, Physics, History, etc.
- Comparative Literature: American Postmodern Fiction vs. British/Irish/African/Spanish, etc.
- Some combination of these topics

Step Two: Begin Research and Write Research Paper Proposal

Due: October 25

The Research Paper Proposal should contain the following elements:

1. **Revised Overall Topic Description:** At least a one-paragraph topic description of the final paper. This description should name the primary text or texts your final paper will analyze. It should also describe the focus of the analysis and how this topic relates to postmodernism.
2. **Description of your Theoretical Lens:** How would you characterize your reading? Is it feminist, Marxist, postmodernist, new historicist, etc.? Not sure? See *Literary Theory: A*

Very Short Introduction by Jonathan Culler for an overview of the different lenses and why and how theory can assist your argument.

3. **Significance:** Why does this topic need to be written about? Who will be interested in this research? Why are you interested in this topic? Why do you think no one has written on this topic before?
4. **Research Description:** Describe what research you have already completed, its use, and what research you still need to complete. What questions are you currently thinking about? Do you have any questions for your instructor at this point?
5. **Short Theory Paper Topic Description:** At least a one-paragraph topic description of the smaller aspect of your research topic that this paper will address. Include a rough outline of this paper in your description.
6. **Rough Outline of Final Research Paper:** Fill out, as much as you can, what specific topics and subtopics will constitute the final paper's Introduction, Body, and Conclusion.
7. **Timeline:** A timeline that outlines when you will complete your research, plan, draft, revise, and polish your paper.
8. **Initial Bibliography:** A list of at least 10 secondary sources in perfect MLA format that you expect to be helpful for your research. (This bibliography does not need to be annotated.)

Step Three: Meet with your instructor during her office hours.

This element is not required, but it is strongly encouraged. You can do meet with Dr. J at any stage in the process of working on this project. If you haven't dropped by yet, however, you should after receiving feedback on your proposal and before passing in your Short Theory Paper. No appointment needed if you drop in during her scheduled office hours. Can't make her scheduled office hours due to a class conflict? E-mail Dr. J in WebCT to set up an appointment.

Step Four: Begin Writing and Draft Short Theory Paper (6-8 pages)

Writing Workshop of Rough Draft:

Final Draft Due: November 8

The purpose of the short paper is to compose a polished piece of writing that can be incorporated into the final research paper. You will probably not be able to simply "cut and paste" this stand-alone argument into the longer final paper; however, the short paper should provide a strong foundation for your expanded analysis in the final paper.

You have two options for the format and content of the short theory paper:

1. **Close reading of an assigned theoretical essay to explicate some issue central to the understanding of postmodernism**
2. **Bibliographic essay of an assigned author and/or his/her assigned work(s)**

Option One: Close Reading of an assigned theoretical essay

The purpose of this essay is to conduct a close reading of an argument from one of the assigned theoretical essays. The paper should clearly explain the argument and its implications for literary study. (If you wish to write about an essay not assigned in this course, you must seek approval from your instructor.)

For the short theory paper I suggest that you focus on one aspect of the argument. You may compare this aspect to other arguments within the essay, compare it to an argument written by

another author, or use a piece of fiction to discuss the argument, but your analysis should focus on the essay's argument and its implications.

You may wish to explain to your reader, for example, in what cases might this theory be helpful and in what cases might it not be as helpful to literary study. You may wish to expand the theory. You may wish to support the theory. You may wish to refute it. Keep in mind that no one theory or argument is either perfect or perfectly awful. Your analysis should avoid such hyperbole—or a simple “thumbs up or thumbs down” approach. Consider the kind of tool the argument represents and its potential uses.

This option will help you frame the theoretical question your final paper will explore; it should allow you to draft a smaller, more concise version of your larger argument and paper. The longer paper will likely expand the scope of the question you explore to make room for additional close reading examples and support as well as analysis from secondary sources.

For example, let's imagine you want to engage the debate about the definition of postmodernism in your research. You are also interested in multicultural literature. So, for your short paper you might examine hooks' “Postmodern Blackness.” Your short essay might outline and examine hooks' definition of postmodernism, drawing from some of the short fiction or another essay that we've read to illustrate your argument. Then, in your longer paper, you could broaden the scope of your analysis, which would allow you to add other theorists and/or fiction into the mix.

Option Two: Bibliographic essay of an assigned author and/or his/her assigned work(s)

The purpose of this essay is to familiarize your reader with the scholarship that has already been written about this author and/or text. This type of essay will help you enter the scholarly conversation already taking place when you write your longer final paper.

Select an author and text we are reading. Go to the MLA database and research what has been written about this author and/or the particular text. Depending on your author and text, you may need to narrow or broaden your search. For example, if you find 100 articles and books on your author, eliminate all essays not about your text. If you still have 50 articles, narrow and select by a particular topic that interests you—feminist readings, focus on a particular character, etc.—and/or by the date in which the essays were written. Please select the most recent articles, unless you have a clear rationale for working with the older ones. If you have trouble finding at least four articles on your author/text, you may need to search other databases. While you should be able to find at least 4 articles on any of the authors we are reading this semester, you may not want to write an essay based on these limited results. In this case, consider selecting option one or two for the short paper or changing your author and text.

You will want to select at least 4 and probably no more than 6 articles for the bibliographic essay. Read them. As you read, take notes on the arguments. Your argument will characterize this scholarship as a whole. The essay will connect (compare and contrast) the essays. You may also address their positive and negative features. Many journals include bibliographic essays; your instructor has included a couple of examples in WebCT.

Step Five: Annotated Bibliography (20 Sources)**Due: November 20**

The bibliography should be in perfect MLA format and include a brief paragraph with the following information: A brief description of the essay/chapter/book's argument (2 sentences) and how the source relates or does not relate to your chosen topic (1-2 sentences). You may or may not use any or all of these sources in your final draft. Be sure to summarize the argument in your own words.

Step Six: Research Presentation**Due: Sign Up for Slots will take place later in the term**

The last two weeks of the semester will be devoted to student presentations of their research. This presentation will overview your Final Research Paper for the class and instructor. It should outline what your paper aims to accomplish, how the paper will accomplish these goals, why this research is needed/important, and anything especially surprising or interesting you want to share with the class. Presentations that match substantive, informative content with creative, exciting presentations are appreciated by both the instructor and your fellow classmates.

Step Seven: Final Expanded Paper (20-25 pages)**Draft Workshop: December 4****Final Expanded Paper Due: December 11**

This paper should incorporate the following elements:

- *Attention to the scholarly conversation about this author/text/theory*: incorporate at least five peer-reviewed journal articles or books related to your topic (e.g. not web pages)
- *A clear theoretical lens*: incorporate at least one of the theoretical essays we read this semester
- *Close reading of the primary text or texts to support and flesh out your argument*: incorporate at least one of fictional texts we read this semester
- Expansion of the short paper's argument
- Perfect MLA citation

The paper's introduction (or perhaps its conclusion) should address the following questions:

- What is the scholarly conversation that has already taken place about this author and/or text?
- How does your paper contribute to this conversation? For instance, will you disagree with an accepted reading? Will you provide a different/new lens with which to read this text?

Format and Grading Criterion For Short and Long Papers

All papers should be double-spaced, 12 or 10 point font (Times or New Roman) with one-inch margins. Page numbers should appear in the upper right-hand corner. All papers should include a title. A title page, however, is not necessary.

Before passing in your final paper I encourage you to drop by my office hours to chat about your analysis, look over your thesis statement, etc. No revisions will be allowed. Put your very best effort into the final drafts.

Academic Honesty Reminder:

The Literature program expects all the work you turn in to be your own. If you are found to have represented the work or ideas of others as your own—intentionally or unintentionally—you will face serious consequences, as follows:

1. Any student who is found to have plagiarized a paper or assignment, in full or in part, must meet with the professor of the class for which the paper is written.
2. The professor will review the suspect work with the student.
3. If this is the first time the student has been found to have plagiarized, he/she will receive an "F" for that paper or assignment and/or the course.
4. For second offenses of plagiarism, the student will receive an F for the course.

Additionally, and in accordance with Stockton College policy (<http://www2.stockton.edu/bulletin/undergrad/chap7.pdf>) the literature program faculty will report all instances of plagiarism to the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Students may be subject to discipline by the college, such as being placed on academic probation or expelled.

Remember our essential course goals are to focus on:

1. **Expressiveness:** to developing skills in expressing oneself orally and in writing
2. **Intellectual development:** to learn to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view

If you consciously and thoroughly work through each step in the assignment timeline—from the planning to the polishing stages—you will have ample opportunities to sharpen these skills. Meeting with your instructor throughout the process is highly encouraged!

Grading Criterion included below.

Short Paper Evaluation Sheet

Name: _____

Evaluation: _____

Criterion	Superior	Good	Average	Below Average	Poor
Assignment Guidelines Followed					
The essay effectively meets the needs of the rhetorical situation in terms of establishing the writer's stance, attention to audience, purpose for writing, and sensitivity to context.					
The essay effectively meets the needs of the assignment guidelines.					
Thesis/Topic/Argument (Intellectual Development):					
The topic itself is clearly defined, focused, and supported.					
The essay has a clear thesis that is supported with specific (and appropriate) evidence, examples, and details.					
Any outside sources of information are used carefully and cited appropriately in MLA format.					
The valid reasoning within the essay demonstrates good judgment and an awareness of the topic's complexities.					
Organization (Expressiveness & Intellectual Development):					
The organization—chronological, spatial, or emphatic—is appropriate for the purpose and subject of the essay.					
The introduction establishes a context, purpose, and audience for writing and contains a focused thesis statement.					
The following paragraphs are controlled by (explicit or implicit) topic sentences; they are well developed; and they progress logically from what precedes them. (If appropriate, headings and subheadings are used.)					
The conclusion moves beyond a mere restatement of the introduction, offering implications for or the significance of the topic.					
Style (Expressiveness):					
The prose is clear, readable, and sometimes memorable.					
It contains few surface errors, none of which seriously undermines the overall effectiveness of the paper for educated readers.					
It demonstrates fluency in stylistic flourishes (subordination, variation of sentence and paragraph lengths, interesting vocabulary).					

Final Research Paper Evaluation Sheet

Final Course Grade: _____

Name: _____

Paper Evaluation: _____

Criterion	Superior	Good	Average	Poor	Unacceptable
Assignment Guidelines Followed					
The essay effectively meets the needs of the rhetorical situation in terms of establishing the writer's stance, attention to audience, purpose for writing, and sensitivity to context.					
The essay effectively meets the needs of the assignment guidelines.					
Thesis/Topic/Argument (Intellectual Development):					
The topic itself is clearly defined, focused, and supported.					
The essay has a clear thesis that is supported with specific (and appropriate) evidence, examples, and details.					
Outside sources of information are used carefully and cited appropriately in MLA format.					
The valid reasoning within the essay demonstrates good judgment and an awareness of the topic's complexities.					
Organization (Expressiveness & Intellectual Development):					
The organization—chronological, spatial, or emphatic—is appropriate for the purpose and subject of the essay.					
The introduction establishes a context, purpose, and audience for writing and contains a focused thesis statement.					
The following paragraphs are controlled by (explicit or implicit) topic sentences; they are well developed; and they progress logically from what precedes them. (If appropriate, headings and subheadings are used.)					
The conclusion moves beyond a mere restatement of the introduction, offering implications for or the significance of the topic.					
Style (Expressiveness):					
The prose is clear, readable, and sometimes memorable.					
It contains few surface errors, none of which seriously undermines the overall effectiveness of the paper for educated readers.					
It demonstrates fluency in stylistic flourishes (e.g., subordination, variation of sentence and paragraph lengths, interesting vocabulary).					

Final Research Paper Rubric—Detailed Explanation

Assignment Guidelines Followed:

A (SUPERIOR)

- _____ Demonstrates a familiarity with literary terms and theories in general and of the literary criticism of the primary text being analyzed and incorporates them smoothly into an argument
- _____ The writer's rhetorical stance is clearly articulated
- _____ Page guidelines met or exceeded without fluff or margin and font play; every word needed.

B (GOOD)

- _____ Shows a familiarity with literary terms and theories as well as related critical text, and incorporates them into an argument
- _____ The writer's rhetorical stance is clearly stated or implied
- _____ Page guidelines met or exceeded without fluff or margin and font play.

C (AVERAGE)

- _____ Demonstrates some familiarity with literary terms and theories as well as related critical text, but does not incorporate them clearly
- _____ The writer's rhetorical stance is implied but not clearly stated
- _____ Page guidelines met or exceeded without margin and font play, but some material may not be incorporated well.

D (POOR)

- _____ The paper displays little familiarity with literary terms, theories, or criticism
- _____ No rhetorical stance is articulated
- _____ Page guidelines nearly met, but material may not be incorporated well.

F (UNACCEPTABLE)

- _____ The paper displays no familiarity with literary terms, theories, or criticism
- _____ No rhetorical stance is apparent
- _____ Page guidelines not met.

Thesis/Topic/Argument (Intellectual Development):

A (SUPERIOR)

- _____ Insightful, cogent response to a literary text and the questions that the text raises
- _____ Reasoning is persuasive and supported by detailed, relevant examples
- _____ The central point or thesis is focused for a specific audience, clearly defined, and gracefully stated
- _____ Research is thorough, well documented, and effectively integrated into the text. Perfect MLA documentation

B (GOOD)

- _____ Provides a thoughtful, well-developed response to a literary text and the questions the text raises
- _____ Reasoning is sensible and supported by appropriate examples
- _____ The central idea or thesis is focused and clearly defined
- _____ There is clear evidence of research, but it not always appropriately used or effectively integrated into the text. Near perfect MLA citation

C (AVERAGE)

- _____ Presents a clear response to a literary text and the questions the text raises
- _____ Paper is developed with acceptable reasoning and adequate examples, but these examples are sometime sketchy, vague, or repetitious
- _____ The central point or thesis is apparent but not clearly stated
- _____ There is evidence of research, but it is not always appropriately used or effectively integrated into the text. Good MLA citation

D (POOR)

- _____ Responds to a literary text in an illogical and/or incomplete way
- _____ While some good examples are provided, for the most part the essay is underdeveloped
- _____ The central point or thesis is confusing, sometimes contradictory, and/or not explicitly stated
- _____ There is little evidence of research, and that is poorly documented and ineffectively used to develop the paper. Poor MLA citation

F (UNACCEPTABLE)

- _____ Presents a simplistic, inappropriate and/or incoherent response to a literary text
- _____ Examples are lacking or misused
- _____ The central point is not apparent
- _____ No research is evident. Unacceptable MLA citation

Organization (Expressiveness & Intellectual Development):

A (SUPERIOR)

- _____ Organization strategies (e.g., chronological, spatial, or emphatic; topic headings) are appropriate to the topic and consistently controlled
- _____ Paragraph breaks correspond to shifts in topic; paragraph topics are focused and clearly articulated; transitions are smooth and logical

B (GOOD)

- _____ Organizational strategies (e.g., chronological, spatial, or emphatic; topic headings) are appropriate to the topic and usually controlled
- _____ Paragraph breaks correspond to shifts in topic; the paragraph topics are usually focused; and transitions are attempted although they are sometimes weak or ineffective

C (AVERAGE)

- _____ Organizational strategies (e.g., chronological, spatial, or emphatic; topic headings) are usually controlled
- _____ Paragraph breaks usually correspond to shifts in topic; the paragraph topics are usually focused; some transitions are attempted but are weak or ineffective

D (POOR)

- _____ Organizational strategies (e.g., chronological, spatial, or emphatic; topic headings) are only partially in control and applied inconsistently
- _____ Paragraph breaks are arbitrary and paragraph topic are not always apparent; transitions are choppy

F (UNACCEPTABLE)

- _____ Organizational strategies are not apparent
- _____ Paragraph breaks are arbitrary and paragraph topic are not always apparent; transitions are lacking.

Style (Expressiveness):

A (SUPERIOR)

- _____ Original imagery may be used to convey thoughts and emotions
- _____ Ideas are expressed clearly and directly; sentences are varied and consistently well-constructed
- _____ Final draft is close to error-free

B (GOOD)

- _____ No original imagery is used, or imagery may be ineffective
- _____ Ideas are usually expressed clearly, but prose is characterized by a lack of directness and/or conciseness; occasionally imprecise word choice; little sentence variety; and occasional major and minor errors in grammar occur
- _____ Final draft has one section that may contain several errors but the majority of the paper is close to error-free

C (AVERAGE)

- _____ Imagery lacks effectiveness
- _____ Ideas are usually expressed clearly but the prose is characterized by a lack of directness and/or lack of conciseness; frequently imprecise work choice; little sentence variety; occasional major errors in grammar and frequent minor errors
- _____ Several sections of the final draft require final editing for errors

D (POOR)

- _____ Imagery is generally lacking and/or inappropriately used
- _____ The paper relies on summary rather than analysis
- _____ Most the final draft require final editing for errors

F (UNACCEPTABLE)

- _____ Imagery is generally lacking and/or inappropriately used
- _____ The paper relies on summary rather than analysis
- _____ The paper is riddled with errors