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English 124.016  
Winter 2016  
MW 10-11:30am  
4199 AH

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T 2:30-3:30p  
or by appointment

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## Academic Writing and Literature: Unreliable Narratives

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### Course Description:

This course studies the intersection between critical thinking and persuasive writing, and, using literary texts as the point of reference, takes as its goal the development of the student's skill at writing cogent expository and argumentative prose.

### Section Description:

In this class, we will read poems, short stories, and a short novel that feature distinctive—potentially deceptive—narrative points of view. From encounters with untrustworthy first-person narrators to multiply-voiced stories with ambiguous turns, we will consider how and why authors choose to build stories around unreliable or complex points of view. These explorations of the inner workings of story-telling will lead us to consider how fictional approaches to audience, authority, and authenticity can apply to your own expository writing.

Through class discussion, formal essays assignments, shorter writing exercises, and peer review activities, we will focus on both the mechanics of argumentative writing (developing a strong thesis, supporting your claims with evidence, evaluating and incorporating outside sources, identifying your audience, producing clear and concise prose) and the mechanics of the writing process itself (brainstorming, prewriting, drafting, revising, responding to others, receiving feedback). By the end of the semester, you will be equipped with a suite of strategies for negotiating your relationship to a variety of audiences, strategies that will help you throughout your college career and beyond.

### Learning Goals for English 124:

1. To produce complex, analytic, well-supported arguments that matter in academic contexts.
2. To read, summarize, analyze, and synthesize complex texts purposefully in order to generate and support writing.
3. To analyze the genres and rhetorical strategies that writers use to address particular audiences for various purposes and in various contexts.
4. To develop flexible strategies for revising, editing, and proofreading writing of varying lengths.
5. To develop strategies for self-assessment, goal-setting, and reflection on the process of writing.

### Texts:

- Course Pack (available for purchase at Accu-Copy, 518 E William St)
- Nella Larsen, *Passing* (Penguin, 1929/2003)

The course pack is available for purchase at Accu-Copy, 518 E William St. Both books are available at the two main campus bookstores (Ulrich's and the Michigan Union). Please make every effort to ensure you are purchasing the edition of *Passing* listed above.

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### Course Assignments and Policies

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#### Grading:

Your final course grade will be calculated according to the following rubric:

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Formal Essays                                    | 70% |
| 1. Reading as argument 1 (2-3pp/700-900 words)   | 10% |
| 2. Reading as argument 2 (4-5pp/1300-1600 words) | 15% |
| 3. Reading two sources (7-8pp/2200-2600 words)   | 20% |
| 4. Reading in the world (situation-dependent)    | 25% |
| Peer Review workshops and comments               | 15% |
| Weekly Writing, Attendance, and Participation    | 15% |

Rubrics for formal essays, short assignments, peer review feedback, workshops, and in-class participation are posted on Canvas.

Letter grades correspond to the following numerical scale:

|             |    |              |    |
|-------------|----|--------------|----|
| 94.0 - 100  | A  | 74.0 – 76.9  | C  |
| 90.0 – 93.9 | A- | 70.0 – 73.9  | C- |
| 87.0 – 89.9 | B+ | 67.0 – 69.9  | D+ |
| 84.0 – 86.9 | B  | 64.0 – 66.9  | D  |
| 80.0 – 83.9 | B- | 60.0 – 63.9  | D- |
| 77.0 – 79.9 | C+ | 59.9 & Below | E  |

*Note: You must receive a minimum of a C- in this class to fulfill your first-year writing requirement.*

#### Course management systems:

<https://umich.instructure.com/courses/35459>

<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/1/folders/0B3FAAv0dKLHXM2NXM2hOd3VFcg>

We will use **Canvas** as our primary course management system. I will post all assignments and in-class handouts on Canvas, and you will submit your revised essays and short writing assignments on Canvas as well.

In addition to Canvas, we will also use **Google Drive** for collaborative assignments such as peer review. Everyone will have access to a shared Google Drive folder where you will submit your essay drafts and peer review comments.

**Assignments:****Formal essays:**

This course is structured around four major essay assignments:

|                       |                              |                                   |     |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Reading as argument 1 | 2-3 pages<br>700-900 words   | Draft: Jan 15<br>Revision: Jan 22 | 10% |
| Reading as argument 2 | 4-5 pages<br>1300-1600 words | Draft: Feb 12<br>Revision: Feb 19 | 15% |
| Reading two sources   | 7-8 pages<br>2200-2600 words | Draft: Mar 25<br>Revision: Apr 1  | 20% |
| Reading in the world  | situation-dependent          | Draft: Apr 15<br>Revision: Apr 22 | 25% |

We will use each essay to discuss the various components of the writing process, including brainstorming ideas, proposing a topic, drafting a first pass, responding to peer critiques, and revising. For most essays, drafts and revisions are due on Fridays at 1pm. Drafts should be submitted to the [Google Drive folder](#) for each essay, while revisions should be submitted via [Canvas \(Assignments\)](#). I will grade these essays on a 100-point scale (see Canvas for rubric).

**Peer Review:**

Each of your formal essay drafts will go through a peer review process designed to help you identify areas for revision and further work. Workshops will take place during class in groups of three, and you will have a different group for each essay. To prepare for each in-class workshop, you will read and provide marginal comments and a brief end-note on your group-mates' drafts. You will also fill out a peer review worksheet that summarizes your responses for your group-mates. You will leave your comments and end-notes directly on your group members' drafts in our class [Google Drive folder](#). These comments are due before class on the day of workshop.

Your peer review grade will consist of two components: your written feedback and your participation in workshop. I will grade your written feedback for each essay on a scale of 0-5 points. Your workshop grade will contain an element of self-evaluation, as I will ask you to evaluate your group's performance on a 5-point scale; I will then incorporate this score into a grade based on my observations of your group's participation in class. (See Canvas for grading rubric.)

**Short Writing Assignments:**

Over the course of the term, you will write a series of short assignments in response to readings on our syllabus. These assignments, to be submitted via [Canvas](#) by 8:30am on the day they are due, will focus on a specific skill, including summarizing, analyzing, close-reading, and reflecting. Each assignment will be graded on a scale of 0-5 points, and together they will contribute to your participation grade. (See Canvas for grading rubric.)

In addition using these short assignments to practice essential skills of reading and writing, we will also use them to discuss ongoing issues of grammar, mechanics, and style. On each day with a writing assignment due, we will conduct a mini in-class workshop with two or three students' responses. Everyone will have a short assignment workshoped once.

### **Attendance:**

- I expect you to attend every class.
- You may miss two classes without penalty. For each unexcused absence beyond the first two, you will receive a participation score of zero for the day. Missing more than five classes will likely result in you failing the course, regardless of work completed.
- Your absence will count as “excused” if you bring me a note from a doctor or health professional, a signed letter from a University team or program, or clear documentation of a family emergency.
- You may not miss workshop days.
- Please arrive on time. For every tardy, I will deduct one point from your overall participation grade. Three tardies will count as one unexcused absence.

### **Participation:**

The success of a seminar-style class such as this depends on your consistent attendance and daily participation. This means completing the day's reading assignments, taking notes on them, and bringing them with you to class. In class, participation can take many forms—offering comments and observations, asking questions about the reading, responding to your classmates' comments, listening respectfully and alertly.

Each class day, I will give everyone a grade on a scale of 0-5 according to the following guidelines:

- A score of five indicates that you have truly come to class prepared to engage with the course material and your classmates, and the difference between a four and a five hinges on the latter part. I will happily give fives on days in which you interact with each other by building off of each other's comments, by asking questions of your classmates that show that you have listened to and thought about their positions, and by making efforts to include everyone in the conversation.
- A score of four indicates that you have taken an extra step beyond just showing up. This might mean volunteering to read, offering a point for discussion, or even asking a question about what is going on in class.
- A score of three is the default mark. If you show up on time, have your materials, and look alert but say nothing, you will get a 3. Note that if you do this every day, you will be on track for a 60% in participation over the course of the term.
- A score of two indicates general disengagement from class proceedings. This might mean not having your class materials, staring listlessly at walls or out of windows, saying “Huh?” if I call on you, or falling asleep.
- A score of one indicates truly disruptive behavior, which usually takes the form of talking out of turn or talking too much. If you have something to say, offer it in a way that engages the entire classroom.
- A score of zero will be given in two cases: if you are absent without excuse past your first two unexcused absences, or if you have your cell phone out in class.

**Late Work:**

Due dates for drafts, peer review comments, small writing assignments, and revised essays are marked in bold throughout the reading schedule below. Please take note of them now, and if you anticipate any difficulties in meeting deadlines, contact me within the first week of the course.

Late policies for specific graded assignments are as follows:

- *Peer review:* Any late peer reviews will result in a zero on the assignment. I have made this penalty more substantial than some of the other late work penalties because your peers are relying on you to help them think about and improve their writing. Therefore, it is in everyone's best interest for you to complete your formal peer reviews on time.
- *Revised papers:* I will deduct 3% from your paper's final grade for every 24-hour period that the paper is late. Papers more than a week late will receive a failing grade.
- *Short writing assignments:* Because they are so short, and because they are designed to prepare you for specific class periods, I will not accept late work for short writing assignments.

**Cell Phones:**

Please silence your cell phones and other electronic devices before you enter the classroom. If I see that you have your cell phone out during class, you will receive a zero in participation for the day.

**Laptops:**

Because our class activities revolve around discussion and close engagement with texts, laptop use in class can be incredibly distracting and detrimental to the goals of our classroom. However, I also realize that most of us compose and revise in digital environments. As a compromise, I will not allow laptops in the classroom for most class days, but I will allow laptops for workshop days and certain other course meetings whose focus is on composition and revision.

**Email:**

Your @umich.edu email accounts will be my primary point of contact with you, so please be sure to check this account regularly. I am also most easily reached via email (bevilacq@umich.edu) and invite you to send me any questions or concerns that may arise during the term. I make every effort to respond to emails within 24 hours of receiving them.

**Plagiarism:**

The University of Michigan is built around intellectual and academic integrity, and plagiarism (stealing/borrowing/not citing the work and/or ideas of another person and presenting them as your own) is not treated lightly. If you are caught plagiarizing—regardless of whether it's a few lines or an entire paper—you will automatically fail the assignment and, under most circumstances, will also fail the course, regardless of how much work you've completed in the class. In addition, the case will be forwarded to the Dean of Student Affairs for disciplinary action and permanent notation in your academic record. If you ever have any questions about what might count as plagiarism, please do not hesitate to ask! For more information, also see: <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/english/undergraduate/advising/plagNote.asp>

**Sweetland Writing Center:**

If you would like additional feedback or assistance with your writing, the Sweetland Writing Center is a fabulous resource. Staff members and peer tutors from the Center can work with you as you draft and revise your assignments. Visit the website for more information:

[www.lsa.umich.edu/swc](http://www.lsa.umich.edu/swc)

**Accessibility and Accommodation:**

I am committed to making this course as accessible as possible for all students. If there are ever circumstances that may affect your performance in this class, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can work together to develop strategies for adapting assignments to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. In some cases, you may wish to consult with the university's Services for Students with Disabilities (<http://ssd.umich.edu/>). In all cases, I will treat as private and confidential any information that you share with me.

**Religious Observances:**

If a class session or due date conflicts with your religious holidays, please notify me ahead of time so that we can make alternative arrangements. In most cases, I will ask you to turn in your assignment ahead of your scheduled absence, but your absence will not affect your grade.

**Office Hours:**

I will hold weekly office hours, during which you are invited to drop in to discuss assignments, readings, your thoughts on the course, or any difficulties you might be having. I also welcome drop-ins and am happy to arrange other times to meet if need be.

## Class and Reading Schedule

*All readings except for Passing are in the course pack.*

|           | <i>Reading Due</i>  | <i>Writing Due</i>       |
|-----------|---|--------------------------|
| Jan 6, W  | Dunning, “We Are All Confident Idiots”  |                          |
| Jan 11, M | Ryan, “Sharks’ Teeth”<br>Gardner, “The Role of Good Reading”                    | close reading (1¶)       |
| Jan 13, W | Selected Kay Ryan Poems<br>Cioffi, “The Thesis”                                 |                          |
| Jan 15, F | <b>Essay 1 draft due by 1pm</b>   |                          |
| Jan 18, M | <b>No class: MLK, Jr. Day</b>   |                          |
| Jan 20, W | <b>Workshop: Essay 1</b><br>Peer review materials due before beginning of class |                          |
| Jan 22, F | <b>Essay 1 revision due by 1pm</b>  |                          |
| Jan 25, M | Poe, “William Wilson”   | story summary (1¶)       |
| Jan 27, W | Freud, “The Uncanny”  | argument summary (1¶)    |
| Feb 1, M  | Schopp, ““Vast Forms That Move<br>Fantastically’: Poe, Freud, and the Uncanny”  | evidence analysis (1¶)   |
| Feb 3, W  | Poe, “William Wilson”   | close reading (1¶)       |
| Feb 8, M  | Gilman, “The Yellow Wallpaper”  | discussion question (1¶) |
| Feb 10, W | Hume, “Managing Madness in Gilman’s ‘The<br>Yellow Wallpaper”                   | argument summary (1¶)    |
| Feb 12, F | <b>Essay 2 draft due by 1pm</b>   |                          |
| Feb 15, M | <b>Workshop: Essay 2</b><br>Peer review materials due before beginning of class |                          |
| Feb 17, W | Baker, “Good Sentences”<br>Graff, “I Say”                                       | paragraph from essay 2   |
| Feb 19, F | <b>Essay 2 revision due by 1pm</b>  |                          |
| Feb 22, M | Morrison, “Recitatif”   | reaction/reflection (1¶) |



|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| Feb 24, W  | Benjamin, "The Space that Race Creates"   |  |
| Feb 29, M; Mar 2, W: <b>NO CLASSES: Winter Break</b> |   |  |
| Mar 7, M   | <i>Passing</i> , Part 1<br>Davis, "Introduction" in <i>Passing</i>  | discussion question (1¶)                                   |
| Mar 9, W   | <i>Passing</i> , Part 2   | close reading (1¶)   |
| Mar 14, M  | <i>Passing</i> , Part 3   | <b>essay 3 proposal</b>                                    |
| <b>Mar 16, W</b>                                     | <b>No class: individual meetings about essay 3</b><br><i>Meetings will be held Tuesday 2:30-4:30 and Wednesday 9:30-11:30</i> |  |
| Mar 21, M  | Young, "Teaching Texts Materially: The Ends of Nella Larsen's <i>Passing</i> "  | reaction/reflection (1¶)                                   |
| Mar 23, W  | Sample comparative analysis essay<br>McIntosh, "White Privilege and Male Privilege"   |  |
| Mar 25, F  | <b>Essay 3 draft due by 1pm</b>   |  |
| Mar 28, M  | <b>Workshop: Essay 3</b><br>Peer review materials due before beginning of class   |  |
| Mar 30, W  | Baker, "Wordiness"  | paragraph from essay 3<br>essay title and thesis statement |
| Apr 1, F   | <b>Essay 3 revision due by 1pm</b>  |  |
| Apr 4, M   | Gaipa, "Breaking into the Conversation"   | <b>essay 4 proposal</b>                                    |
| Apr 6, W   | Examples of your essay 4 genre  |  |
| Apr 11, M  | DIY Rubric for essay 4  |  |
| Apr 13, W  | Transfer worksheet  |  |
| Apr 15, F  | <b>Essay 4 draft due by 1pm</b>   |  |
| Apr 18, M  | <b>Workshop: Essay 4</b><br>Peer review materials due before beginning of class   |  |
| Apr 22, F  | <b>Essay 4 revision due by 1pm</b>  |  |

## Peer Review Guidelines

### Drafts

Workshop drafts are due the Friday before workshop by 1pm in the Google Drive Folder. Upload your draft to the appropriate essay draft folder, and please **use the following format for your file name**: “**First Name Last Name – Essay # draft**” (e.g. **Kathryne Bevilacqua – essay 2 draft**).

Drafts can be “rough,” but they should be complete. That means that your drafts should be at least the minimum page requirement, have a clearly stated thesis, and give the reader the general shape of the argument you intend to make and the evidence you will use to support it.

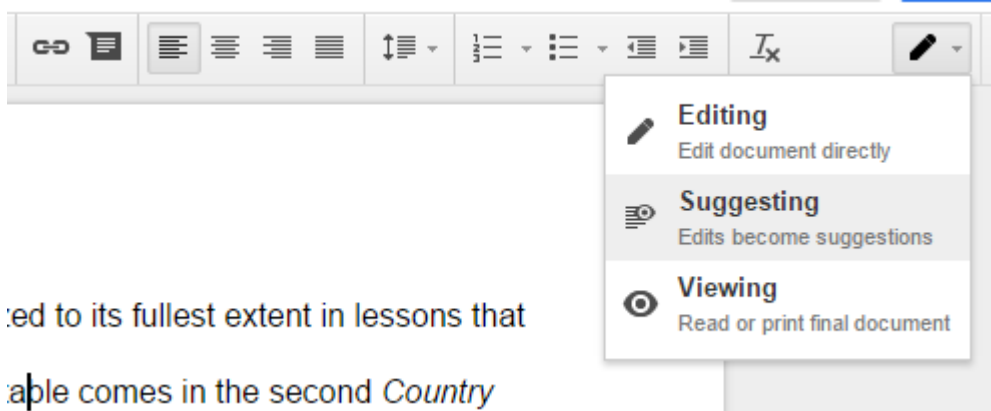
### Peer Review Feedback

Peer review feedback in the form of marginal comments and a brief endnote on your group members’ drafts is due the day of workshop by 8:30am (i.e., *before* class).

To make marginal comments in Google Docs, use the “Add comment” feature.



To make suggested changes to the text itself, you can change Google Docs to “Suggesting” mode:



If you are more comfortable offering marginal feedback by hand, feel free to print off copies of your group members’ drafts and bring them to class. If you do this, please let me know so that I give you credit for your comments.

Here are some general guidelines for the peer review process:

- Read the writer’s entire essay before you begin to take notes or mark in the margins.
- Focus on thesis, organization, topic sentences, use of evidence, and persuasiveness.
- Do not focus exclusively on proofreading/copy-editing.
- Be specific with your feedback.

In addition to marginal comments and an endnote, you will also fill out a peer review worksheet for each group member. I will bring copies of the peer review worksheet to class so that you can fill them out after your small group conversations.

### **Questions to consider as you read for peer review**

- *Title and Introduction:* How effectively does the writer set up her topic? How effectively does the introduction set up the “stakes” or “so what?” question of the essay? How well does it convince you to keep on reading? How well does the title capture the spirit of the overall essay?
- *Thesis:* Write down the specific sentence or sentences that you identify as the thesis. Does the thesis clearly articulate the essay’s central claim? offer a nuanced perspective (“gray area”) rather than an all-or-nothing claim? provide a “roadmap” or “signposts” for the argument that follows in the essay without sounding rote or mechanical?
- *Key words:* What words are central to the author’s argument? Does he or she define these terms adequately? Do they need further definition or clarification? If you cannot identify any key words, what words should the author consider paying more attention to?
- *Body Paragraphs:* How well does each paragraph connect to and help support the essay’s central claim? How well does each topic sentence frame each paragraph? How well does the evidence in each paragraph support and develop the topic sentence?
- *Evidence:* How well does the author set up and analyze quotations? How does the author balance summary and analysis?
- *Transitions:* How well does the essay develop from one paragraph to the next? Are there any specific places where you thought the author could do more to connect her thoughts in a logical way?
- *Conclusion:* How effectively does the conclusion recall the essay’s central claim? Has this claim changed or developed in unexpected ways from the beginning of the essay? How well does the author recall the stakes of the essay?
- *Mechanics:* Are there any sentences or phrases that strike you as awkward or unclear? Are there sentences or phrases that sound stilted or overly formal?
- *Style:* How does the author incorporate his or her own voice and point of view into the essay?

### **Technology Use**

Because nothing will eat through your printing budget like the peer review process, I will allow you to bring laptops to class on workshop days. This way, you will be able to access each other’s drafts *and* each other’s feedback reports. However, if I notice any off-task laptop usage, I will change this policy.

### **Evaluation**

Your peer review grade will consist of two components: your written feedback and your participation in workshop. I will grade your written feedback for each essay on a scale of 0-5 points. Your workshop grade will also contain an element of self-evaluation, as I will ask you to evaluate your group’s performance on a 5-point scale; I will then incorporate this score into a grade based on my observations of your group’s participation in class.

Peer review is worth 10% of your overall grade.

*Rubric for Margin Comments and Endnotes*

|          | <b>Higher-Order Issues</b>   | <b>Local Issues</b>  | <b>Tone of Feedback</b>  |
|----------|--|--|--|
|          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• thesis</li> <li>• structure/organization</li> <li>• development (topic sentences, signposting)</li> <li>• evidence</li> <li>• stakes</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• wordiness</li> <li>• clarity</li> <li>• awkwardness</li> <li>• sentence structure</li> <li>• quotation incorporation</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• quantity</li> <li>• quality</li> <li>• questions</li> </ul>   |
| <b>5</b> | Consistently <u>identifies specific issues</u> throughout the essay AND <u>offers substantive suggestions</u> for revision   |  | Poses questions meant to prompt revision, offers respectful and helpful feedback   |
| <b>4</b> | Identifies <u>some specific issues</u> and offers <u>some suggestions</u> for improvement  |  | Poses some questions, but mostly uses short comments (e.g. “good,” “vague,” “word choice,” “awkward”) that do not offer suggestions for change |
| <b>3</b> | Vaguely points out issues <u>without offering suggestions</u> for improvement  |  |  |
| <b>2</b> | Patchy attention to these concerns   |  | Inappropriate, insensitive, or inconsistent feedback   |
| <b>1</b> | Little attention to these concerns   |  |  |

*Rubric for in-class workshop self-assessment*

|          | <b>Attention</b>   | <b>Time Management</b>   | <b>Group dynamic</b>   |
|----------|--|--|--|
| <b>5</b> | Discussion stays on-topic and productive with group members engaging with others | Group spends <u>a full 20 minutes</u> discussing <u>each</u> essay | All group members actively and respectfully offer and listen to feedback                       |
| <b>4</b> | Discussion is mostly on-topic, with most group members remaining engaged         | Group spends around 15 minutes discussing each essay               | Most group members offer helpful feedback and actively listen to others                        |
| <b>3</b> | Some group members drift in and out of attention                                 | Group spends 10 minutes discussing each essay                      | One group member dominates discussion OR one group member does not listen actively to feedback |
| <b>2</b> | Discussion remains cursory, touching only on surface issues with each essay      | Group spends 5 minutes discussing each essay                       | Group members struggle to communicate effectively  |
| <b>1</b> | Discussion is frequently off-topic or unhelpful                                  | Group spends very little time per essay                            | Group members sit in silence   |

## **Grading Rubric for Short Assignments**

### **5: extraordinary**

- thoroughly addresses all aspects of the assignment and may include analysis that exceeds the requirements of the assignment
- offers thoughtful and insightful analysis
- provides sufficient textual evidence to support its claims
- shows consistent attention to detail and an effort to create work of superior quality

### **4: excellent**

- thoroughly addresses all aspects of the assignment
- offers thoughtful and insightful analysis
- provides sufficient textual evidence to support its claims
- shows consistent attention to detail

### **3: good [I assign this rating most frequently]**

- addresses all aspects of the assignment, but some portions of the response may be less thorough than others
- offers some thoughtful analysis but includes arguments that require further development or clarification
- provides textual evidence to support its claims, but that evidence may not be sufficient or persuasive
- shows some attention to detail but may include a few careless errors

### **2: fair**

- does not address all aspects of the assignment
- offers very little analysis or analysis that is significantly underdeveloped or unclear
- provides insufficient textual evidence to support its claims
- shows a lack of attention to detail and includes several careless errors

### **1: poor**

- does not address all aspects of the assignment
- offers little or no analysis
- provides little or no textual evidence to support its claims
- shows minimal effort

**Essay 1: Reading as argument 1**  
**Length: 2-3pp (700-900 words)**

**Workshop draft due: Jan 15, 1 pm (Fri)**  
**Workshop date: Jan 20 (Wed)**  
**Revision due: Jan 22, 1pm (Fri)**

**Assignment:**

Select one of the Kay Ryan poems in the course pack and offer a “close reading” of it. Use the attached worksheet to help you identify interesting features of the poem and generate your own take on its purpose and form. Then, in clear and concise prose, guide your essay’s reader through your reading of the poem, focusing on how the specific details that you have noticed inform what you take away from the poem.

Close reading is an intensive engagement with the mechanics of a text. Your writing should capture the “closeness” of your reading by both quoting from the text itself and taking the time to explain the significance of what you have quoted. What words, sentences, or paragraphs stand out in your reading? Why? How does reading the text your way (focusing on the details you have noticed) affect your understanding of the work as a whole? What question is the poem asking you? What question is it helping you to answer?

Because this essay is meant to be brief, do not write a lengthy introduction or conclusion.

Please follow MLA formatting throughout your essay for setting up your document and citing from the text.

**Evaluation:**

As your essay’s reader, I want to see what *you* see when you read the poem you have selected: how well does your writing guide your reader through the text? Specifically, I will be evaluating how effectively you:

- capture and state the main idea of the poem you have chosen
- select, introduce, and discuss quotations from the text
- “unpack”/explain the significance of specific words, phrases, and sentences
- negotiate a balance between cited text and your own words
- argue for the validity and importance of your specific reading of the poem

I will also comment on the overall effectiveness of your essay in terms of style, usage, and mechanics.

**Submission:**

| <i>Workshop draft</i>                  | <i>Peer review comments</i>                     | <i>Revised essay</i>                         |
|--|---|--|
| Friday, Jan 15, by 1pm on Google Drive | Wednesday, Jan 20, before class on Google Drive | Friday, Jan 22, by 1pm in Canvas Assignments |

This essay is worth 10% of your final grade.

## Moving from Close Reading to Writing

1. Read your selected poem through once without marking anything up. What is your initial reaction to it?

2. Now read your selected poem carefully, marking words, phrases, structures, etc. that catch your attention.

3. Repeat step 2. Keep marking up your text.

4. Make a list of everything you marked.

*List words, ideas, etc that you marked or wrote. Don't stress over how to phrase something; just write a list.*

5. Take a look at your list. What do you notice? Do certain words or ideas keep appearing? Have you fixated on one thing, or looked at many different things? What story do your markings tell about your reading?

What are the five most important words to come out of your reading?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. What question(s) is the poem asking you?

## Thesis Templates for Close Reading Essays

### #1. Cursory Reading vs. Close Reading:

*“In this essay I will focus on \_\_\_A\_\_\_. At first glance, many readers would see/view/believe \_\_\_A\_\_\_ to mean/signify/be functioning as \_\_\_B\_\_\_. However, after closer inspection of the text, we see that \_\_\_A\_\_\_ actually/also/more importantly means/signifies/functions as \_\_\_C\_\_\_, and that this substantially changes our understanding of \_\_\_D\_\_\_ in the text.”*

### #2. The Part vs. The Whole

*“In this essay, I will focus on a part of the text, \_\_\_A\_\_\_. When read in relationship to the text as a whole/a larger part of the text, whose major theme is \_\_\_B\_\_\_, \_\_\_A\_\_\_ enhances/reflects/complicates/challenges this theme, suggesting that \_\_\_B\_\_\_ might actually/also/more importantly mean/signify/function as \_\_\_C\_\_\_. This substantially changes our understanding of \_\_\_D\_\_\_ in the text.”*

### A strong thesis:

- can be more than one sentence long
- should be arguable or debatable (i.e. someone else can disagree)
- should be specific to the text you are discussing (i.e. can't be too broad or general)

### Words for discussing poetry:

#### *Form:*

Line length

Sentence structure (syntax)

Enjambment – when line breaks interrupt sentences

vs. End-stopped – when line breaks correspond to pauses in sentences

Caesura – a break within a line

#### *Sound:*

Rhyme

Rhythm

Meter

Alliteration

Assonance – repeated vowel sounds

Consonance – repeated consonant sounds

#### *Techniques:*

Speaker

Imagery

Metaphor

Simile

Juxtaposition

Tone

Paradox – something contradictory that may nonetheless be true

Ambiguity – something understood in two or more possible ways, making its meaning unclear or unstable

Apostrophe – an address to something absent

Irony – a distance between what is said and what is meant

Check out <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/learning/glossary-terms> for more definitions



**Essay 2: Reading as argument 2**  
**Length: 4-5pp (1300-1600 words)**

**Workshop draft due: Feb 12, 1pm (Fri)**  
**Workshop date: Feb 15 (Mon)**  
**Revision due: Feb 19, 1pm (Fri)**

**Assignment:**

Write an argumentative essay that considers how one of the following themes or tropes in either Poe’s “William Wilson” or Gilman’s “The Yellow Wallpaper” challenges or clarifies your understanding of a major theme in the story:

- the use of first-person narration
- an emphasis on vision and perception
- the role of setting (descriptions of space and place)
- narrative structure and pacing
- ideas of embodiment or materiality
- another trope, theme, or question of your choosing

This assignment builds on the close reading skills you practiced in the first formal essay, and once again, your writing should capture the “closeness” of your reading by quoting from the story and taking time to explain the significance of what you have quoted. In this slightly longer essay, I will be paying much more attention to the type of *claim* you make through your close reading. What has the text allowed you to think about in a new or unexpected way? How has the text achieved this effect? Why does it matter? Your essay’s organization and structure should highlight your claim: take special care to use a thesis statement and topic sentences to propel your argument forward.

Please follow MLA formatting throughout your essay for setting up your document and citing from the text.

**Evaluation:**

As your essay’s reader, I want to see what how close reading techniques have enabled you to see something new or unexpected through the story. Specifically, I will be evaluating how effectively you:

- use a clear, debatable claim to organize your essay
- focus on significant parts or details of the story in order to talk about the story as a whole
- quote selectively from the text and “unpack”/explain the significance of your quotations
- organize your essay so that each piece of evidence builds to a clear conclusion
- include a sense of “motive”: why does your claim matter?

I will also comment on the overall effectiveness of your essay in terms of style, usage, and mechanics.

**Submission:**

| <i>Workshop draft</i>                  | <i>Peer review comments</i>                  | <i>Revised essay</i>                         |
|--|--|--|
| Friday, Feb 12, by 1pm on Google Drive | Monday, Feb 15, before class on Google Drive | Friday, Feb 19, by 1pm in Canvas Assignments |

This essay is worth 15% of your final grade.

**Essay 3: Reading Two Sources**  
**Length: 7-8pp/2200-2600 words**

**Second source proposal due: Mar 14 (Mon)**  
**Individual conferences: Mar 15 or 16 (Tues or Wed)**  
**Workshop draft due: Mar 25 (Fri)**  
**Workshop date: Mar 28 (Mon)**  
**Revision due: Apr 1 (Fri)**

**Assignment:**

Select a text of any medium, genre, or form that helps you explore or develop a theme in *Passing* or “Recitatif.” Your essay should be guided by this central question: what does reading your text with *Passing* or “Recitatif” enable you to see or know that you cannot see or know if you read these texts separately?

This assignment is not a compare and contrast essay, and your essay should not simply list the ways your text is similar to and/or different from *Passing* or “Recitatif.” Instead, this assignment asks you to consider how reading two texts together can generate insights about both the texts and the larger world. Possible “motivating moves” for this essay include:

- Using one text to pose a question that the other text answers
- Using one text to define or redefine the other text’s key terms or ideas
- Using one text to expand or develop a theme in the other text
- Using one text’s formal devices to understand the other text’s form
- Using one text’s argument to contradict or refine the claims of the other text

For each of these motivating moves, your essay will also have to offer a “so what”: why are you arguing that it is important to read these two texts together? Your thesis statement should include this “so what,” along with your specific claims about your two texts.

Please follow MLA formatting throughout your essay for setting up your document and citing from your sources. I do expect a Works Cited page for this essay.

**Evaluation:**

As your essay’s reader, I will need some convincing as to why you have chosen your second source. Why should I read these two texts together? What am I missing by only having access to one? On what grounds are you staging this confrontation? Another major component of the paper will be positioning your sources in relation to each other. How do they relate? What do they ask of each other? Where do they position *you* in relation to the larger context of the subject matter they engage?

Specifically, I will be evaluating how effectively you:

- select a second source and explain your choice
- read and analyze each of your sources
- describe and analyze the relationship of your sources to each other
- position yourself among the conversation between your two sources
- show why your paired reading matters beyond the worlds of the texts

I will also comment on the overall effectiveness of your essay in terms of style, usage, and mechanics.

**Process:**

The writing process for this essay will include an extra step: a second source proposal. This brief document (200 words) should answer the following questions:

- What is your second text? (Who wrote it? When is it from? How did you find it?)
- What themes or questions led you to select your second text?
- How do you plan to use your second text in your essay? What will your “motivating move” be?
- What larger claims do you hope to make in your essay?

Your second source proposal is due by Monday, March 14, by 8:30am on Canvas. Then, on either Tuesday, March 15, or Wednesday, March 16, I will meet with each of you individually to discuss your second source and your plans for the essay. I will cancel class on that Wednesday in order to hold individual conferences.

**Submission:**

| <i>Second source proposal</i>         | <i>Workshop draft</i>                    | <i>Peer review comments</i>                    | <i>Revised essay</i>              |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|-----------------------------------|
| Monday, March 14, by 8:30am on Canvas | Friday, March 25, by 1pm on Google Drive | Monday, March 28, before class on Google Drive | Friday, April 1, by 1pm on Canvas |

This essay is worth 20% of your final grade.

*If you are interested in finding a scholarly article to use as your second source, here are some resources available through the library:*

<http://scholar.google.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/>

<http://jstor.org.proxy.lib.umich.edu>

<http://muse.jhu.edu.proxy.lib.umich.edu/>

### Additional Hints for Essay 3: Reading Two Texts/Comparative Analysis

We all compare things all of the time, but we rarely think about *the mechanics of comparison*. A comparative analysis essay asks for more than a catalogue of similarities and differences: it asks why you are looking at two things instead of one in the first place. What can we learn about one or both texts by introducing it to another interlocutor?

A comparative analysis essay...

- is NOT a “compare and contrast” essay
- is NOT a list of similarities or differences
- is NOT a determination of which text is better
- DOES offer a concrete, evidence-based analysis / close reading of a text that is made more original, more sophisticated, and more illuminating through the addition of concepts borrowed from another text

Process:

1. Start with your first text. What themes or questions emerge that strike you as interesting, confusing, or worth investigating further?
2. Find a second text. What sort of information or point of view would help you think more deeply about the questions that the first text raises for you?
  - a. What is your *basis for comparison*: what makes these two things comparable at all?
  - b. What are your *points of comparison*: what components of each subject will you analyze?
  - c. Think about your texts as in conversation with each other. What does each text say to the other? How are you mediating this conversation?
3. With your observations about both texts, start to solidify your central argument. What is the driving question that your essay hopes to answer?

Thesis statements:

- Can you *support* your thesis using close reading techniques, without resorting to more general assertions or assumptions?
- Could someone else *debate* your thesis and make a convincing argument against it?
- Does your thesis *strive for nuance* over certainty by addressing a difficult driving question that can't be easily answered?
- Is your thesis *specific and concrete*: does it provide an answer particular to the texts and phenomena you analyze, rather than make a general argument that would fit many different texts and phenomena?

Common traps:

- *Inessential comparison*: if you can remove one of your texts and still make the same claims, then your comparison is inessential to your argument.
- *Surface comparison*: if your thesis reads, “Although X and Y are different on the surface, they actually contain surprising similarities,” you have not dug deep enough! Why does your comparison matter? Why is your comparison essential to answering your question?

General comparative analysis thesis templates:

“Text A provides details about theme X and presents theme X in a specific way. Reading Text B gives us more specific information about theme X that we can use to interpret Text A. Reading both texts together, we can make this specific claim about theme X.”

1. What themes or questions arise from your first text? Where specifically in the text do they arise?

2. What sort of information or point of view does your second text provide? Where specifically?

3. What driving question do you hope your conversation between these texts can answer?

**Essay 4: Reading in the World**  
**Length: situation-dependent**

**Proposal due: Apr 6 (Wed)**  
**Workshop draft due: Apr 15 (Fri)**  
**Workshop date: Apr 18 (Mon)**  
**Revision due: Apr 22 (Fri)**

**Assignment:**

Revise one of your previous essays to address a new, specific rhetorical situation of your choosing. As a part of your revision, include at least two additional outside sources that help you reframe your initial claim. In addition to your revised essay, please include a one-page introductory note that explains the choices you have made in completing your revision.

Over the course of this semester, you have written essays that focus explicitly on literary texts for a very specific rhetorical situation: the college classroom. This assignment asks you to reimagine your initial argument in a different rhetorical situation, which means reconsidering the following elements of your work:

- *Audience:* Who are you writing for? How does your choice of audience affect the choices you will have to make in revising your work?
- *Form:* What type of written form will speak most effectively to your chosen audience? Does a traditional essay form still work best, or would your claims be better served by a different type of writing? (Consider these types of alternative forms: personal narrative, open letter, public speech, imagined dialogue, a series of journal entries, short fiction, poem, etc.)
- *Purpose:* What is your main goal for this revision? To inform, to persuade, to provoke, to correct a misconception, to highlight a problem, to offer a solution, etc.? How does your intended argumentative purpose affect the form your work will take?

Please follow MLA formatting throughout your essay for setting up your document and citing from your sources. I do expect a Works Cited page for this essay.

**Evaluation:**

As your essay's reader, I will be looking for how you creatively adapt a traditional argumentative essay into a form that speaks in new ways to a new audience. A successful essay will use both outside sources and your own rhetorical choices to make it clear who you are writing for and why. Your grade will not be based on how much or how little you change in your original essay, but rather on how successfully you adapt to your new rhetorical situation. Specifically, I will be evaluating how effectively you:

- identify an appropriate rhetorical situation for your claim
- adjust your modes of argumentation to meet the expectations of your essay's new genre
- situate your claim within a "larger conversation" using outside sources
- present a compelling motive for why readers should care about your argument

I will also comment on the overall effectiveness of your essay in terms of style, usage, and mechanics.

**Process:**

As with essay 3, you will write a brief proposal (200 words) that explains which essay you plan on revising and what your new rhetorical situation will be. These proposals are due on Canvas on Wednesday, April 6 by 8:30am. We will discuss your proposals in class that day.

**Submission:**

| <i>Proposal</i>                         | <i>Workshop draft</i>                    | <i>Peer review comments</i>                    | <i>Revision</i>                    |
|---|--|--|------------------------------------|
| Wednesday, April 6, by 8:30am on Canvas | Friday, April 15, by 1pm on Google Drive | Monday, April 18, before class on Google Drive | Friday, April 22, by 1pm on Canvas |

This essay is worth 25% of your final grade.

**Prewrite notes:**

Take some time to think about the three essays you have written over the course of this term. Which ideas, stemming from your readings of our course's texts, have caught your attention the most? Which ideas would you be interested in pursuing further? What audience would you like to speak to? What types of written forms might most effectively let you engage with that audience?

## DIY Rubric for Essay 4

Format of your revision project:

Salient formal features of your chosen format:

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><u>Argument</u><br/>-what does a thesis look like in this format?<br/>-how does this format show its “stakes” or “so what”?</p> |  |
| <p><u>Structure</u><br/>-what structural elements define this format?<br/>-how is this format usually organized?</p>               |  |
| <p><u>Evidence</u><br/>-what does citation look like in this format?<br/>-what types of sources get cited?</p>                     |  |
| <p><u>Mechanics</u><br/>-what type of written style defines this format? what type of tone?</p>                                    |  |



### Reading and Writing for Transfer

| Reading and writing activities you've done <u>this year:</u>                            | Reading and writing activities you'll do <u>next year:</u> | Reading and writing activities you'll do <u>in ten years:</u> |
|---|--|---|
|   |  |   |
| Specific skills, general lessons, habits, attitudes, interests developed this semester: |  |   |

### Formal Essay Grading Rubric

|   | <b>A</b>   | <b>B</b>  | <b>C</b>  | <b>D</b>   | <b>E</b>                                    |
|---|--|---|---|--|---|
| <b>Conceptual structure:</b><br>-overall organization<br>-development of ideas<br>-motive | Contains a convincing argument with a compelling motive; responsive to demands of the assignment and audience; cogent analysis develops according to a logical structure     | Addresses audience with a thoughtful argument; responds to the prompt; motive is clearly stated, but perhaps slightly underdeveloped or obstructed by minor structural errors | Presents adequate response to the prompt; motive may be unstated or missing; structure of essay does not help develop ideas                                     | Shows serious weakness in addressing the prompt; weak organizational sense or motive                         | Does not address the prompt                 |
| <b>Rhetorical structure:</b><br>-topic sentences<br>-paragraph transitions                | Well-constructed paragraphs; appropriate, clear, and smooth transitions; uses signposts to guide the reader through the paper  | Paragraphs are distinct and follow clear topic sentences; transitions are logical and coherent; may have some organizational issues   | Some awkward transitions; some weakly unified or undeveloped paragraphs; unnatural arrangement of ideas   | Wanders from topic to topic with no clear logic  | No transitions; incoherent paragraphs       |
| <b>Argument:</b><br>-thesis statement<br>-key terms                                       | Essay controlled by clear, precise, well-defined thesis; is sophisticated in both statement and insight; key terms well-defined and deployed                                 | Clear, specific, arguable thesis central to the essay; may have some key terms undefined  | General thesis that states the obvious; may leave many key terms undefined  | Thesis is vague or not central to argument   | No discernible thesis or controlling idea   |
| <b>Evidence/Analysis:</b><br>-quotations<br>-summary vs analysis                          | Well-chosen examples, thoughtfully presented and explained; analysis always connects back to central thesis; quotations cited correctly and artfully incorporated into prose | Supports thesis with appropriate details; may leave some analysis implicit rather than explicit; incorporates quotes into prose well  | Shallow analysis that veers more toward summary; quotes not fully explained or unpacked; generalizations rather than specific quotations; awkward use of quotes | Insufficient or awkward use of textual evidence  | Fails to cite sources                       |
| <b>Mechanics</b><br>-grammar<br>-style  | Uses sophisticated sentences and appropriate vocabulary; follows conventions of written English; makes few errors in formatting  | May contain a few stylistic or mechanical problems (awkward sentences, word choice); few spelling/punctuation errors; uses appropriate format                                 | Frequent awkwardness, wordiness, passive voice, grammatical errors  | Some major grammatical or proofreading errors (subject-verb agreement, sentence fragments, word form errors) | Numerous major and minor grammatical errors |