

FINAL PROJECT

This project is a traditional written essay in which you will select a topic and write a comparative argument based only on primary texts. The essay proposal will deliver your initial thoughts on the topic and argument. This proposal needs to include your primary texts and how they will be used. The first draft is a necessary step in any writing project. It is the moment where you discover ideas and begin to formulate arguments. The final draft represents a full, complete argument that uses evidence effectively and discusses both the content and structural details from primary texts.

Phase I: Proposal (Due 10/31 – 300-500 words)

A proposal is the presentation of an idea that you wish to pursue. A good proposal presumes that you have already thought about your project and have devoted some time and effort in gathering information, reading, and then organizing your thoughts. A research proposal is NOT a project to be thrown together in one night with ideas off the top of your head. Thus, one might say that the proposal is a second step, following the selection of a broad topic.

The actual proposal will indicate what analytical question you wish to address. The foundation of a good essay is a good research question. Just as a tree needs a good root system to grow to be strong, a good essay needs a good analytical question. What does "analytical" mean? An analytical question can take different forms and no one form is necessarily better than others. What all analytical questions have in common is the fact that they are not merely descriptive. That is, an analytical question moves beyond the "what" and explores the "how," and the "why." A good analytical essay will use "the what" as part of the answer to "the why." But it is obligatory to address a question beyond the "what." For example, a descriptive paper would ask: "What was Gorbachev's economic perestroika policies?" An analytical paper would ask: "Why did Gorbachev's economic perestroika policies fail?" As part of the paper, you would then review what the policies were, but then you would go beyond that description.

Attach the proposal to an email (either as a Word or WordPerfect document). I will then comment on it and return it to you. No grade will be issued for the proposal; however, if you do not turn in a proposal *on time*, for each day that it is late, you will lose a grade step on the final essay grade.

Phase II: Draft (Due 11/14 – 1200-1500 words)

In this draft, you need to begin your **analysis** of the topic (through research or by comparing texts). In addition, you should use MLA Style in-text citation. If you aren't familiar with this, please see me. Consider it a formal piece of writing and check for grammar or spelling errors.

Phase III: Final Draft (Due 12/7 – 2400-3000 words)

All Phase III components will be submitted on paper and in person at the beginning of our last day of class without exception. Include a Works Cited with your essay.

Phase IV: Present to the Class (Due 12/8 – 5-10 minutes)

On the final day of class, each person will use 5-10 minutes to present his/her topic to the class. Failure to present will result in a failing grade on the entire project.

TOPIC CHOICES

We've covered many topics over the course of the semester, and many of you have expressed interest in unique topics. For this reason, we spent today brainstorming on topic ideas, something that you can take away with you today and begin work on. Remember that you must come up with some sort of comparative argument that can be explored in your project. To simply pick "femininity" is not enough. What is it about this topic that you'd like to explore? What texts will you use? (Avoid relying solely on lectures and class discussion to provide your insight into the texts.) For this topic, you must use at least two primary texts. No secondary criticism is necessary and I discourage you from looking at other scholars' assessments of the novels; it may taint you of your own opinion. If you would like to do some research, think about performing research on primary materials. We discussed this type of research today and the resources freely available to you.

DOING YOUR RESEARCH

There are many scholars who have much to say about the novels that we've been reading this semester. However, I'm not interested in what they have to say – I can read those. For your research, begin with the primary novel that you'd like to investigate. From here, you may decide that you need more background information. This comes in the form of primary and secondary sources: 1) primary sources are the actual publications that are contemporary to your novel's initial publication; this could include newspaper reviews, advertisements, paintings or author's letters/journals (e.g., Carroll's original *Alice* journal); 2) secondary sources are articles or books that provide a context to the period; for instance, research on child labor laws of the nineteenth century might be useful if you're investigating the role of children in *Old Curiosity Shop*.

To find primary resources, check the Online Resources for our course. There are many newspapers that have been digitized as searchable text as well as author's letters (see the British Library's *Turning the Pages* exhibit of Carroll's original *Alice* journals). Or, read through some of our authors' contemporaries for a different view of the period. You could even use our *Victorian Print Media* anthology, which is full of primary sources. The Web offers many, many resources but be careful of those non-scholarly Websites. Any encyclopedia or dictionary (unless it's the OED) are not good scholarly sources since they just report the facts.

FORMAT

All assignments need to be typed in 12pt font, double-spaced with one inch margins. Use the MLA style for in-text citations (parenthetical citation) and the MLA format for your Works Cited. Other requirements are listed below:

- Your name, the date, the course and section number should be typed at the top left-hand corner.
- Your name and the page number should be typed in the upper right corner of every page following the first page.
- Staple the pages together. (Do not fold or paperclip your pages.)
- Proofread everything before you turn it in. There should be no spelling or typographical errors.

Writing About Literature

For help with constructing your essay, narrowing your topic or doing research, see the following sites:

Writing About Literature: <http://www.wwnorton.com/litweb/writing/welcome.asp>

Writing a Literature Paper: <http://www.umd.umich.edu/casl/hum/eng/jonsmith/writing.html>