

Supplement to the Syllabus

Table of Contents

Topic	Page number
Taking Notes	2
Reading Poetry	2
Essay Format	3 - 4
Tips for Writing a Paper	5
Conventions in Literary Discussion	6
Grading Criteria	7
Common Grammar Errors	8
Computer Tool for Critical Analysis	8
Information about Tests	9
Oral Presentation	10
Paper Assignment	10 - 11
Explication Essay	12

Taking Notes

It is very important to take notes when you read. It will help you understand what you're reading, prepare for tests, and write your papers.

1. Mark anything that you don't understand.
2. If a word is unfamiliar, or used in an unfamiliar way in the text, mark it and look it up in a dictionary.
3. Mark anything that you think is important and write notes in the margins.
4. Note why you think an idea is important.
5. Note connections that you can make between what you see in the passage and what you've read before.
6. Note questions that the passage raises.
7. Note why you agree or disagree with the author.

Reading Poetry

- Read the poem silently and aloud, several times. Listen to the language and the rhythm of the words.
- Circle or underline words and phrases that seem important to you.
- Write in the margins what you think about the words you marked, what they make you feel.
- Write down words that you find confusing or don't understand and look up their meanings in a dictionary.

Then consider the following questions:

1. Is there a clear theme in the poem? How is the theme expressed and developed? Can you see a pattern in the words and images used? For example, do you see a lot of references to religion, sin, redemption, salvation, childhood, nature, power, etc.? (image -- a mental picture; a written description; a figure of speech; symbol; imagery -- images collectively)
2. Is there a story in the poem?
3. Who is the speaker of the poem?
4. What is his implied position in relation to his material?
5. Is there a stated and/or implied audience?
6. What effect do the poem's rhythms and sound patterns have on the movement, meaning or mood of the poem?
7. What is the tone of the poem -- serious? reverent? ironic? satiric? ambivalent? hostile? humorous? detached? witty?
8. What does the poem tell you about poetry, and how do you know?
9. Is there continuing relevance in this poem to twentieth-century experience?

Essay Format

(These guidelines are adapted from Dr. Toise's syllabus)

1. Papers should be typed; and the font should be 12 point and clearly readable.
2. Use 8 1/2 inch x 11 inch white typing paper.
3. Set 1 inch margins all around.
4. Use double spacing throughout.
5. Do not include a title page. On the first page, starting one inch from the top and flush with the left margin, type your name, my name (Professor Yen), the course number, and the date. Double space and center the title. Double space twice and begin the first line of your paper.
6. Staple the pages together.
7. Indent five spaces at the beginning of each paragraph.
8. Concentrate on developing your own reading and interpretation of the texts.
9. Do not include too many direct quotations; instead, try to paraphrase or summarize when you need to refer to ideas expressed in the text.
10. To quote one, two, or three lines of poetry, use a slash mark (/) to show line breaks. To quote more than three lines, set the quotation off as a block quote-- without quotation marks around it. Indent one inch from the left margin, keeping the capitalization and punctuation of lines as they appeared in the original poem. Introduce long quotations with some of your own language and follow the introduction with a colon.

For example:

A. Towards the end of Chaucer's "The Wife of Bath's Tale," the old hag gives the knight two "choices": "To have me old and ugly till I die,/But still a loyal, true, and humble wife,/That never will displease you all her life," or a seemingly more attractive option (291).

B. Towards the end of the story, the old hag gives the knight two choices:

To have me old and ugly till I die,

But still a loyal, true, and humble wife

That never will displease you all her life,

Or would you rather I were young and pretty

...

Which would you have? The choice is all your own. (Chaucer 291)

11. You are not required to include research for this paper, but if you use other people's ideas to help set up your argument, use the MLA format for documenting secondary sources, that is, use a works cited page and parenthetical citations. When you quote an author, follow the quotation with the writer's last name, a space, and then the page number on which the quotation was found.

For example:

Writing about Elizabethan sonnets and their connection to Italian originals, a prominent critic has recently drawn our attention to the specific achievements of the English translations: "Wyatt's debt to Petrarch is clear, but so is his deliberate and careful refashioning of the original poem, his transformation of transcendental idealism into exhaustion and bitterness" (Greenblatt 146).

12. At the end your paper, include a work cited list that is alphabetized by the author's name.

- On your last page, the words "Works Cited" in the center.
- Skip two lines and then list each of the works you have used in the essay.
- In an entry for a book, first type the author's name, followed by a comma, followed by the first name, and then a period. Then give the title of the book underlined or in *italics*. Follow this by a period. Then give the city of publication, followed by a colon ":". Then type the name of the publisher and a comma. Lastly, give the year of publication, followed by a period. At the beginning of each line of the entry that goes beyond the first, indent five spaces.

For example:

Works Cited

Abrams, M. H., gen. ed. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 7th ed. 2 vols. New York: Norton, 2000.

Chaucer, Geoffrey. "The Wife of Bath's Tale." *The Canterbury Tales*. Trans. Nevill Coghill. New York: Penguin, 1977.

Greenblatt, Stephen. *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.

Some Tips for Writing a Paper

I. Thesis:

In your introductory paragraph, don't just say that there are similarities and differences between the two texts that you have chosen to analyze and then proceed to list them. Try to make connections between your ideas. And consider what the main point of your paper is going to be.

It is generally easiest to put your thesis at the end of the first paragraph. But you could really put it anywhere you want—even in the conclusion. Just make sure that your paper includes a clear thesis, which could be two or three sentences long.

II. Development and Organization:

1. Topic sentences

It is helpful to write a topic sentence at the beginning of each paragraph to help you organize your ideas and determine how they are all going to fit together—within the paragraph. Generally speaking, a topic sentence is not a quote from the text, a statement of fact, or plot summary. It's more like a small "thesis" statement alerting your reader to what you are going to discuss in the paragraph.

2. Examples

Make sure that you have included examples which will support the claims that you make in your topic sentence. And then make sure that after you have cited the examples, you go beyond paraphrase or plot summary to analyze the passages—that is, explain their significance and what you think they mean and how you think they relate to your main point in each paragraph. Remember to use specific examples.

When you are considering particular passages to use for illustration, ask yourself specific questions such as the following:

- How does the passage illustrate how Chaucer portrays the Wife of Bath?
- How does the language used in the passage illustrate who the main target of Chaucer's satire is?
- Will an analysis of the passage enable me to make a point about Chaucer's main theme?

When you use quotations, remember to include one or more sentences to explain why you are using the quotation. In other words, why is the quote significant and what kinds of connections can you make between the quote and other ideas already discussed in the paper?

III. Planning and Proofreading:

Start writing your paper as early as possible; and proofread carefully before turning it in.

Some Conventions in Literary Discussion

1. Use present tense verbs for your discussion. Shift to other tenses only when logical to do so.

For example: "Geoffrey Chaucer **portrays** [present tense, third person singular] the Wife of Bath as a fiercely independent woman."

2. After the first reference, refer to the author by last name only. Usually, you should not make references to the author in the discussion; instead, refer to the speaker or to the poem itself.

For example: "**Chaucer** gives the Wife of Bath many character traits that surprise us"; or, "The Wife of Bath tells us that she has had five husbands."

3. When the speaker of the poem is unknown or unnamed, refer to him or her as "the speaker"; in other words, don't confuse author and speaker. You may use either the masculine or feminine pronoun in subsequent references unless the speaker's gender is apparent.

For example: "**The speaker** in Sir Thomas Wyatt's 'Whoso list to hunt' gives voice to the pain and frustration that lovers in Elizabethan sonnets often experience. The poem includes many instances of the paradoxical emotions that unrequited lovers often feel."

Don't say: "Wyatt expresses frustration with the game of courtship because he realizes that he can never get the girl-- she belongs to another man more powerful than he."

4. Avoid the second person pronoun (you) and direct references to readers.

Don't say: "**You** can really identify with the speaker when he uses vivid images and strong action words in his language."

Grading Criteria

	A	B	C	D or F
Clearly articulated thesis	The very best essays will address the topic clearly. It will contain a thoughtful and carefully articulated thesis.	Good essays will also address the topic clearly and include a clear thesis.	Less successful essays may not address the topic very clearly or contain a viable thesis.	An unsatisfactory essay does not address the topic or contain a thesis.
Adequate examples to support the thesis	It will include well-chosen examples taken from the texts that will be carefully focused to support the thesis.	It will also include examples, although its choice of examples to support the thesis may not be particularly appropriate.	It will include some examples from texts.	It may include some references to texts that are not yet connected to each other in a meaningful way.
Detailed analysis of examples	It will include detailed analysis of the examples.	It will include careful analysis of particular texts, although the discussion of the examples may not be well focused.	It will also include some analysis of those examples.	It may include some attempt at analyzing the examples, though clear connections between ideas are not yet evident.
Effective organization	It will be effectively organized.	It will be effectively organized.	It will demonstrate some effort in organization.	It does not appear to be organized.
Careful attention to mechanics of writing	It will be carefully documented and well polished.	It will be carefully written.	It will also show some care in the writing.	It contains an excessive number of typographical and grammatical errors.

Most common types of grammatical errors:

1. run-on sentences
2. sentence fragments
3. lack of agreement in number
4. faulty parallelism
5. unclear pronoun reference
6. misspelling
7. missing or misplaced commas
8. missing or misplaced apostrophes.

Written work for this course will be graded for:

1. Substantive content and clearly articulated thesis
2. Adequate examples to support the thesis
3. Detailed analysis of examples
4. Effective organization
5. Careful attention to mechanics of writing

For more help with writing your paper, please

- ask me
- consult any standard grammar book or Diana Hacker's *A Writer's Reference*
- consult the Writing Center at Harvard at <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~wricntr/html/tools.htm>; or the University of Wisconsin's online guide at <http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/DocMLA.html>.

How to access and use Professor Yen's computer tool for critical analysis:

1. Go to the faculty web page of Professor Yen, by opening Internet Explorer and pulling down the list of faculty web pages under Quick Links.
2. Go to the link [analysis] and click on it.
3. Download the program onto the Desktop of your computer by saving it, not just opening it. In the campus lab, you may have to replace the copy of the program on the computer if one was left there by other students.
4. Go through the program by following each of the seven steps.
5. You may click on the "Example" button to see sample work by a student at each step.
6. You may also click on the "Writing Center" button to go out to the WWW for some general help on writing.
7. Remember to save your work at each step of the process.
8. To make your text easier to work with, you may want to copy it into a Microsoft Word document. Select the text that you have generated by highlighting it, and press Ctrl-C (at the same time) to copy and Ctrl-V (at the same time) to paste into the Word document.
9. Save the Word document on your floppy disk.
10. Print out your work and come see me if you'd like some feedback.

Tests

The three tests are not cumulative.

In each test, you will be given three passages and you will choose two of them to answer. First, you will be asked to identify the author of the text, by giving his or her full name. Then, you will write two detailed essays that analyze the passages in which you develop your own interpretation without falling back on summarizing the plot or paraphrasing the language of the author.

The passages that will appear on the tests will be passages that we discuss or refer to in class, so your attendance and active participation in class are crucial for your success in the course.

Prepare for the tests by

1. reading the texts carefully-- at least three times
2. making notes as you read
3. taking the time to think about what the text means to you
4. considering why you agree or disagree with the ideas discussed in class
5. practicing your analytical and writing skills with the computer tool that you used for the explication essay

An excellent response would

- Focus on cited passage
- Go beyond paraphrase or plot summary
- Develop ideas by making connections between the passage and the rest of the text, i.e., provide:
 1. context of the passage
 2. analysis of the development of a common theme or idea
 3. insight into a character and his or her role
 4. relation to other themes in the text

Please bring small blue books for the tests.

Oral Presentation

(This assignment is adapted from work created by Dani Smith and Carla Mulford at Penn State.)

For the oral presentation, you will work with a partner to help jumpstart class discussion. I will pair you up with someone in class, but if you have a strong preference for completing your assignment on a certain author or date we can change your assignment.

You and your partner should each prepare a "Talking Point"-- that is, an issue, concept, event or set of events associated with the reading(s) that you think is important. Your presentation day is your opportunity to have the class talk about things that you think are significant. You and your partner will have a total of 10 - 20 minutes to lead class discussion.

Written part of the assignment:

1. Your "Talking Point" should be framed in the form of a question or a series of questions.
2. You should explain why the "Talking Point" is important and should be discussed in class.
3. You should attempt to answer the question(s) yourself.
4. You should devote one paragraph to each of the above 3 points.
5. You should turn in this written part of the assignment on the day you lead discussion, at the beginning of class.

To prepare for the presentation, you should:

1. meet with your partner two weeks before your presentation
2. read the introductory section of the text(s) in the textbook
3. meet with me if you are having difficulty with the reading
4. consider using "how," "why" and "in what ways" questions to elicit more complicated and interesting responses
5. consider making connections between your "Talking Point" and themes and ideas we've discussed in class
6. prepare some visual aids (optional)

Paper Assignment

Length: 4 - 5 pages

Due: in class, October 30, 2003

Your essay should be coherent and well organized. It should contain:

- an introductory paragraph
- a clearly articulated thesis
- detailed analysis of appropriate examples from the text(s) to support your thesis
- a conclusion which goes beyond a mere summary of ideas already discussed
- a title

Construct an outline before starting your first draft. The process will help you clarify your thesis and organize your ideas. Generally, it saves time and helps you articulate a strong argument more effectively. If you would like some help with your outline, feel free to stop by my office with the ideas that you're working with.

Pick any **one** of the following topics:

1. **Compare and contrast the representations of knighthood in "The Wife of Bath's Tale" and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.** Be sure to include a clear thesis in your essay; also remember to include plenty of detailed examples and analysis.

Suggested ways of addressing the question: Consider the experiences of each knight in the two stories and what the men may have learned from their "tests." How do the two texts represent the roles played by women in these men's stories? Do the two texts convey similar ideas about the chivalric code of honor?

2. **Compare and contrast the ways in which religion is represented in two medieval texts: the morality play *Everyman* and the spiritual autobiography *The Book of Margery Kempe*.** Be sure to include a clear thesis in your essay; also remember to include plenty of detailed examples and analysis.

Suggested ways of addressing the question: What kind of relationship does God seem to have with people in these texts? How would you describe the portrayal of God in each text? What appears to be the main purpose in each text?

3. **Compare and contrast the representations of sin and redemption in the plays *Everyman* and *Dr. Faustus*.** Be sure to include a clear thesis in your essay; also remember to include plenty of detailed examples and analysis.

Suggested ways of addressing the question: Do the two stories, one from the medieval period and one from the Renaissance, say similar things about the ideas of sin and redemption? What does each play suggest about the kinds of choices that a person has? What lessons do the main characters learn? Do the two texts appear to have similar or different purposes?

4. **Compare and contrast love poems written by two of the most important Renaissance poets: Shakespeare's Sonnets 18 and/or 130 and Donne's "The Flea" and/or "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning."** Be sure to include a clear thesis in your essay; also remember to include plenty of detailed examples and analysis.

Suggested ways of addressing the question: You may compare the two poems in terms of theme, imagery, tone, representation of the beloved or the idea of love, etc. Is one of the poems more effective than the others? In what ways?

Explication Essay

Length: 2 - 3 pages

Due: in class, September 16, 2003

For this assignment, you will be using a computer tool that is designed to guide you through the steps of analyzing a textual passage and writing a well-developed essay.

We will begin writing this essay in a lab session and you can finish your work outside class later. The computer program that we will be using for this assignment will include examples that should give you guidelines about my expectations. If anything is unclear about the assignment or the program, please ask.

Please bring a floppy disk to class, so you can save the various steps of your writing process to continue working on them later on.

Please analyze the following passage from Chaucer's "Wife of Bath's Tale":

You have two choices; which one will you try?
 To have me old and ugly till I die,
 But still a loyal, true, and humble wife
 That never will displease you all her life,
 Or would you rather I were young and pretty
 And chance your arm what happens in a city
 Where friends will visit you because of me,
 Yes, and in other places too, maybe.
 Which would you have? The choice is all your own.

Some questions to consider when you respond to this passage:

1. What is the context of the passage?
2. How does it contribute to our understanding of the characters involved here?
3. What is the choice that is made?
4. What does the question and the answer suggest in terms of how we are to interpret the text?

Your essay should be coherent and well organized. It should contain:

- an introductory paragraph
- a clearly articulated thesis
- detailed analysis of appropriate examples from the text(s) to support your thesis
- a conclusion which goes beyond a summary to make your point about what Chaucer's "The Wife of Bath's Tale" reveals to the reader about the medieval period.
- a title

Do not include unnecessary plot summary.

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