

Critical Methods Final Paper: Critical Approaches to the Novel

Due: Thursday 8 May, by noon, my mailbox or office (4th floor O’Leary Library)

This assignment asks you once again to develop your skills of close reading, both of primary sources (a novel) and secondary sources (at least two critical articles). Your paper will be a comparison of the two critical articles, in which you summarize, evaluate, and compare the different claims that the two critical articles make.

Choose either of the two novels that we’re reading for class: Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening* or Henry James’ *The Turn of the Screw*. Find one critical article that is NOT included in our editions of the novels. You should seek out an article that interests you from the library’s databases, and find a way to connect it with one of the articles that we’ve read for class. You might connect the articles by showing how they agree or disagree with each other, or how they offer conflicting or complimentary readings of the text, or the ways in which one article complicates the other. We’ll have a session with a librarian to help us identify appropriate sources. Here is a link to the library’s web guide made just for this assignment: <http://libguides.uml.edu/litcritmarshall>

Things to do (steps in the paper-writing process):

1. Choose a novel. Dig in and figure out what you might like to say about the novel.
2. Find an “outside” critical article that you like. We’ll work on this in our library session.
3. Find a good pairing with a critical article from class. You can choose ANY article that is listed on the syllabus (they are all in our critical editions).

Note that steps 2 and 3 are related – you might start by thinking about which article(s) you liked from class, and specifically seek out an article that is related to that. Alternately, you might seek out an article you really like, and then backtrack to find one of our class articles that would work well with it.

4. Craft an argument about the novel that connects with both articles in some way. You’ll have a thesis that is about the novel, and within the body of the paper, you’ll explain how these other two critics have talked about the novel, and connect those ideas to your own.

Within your paper, you will:

1. Make an argument about the primary text (the novel). This means that your paper’s thesis is ABOUT the novel.
2. Explain/summarize the approach & key points of both of the critical articles. This will need to be a part of your argument. So, for instance, you’re making an argument about the role of women in the novel, and these two articles also somehow deal with the role of women.
3. Respond to the two articles: this includes comparing/contrasting the different articles, but also weighing in yourself: what parts of these critical interpretations seem useful, important, or engaging, and what parts of these articles seem problematic, unsubstantiated, or otherwise lacking?

Formatting Guidelines:

- Aim for 1000-1400 words (this is longer than the previous paper). Unsure? Use the “Word Count” function in Word, under “Tools.”
- 12-point font size in Times New Roman (or similar font) with double-space & 1-inch margins
- Use MLA style for citations and for your “Works Cited” page (it need not be a separate page; just put it a few lines below the end of your final paragraph). There will be a minimum of three entries in your Works cited list: the novel, plus two critical articles. Please pay attention to these details.
- Your essay should have a title.

Before you begin, and as you're writing & revising, I strongly recommend that you review the following sections of our textbook: "Integrating quotations" on pages 184 – 185 and the "Glossary of Literary Terms," Appendix 5, pages 287 – 295, and that you review the comments on your previous two papers, as they will indicate some recurrent grammar/style/citation issues in your writing that you will want to be sure to improve for the final paper.

Your critical article **MUST** be one that you find through the University Library, whether in hard copy, through the Library's many databases, or through Inter-Library Loan. It needs to be an appropriate scholarly source. If you have any concerns about whether your article is appropriate, you should ask me. Link to the library's web guide again: <http://libguides.uml.edu/litcritmarshall>

Writing Style:

- Language and reasoning must be clear, logical and precise; in general, a paper should be written in the simplest and **clearest** prose you're capable of writing.
- Use **present tense** when discussing events in the story; use past tense when discussing actual historical events:
Example: Edna Pontillier experiences an awakening.
Example: The novel *The Awakening* was published in 1899.
- The author is NOT the same thing as the narrator and/or characters:
Example "Kate Chopin was born in..." vs. "The narrator of *The Awakening* claims that..."
- Always include page numbers according to MLA citation guidelines; pay special attention to quotes-within-quotes:
Example: Edna says, "I see Léonce isn't coming back" (26).
Example: Edna notices Mariequita; the narrator explains: "she was saucy the next, moving her head up and down, making 'eyes' at Robert and making 'mouths' at Beaudélet" (55).

Essay Structure:

Introduction: Get to the point right at the start of the paper.

- In *all* literary analysis essays, in the first paragraph (the introduction) you should *always* identify the **author(s)** and **text(s)** you are discussing and your **thesis**.
- Provide a sketch of the main ideas to be explored in the paper, including anticipation of its conclusions.
- The final sentence of the introduction should be your thesis, which should give the reader a "road map" to the paper's argument.

Paragraphs:

- Should be developed as self-contained, mini-essays discussing **one main idea** (stated in or near the first sentence)
- The body of the paragraph should offer **proof** and discussion of that idea
- The conclusion at end of paragraph should lead logically into the issue discussed in the next paragraph
- The paragraph should be well-developed – one or two sentences is NOT a paragraph
- Paragraphs should follow each other in such a way as to constitute a logical sequence of arguments leading up to certain conclusions at the end of the paper.

Conclusion: The end of the paper should include a paragraph where you wrap up your discussion. Bring together the different strands of your argument and discuss the implications (the "*so what?*") of your essay.