

Disability in Literature Final Paper/Presentation Project Information Packet

This rather hefty packet contains all the information you need regarding the final project for this course. Please ask if you have questions! And please start thinking NOW about what you'd like to work on for the project. The best projects come out of a student's genuine interest in the topic or text. Last-minute selections rarely work out well. I want to see you happy with your project (both because that's nicer for you AND because it usually results in a much better project for me to read). If you need advice on where to start or what to do, please ask!

For your final paper (in place of a final exam) for this course, you'll be helping me improve this course. You will need to find a disability-related piece of literature –fiction, non-fiction, poetry, drama, or graphic novel - - that you think should be included on our syllabus. Your final paper should make the argument for including this text in future semesters of this course. I'm letting you know about this now, so that you can keep your eyes open for possible texts. I am very eager for you to find a book that you like and that you care about so that you can enjoy this project and write a strong final paper.

Please do NOT use a text you have previously read (like something you read for another course); I'm asking folks to branch out and find something new. I will only allow one student to work on any particular text, so please come let me know when you've decided on something.

Your first step is to find an appropriate book that interests you. I am happy to help you do this, but I want to strongly suggest that you start this process now. Some questions that you might think about as you start this process include:

- Is there a particular disability that interests me?
- Is there a particular genre that I like – novels, non-fiction, poetry, drama?
- Is there a particular time period that I like reading about or would like to learn more about?
- Which texts have I enjoyed, and what aspect of them – style, form, content, topic, etc. – were important to me?

Book search sites – like Amazon – can often be helpful for this phase of the project. You can type in a topic or disability and often find a host of suggestions from booksellers and from other readers for books that will fit your particular angle.

I have a list of pre-approved titles available on my website; please check there for suggestions, or come talk to me. Our class notes & assignments can be found here:

<http://faculty.uml.edu/bmarshall/Dis%20Lit%20Notes%20Fall%202013.html>

Once you've chosen your text, you have two tasks: Create a PRESENTATION for the class, and write a FINAL PAPER about the text. There's a page for each of those parts, below. Please note, if you are interested in a different kind of project, turn to the last page of the packet for the "Final Project: Alternative Option" information.

1. PRESENTATIONS

Presentations will happen on Thursday December 5th and Tuesday December 10th (our last two class meetings). The main point of the presentations is to share what you've learned on your own with the rest of the class. At the time of the presentation, **you are not required to have finished reading the text**. Also, **you do not have to stand up in front of the class** (unless you wish to do so). The presentations can be relatively informal – basically, we sit in a circle and the presenter talks about the novel that he/she read. Here's what you need to do:

- Provide your classmates with a **roughly 5 to 6-minute presentation**. You'll be able to use what you have on your visual (see below) as a guide to your talk. You should go with what interests you most about the book. In part, you'll need some level of plot summary, as well as your own response or review (thumbs up, thumbs down, and WHY!). You might connect the book to other texts we've explored in class. You might even think about your presentation as a kind of advertisement for the book – why should people in the class read this? What are the “selling points” of the text? You might read a few relevant quotes from the text and talk about what's interesting/confusing/etc about the passage and the book. You can consider the presentation a forum for you to try out some ideas you may have for your final paper. You can even ask the class questions (who else had read it, who else knows about this particular disability, etc.). You could include some kind of audience interaction if you like (though obviously, it would have to be quite short!). Doing your own presentation and watching those of others should help to give you ideas for your own final paper, and help us all reflect on what we've learned through the course texts during the semester.
- Create some kind of visual for everyone in the class. Your “visual” can be all text – it need not be an image or work of art. Basically, it's something to help focus our attention, and to aid visual learners in the class. It also gives you something concrete to focus on in case you're nervous about presenting. Your visual might include basic publication data (title, author, date, etc.) and a short summary of the text. It might include an image of the book, or images related to it. It might include background information on the disability, or the author. The design and content of your visual should follow your own interests. You could include quotes from the text, create or find related images, offer bullet-pointed notes about the text, or explain how it connects with other texts we've read in the class. Here are some options for what form your “visual” might include (note that you **don't** need all of these – just one!):
 - A handout for everyone in the class (we have 18 students): You should bring enough copies of the handout so that everyone can have one. These could be just a half-page each; in any case, don't go over one double-sided page. Your handout might serve as a flyer or ad for the book, so that people remember to check it out after our class is over.
 - A poster: You could include images from or about the text, background information, or whatever kind of information you think would be useful. You can go small or large; it can be a poster that you hold at the front of the room, or we can pass it around so people can get a closer look.
 - A few Powerpoint slides: You should keep these to a small number (say, 5). Keep in mind that the presentations are short – you should not show up with 20 slides to get through! I will set up the computer for class. It does have internet (when it's working), so you can e-mail your slides to yourself. You might also want to bring your slides on a thumb drive. I'd also recommend that you bring one print out of your presentation as backup, just in case there's tech trouble (you can pass the slides around to show the class).
- On presentation days, I'll bring a timer to our session, and I'll cut people off at the 8-minute mark so that we're sure to have enough time for every student to present. After each presentation, we will (hopefully) have time to ask questions of the presenter, too. We'll need a bit of time at the start of each session to get the technology set up for everyone, and to get settled, but please, please, please be on time for these final three sessions so that no one's presentation is interrupted. On your own presentation day, particularly if you have technology, please try to arrive a bit early if possible.

2. FINAL PAPER

The final paper should be about 8-10 pages and focus on one disability-related text that is not on the syllabus. Your paper must make an ARGUMENT for inclusion. Why should we read this text in this course? This paper is not a plot summary; it should focus on an *analysis* of the text, including how it fits into the syllabus we currently have. Here are some of the things you should do in the paper (in no particular order here; however, you SHOULD develop an order that works for your own paper!):

- Thumbnail sketch of plot summary (a paragraph or so – really! Don’t do too much of this!)
- Your response/recommendation – what you liked or disliked about the text. BE SPECIFIC and explain why you had the reaction you did.
- Close reading of a few passages: You should have quotes (properly cited of course!!) from the text to illustrate your points and ideas. Just as you did with the response papers and mid-term paper, you will want to discuss the quotes – talk about the details and specific language in the quote.
- Connect the text to other texts in the course and to our discussions in the course. Where might this text fit into the current syllabus? What book might it replace? What teaching tactics or classroom activities might be well-suited to this text?
- Find at least one article about or review of the book (it could be positive or negative). This review should come from a UML library source. **More details on this appear on the next page of this handout.**
- A Works Cited list. This might include only the novel itself and your one additional source (article or review). Keep in mind that if you quote other books, you should cite them properly and include it in the Works Cited. And keep in mind that you should cite ALL material that came from outside sources; do not plagiarize!

Your paper must have a clear thesis. A thesis for this paper might look something like this:

- Novel X should be included the “Disability in Literature” course because it does X, Y, and Z.
- This memoir shows A, offers B, and questions C, making it an excellent pairing with “Text Q” on the syllabus.
- This text, which portrays A, B, and C, provides a perspective that is currently missing from the course.

The paper is due on Tuesday, December 17th, by noon. I welcome papers earlier than this date. You can put them in my mailbox in the English department office on the 4th floor of O’Leary Library. Please note that access to the English department is only during “regular” business hours; after hours, although the library is open, the English department area will be locked. You **can** leave your paper in the mail slot that goes to the English Department (in the hall on the 4th floor of O’Leary). I recommend that you e-mail me to let me know that you have delivered your paper. Note that I DO NOT accept final paper via e-mail. You need to turn in a hard copy by noon on Tuesday, December 17th. E-mail me with questions: Bridget_marshall@uml.edu

Please remember to cite all quotes – from your text, from your critical source, and from any other resources you use -- in MLA style, which also includes having a Works Cited list at the end of the paper. Please see the previous handout on MLA style, consult a handbook or website that explains MLA style, or ask for assistance if you don’t know how to use MLA style.

In the rush of the end of the semester, please be very careful about citing all material. The standard plagiarism policy for this course, which is detailed more thoroughly on the syllabus, includes FAILURE FOR THE COURSE if your paper includes plagiarism. Do not plagiarize.

Finding an outside source for the Disability in Lit Final Paper

A review on Amazon.com is not an appropriate scholarly source (even if it's the *New York Times* review being quoted there – you should find the original). Here's how you should go about finding an appropriate source:

- 1) Go to the UML Library website. You can do this on campus or from home. If you do it from home, you will need to first go to "Off Campus Users Login" and log in using your UML e-mail & password.
- 2) Click on "Databases" (in the left side column menu).
- 3) On the "Find Databases by Subject" page, you'll see a link for "Literature." Click it.
- 4) Start by searching for your book's title from this page. Try out a variety of searches:
 - Note that using the drop-down box beside the search box, you can choose to search the titles of the articles (which will most likely get you reviews of the book) but you can also search "Full Text" and "Key Word," which will probably give you more hits. Where the drop-down box says "author," that means the author of the article (not of your book), so that is probably not going to yield results.
 - You could try a search on the author of your book, using "keyword" or "full text." It's possible that you'll find an interview with the author that you might find useful.
 - Remember to put your title or your author's full name in quotation marks to be sure you're just getting hits for the title (or name), and not just for articles that have those words in them.
 - The library has automatically clicked three "recommended databases," but if you don't get any hits (or any that you like) try adding some of the other databases. I especially recommend the following:
 - Academic Search Premier
 - New York Review of Books
 - Contemporary Novelists

Some Likely Sources:

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| ▪ Publisher's Weekly | ▪ Kirkus Reviews | ▪ Times Literary Supplement |
| ▪ Booklist | ▪ The New York Times
Book Review | ▪ Interviews with authors |
| ▪ Library Journal | | |

If you're having a hard time finding an article on the UML Library site, drop me a line to let me know. It is possible that with newer books, or some lesser-known titles, there might not be a good source available through the library. In this case, I'll work with you to help determine an appropriate source. But please talk to me first before giving up on finding a good source!

Your source might agree or disagree with you. That's OK. I just want to be sure that at some point in your paper you let someone else weigh in on the book. It's fine if you use just one small quote from that source; it's also fine if you use three or four quotes from him/her. Be sure to avoid letting the other author overwhelm your paper (the paper should be your ideas).

You should properly introduce the quote, cite it, and follow up after it. Here are a couple examples of how to introduce (made-up) sources and follow-up after quotes from those sources.

Mr. Nasty Reviewer wrote in *Booklist* that "this book stinks! Don't buy it!" (23). I don't think Mr. Reviewer understood the importance of this issue. It's clear that *My Chosen Book* is very valuable.....

I think this book really reveals an important issue at the heart of disability. As Ms. Nice Review-Writer explained in *Library Journal*, "this book provides insight into the lives of young people struggling with the issue of disability X in a way that other texts haven't managed" (21). *My Chosen Book* provides shocking details about the experience of disability X in a young woman; it's distressing to read about.....

Final Project: Alternative Option

Since this course has a Service Learning element, I thought some of you might be interested in expanding your work in this area. I want to make sure you have options that will help you develop a project that you enjoy. The standard option for the final project involves a two-part final project centered around reading a piece of literature related to disability that is not on the syllabus, as described earlier in this packet. I imagine that this will work for you many of you, and it is actually a pretty enjoyable project. That said, I am also offering the opportunity for you to do a more extended version of the Service Project for your own final project, which may take a variety of forms. If you wish to do this, the Project must be with the Lowell Association for the Blind (because that's who we've been working with this semester). Based on the needs of the Lowell Association for the Blind, and your own interests and availability, you can develop a project that fulfills a need at the L.A.B. and provides you with a good learning experience. If you want to go this route, you should start thinking about that now, and we should meet soon to talk about what your project will be. If you wish to take this alternate route, you will still need to do some manner of presentation, and some manner of final write-up that you turn in. But the details of the project, and the specific form of the presentation and paper will be up to you (with some consultation with me along the way).

If you are interested in pursuing a different kind of project, here's what I will need from you:

1. **A project proposal:** This is about a 1-2 pages long, outlining what you will do and what your learning objectives are. This is due by November 8th so that we'll have time to review and discuss it. Earlier proposals are welcome!
2. **A project plan:** Once your proposal is approved, you'll need to develop a more detailed plan, that will include specific details of your "deliverables" – what exactly you will do, produce, and turn in and when. It should also include a rough rubric – how should this project be evaluated? What will constitute "success" for this project? You'll need to have a clear timeline for when you need to have tasks complete to keep on track with your project. This might include your plan for how many hours you'll put into this project in given weeks.
3. **A presentation:** you'll provide a presentation to the class (during one of our last two sessions) about what your project was. This will follow roughly the same format as the "regular" presentations on Thursday, 5 December and Tuesday, 10 December (the last two days of class).
4. **A final write-up:** the specific details of this are something that we will need to hammer out together. You'll need to think about this at both the proposal and planning stage. The final write up is due on Tuesday, 17 December, just like the regular papers.

If you think some kind of alternate project is what you want to do, please start thinking and talking about it now. That said, I believe that the "standard" format project is also a useful, engaging, and I dare say enjoyable one, so do take a look at this as a possibility, too: