

Research Paper: Requirements & Topics

Refer to Canvas and the Course Calendar for Due Dates for Topics, Bibliography, Drafts and Final Submissions

Requirements:

- ☑ **Write a 7-8 page essay.** Times New Roman 12pt or Calibri 11pt font, double-spaced. Include a *Works Cited* page, which will be in addition to your 7-8 pages. No cover pages or special folders are necessary.
- ☑ **The topic for this research paper MUST be a text**— a novel, short story, group of poems, graphic novel or play—or a creative work/works that you can ‘read’ as a text and analyze critically—this could potentially include visual art, songs, rap, graffiti, a film, a television episode or a fashion collection—any text of artistic or cultural significance, whether academic or popular culture. **Your research paper will be a critical analysis paper.** You *may not* write a biographical research paper on an author or a history or survey of a subject.
- ☑ This essay will not ‘take a side’ in the usual sense; rather it will explore your topic in-depth (through careful examination of the text), dwell in a range of complexities, entertain a set of questions, employ a critical approach and come to a conclusion (which may even be partly incomplete) about an aspect or interpretation of a work of literature.
- ☑ Your thesis needs to propose a connection between what the writer is trying to say, or the effect the text may or may not have on the reader, and how (and where) in the text the writer crafts and achieves (or is inconsistent with) this effect; you must focus on the text itself. Your thesis should *not* focus on the author’s biography or historical circumstances or consider any ‘what would happen if’ aspect of the plot.
- ☑ You must thoughtfully incorporate **at least four secondary sources**, in support of your critical analysis. These sources must be credible and academic, and in addition to your primary source(s), the text. Avoid relying too heavily on a single source, such that you begin to summarize one critic and ‘rewrite’ his or her essay. Find scholarly articles in the library’s subscription databases, and consider applying one of the theoretical frameworks in the back of the *Norton* (I will consider this a secondary source), or ask me for help finding a literary theory essay that would work well applied to your text. Also consider any craft essays written by the author or interviews of the author.
- ☑ Your paper must provide **textual evidence in support of your thesis and to develop your points.** Choose your quotes and paraphrase shrewdly. Don’t add material that sounds *good* or like it must be *important*, but is tangential; the quotes have to directly illustrate your points.
- ☑ Your paper should be error-free. Strive for writing that is clear and specific. You’re aiming for clarity + complexity. Use the templates in *They Say, I Say* to help you achieve rhetorical finesse. Avoid clichéd language, generalizations and absolute statements. Refer to the MLA style guide (there’s one in the Tutoring Center) or google your question or look on Perdue Owl’s Writing Lab website for any grammar or formatting questions. Go to the Tutoring Center, just go.
- ☑ Your paper should be written for an academic audience. Assume that your reader is familiar with the text and avoid plot summary accordingly. Maintain an academic tone throughout your paper, avoiding informal or conversational language. Do not address your reader as ‘you.’ You are not forbidden to use