

Reading Reflections

The main goal of these response papers is to give you the opportunity to think about how monstrosity is being defined and employed by a variety of different texts. Taken together, these responses will not only function as the backbone for several of our class discussions, they will also serve as a reading journal that could conceivably help you figure out a topic or angle for your Seminar Paper. To that end, you will not be responding to formal prompts constructed by me. Instead, you will be identifying and writing about questions, patterns, themes, etc., that interest and inspire you.

Each response paper should be between two and three pages, which means focus is key. You are not being asked to analyze a whole text here; you should approach these responses more as reflections of what you are thinking and/or curious about as you are reading. Is there a question raised by a text that is never effectively answered? Identify it and explore some of the more interesting potential answers. Is there a particular passage from a text that you found especially disturbing or illuminating? Point it out and offer insight into why. Does a text we've read for the day respond to or complicate an earlier text's conception of monstrosity in a provocative way? Put the two in conversation with each other. Etc.—you get the idea. Your responses should be grounded in specifics from the texts in question, but you should also feel free to make connections between the topic you're exploring and other texts, cultural phenomena, and/or historical occurrences.

Objectives

- To begin thinking critically about monstrosity as a scholarly discourse.
- To apply your close reading and critical thinking skills to articulate your reaction to a particular text's or texts' depiction of monstrosity.
- To start cultivating your own professional, academic writing style.

Requirements

- These essays should be 2-3 pages, double-spaced. Coming in at just under two pages—say, one sentence short of a second page—is probably fine. Coming in at one page or less is not fine, and your grade will reflect this. On a related note, if you need a little over three pages to effectively argue your position, take them. I do not, however, want to read a four-page paper that can and should have been a two-page paper.
- Your essay should have 1" margins and be in Times New Roman or another standardized, easy to read font. Your font size should be 12 point.
- Your essay should include a bibliography that lists the texts with which you are engaged in correct MLA format. See the resources listed on the syllabus or come and talk to me during office hours if you need a refresher on what correct MLA 8 or 9 format might be.
- You should submit your work as a word file (.doc or .docx) or pdf (.pdf) to the appropriate Assignment folder on CourseDen. If you submit another file format that I cannot open, your work will be considered late and subjected to the late policy outlined on the syllabus.
- The due dates for these papers are as follows: August 23, August 30, September 8, and September 27. All responses are due **before** class starts so that they may be used as part

of class discussion on the dates they are due. You do not need to write a response for the day you are scheduled to lead discussion.

- If you are focusing on a single text, that text should be drawn from the readings due on the same date as the response itself. If you want to discuss two texts, one should be from the readings due on the same day as the response, but the other can be drawn from any group of readings up to that response paper's due date.

Things to Consider

- Analyze, do not just summarize. You might very well need to provide a general overview of a particular episode or example in order to contextualize your specific point for your readers. If, however, you are simply retelling a familiar narrative, you are not writing an effective response paper.
- You will need to engage the text(s) you are writing about in specific and meaningful ways. This means that you will be citing said texts as evidence, and you will be citing them in the correct MLA format.
- Remember, nobody is inside your head except you, and you cannot assume that your readers will respond to a text the same way that you did. You need to walk your readers through your thinking by effectively using textual examples that help them understand where your ideas are coming from. Simply put, don't just tell us, "show" us.

Grading Criteria

I will look for and grade your responses based on the following:

- The ability to articulate a thoughtful and thought provoking reflection on why/how monstrosity is being evoked in a text or texts of your choosing.
- The ability to construct focused ideas that clearly aid in the development of your overall response.
- The ability to successfully employ specific evidence to support your questions and ideas.
- The ability to articulate your ideas in controlled, error-free prose with correctly formatted citations.