Research Essays: 6-8 pages
The topics below are meant to give you ideas for your paper; YOU have to settle on a strong thesis and purpose for the essay. In the pre-writing stage, try answering the questions associated with a topic and see how that spurs your thinking. When you settle down to draft your essay do NOT attempt to provide answers to all the questions, or you'll end up rambling. Use the pre-writing stage to figure out what ONE idea you want to explore. However, you are NOT limited to this list. If there's a topic you want to develop on your own, feel free to do so, though it's wise to run it by me first.

Be prepared/willing to read around your topic—historical, cultural, medical, literary, biographical research will be necessary in order for you to thoroughly understand your topic and write an effective analysis (as in: do the research). Any sources you use should be cited carefully and correctly using MLA citation format (other citation formats are acceptable—don't make one up). I will take 5 points off for incorrect citations. **You must use a combination of at least 8 primary and secondary sources** (primary = novels, short stories, poems, plays, memoirs, biographies; secondary = literary criticism and reviews, history, non-fiction commentary and analysis, peer-reviewed research).

Do not: 1) summarize what we've discussed in class—try to find something new; or 2) write a history paper or case study.
For grading criteria, refer to the Rubric for Argument Synthesis.

1. Some of the works we've studied this semester portray physicians or the health care system in a negative or critical light. Many also to suggest a doctor/patient relationship that is adversarial and/or condescending, even contemptuous—but is that really what's going on? Who are the protagonists/antagonists in these stories? Is anyone actually heroic? Why do we like stories about doctors who are both highly competent, and highly contemptuous of their own patients? Why do so many authors/storytellers portray physicians as threats (or choose your terms: dangerous, unstable, callous)? Why might we enjoy such portrayals? Discuss, using 3-4 examples.
2. Various aspects of identity play a major role in the progress of our physical health, in the treatment of it, and in our mental health. Choose an aspect of identity and a work that explores it and examine the social conditions that play a role in how it manifests, how it's stigmatized, and how it's treated by health professionals and by others. Some examples are gender, race, sexuality, disability, fatness, transgender, etc.
3. How do literary portrayals reflect society's collective needs/fears/desires about health and the body?
4. How do authors use illness experiences as a means of providing social critique—about the way our culture stigmatized people according to race, class, sex, particular illness (physical or mental)? How can narrative about illness or medical practice be used as a way of critiquing the health care system?
5. How is mental illness portrayed in literature? How do authors use literary techniques and narrative structure—plot, character, setting, point of view, figurative language, metaphor

—to represent or comment on the experience of mental illness and/or give it more symbolic meaning?

6. You are not limited to these topics: you are free to explore anything you connect to the literature in an essay.

For Research Essays:

1. Choose your topic;
2. Strategize about research. Investigate e-brary and Expanded Academic Index/Academic OneFile (MCPHS), www.scholar.google.com; MLA Bibliography and J-Stor at COF libraries (Simmons is a good choice). If you're not sure what primary sources to use: you might start be researching the *topic* and see what other experts have said on the subject, including the primary sources they've used.
3. Remember that this is a literary analysis, not a history paper—the focus (your primary sources) must be literary or popular culture texts (novels, short stories, poems, plays, memoirs, etc.). You might use certain autobiographies.