

Analytical Paper: Engaging the Monstrous

Over the first few weeks of class we have discussed a variety of different definitions of monstrosity, as well as how these definitions are or are not useful tools for making sense of several fictional depictions of the monstrous or non-human (as well as the human). For this paper, you will be extending this dialogue to analyze one of the texts—written or cinematic—that we have discussed in more detail.

Your primary goal is to produce an engaging argument about the function of the monstrous in your chosen text; you should not, therefore, simply be summarizing the text or describing the monsters you chose to analyze. Put another way, you are being asked to consider not just **how** the monstrous is evoked or depicted, but also **why** the monstrous is evoked or depicted in the first place. Questions you might consider while constructing your argument include: what does your text's depiction of monstrosity tell us about its larger textual aspirations? How does this particular monster contribute to or complicate our understanding of the monstrous and/or the human? Why should anyone interested in monsters familiarize him/herself with your text? Keep in mind, you do not need to answer all of these questions in your essay; they are simply meant to help you get started in your thinking processes. There are plenty of other questions you might strive to answer in your essays as well. Just remember that your main goal is advance a claim about why understanding a particular monster in a specific way—YOUR way—provides new insight into the text you are analyzing.

Objectives

- To enter the scholarly discourse on monstrosity in a rhetorically sophisticated manner.
- To apply your analytical and critical thinking skills to the development of your own focused, audience-friendly argument.
- To practice using evidence to successfully argue a specific position.
- To continue cultivating your own professional, academic tone.

Guidelines

- These essays should be 3-4 pages, double-spaced. Coming in at just under three pages—say, one sentence short of a third page—is probably fine. Coming in at 2.5 pages or less is not fine, and your grade will reflect this. On a related note, if you need a little over four pages to effectively argue your position, take them. I do not, however, want to read a six-page paper that can and should have been a four-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 and your pages should be numbered. Make sure you give your paper a creative title, too.
- Your essay should include a bibliography that lists the texts with which you are engaged in correct MLA 8 or 9 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.
- These papers are due by midnight on Thursday, September 16th.

Things to Consider

- To make a convincing argument you will need to engage the text 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.
- Put another way, analyze, do not just summarize. You might very well need to provide a general overview of a particular episode or dialogue in order to contextualize your specific point for your readers. If, however, you are simply retelling a story, you are not writing an analytical paper.
- It is possible to rely too much on textual evidence in much the same way that it is possible to rely too little on it. For every piece of quoted or paraphrased evidence that you mention, you should have at least two sentences in your own voice; at least one of which will introduce the evidence to your audience in an accessible manner (punctuation counts here, so review it!), while another will make clear what you think the larger significance of that evidence is.
- 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. Do not just tell your readers what you think; show them why you think what you think.
- You may expand upon one of the topics from a reading response if you are so inclined. If you go this route, though, keep in mind that your final paper must exhibit a significant amount of new material that will most likely necessitate a reworking of your response. In other words, do not assume you can just add two pages to what you have already written and call it a day.

Grading Criteria:

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

- The ability to formulate an engaging argument that includes a thoughtful “reading” of the function of monstrosity in your text.
- The ability to construct focused ideas that clearly aid in the development of your argument.
- The ability to successfully employ specific evidence to support your ideas.
- The ability to articulate your ideas in controlled, error-free prose with correctly formatted citations.
- The ability to effectively engage your audience, who may or may not agree with your take on the text in question.