

Assessment Guidelines
ENG2326 Fiction and Film
Fall 2022

Examination

The final grade is set on the basis of:

- a written term paper of 6-8 standard pages (2,300 characters each, not counting Works Cited; 60% of the grade)
- a short take-home exam (2 hours; 40% of the grade).

Requirements and details are given below.

It is required to pass both parts of the exam individually, and both parts must be taken in the same semester.

2-hour Take-home Exam (40%)

Each response for the take-home examination will be marked holistically, with no specific percentage of marks for any one aspect within each response. The marker will thus be making an overall judgement of the quality of each answer as a whole. Weaknesses in one area may be compensated for by particular skill in another, and vice versa. Independence of thought and evidence of analytical ability will be rewarded. Significant problems in structure, analysis, and/or language can result in lower grades.

Key elements for each response will be given after each prompt.

Part I consists of one response (50% of the take-home exam, 20% of the overall grade)

Part II consists of one response (50% of the take-home exam, 20% of the overall grade)

Instructions

Choose only ONE passage in EACH section below to write about (TWO passages TOTAL).

I. Close Reading

Choose ONE of the following passages. Identify the text (full name of author and title) from which it is taken. What is significant about the way the passage is written? What is significant about the ways this passage relates to the text as a whole? How does it relate to cultural critique? Your answer should be 1-2 pages (approx. 2300 characters/page, including spaces).

A.

The christening party was coming up the path, the old man, now wearing a stole, shepherding them with small cries of encouragement. There were two middle-aged women and two older men, the men soberly dressed in blue suits, the women wearing flowered hats, incongruous above their winter coats. Each of the women was carrying a white bundle wrapped in a shawl beneath which fell the lace-trimmed pleated folds of christening robes. Theo made to pass them, eyes tactfully averted, but the two women almost barred his way and, smiling the meaningless smile of the half-demented, thrust forward the bundles, inviting his admiration. The two kittens, ears flattened beneath the ribboned bonnets, looked both ridiculous and endearing. Their eyes were wide-open, uncomprehending opal pools, and they seemed unworried at their confinement. He wondered if they had been drugged, then decided that they had probably been handled, caressed and carried like babies since birth and were

accustomed to it. He wondered, too, about the priest. Whether validly ordained or an impostor--and there were plenty about--he was hardly engaged in an orthodox rite. The Church of England, no longer with a common doctrine or a common liturgy, was so fragmented that there was no knowing what some sects might not have come to believe, but he doubted whether the christening of animals was encouraged. The new Archbishop, who described herself as a Christian Rationalist, would, he suspected, have prohibited infant baptism on the grounds of superstition, had infant baptism still been possible.

- **P. D. James, *The Children of Men***
- **early in novel, Theo observing how desperate people have become because no new births: christening cats now**
- **key elements: dystopian world so bad that even Church of England has gone wrong, even if this is a rogue priest; the Archbishop is a rationalist (traditional Xty. seen as superstition)**
- **significance: critique of world where culture has decayed, porn shops, etc.; revived C of E as answer in the end of novel, includes Theo saying the Common Prayer, taking it on; therefore conservative critique? vs. other aspects: authoritarian government, anti-immigrant, etc.**

B.

But let me be serious. I wish, as the title of my little chat implies, to consider some of the problems associated with the *soi-distant* manuscript which is well known to all of you by now, and which goes by the title of *The Handmaid's Tale*. I say *soi-distant* because what we have before us is not the item in its original form. Strictly speaking, it was not a manuscript at all when first discovered, and bore no title. The superscription "The Handmaid's Tale" was appended to it by Professor Wade, partly in homage to the great Geoffrey Chaucer, but those of you who know Professor Wade informally, as I do, will understand when I say that I am sure all puns were intentional, particularly that having to do with the archaic vulgar signification of the word *tail*; that being, to some extent, the bone, as it were, of contention, in that phase of Gileadean society of which our saga treats. (*Laughter, applause.*)

This item--I hesitate to use the word document--was unearthed on the site of what was once the city of Bangor, in what, at the time prior to the inception of the Gileadean regime, would have been the State of Maine. We know that this city was a prominent way-station on what our author refers to as "The Underground Femaleroad," since dubbed by some of our historical wags "The Underground Frailroad." (*Laughter, groans.*) For this reason, our Association has taken a particular interest in it.

- **Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale***
- **end of novel: historical postscript, academic conference from the future, looking back at supposed recordings that form the basis of the novel**
- **key elements: sexism/chauvinism in the jokes and comments; looking back at what happened to the U.S. (Gilead takeover); potential for conservative takeover in near future; cf. abolition/Underground Railroad; what will we do about it?**

II. Adaptation Analysis

Choose ONE of the following passages. Identify the text (full name of author and title) from which it is taken. What is significant about the passage? How is it similar and/or different from related parts of the film/TV adaptation? How does this difference relate to cultural critique? Your answer should be 1-2 pages (approx. 2300 characters/page, including spaces).

A.

You're talking crazy.

No, I'm speaking the truth. Sooner or later they will catch us and they will kill us. They will rape me. They'll rape him. They are going to rape us and kill us and eat us and you won't face it. You'd rather wait for it to happen. But I can't. I can't. She sat there smoking a slender length of dried grapevine as if it were some rare cheroot. Holding it with a certain elegance, her other hand across her knees where she'd drawn them up. She watched him across the small flame. We used to talk about death, she said. We don't any more. Why is that?

I don't know.

It's because it's here. There's nothing left to talk about.

I wouldn't leave you.

I don't care. It's meaningless. You can think of me as a faithless slut if you like. I've taken a new lover. He can give me what you cannot.

Death is not a lover.

Oh yes he is.

Please don't do this.

I'm sorry.

I can't do it alone.

Then don't. I can't help you. They say that women dream of danger to those in their care and men of danger to themselves. But I don't dream at all. You say you can't? Then don't do it. That's all. Because I am done with my own whorish heart and I have been for a long time. You talk about taking a stand but there is no stand to take. My heart was ripped out of me the night he was born so don't ask for sorrow now. There is none. Maybe you'll be good at this. I doubt it, but who knows. The one thing I can tell you is that you won't survive for yourself. I know because I would never have come this far. A person who had no one would be well advised to cobble together some passable ghost. Breathe it into being and coax it along with words of love. Offer it each phantom crumb and shield it from harm with your body. As for me my only hope is for eternal nothingness and I hope it with all my heart.

- **Cormac McCarthy, *The Road***
- **(John Hillcoat, dir.)**
- **flashback to mother contemplating suicide, doing it; recalled via focalized man**
- **key elements: language (faithless slut, whorish heart); misogyny/blame vs. man sacrificing for boy; world so dystopian that she didn't want to have child, better to kill yourself than be raped/eaten**
- **“some passable ghost”: what is it that keeps you going in the right way? is it all fake? critiqued via “carrying the light”, Xty., etc.? (“ghost” not belief, core, etc.)**
- **vs. film version: more scenes in film, including giving boy a bath before she commits suicide; film removes language (slut/whorish); she is more sympathetic? but also still blamed vs. nuclear family at end; which version is more conservative?**

B.

The train finally begins to slow and suddenly bright light floods the compartment. We can't help it. Both Peeta and I run to the window to see what we've only seen on television, the Capitol, the ruling city of Panem. The cameras haven't lied about its grandeur. If anything, they have not quite captured the magnificence of the glistening buildings in a rainbow of hues that tower in the air, the shiny cars that roll down the wide paved streets, the oddly dressed

people with bizarre hair and painted faces who have never missed a meal. All the colours seem artificial, the pinks too deep, the greens too bright, the yellows painful to the eyes, like the flat round discs of hard candy we can never afford to buy at the tiny sweet shop in District 12.

The people begin to point at us eagerly as they recognize a tribute train rolling into the city. I step away from the window, sickened by their excitement, knowing they can't wait to watch us die. But Peeta holds his ground, actually waving and smiling at the gawking crowd. He only stops when the train pulls into the station, blocking us from their view.

He sees me staring at him and shrugs. "Who knows?" he says. "One of them may be rich."

- **Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games***
- **(Gary Ross, director of film)**
- **coming into the Capitol for the horrific games, kids to kill each other for entertainment, history of the games as punishment for rebellious district**
- **passage esp. at class differences, glittering city, rich people who have never been hungry, artificial colors like candies the poor can't afford, Peeta explicitly at attracting patronage from rich people**
- **very brief in book vs. longer and striking sequences in film: glittering city**
- **leering camera work in film at colors/exotic toward gender bending, all vaguely "queer", more than emphasis on class; (therefore more conservative as critique of city gone awry via non-traditional gender roles (supposedly), cf. making Katniss masculine in order to survive, can't be "normal" girl**
- **Katniss joins Peeta at the window in the film, vs. just sickened by it in book**

PAPER ASSIGNMENT

Papers Due: Friday, 2 December, 2022, by 11:00 (Inspira)

Assignment

Choose one pair of texts we have studied in this course (a novel and its film/TV adaptation). Which one do you think is more effective as a form of cultural critique? Which specific kinds of critiques are addressed by both, perhaps in different ways, but more effectively in one, from your perspective? How might you persuade those who would argue instead for the other? In order to complete this assignment, it will be necessary to compare and contrast each text, as well as take into account various ways that each text could itself be critiqued. The primary task, however, is to develop a persuasive academic argument, supported by evidence from both texts, as well as engaged with relevant historical and cultural contexts.

Requirements

- Papers must be 6-8 pages of text (a standard page consists of 2,300 characters), not counting the Works Cited page;
- Follow MLA guidelines for in-text citations, style, format, and Works Cited, as well as how to avoid various kinds of plagiarism, which is strictly forbidden;
- Papers should be typed, 1.5 line spacing, with 2.5 cm margins, 12 pt. Times New Roman font, with no extra spaces between paragraphs;

- Proofread (very carefully) to avoid grammar and spelling errors;
- Submit your paper via Inspira.

Suggestions

- Begin with a brief title that suggests something that might catch the attention of your intended audience, while also indicating what the paper addresses.
- Read and engage with the theoretical fields discussed by Robert Dale Parker in *How to Interpret Literature* (a recommended text for this course); you may cite his summaries and you may also engage directly with sources he describes.
- Read and engage with the concepts discussed in Ed Sikov's *Film Studies* (recommended text); use this book for information about how to write about various formal aspects of film.
- Read and engage with Jakob Lothe's *Narrative in Fiction and Film* (recommended text) for help with terminology and concepts related to narrative theory and adaptation.
- Optional independent research: engage with peer-reviewed journal articles and/or books published by university or academic presses that discuss your text or issues relevant to it.
- Focus on something that is interesting and important to you; which debates and arguments do *you* want to engage?

Optional feedback: submit your ideas for a paper topic by 12:00 noon on 25 Oct. (Canvas)

Term Paper Assessment

Essays will be marked holistically, with no specific percentage of marks for any one aspect. The marker will thus be making an overall judgement of the quality of the piece of work as a whole. Weaknesses in one area of the criteria may be compensated for by particular skill in another, and vice versa. Independence of thought and evidence of analytical ability will be rewarded. Significant problems in structure, analysis, and/or language can result in lower grades.

Good:

1. Work at the highest levels will present a problem statement which is argumentative, specific and substantiated (there is evidence to support it).
2. The problem statement assumes the form of an argument which can consist of several linked questions. There is a link between problem statement and title, and between problem statement and discussion.
3. The essay has a clear structure. The student considers the flow of the argument from paragraph to paragraph and sustains the argument throughout. The various points made are relevant to the problem under consideration in the essay.
4. The essay engages in detailed analysis, developing a critical argument about discourses of speciesism, racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism, or other oppressive frameworks. The student manages to present and develop his/her own ideas.

5. The essay is written in formal English of a high standard, with no mistakes of grammar or spelling.

Average:

1. Includes a problem statement, which assumes the form of an argument and is for the most part sustained throughout.
2. The essay adopts a clear structure and the points made are relevant to the problem under consideration throughout.
3. The essay engages in analysis, and demonstrates some awareness of the situatedness of the texts in question. It presents and to some extent develops the student's own ideas.
4. The essay is written for the most part in correct English, with only minor mistakes of grammar or spelling.

Poor:

1. The student's problem statement is excessively general or vague, or lacks substantiating evidence.
2. The structure lacks logic, and the points made are occasionally irrelevant to the problem under consideration.
3. The essay rarely engages in analysis, limiting itself to paraphrases of the texts in question. There are few ideas presented by the student.
4. There are errors in grammar and spelling, though these do not prevent understanding of the essay text.

Unacceptable:

1. The essay lacks a problem statement.
2. The structure is illogical and confusing. The points made lack relevance.
3. The essay lacks analysis, simply providing more or less adequate paraphrases of the texts in question.
4. The essay is poorly written with numerous errors of grammar and spelling.