

EN200: Foundations of Literary Studies

4 Credits * Spring 2022

Professor: Dyani Johns Taff
Class Time: TR 9:30-10:45 am
Class Location: Lovejoy 205

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Office Hours: M 12-2 & By Appt.



Paintings of Circe by Dosso Dossi and John William Waterhouse; from <https://eclecticlight.co/2018/01/29/changing-stories-ovids-metamorphoses-on-canvas-72-scylla-transformed/> (see another below and more at the site!)

Course Description

The central purpose of this course is to introduce you, as per the title, to the foundations of literary studies; that is, our task will be to discuss and practice how to read and write about literature according to the conventions of the academic discipline of literary studies. To approach this task, we will read widely across the various kinds of literature—poetry, drama, novels—written in English in time periods from the medieval to the twenty-first century. We will define key disciplinary terms and concepts and put them to use in analytical close readings of our texts. We'll consider some authoritative answers to the question "What is Literature?" and we'll attempt some answers of our own.

I want to explore with you not just *how* to read literature but also *why* we might want or need to do so. Is literature transformative? If so, how does that transformation happen? Is it mysterious and magical or just a trick? What are writers after when they depict alchemy, an old science (that is, *scientia* or method of knowledge) preoccupied with the transformation of one thing into another? Is reading or writing like that? What can we *do* with literature and what does it do to—or with—us? With "transformation," what other trans* ideas might literature enable us to feel or experience or describe?

Texts

The following required books are available at the Colby College Bookstore. **Please buy these editions in hard copy (not ebook) as soon as possible.** We will use introductions, notes, and additional materials that are only available in these editions; use the ISBN to double check that you have the right version. **If you have trouble locating or paying for these books, contact me and I can help.**

- Madeline Miller, *Circe*, Back Bay Books, 2020, ISBN: 9780316556323
- Ben Jonson, *The Alchemist*, ed Elizabeth Cook, Bloomsbury, 2010 ISBN: 9781408110201
- Toni Morrison, *Beloved*, Vintage, 2004, ISBN: 9781400033416
- Ali Smith, *How to Be Both*, Anchor, 2015, ISBN: 9780307275257

All other readings will be available as PDFs on our Moodle/Perusall. Since we will write frequently in this course, I recommend buying a book about writing. My two favorites are Graff and Birkenstein's *They Say / I Say*, 4th edition (ISBN: 9780393631678) and Trimble's *Writing With Style*, 3rd edition (ISBN: 978-0205028 80). The [Purdue Online Writing Lab](#) and the [Colby College Library "All About Citations" Guide](#) are excellent, free resources for citation, grammar, and writing help.

Grading System

I will employ a labor-based grading contract system to arrive at your course grade. This system is based on research by scholars including Asao Inoue and Cathy Davidson about how to create equitable, socially just writing classrooms.¹ Their insights apply not only to writing classrooms but also to ones like ours in which we will write in order to pursue our humanistic studies; my goal is to create a classroom in which you feel comfortable taking risks, exploring and being brave about new ways of speaking, reading, and writing, and even experiencing failure: these are key aspects of the process of learning. A labor-based grading contract system enables these experiences by emphasizing process over product and allowing us to build a compassionate classroom community.

On our Moodle site, you will find our starting point: a draft contract for the course. During our first week, we will discuss, negotiate, and agree on the terms of this contract together, relying on the work of experts as well as our own sense of what will work for our community. We will pause mid-semester to return to our contract, reflect on our work so far, and make any necessary changes.

Assignments

The assignments for this course, **described in detail in the Appendix below**, are the work—the labor, the *doing*—that I will ask of you this semester. For the purposes of your grade, which is based on the labor you complete, all of the assignments both big and small are equally important.

¹ A few great texts on labor, equity, and grades in the writing classroom are: Cathy Davidson, *Now you see it: How technology and brain science will transform schools and business for the 21st Century* (New York: Penguin, 2011); Asao Inoue, *Labor-based grading contracts: Building equity and inclusion in the compassionate writing classroom* (Fort Collins, Colorado: The WAC Clearinghouse and University Press of Colorado, 2019); and Alfie Kohn, "The case against grades" (*Educational Leadership* 69.3, 28-33, 2011). If you have questions or want to read more, get in touch!

You will receive feedback from both me and your peers on your work and we will use assignments that you complete outside of class to shape our in-class work. We will talk about what it's like to *do* the work for this class and how that doing is impacting your practices and progress in your learning. **We'll also take time to reflect on and adjust these assignments as necessary.**

- **Participation:** In order to create and sustain a compassionate community, we all need to commit to preparing for class, showing up, and attending to what members of our community (students and professor) say and ask of us. During our sessions, you will engage in discussion, reading aloud, freewriting, group work, and other activities.
 - **Masking:** I have small children and a high-risk parent at home; although we are all vaccinated, the Omicron variant still puts us all at risk. Given this situation, I will require us all to wear masks when we are in person together in class or in my office. We can meet outside (weather permitting!) for one-on-one meetings without masks. If the community transmission rates in Maine decrease significantly, we can discuss a change to this policy.
 - **Alternative Attendance:** All of our lives are complicated and subject to radical uncertainty because we are STILL living through a global health crisis. If, for any reason at all, you are unable to attend one or more of our class sessions, you may engage with our course records—the class notes document, powerpoints, jamboards, etc.—and then write a ~200 word response in the class notes document, commenting on our discussion, providing new or illuminating examples from our texts, posing new questions, and so on. These responses will count as participation for the relevant class sessions.
 - ***We'll need a critical mass of folks in class each week. Participating asynchronously (after class has happened) will mean that you will miss out on group work and real-time insights. **Please prioritize synchronous, in-person participation**, but use this option as a back-up whenever you need to.
- **Required Assignments:** See the Appendix for details.
 - **Labor Log Entries:** documenting and reflecting on your work habits.
 - **Passages and Questions (P&Qs):** brief writing assignments due before most classes.
 - **Three short essays:** 700-800 word explorations and close readings of our texts. Essay 1 will go through a draft and peer review process before you turn in the final version.
 - **Writing Meetings:** three meetings: will meet one on one to discuss each essay.
 - **Discussion Leadership:** practicing research skills and presenting what you have found to the class with the goal of sparking discussion.
 - **Final Portfolio:** a culmination of our work together, including a reflective cover letter, a statement about what literature is, 1-3 artifacts of coursework, and a substantially revised essay (either one expanded essay or two essays combined and polished; 7-10 pages) that makes use of 1-3 scholarly sources.

Late Work

Once more: we are still living through a global health crisis. Everything can change, rapidly; communication is key! The grading system gives us a cushion for late assignments and missed class days if you find yourself in crisis mode (for any reason, big or small, internal or external), but if you will need to miss or turn in late assignments beyond that agreement, get in touch and we can find a solution together.

As a general rule, though, please turn in all work by the due dates listed in the syllabus and assignment directions on Moodle/Perusall. I have designed those due dates with our class community in mind. For example, your passages and questions are due *before* class so that we can use them during discussion; your drafts are due such that your peers have time to read and comment on them before turning to new material. If your work is late, you rob us of the time to think carefully about your contributions, and you rob yourself of the thoughtful responses we might otherwise be able to provide you with. For these reasons, **late work will count against your ability to fulfil our grading contract. Keep our community in mind and plan your work schedule accordingly.**

Office Hours and Email

I love working one-on-one with students when you are excited about the material, when you are struggling, when you have quick questions, when you don't know what you need, and so on. My regular, weekly office hours are scheduled so that you can help me to help you and get to know you. For in-person meetings in my office, please wear a mask. We can also meet via zoom or (weather permitting) find somewhere to sit together outside.

To arrange an appointment outside of regular office hours, please email me with your availability. When I send you a time to meet, be sure to respond to confirm the meeting. I am happy to arrange appointments via e-mail and answer short questions about course topics; longer discussions will be easier via zoom or in person. After you have finished reading this syllabus, email your favorite meme, .gif, or cute animal video (ideally literature related) to me at dtaff@colby.edu. By doing so, you prove both that you have read this syllabus and that you know how to contact me.

Resources and Support:

- **Financial Security:** If you need support so that you can buy textbooks or food, pay rent, buy or borrow a laptop or interview clothes, or any other kind of financial relief, [contact your class Dean](#) (they are friendly and ready to help! If you want help reaching out, let me know!).
- **Access and Disability Services:** In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act, reasonable accommodations will be provided to qualified students with documented disabilities. Students seeking accommodations should start by contacting the [Office of Student Access & Disability Services](#).
- **Counseling Services:** [Colby College provides cost-free mental health and counseling services](#) to help you manage challenges that threaten your personal or academic wellbeing. **Getting help when you need it is the smart, courageous thing to do!** I am not a mental health professional, but I can make you an appointment, walk with you to Counseling Services, discuss coursework-related stress (and make plans to alleviate it), or help you to see or know when you need to get help beyond my expertise. **Email me any time.**
- **Academic Support:** The Dean of Studies office also offers comprehensive academic support in the form of academic success programs, learning consultants, tutors, and much more. [Consult the academic success page to learn more.](#)

- **The Farnham Writer's Center:** From the FWC's website: "The FWC is a place for you to get skilled feedback on your writing. Our peer writing tutors have experience working with Colby's diverse student populations, and they are eager to engage you in collaborative conversations about your writing." [To learn more and to make an appointment, visit their website.](#) The Writing Center also has a Multilingual Writing Specialist, Dr. Chaoran Wang, who meets individually with international and multilingual students and provides workshops to support multilingual writers. You can reach her at chaowang@colby.edu. Please feel free to contact her, either to discuss your writing concerns and issues in general, or discuss a specific course-related writing assignment.

College Policies:

- **Academic Integrity:** Please take time to read [the Colby Affirmation](#) and review Colby's policies and resources regarding [academic integrity](#). It is the responsibility of every student and faculty member to be familiar with, and comply with, these expectations for honesty, integrity, and personal responsibility. If you have any questions at any time about whether or how to cite a source, about when it's ok to collaborate and when you must work alone, or other topics relating to your own or others' conduct, please ask me! I am happy to explain how to correctly give credit where credit is due or to discuss other concerns.
- **Sexual Misconduct/Title IX Statement:** Colby College prohibits and will not tolerate sexual misconduct or gender-based discrimination of any kind. [Colby is legally obligated to investigate sexual misconduct](#) (including, but not limited to sexual assault and sexual harassment). If you wish to speak confidentially about an incident of sexual misconduct, please contact Colby Counseling Services (207-859-4490) or the Director of the Gender and Sexual Diversity Program, Emily Schusterbauer (207-859-4093).
 - Please note that as your professor, I am designated a "responsible employee," a legal category that requires me to report to the Title IX Coordinator, Meg Hatch (207-859-4266) if you disclose an experience related to sexual misconduct. This is not as scary as it sounds: if I contact Meg, she and her office will email you. If you want to follow up, you can. If not, you don't have to. I will support you in however you would like to proceed: I can connect you to community resources for dealing with sexual misconduct without you needing to disclose specific information to me. If you wish to disclose a specific incident to me, I will help to connect you to Meg Hatch. The college will take initial steps to address the incident(s), protect and support those directly affected, and enhance the safety of our community. The Meg Hatch will work with you to determine the best way to proceed.
- **Bias Incident Prevention and Response Team (BIPR):** From the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion website: "BIPR is a non-disciplinary body charged with both responding to bias incident reports and implementing educational initiatives designed to decrease the frequency of bias incidents in our community. Community members who have experienced and/or witnessed a bias incident are encouraged to submit a BIPR report or contact BIPR chair Emily Schusterbauer (207-859-4093)." [To submit a Bias Incident Report, click this link.](#)

Course Schedule

The following schedule will give you an overview of our readings, topics, and schedule of assignments for the semester.

*****This schedule is subject to change, as needed, throughout the semester.** Our Moodle will be our home base for the semester. I will update checklists and assignments there regularly. Please keep in touch via email and ask questions early and often!

	Readings and Assignments
Week 1:	<u>Th Feb 3:</u> [ON ZOOM] Course introductions; Alfie Kohn, “The Case Against Grades.”
Week 2:	<p><u>Unit 1: Reading Backwards</u></p> <p><u>T Feb 8:</u> Madeline Miller, <i>Circe</i>, chp. 1-6; Asao Inoue, “Grading Contract for First Year Writing”; draft grading contract for EN200.</p> <p><u>Th Feb 10:</u> Madeline Miller, <i>Circe</i>, chp. 7-15.</p>
Week 3:	<p><u>T Feb 15:</u> Madeline Miller, <i>Circe</i>, chp. 16-27.</p> <p><u>Th Feb 17:</u> Spenser, <i>The Faerie Queene</i>, selections.</p>
Week 4:	<p><u>T Feb 22:</u> Ovid, <i>Metamorphoses</i>, selections; Homer, <i>The Odyssey</i>, selections.</p> <p><u>Th Feb 24:</u> Writing Workshop 1</p>
Week 5:	<p>Essay 1 draft 1 DUE 11:55pm M Feb 28</p> <p><u>Unit 2: What is Literature?</u></p> <p><u>T Mar 1:</u> Excerpts from George Puttenham, <i>The Arte of English Poesy</i> and Philip Sidney’s <i>A Defense of Poetry</i>.</p> <p>Essay 1 peer review letters DUE 11:55pm T Mar 1</p> <p><u>Th Mar 3:</u> Excerpts from Terry Eagleton, “What is Literature?,” Toni Morrison, “Unspeakable Things Unspoken”, Frances Dolan, <i>True Relations</i>.</p>
Week 6:	Essay 1 Draft 2 DUE 11:55pm M Mar 7
Essay 1 meetings	<u>T Mar 8:</u> Ben Jonson, <i>The Alchemist</i> , Act 1

	<u>Th Mar 10:</u> Ben Jonson, <i>The Alchemist</i> , Act 2
Week 7:	<u>T Mar 15:</u> Ben Jonson, <i>The Alchemist</i> , Act 3 <u>Th Mar 17:</u> Ben Jonson, <i>The Alchemist</i> , Acts 4-5
Week 8:	<u>Mar 19-27: Spring Recess—No Classes</u>
Week 9:	<u>T Mar 29:</u> Writing Workshop 2 <u>Unit 3: What can literature DO; What can we do with literature?</u> <u>Th Mar 31:</u> Miller Library Special Collections visit; Hester Pulter, selected poems
Week 10: Essay 2 meetings	Essay 2 DUE 11:55pm M Apr 4 <u>T Apr 5:</u> Audre Lorde, “Coal” and “Echoes”; Noah Balding, “Passing”; Erin Coughlin Hollowell, “Maria and Oceanus” <u>Th Apr 7:</u> The King of Tars https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/chandler-the-king-of-tars
Week 11:	<u>T Apr 12:</u> The King of Tars <u>Th Apr 14:</u> Toni Morrison, <i>Beloved</i>
Week 12:	<u>T Apr 19:</u> Writing Workshop 3 <u>Th Apr 21:</u> Toni Morrison, <i>Beloved</i>
Week 13: Essay 3 meetings	Essay 3 DUE 11:55pm M Apr 25 <u>T Apr 26:</u> Toni Morrison, <i>Beloved</i> <u>Th Apr 28:</u> CLAS <u>F Apr 29:</u> Ali Smith, <i>How to Be Both</i> Direction paragraph and bibliography DUE 11:55 pm F Apr 29

Week 14:	<p><u>T May 3:</u> Ali Smith, <i>How to Be Both</i></p> <p><u>Th May 5:</u> Ali Smith, <i>How to Be Both</i>; in class writing—draft of “what is literature?” statement.</p> <p>Portfolio essay complete draft DUE by 11:55pm F May 6</p>
	<p>Final Portfolio due F May 13 by 11:55 pm.</p>



Dosso Dossi (–1542), *Melissa (Circe)* (c 1518-1531), oil on canvas, 176 × 174 cm, Galleria Borghese, Rome. Wikimedia Commons.

For a few more amazing paintings of Circe (and Scylla and Charybdis), see here:
<https://eclecticlight.co/2018/01/29/changing-stories-ovids-metamorphoses-on-canvas-72-scylla-transformed/>

Appendix: Assignment Sheets

- Labor Log
- Passage & Questions (P&Qs)
- Essays
 - Peer Review Letters
- Discussion Leadership
- Final Portfolio

Labor Log

One of my goals for this course is to help you become more aware of your work habits and to prompt reflection about *how* and *why* you are doing the work for this course. Knowing how and why you are working can aid you in making changes to your habits, if you need or want to do so. Knowing your *how* and *why* can also help you protect your health, find intrinsic motivations for your work (i.e. not just for the grade or for credit but because you see value in the labor of learning, reading, and writing for the course), and see progress or change in your own thinking.

This kind of reflective practice, **when done with honesty and care**, can deepen the knowledge you've gained and make it more likely that you'll remember what you've learned in the future.

- In the interest of these goals, I am asking you to complete **a labor log entry for each session of work for my course**. You'll quantify some of your work (tracking when, where, and how many minutes you work for) and you'll also comment on how it felt to work for this class.
- I have created a google sheets template for a labor log: you may create your own copy and share it with me, or you may wish to keep track of your labor in another way (if so, please get in touch to confirm that your method will work).
- *****I will never, ever use the information in your labor log to arrive at or alter your grade.** You need only enter information for each of your work sessions and this assignment will be complete. Each entry should take you a minute or less.

Some students can read for hours at a time, and some prefer to read in short bursts. Some students can complete a complex writing assignment in 20 minutes and some need longer. Some students read quickly and some read slowly. **The goal here is not to achieve the most total minutes of work time but rather to *come to know yourself* and to know what conditions create the most successful, satisfying, useful, or otherwise good work sessions for you.**

Basic requirements to complete this assignment:

- Complete one log entry for each work session for this class.

Passage and Questions

Before each class session, you will select a passage—a sentence or paragraph or ~5-10 lines—from the day's reading that you found beautiful, perplexing, funny, disturbing, confusing, or compelling in some other way. You will note the line/act-scene/page numbers for your passage and then write two or more questions about the lines, designed to prompt discussion. This assignment should take between 5 and 15 minutes per post.

Our maxim: **there are no stupid questions**. Even basic or silly questions can lead to important conversations and can help us dig in to our texts.

Basic requirements to complete this assignment:

- Pick a passage and write two or more questions.
- Post your line/act-scene/pg # (or a screenshot of your passage) on Perusall before the beginning of our class session.

Essays

My sister has run several marathons (and completed two Iron Man triathlons; I like to brag about her athletic accomplishments!). Based on what she told me about her training, she did not get ready for these epic races by running marathons or swimming the full two miles and so on. She mixed shorter and longer workouts, did interval, slow, and fast runs, and supplemented with yoga and crunches and weights and so on.

The same principle, I think, can be applied to learning to write well. One does not learn to write a long analytical essay well by simply writing a long analytical essay (though that is one way to go about it). One learns to write by writing consistently, often, in several shorter and longer modes, and with a variety of goals. To that end, you will be doing some freewriting in class, logging your labor outside of class, writing your P&Qs, doing research to support your discussion leadership, and completing three short essays designed to build your close reading skills (or muscles, if you'll permit me to extend the metaphor).

- To begin each essay, we will hold an **in-class close reading workshop**. You will arrive at class with a printed copy of one page, a few stanzas, or 10-20 lines from the text that you've selected for your essay. Before class, you will do initial brainstorming on your chosen passage (5-10 mins); in class, we will work to deepen that initial thinking, generating as many ideas as we can about the passage's words, sentences, rhetorical and sound features, characters, themes, implications, and so on.
- Next, armed with the material you generated during workshop, you will shape your ideas into a **focused, argument-driven essay of 700-800 words (about 3 pages)** in which you make a case for the most significant feature of your passage and use details from the text to support that case. Why does your passage *matter* to how we read the whole text? What do your observations about the passage's details help us to see or change about how we see the whole text? (~60-120 mins)
- **For essay 1, you will exchange your first draft with two peers and write review letters (~60-80 mins).** **See the Peer Review Letter assignment, below, for directions. Then, you'll revise your essay and compose a memo (~200 words) describing what you changed and why (~60-120 mins).
- For all three essays, once you have submitted your polished, complete second (or maybe 3rd!) draft, **we will meet for 15-30 mins one on one to discuss your writing.**

Basic requirements to complete these assignments:

- Attend and participate in all three writing workshops (Feb 24, Mar 29, and Apr 19).
- Complete and share a draft of essay 1 with peer review groups and me by 11:55 pm on F Feb 25 via google docs.
- Write two peer review letters about peers' drafts of essay 1; letters shared with me and peers by 11:55 pm on T Mar 1 via google docs.
- Complete full, polished drafts of all essays, turned in on Moodle in the relevant assignment by 11:55 pm on M Mar 8, M Apr 4, and M Apr 26, which must:
 - be 700-800 words long.
 - present an argument in a focused, organized way.
 - engage with textual details—direct quotes—to support that argument.
 - show evidence of revision and proofreading; cite the text in MLA style.
- Meet with me one on one to discuss each essay.

Peer Review Letter Assignment

For essay 1, you will go through a full drafting and peer review process to facilitate revision, deepen your thinking, learn from seeing how your peers are approaching the assignment, and find ways to improve your own process. For essays 2 and 3, you are welcome to continue working with your peers in a less formalized way. For an extra labor, you may work with a partner to do an additional exchange, letter, and revision of essay 2 or 3 *after* we have met to discuss it. In each peer review letter, you will do the following:

- Open with a greeting (Dear ____, Hi ____!, etc.), and write an initial sentence or two about your overall reaction to your peer's essay draft. What's it about, broadly? What did you learn? What do you want to know more about? What do you think is working really well?
- Next, write one paragraph for each of the four categories below (argument, evidence, organization/structure, and style/details). **For each category, do two things: 1. describe (about 2 sentences) and 2. offer ideas for revision (about 2 sentences).** If it's helpful, you can follow one or more of the templates below; change them as needed to suit your own voice and purposes, or ignore them if you are already comfortable with providing this kind of feedback.
- Finally, offer some words of encouragement; what would you be excited to see in a new version of this essay? What potential do you see in your peers' work? What do you want to learn more about from your peer? Remember to sign your letter, too!
- A hard truth of writing is that *it is never complete*; writers—from poets to scholars—could tell you any number of things about their *published* works that they would like to change, revise, improve, and so on. No matter the current state of your peer's draft, there is room for revision. **Your goal in this letter is not to “fix” your peer's essay but rather to report your observations about it and aid your peer in seeing where and how revision might happen.**

***Share your letter with your peers and me (either email us the document link or add them with the “share” button at the top of your doc) by the relevant due date.

Categories and templates for commenting on your peers' drafts

1. Argument: what is the main point, purpose, idea, or claim of this essay? If what the writer argues is true, why is it important and to whom? What counterarguments does the writer address?

- Templates for DESCRIBING:
 - In this essay, you are arguing that ____.
 - Your topic in this essay is ____, and your claim about that topic is ____.
 - You say in this essay that ____; this is significant/important because ____.
 - I was confused as I read, because I thought first that you were arguing ____ but then later you wrote about ____.

- I started to really get interested in your argument in your 2nd paragraph/in your conclusion/on p. 3 because I understood that _____.
- Templates for OFFERING IDEAS:
 - If this were my essay, my next step with the argument would be to _____.
 - In the next draft I might keep _____, but change _____.
 - If I were writing this essay, I think I would choose _____ as my central point, and make _____ a part of a body paragraph or the conclusion because _____.
 - I'm not sure how to change/improve _____, but one idea might be to _____.

2. Evidence: what information does the writer use to support the point, purpose, idea, or claim? How is that information integrated and explained in the service of the argument?

- Templates for DESCRIBING:
 - In this essay, you used _____ and _____ as evidence for _____.
 - I liked when you brought in _____ to show that _____; this example supported your point that _____.
 - I was interested in your discussion of the _____ (info, detail), but I wasn't sure how it supported your argument.
 - You decided not to bring up _____ (info, detail), but when you argued _____, I immediately thought about it and wondered about your choice to leave it out.
- Templates for OFFERING IDEAS:
 - If I were writing this essay, my next step would be to _____ so that my evidence would _____.
 - How would your argument change if you added _____ as supporting information?
 - In your next version, I might spend more time discussing _____ (info/detail) so that the connection to your main point would be clearer.
 - Maybe I'm confused about your point because you included a lot of examples; one approach might be to include fewer and analyze and explain in more detail. I was most interested in _____ and _____; maybe start with those?

3. Organization and structure: how is this essay structured? What transitions does the writer use—from sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph—to guide the reader through the essay? What choices did the writer make about when to introduce parts of the argument or evidence?

- Templates for DESCRIBING:
 - I noticed that you began with _____ and moved next to _____, concluding by _____.
 - I noticed that you used phrases like _____ and _____ to transition between ideas. This was exciting/useful/confusing because _____.
 - When you moved from _____ to _____ on page 2, I felt interested/disoriented because _____.
 - When I got to paragraph 4, I thought, I needed to know about _____ sooner the essay so that _____.
 - In paragraph 2, you presented _____, but in paragraph 3, you presented not just _____, but also _____, and _____; that seemed like a lot for just one paragraph.

- Templates for OFFERING IDEAS:
 - If this were my essay, my next step with organization would be to ____ (in regard to transitions or order of ideas).
 - What would happen if you took out paragraph 4 and expanded paragraph 5? ... if you broke paragraph 2 into two or three separate paragraphs? ... if you swapped your paragraph about ____ with the one about ____?
 - I'm not sure how to connect ____ and ____; maybe you could try freewriting about them and see if you come up with a transition sentence or even a new paragraph that can help.

4. Style and Details: what is the writer's tone, voice, and vocabulary in this essay? What kinds of sentences (long, short, straightforward, complex) does the writer use? How do choices about punctuation, word order, and so on aid in conveying the tone or voice?

- Templates for DESCRIBING:
 - I noticed that you used a lot of ____ (long/short/direct/complex) sentences in this essay.
 - I noticed that you have a ____ tone in this essay because you used ____ and ____ a lot.
 - I was confused because you started the essay in a ____ tone, but partway through you shifted to ____.
 - I noticed that you used/didn't use a lot of commas [that you repeated the word ____ a lot; that you started sentences with ____ a lot]; sometimes that punctuation / word / sentence structure choice made it hard for me to follow your idea. For example, on page 2 ____.
 - I really liked your ____ tone, but I wonder what a ____ audience would feel if they read your essay.
 - I noticed that your citations in text were ____ and the ones at the end of the essay were ____.
- Templates for OFFERING IDEAS:
 - If this were my essay, my next step would be to _____. [vary my sentences more / evaluate my comma use / make sure my vocab and tone are consistent from start to finish]
 - What would happen to this essay if you switched from a casual tone to an academic tone (or the other way around)?
 - I'm not sure how to change _____, but maybe tinkering with your sentence lengths / word order or choice / fixing citations / getting rid of extra words would help.

Discussion Leadership

Each student in this course will be responsible for jump-starting one of our class sessions with a short presentation (5 mins or less!) about a peer reviewed, scholarly book, book chapter, or article about one of our syllabus texts. After your presentation, you will pose some questions or lead activities designed to spark discussion (~10 mins) and engage us in thinking about how the critic's ideas shape our understanding of the text, and about whether we agree, disagree, or do some of both in regards to their central idea.

Presentations will begin on February 17th and continue through the end of the semester, with one or two students presenting on most class days. You will choose which day/text you present; sign-up sheet forthcoming. This assignment should take you about **90-180 minutes** to complete; for help with finding and reading your book, book chapter, or article, ask early and often!

I strongly encourage you to begin working on this project least one week in advance of your discussion leadership date. Here's one way to go about it:

Step 1: Using the MLA database and/or the help of our subject librarian, Laine Thielstrom, **locate and smart-skim 3 sources** about our syllabus text that you think might be good for your project. If you strike out with your initial three, try again—revise your keywords or ask for help!

Step 2: Once you select your source, **read it carefully but strategically:**

- If you can read the whole thing, great! Do so!
- If it's too long or too dense for that, one strategy is to read as much of the source as you can in 30 or 40 minutes. Then return to re-read the first five or so pages, looking for the main argument. Next read the last 1-2 pages, looking for conclusions and bottom-lines. Finally skim any skipped pages to see what parts of the text or what kinds of evidence the critic employs.

Step 3: **Summarize your source in about 150-200 words.** What is the critic's big idea? How does the critic explain and support that idea? What is the scholar's *method*: how did they approach the text, and why did they do so in this way?

Step 4: **Respond to the critic in about 150-200 words.** Do you agree with the critic? Why? How might you add to their ideas? Disagree? On the strength of what evidence? Do a bit of both? How or why might the critic's ideas be *useful* to our class's discussion of the syllabus text?

Step 5: **Prepare your presentation.** You now know a lot about the source you've been working with, so return to our syllabus text, and pick a passage that you'll use to focus our attention as we learn from you. The organization of your presentation is totally up to you, but it should contain the following:

- A summary of and response to the source (no more than 5 minutes!).
- A set of questions or an activity of some kind, designed to get us talking about the source AND our syllabus text. Plan more questions than you think you'll need.
- A direct quote from the source AND a direct quote from the syllabus text.
- A visual of some kind: flowchart, powerpoint, poster, comic, diagram, set of props, etc.

Basic requirements to complete this assignment:

- Locate and read a scholarly, peer-reviewed book, book chapter, or article that is about your chosen syllabus text.
- Summarize (150-200 words) and respond to (150-200) the source; post your summary and response paragraphs with a properly formatted MLA citation in our Scholarly Repository on Perusall before class on the day you lead discussion.
- Present your source (5 mins or less) and lead our class in a discussion of the critic's work AND the syllabus text (~10 mins). Presentation and discussion should:
 - summarize and respond to the article in 5 minutes or less.
 - include a direct quote from the article AND from our syllabus text.
 - include questions or an activity.
 - include a visual.

Final Portfolio

At the end of the semester, you will run the marathon: that is, you will draw on all of your training in close reading, discussion, question and idea generation, research, and creativity to write a long analytical, argumentative essay. You will place this essay—which will be a substantial revision and expansion of one or two of your short essays—in a portfolio that showcases your learning for the semester.

Step 1: Write a direction paragraph and an initial bibliography for the portfolio essay (~20-40 mins). Look back at your short essays: which one are you excited about? Which one needs the most work (and do you have time, energy, or new skills that will enable that work now)? Which two have arguments that might fruitfully connect? Using these kinds of questions to consider your options, select one or two of your essays to return to and substantially revise into a **7-10 page thesis driven essay**. Then write a paragraph (100-200 words) about your plans for revision.

Next, look at the articles and books/book chapters in our Scholarly Repository on Perusall and/or do some new research about your text(s) using the MLA bibliography. Select at **least three** scholarly articles, books, or book chapters that you think might be useful in your revised and expanded essay. For each source, create a properly formatted MLA citation and then write 1-2 sentences about how and why the source will help you with your project.

Basic Requirements:

- Select the essay or essays you will revise and expand for the portfolio.
- Write a 100-200 word paragraph about your plans for revision/expansion.
- Compile a bibliography of 3 or more scholarly, peer reviewed sources. For each source, include 1) a properly formatted MLA citation and 2) 1-2 sentences about how the source will help you in writing your essay.
- Submit your direction paragraph and bibliography on Moodle by 11:55pm on F Apr 29.

Step 2: Create a full draft of the portfolio essay (90-180 mins). Execute your plan! Think carefully about argument, evidence, organization, and style/details: what is your big point? Who needs to know and why? What evidence from your texts will you marshal to prove your point? How will you proceed paragraph to paragraph? What kind of tone will you take? How will you be sure to give credit to others where credit is due?

Basic Requirements:

- Write a revision/expansion of one or two of your essays. This portfolio essay must:
 - be at least 7 pages (~1750 words) long.
 - make use of 1 or more syllabus text and 1 or more peer reviewed, scholarly source.
 - present and support an argument with evidence (direct quotes) from the texts.
 - include evidence of proofreading, attention to sentence-level detail, in-text citations, and a works cited page using MLA format.
- Submit your portfolio essay draft on Moodle by 11:55pm on F May 6.

Step 3: Write a revision memo (15-30 mins) and use it to help you polish your portfolio essay (60-120 mins). Before completing final essay revisions and compiling your portfolio, reflect on the process you went through to create your essay draft. First, spend about 15 minutes freewriting in response these questions:

- What is your essay's purpose? Who do you want it to reach (i.e. who's your audience) and what effect do you want it to have on your audience?
- What was your process? What kind of planning did you do and what steps did you take in order to revise and expand this essay? What changes did you make? What challenges did you face and how did you meet those challenges?
- How did comments from peers or your professor help you? What class activities, if any, helped you?²

Next, use what you've written to **reexamine the essay itself**: does the purpose you've articulated in the revision memo match up with what you *actually* have in the essay? (Be honest!) Does the essay really do what you say it does? If not, revise the argument, evidence, organization, and language/conventions in your essay using your revision memo as a guide or a spur for re-thinking.

Basic Requirements:

- Freewrite for 10 mins or more on the above questions.
- Use what you write to re-examine your portfolio essay draft and make changes accordingly. Polish your portfolio essay to the best of your ability.
- Proofread and neaten up your revision memo; include it in your portfolio with your essay.

Step 4: Select artifacts (15-30 mins). With your essay and revision memo complete, turn to the portfolio as a whole, and consider what you would like it to demonstrate about you as a scholar of literature. Would you like to show growth—how you expanded and deepened your skills? Creativity—how you made assignments your own or how you learned in surprising, non-direct ways? Determination—how you stuck with a particular problem or idea throughout the semester? Or something else?

Choose a purpose for your whole portfolio, and then select 1-3 artifacts that evince your purpose. You might select P&Qs, freewrites, jamboard or other in class activities, peer review letters (your own or a peer's), essay drafts, discussion leadership work, and so on. Write 2-5 sentences about your artifacts and how they show your growth, creativity, determination, or other feature of your work as a literary scholar.

Basic Requirements:

- Select a purpose for your portfolio.
- Select 1-3 artifacts from your work in this class.
- Describe your artifacts and how they show your purpose in 2-5 sentences; include your description and the artifacts in your final portfolio.

² The following prompt was inspired by Sandra Giles's letter to the reader assignment from her essay "Reflective Writing and the Revision Process: What Were You Thinking?" Full essay available on Moodle.

Step 5: Write and revise “What is Literature?” statement. In class on May 5th, you will write a draft of a “What is Literature?” statement. The only rule for this statement is that you answer the question in some way. Your statement might be long (2 or more pages) or short (a single word); you might use humor, satirizing the serious essays we read earlier in the semester. You might write a lyrical, poetic meditation on literariness. You might write a serious, theoretical paragraph or two, in the style of or building on the work of thinkers like Puttenham, Sidney, Eagleton, Dolan, or Morrison. You might write in the voice of your favorite character from the semester. Make this statement into whatever you need it to be: What **IS** Literature?

Before your portfolio is due, revise this statement—polish it to the best of your ability—and include it in your portfolio (~5-40 mins).

Basic Requirements:

- In class on May 5th write a draft of a statement that answers the question “What is Literature?” There is no length requirement for this statement; you may use direct quotes from our sources or not, as you choose.
- Revise and polish your statement and include it in your portfolio.

Step 6: Write your cover letter (~20-40 mins); compile and submit the portfolio (~10-60 mins). Once you have completed your essay, revision memo, artifacts with description, and your “What is Literature” statement, step back and consider the big picture: **What is the most important thing you learned this semester?** How do your final portfolio materials fit into or demonstrate that learning? What text(s), activities, conversations, or other features of the course were essential for you and why?

Decide who needs to know: me, your professor? Literary critics? Your younger or older self? A sibling, parent, or other family member? Our college president? A public figure? A student who plans to take this class in the future? Pick a specific addressee and write a letter of 250-500 words that responds to the questions above. Leave yourself time to shape and proofread your letter; it should incorporate a few specific examples (or even a direct quote or two, if relevant) to support your ideas. It should be organized into paragraphs.

Basic Requirements:

- Write your cover letter, which should
 - discuss the most important thing you learned this semester, using a few specific examples of that learning.
 - be addressed to a specific person.
 - be 250-500 words long, organized around a central focus, with ideas divided into paragraphs, and proofread.
- Compile your portfolio, which must contain (in any order that makes sense to you):
 - your cover letter.
 - 1-3 artifacts with a brief description.
 - your “What is Literature” statement.
 - the final version of your essay (7-10 pages; 1-3 scholarly, peer reviewed sources; proofread; correct in text and end of document citations) and revision memo.
- Submit your completed portfolio on Moodle by 11:55 pm on F May 13.