**Essay #1 (due: Thursday, Oct. 7)**

Sept. 14, 2021

English 433

Value: 20%

Length: approximately 1300-1700 words

Write a formal academic essay of analysis with a clear thesis and close reference to the text(s) on one of the following topics. Keep paragraphs to at least five sentences, place book titles in italics, and write about literature in the present tense. Give your essay an effective title (i. e., An Analysis of Reconciliation in *Notes for Plan B*; Narrating Memory: An Analysis of the Treatment of the Mythic Past in *Zombie Heart* and *A Supposedly Fun Thing I’ll Never Do Again*). Indent the first line of paragraphs. Submit a single-sided, double spaced copy of your essay, in 12 point font to Canvas. Use quotations from the primary work(s) in your essay, using MLA style for citations. Secondary sources are not required for this first essay, but if you use them, you must cite this material carefully (see the Outline on plagiarism). Revise, edit, and proofread carefully.

Marks will be based on the content and insight of the essay as it relates to the topic; the quality of the essay’s explication of and understanding of the text(s); the clarity of the essay’s structure and organization; the unity, coherence, and development of paragraphs; the strength of the writing in terms of fluency, accuracy, and conciseness, and its avoidance of errors in grammar, expression, and mechanics.

1. Taking three or four key examples, examine how the epidemic as Defoe describes it in *A Journal of the Plague Year* resembles but also differs from our present Covid 19 pandemic. Keep in mind that the focus of your essay must be a close examination of Defoe’s text and your paper requires a clear overall structure or organization. Consider, for example, the scope, causes, myths and rumors, modes of transmission (such as asymptomatic), role of quack medicines and fake advice, state of medical knowledge, advice for self-preservation and for the next plague, and effects of the disease on marginalized communities. Relate your examination to a larger point or theme about the novel as a whole.
2. Examine three of the longer embedded narratives in *A Journal of the Plague Year*, considering how each relates to the larger themes of the book. Consider, for example, the account of the narrator going to the Pits and encountering a despairing man there and the reactions of some others to his grief and the narrator’s final self-examination (52-61); the narrator’s experience with the waterman and his remarks on the deserving poor (91-97); the three men who leave London together (51, 105-29). To what extent, for example, does the narrator make a point of detailing the lessons he has learned from these incidents personally before enjoining the reader to take heed? Relate your examination to a larger point or theme about the novel as a whole.
3. What are three or four main ways in which Defoe details the city’s attempt to control or regulate the plague, and what is the narrator’s view of their effectiveness? To what extent is he writing a witness account, based on his own observation and his own diary, and also writing a report and a series of recommendations for future plagues (i.e. both a highly personal story and also a civic project)? Relate your examination to a larger point or theme about the novel as a whole.
4. What does Defoe’s narrator present as three or four main causes of the plague and/or three or four main interpretations or rumors about its transmission? Relate your examination to a larger point or theme about the novel as a whole.
5. Examine the handling of setting or place in *Love in Excess* (Part 1), *Oroonoko*, and *A Journal of the Plague Year*. Consider, for example, the often vague/non-existent descriptions of settings and the possible eroticizing of confinement in *Love in Excess*, the use of exotic tropes for the seraglio and Surinam in *Oroonoko*, and the construction of London itself as a character in *A Journal of the Plague Year*. Relate your examination to a larger point or theme about the three works taken together, such as what they might suggest about the roots of the novel as a genre.