

Guidelines for Final Research Paper

Topic Due: April 1 – a 4-5 sentence description of your topic, with a working title

Draft/Outline Due: optional, I will discuss rough drafts and outlines with you

Final Version Due: May 13, by 5 pm in my mailbox

- 1) You are encouraged to come up with a research project of whatever kind interests you, but if you are using primarily works of literary criticism as your sources, aim for about 6 articles or introductions/chapters from books. Other types of projects should aim for a similar amount of outside material.
- 2) This is NOT a report. You must have an argumentative thesis that offers an insightful perspective on a literary work, a cultural issue related to literature, etc.
- 3) Make sure your argument does some intellectual work—that is, be sure it is not self-evident and does not replicate discussions we have had about the literary works in class. Think of your project as doing the research so that you can bring some expertise to the literature you are interpreting, and then showing a reader who is familiar with the literature something s/he might not have seen without your perspective. Keep asking yourself, “so what?” until you have a relevant and exciting answer to that question.
- 4) Papers should be 8-10 pp, typed, double-spaced. Do not seriously exceed this limit.
- 5) Use consistent documentation of your sources (preferably MLA style), and be careful to cite all words and IDEAS you employ from another author. Examples of MLA citation for electronic sources (websites, e-mails, &c. can be found in the Study Materials section of our course website)
- 6) Be sure to see me with any questions you have as you work on the project.