

**E 316K****Brian A. Bremen**

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**Masterworks of American Literature**<http://www.en.utexas.edu/Classes/Bremen/e316k/>

Office Hours:

Tuesday 2:00 - 4:30

Thursday 2:00 - 4:30

or by appointment

**Description:**

"American Literature," according to Daniel Aaron, "is the most searching and unabashed criticism of our national limitations that exists." This course aims at examining these limitations through a selective reading of major American writers from the 17th to the 20th century, tracing the development of major literary forms, themes, and historical and cultural trends.

Explicit throughout the course will be the notion – as Robert Scholes once explained – "that reading and writing are important because we read and write our world as well as our texts, and we are read and written by them in turn. Texts are places where power and weakness become visible and discussable, where learning and ignorance manifest themselves, where structures that enable and constrain our thoughts and actions become palpable." At its most fundamental level, then, this course will use the study of literature to help its students become better readers, writers, and thinkers.

But also at stake in this course will be the notion of an "American identity," the historical emergence of something called "American Literature," and the ways in which the issues of race, class, region, sexuality, and gender affect these constructions. We will also explore how marginalized groups face the prospect of self-formation. In this way, issues of descent and dissent and the role they play in the formation of a democratic culture will constitute the focus of our study.

The approach will be loosely historical, though the large period we will attempt to cover will necessitate some rather big jumps in time.

**Requirements:**

Students will keep a dialectical reading journal and write two short (2 page) papers, the first of which must be revised and resubmitted; any subsequent essay may be revised and resubmitted before the next paper is due (note: all drafts must be submitted with re-writes). There will also be a final examination.

Grades will be based on reading journals (20%), class discussion, quizzes, and attendance (20%), as well as on the above requirements (papers - 40%; exam - 20%). Plus/minus grades will be given where appropriate; grades will not be rounded up or down at any stage.

**Attendance:**

Only one unexcused absence allowed from lectures and one from discussion sections – extra absences will affect your final average. Discussion sections are mandatory. The TA in your discussion section has the option of passing out extra materials and will administer short, weekly reading quizzes. Quizzes missed by unexcused absences cannot be made up.

**Required Texts:**

*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Samuel Clemens (Bedford/St. Martins; 0-312-40029-2)

*The House on Mango Street*, Sandra Cisneros (Vintage; 0-679-73477-5)

*In Our Time*, Ernest Hemingway (Scribner Paperback; 0-684-82276-8)

*Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, Frederick Douglass (Penguin; 0-14-039012-X)

*Sula*, Toni Morrison (Vintage International; 1-4000-3343-8)

*Pulp Fiction*, Quentin Tarantino (Miramax; 0786881046)

**Packet of Xeroxes available at Speedway Copies & Printing** (in the Dobie Mall)

**Recommended Texts:**

The Little Penguin Handbook, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Lester Faigley (Pearson Education; 9780205743391)

**The Road Not Taken**

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I —  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

**Things to do:**

1. Do all of a week's reading (and make entries in your Reading Journal) before lecture on Tuesday of that week.
2. Always bring your book, your journal, and the packet of Xeroxes to class and lecture.
3. Review, reconsider, and re-read the material during the week, while you prepare the next week's reading. (You might want to make entries on the left-hand pages of your Journal to record ideas or readings from the lectures concerning passages that you noted as well. Just make sure that you are able to distinguish your lecture notes from your reading entries)

## Schedule of Readings, Lectures, Discussion Sections, and Assignments

### Week 1

**Thurs** Introduction: Why I Hate Symbols  
[Robert Frost](#)—“[The Road Not Taken](#)”

### Week 2

**Tues** [Vladimir Nabokov](#)—“[Good Readers and Good Writers](#)” (Xeroxes; [Journal](#))

**Discussion Section:** Educating Good Readers and Good Writers by Poetry

**Thurs** [Robert Frost](#)—“[Education By Poetry](#),” “[After Apple Picking](#)” (Xeroxes; [Journal](#))  
[Steven Johnson](#)—“[Metaphor Monopoly](#)” (Xeroxes; [Journal](#))  
Perrine—“[The Nature of Proof in the Interpretation of Poetry](#)” (Xeroxes)

### Week 3

**Tues** [Ernest Hemingway](#)—In Our Time (read entire book: [Journal](#) "The Revolutionist")

**Discussion Section:** Reading, Writing, and Thinking about Literature

**Thurs** [Ernest Hemingway](#)—In Our Time ([Journal](#) "The Revolutionist" and "Indian Camp")  
John Bunyan—[from Pilgrim's Progress](#) (Xeroxes; optional)

### Week 4

**Tues** [Ernest Hemingway](#)—In Our Time ([Journal](#) "'Fun' with Hemingway" Xeroxes)  
Mary McCarthy—“[Settling the Colonel's Hash](#)” (Xeroxes)

**Discussion Section:** Letting the Text Talk — ["Fun' with Hemingway"](#)

Initial [Journal Conferences](#) (to be scheduled with TAs)

1 Page [Reaction Paper](#) (on the Gilbert) due in Thursday lecture

**Thurs** [Sandra Gilbert](#)—“[The Queen's Looking Glass](#)” (Xeroxes; [Journal](#))

### Week 5

**Tues** [Sandra Gilbert](#)—“[The Queen's Looking Glass](#)” (Xeroxes; [Journal](#))  
[Anne Bradstreet](#)—“[The Prologue](#)” (Xeroxes; [Journal](#))  
[Phillis Wheatley](#)—“[On Being Brought from Africa to America](#)” (Xeroxes; [Journal](#))  
Henry Louis Gates, Jr —“[Phillis Wheatley On Trial](#)” (Xeroxes; optional)  
[Nikki Giovanni](#)—“[Linkage: To Phillis Wheatley](#)” (Xeroxes; [Journal](#))

Check out Paper Proposal with your TA

**Discussion Section:** Reading and Writing Women

(Recommended) Movie of the Week: *Fatal Attraction*

**Thurs** [Phillis Wheatley](#)—“[On Being Brought from Africa to America](#)” (Xeroxes; [Journal](#))  
Henry Louis Gates, Jr —“[Phillis Wheatley On Trial](#)” (Xeroxes; optional)  
[Nikki Giovanni](#)—“[Linkage: To Phillis Wheatley](#)” (Xeroxes; [Journal](#))  
Annette Kolodny—“[A Map for Re-reading](#)” (Xeroxes; optional)  
[David Foster Wallace](#)—[2005 Commencement Address](#) (Xeroxes; [Journal](#))  
[Charlotte Perkins Gilman](#)—“[The Yellow Wallpaper](#)” (Xeroxes; [Journal](#))

[First Paper](#) (2 pages) due in Tuesday Lecture (Week 6)

#### Week 6

**Tues** [Charlotte Perkins Gilman](#)—“[The Yellow Wallpaper](#)” (Xeroxes; [Journal](#))  
[Charlotte Perkins Gilman](#)—“[Why I Wrote 'The Yellow Wallpaper'](#)” (Xeroxes)

**Discussion Section:** Reading and Writing Gender

(Recommended) Movie of the Week: *The Last Seduction* and *Glengarry Glen Ross*

**Thurs** Robert Jensen — “[White Privilege Shapes the U.S.](#)” (optional)  
NYT Editorials — [The Jefferson / Hemings Controversy](#) (Xeroxes; [Journal](#))  
[Frederick Douglass](#) — *Narrative of the Life . . .* ([Journal](#))

#### Week 7

**Tues** [Frederick Douglass](#)—*Narrative of the Life . . .* ([Journal](#))

**Discussion Section:** Reading and Writing Race

**Thurs** [Frederick Douglass](#)—*Narrative of the Life . . .* ([Journal](#))  
[T. S. Eliot](#)—“[The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock](#)” (Xeroxes; [Journal](#))

Re-Write of [First Paper](#) (2 pages) due in Tuesday Lecture (Week 8)

#### Week 8

**Tues** [T. S. Eliot](#)—“[The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock](#)” (Xeroxes; [Journal](#))  
[Hilda Doolittle](#)—[Selected Poems](#) (Xeroxes; [Journal](#))  
[Langston Hughes](#)—“[The Negro Artist & the Racial Mountain](#)” (Xeroxes; [Journal](#))  
[W. E. B. Du Bois](#) — from *The Souls of Black Folk* (optional)

**Discussion Section:** Reading and Writing the Self

**Thurs** [Langston Hughes](#)—“[The Negro Artist & the Racial Mountain](#)” (Xeroxes; [Journal](#))  
[W. E. B. Du Bois](#) — from *The Souls of Black Folk* (optional)  
[Langston Hughes](#)—[Selected Poems](#) (Xeroxes; [Journal](#))  
[Countee Cullen](#)—“[Yet Do I Marvel](#)” (Xeroxes; [Journal](#))  
[Joe Wood](#)—“[Who Says a White Band Can't Play Rap?](#)” (Xeroxes; [Journal](#))

#### Week 9

**Tues** [Américo Parédes](#)— from [With His Pistol in His Hand](#) (Xeroxes; optional)

Manuel Peña — "[Música fronteriza / Border Music](#)" (Xeroxes; optional)  
[Américo Parédes](#) — "[The Ballad of Gregorio Cortez](#)" (Xeroxes; [Journal](#))  
[Rodolfo Gonzales](#) — "[My Name Is Joaquín](#)" (Xeroxes; [Journal](#))  
Edward James Olmos — scenes from *American Me* (1992; in lecture)

**Discussion Section:** Papers

(Recommended) Movie of the Week: *The Ballad of Gregorio Cortez* and *American Me*

**Thurs**     [Samuel Clemens](#) — *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* ([Journal](#) Title Page; Chapters 1-3, 14-16)

**Week 10**

**Tues**     [Samuel Clemens](#) — *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* ([Journal](#) Chapters 14-16)

**Discussion Section:** Huck Finn

**Thurs**     [Samuel Clemens](#) — *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* ([Journal](#) Chapters 14-16, 31-End)

**Week 11**

**Tues**     [Samuel Clemens](#) — *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* ([Journal](#) Chapters 14-16, 31-End)

[Jane Smiley](#) — "[Say It Ain't So, Huck](#)" (Xeroxes; [Journal](#))

Check out Paper Proposal with your TA

**Discussion Section:** Huck Finn — The Critical Controversy

**Thurs**     [Raymond Chandler](#) — "[The Simple Art of Murder](#)" (Xeroxes; optional)

[Raymond Chandler](#) — "[Red Wind](#)" (Xeroxes; [Journal](#))

Thomas de Zengottia — "[The Numbing of the American Mind: Culture as Anesthetic](#)" (Xeroxes; optional)

Ridley Scott — scenes from *Blade Runner* (1982; in lecture)

Second [Paper](#) (2 pages) due in Discussion Section (Week 12)

**Week 12**

**Tues**     [Flannery O'Connor](#) — "[Some Aspects of the Grotesque in Southern Fiction](#)" (Xeroxes; [Journal](#))

[Flannery O'Connor](#) — "[A Good Man Is Hard To Find](#)" (Xeroxes; [Journal](#))

[Wallace Stevens](#) — from "[The Noble Rider and the Sound of Words](#)" (Xeroxes; optional)

**Discussion Section:** Faulkner, O'Connor

(Recommended) Movie of the Week: *Pulp Fiction*

**Thurs**     [William Faulkner](#)—“[Barn Burning](#)” (Xeroxes; [Journal](#))  
[Quentin Tarantino](#) — *Pulp Fiction* ([Journal](#))  
Fredric Jameson — "[Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism](#)"  
(Xeroxes; optional)

**Week 13**

**Tues**     [Quentin Tarantino](#) — *Pulp Fiction* ([Journal](#))  
Gregory Gibson — "[Our Violent Inner Landscape](#)" (Xeroxes; optional)  
Bob Herbert — "[A Volatile Young Man, Humiliation, and a Gun](#)" (Xeroxes;  
optional)

**Discussion Section:** Pulp Fiction

**Thurs**     [Toni Morrison](#) — "[Unspeakable Things Unspoken](#)" (Xeroxes; optional)  
[Toni Morrison](#) — *Sula* ([Journal](#))

**Week 14**

**Tues**     [Toni Morrison](#) — *Sula* ([Journal](#))

**No Discussion Section**

Thanksgiving Vacation

**Week 15**

**Tues**     YOUR CHOICE:  
[Sandra Cisneros](#)—*The House on Mango Street* ([Journal](#))  
Rick Martinez— "[Genius Can Come in Many Colors](#)" (optional)  
OR  
[John Sayles](#) — "[Interview](#)" from *Sayles on Sayles* (Xeroxes; [Journal](#))  
[John Sayles](#) — *Lone Star* (Xeroxes; [Journal](#))

Final [Journal Conferences](#) (to be scheduled with TAs)

(Recommended) Movie of the Week: *Lone Star*

**Thurs**     YOUR CHOICE:  
[Sandra Cisneros](#)—*The House on Mango Street* ([Journal](#))  
Rick Martinez— "[Genius Can Come in Many Colors](#)" (optional)  
OR  
[John Sayles](#) — "[Interview](#)" from *Sayles on Sayles* (Xeroxes; [Journal](#))  
[John Sayles](#) — *Lone Star* (Xeroxes; [Journal](#))

**[Final Examination](#) — Thursday, Dec. 10th: 2 PM - 5 PM (No Make Ups)**

## The Reading Journal

**PLEASE UNDERSTAND AND REMEMBER THAT THIS IS A CRITICAL READING JOURNAL, NOT A PERSONAL RESPONSE JOURNAL. THIS JOURNAL IS DESIGNED TO HELP YOU DEVELOP CRITICAL THINKING AND READING SKILLS SO THAT YOU CAN BOTH DEVELOP AND ARTICULATE LEGITIMATE READINGS OF A TEXT.** Using reading journals, we hope, will make your reading and learning personal. And as you attend carefully to how you read and to what you personally make of your reading, we believe you will be surprised to find that such things can improve your enthusiasm for reading and your participation in the classroom. By watching your own reading move from puzzlements through approximations and misreadings to more and more satisfying readings **you will gradually develop a more realistic sense of what valid and legitimate readings of texts are**, and in class discussion you will more readily share your readings and build on each other's perceptions instead of worrying about who is right and who is wrong.

The core of your work in the course will be composed in your reading journal. We'd like you to get a separate spiral notebook just for this purpose and keep it together over the term (If you want to try and keep your journal on your computer, go to: [http://www.en.utexas.edu/Classes/Bremen/e316k/texts/two\\_page\\_doc.html](http://www.en.utexas.edu/Classes/Bremen/e316k/texts/two_page_doc.html)). **It is essential to the course that you do the reading before the class/lecture in which it will be discussed, and that you make entries in the journal on the readings as you read them.** You can add entries to the journal from lectures or classes. There is **one rigid rule** about the format of the journal--I want you to use the facing pages in a special way. **Take all of your reading notes on only the right hand pages.** Leave the opposing pages blank for later. (you might want to reverse this if you're left-handed.) The basic difference is that **the right-hand pages are for comments on the reading. The left-hand pages are for comments on the right-hand pages.** Keep the difference clear and make use of it--don't write continuously from front to back of the sheet.

The basic rule of thumb in using the Journal is this: **EVERY TIME YOU STOP AND THINK, WRITE DOWN WHAT IS IN YOUR MIND ON THE RIGHT-HAND PAGE OF YOUR JOURNAL, USING COMPLETE SENTENCES.**

More specifically --

**When you read a work of fiction**, you want to think about answering the questions:

- what is this story about?
- what happens first, second, third . . . ?
- what's the significance of what's going on?
- what details seem particularly important?
- what are some of the problems (conflicts, contradictions) in the story?
- what are some of the problems (conflicts, contradictions) you have with story?

**When you read an essay**, you want to think about answering the questions:

- what is this author's argument?
- how does he or she go about making that argument?
- what details seem particularly important?

Other things to put on the right-hand pages:

- Times when your reading changes
- You see something you didn't see before.
- You recognize a pattern – images start to overlap, gestures or phrases recur or get repeated, some details seem to be associated with each other or bring to mind other works.
- The work suddenly seems to be about something different from what you thought.
- You discover that you were misreading.
- The writer introduces a new idea.
- Times when you are surprised or puzzled.
- Something just doesn't fit.
- Things just don't make sense – pose explicitly the question or problem that occurs to you.
- Details that seem important and that make you look twice.
- Your first impression of the ending.
- What you think is the most important point in the work (and why)

When writing in the journal, **use full sentences instead of phrases**. The demands of the sentence will help you draw out your thoughts fully. **Be explicit about the nature of your surprise or change or puzzlement** – what caused it in the text? The journal will seem less of an intrusion into your reading if you follow the natural rhythms of reading. Sometimes we're carried along by the flow of a work, but the things I've asked you to note are all signs that it's time to pause and reflect. **Nobody reads a work straight through or at a uniform speed**. Only machines work that way. The journal is a device to help you make more of the moments of reflection and to preserve them for later reconsideration.

**What to put on the facing pages (left side):**

While the right-hand pages involve your direct reactions to the text – your first gestures at making meanings out of it – the left hand pages are for a completely different activity. **When you finish the reading for a particular author, or after we've discussed them in lecture and class, go back and use the facing pages to comment on your original observations and to make something of them**. Is there a pattern to the changes you experienced? Does the end of the work tie them together? Why did you misread when you did? Then reflect on yourself as a reader--what do you focus on? What do you most care about? What do you disregard? When do you have the most trouble staying with a work? Finally, as you make these reflections on your reading experience, discuss your emerging sense of what the work is about.

Ideas adapted from Toby Fulwiler, University of Vermont Writing Program Director;  
Ann Berthoff, Professor of English at the University of Massachusetts, Boston;  
and Gary Lindberg's "The Journal Conference: from Dialectic to Dialogue,"  
in *The Journal Book*, ed. by Toby Fulweiler (1987)

## The Two-Page Paper:

**Assignment:** We want you to write a 2-page essay that develops fully an interesting, insightful, tightly focused argument that engages a text we've read and/or talked about thus far. Your essay should provide the reader with clear support and with argumentation that fully justifies your conclusions, and it should be written in a style that is both felicitous and sophisticated. Its argument should be both complex and clear.

**"I don't know what you want; I don't know what you're looking for"** – If by this statement you mean: "I don't know what specific content, in what specific form, you want," the answer is: "we don't either." There is no magic formula, no single right reading, no set model for a great essay. Having said that, here's what we don't want: **Don't simply repeat what we said in lecture or class** – we already know what we said in class; we're the ones who said it. **We want to hear what you think; what your ideas are.** Feel free, however, to take something we said in class and expand on its implications, using your own reading or experience for support.

**Most Important:** At any and all of the process below, help is available if you need it. Talk to your TA (during office hours, not the night before the paper is due), check out the [Undergraduate Writing Center](#) (FAC 211; take this description with you), or visit the [UT Learning Center](#) (Jester).

### Things you can do in your essays:

- Make a connection using a text studied – put “this and that together” and explain both the details and the significance of that connection
- Locate yourself in a conversation (from section, from lecture, from your reading, from life)
- Agree with a writer and extend his or her ideas with your own examples
- Ask a question, then answer it
- Reconstruct a “light bulb moment” you had while reading

### How to get started:

- **Go to your reading journals**, and find the point in your reading that engaged you the most. (Note: if the point that engaged you the most was something said in class or in lecture, go back to your journal and find out what you originally said about it. If it is a point you missed or misread, look back at the work and figure out why you missed or misread it. Use the left-hand page to write down what you discover.)
- **Look back in the text** and find out what was said there that made you say what you said. Does the text actually say what you say it says? Do you still agree with what you wrote originally? Why or why not? What would you write in your journal now?
- When you've settled on a statement you can live with, you need to ask yourself **"is this simply a statement of fact?"** (for example, does it merely repeat what gets said in the text or retell an incident that occurs in the text?) or **does it in some way provide a commentary or present an opinion on the text?** Another way to think about this step is to ask yourself **does my argument make explicit something that I see as implicit** either in this text or between two texts? Keep thinking about this point in the text until you can formulate an argument that provides some commentary or opinion.
- Now you need to ask yourself two vital questions: **what is my argument? and why is it important?**

Remember, your essay should be **an individual, not a personal, response** to the reading. You might think the protagonist in "Mr. & Mrs. Elliott" is a twit (and he might be), but a good paper will explore why his being a twit is important (to the story, to your understanding of human nature, to Nabokov's idea of the author as teacher, etc.). You might personally disagree with Frost about the importance of metaphor, but why is your disagreement important?

- **Reread the entire text and find all of the evidence that led you to this conclusion.** Begin also to think about how and why you came to the conclusion you did. You should also look for evidence that might contradict or work against your argument.
- **Keep asking yourself those two vital questions: what is my argument? and why is it important? Write and re-write your response until you can articulate a clear answer to these questions in two or three sentences.** You do not necessarily need to write these statements explicitly in your essay, but it should be clear to a reader of your essay what your argument is and why you think it is important. Remember, [if you can't clearly explain to someone exactly what your argument is](#) (and why it's important), odds are that a reader won't know what it is either.
- Ask yourself, "**is this an argument I can make in two pages?**" **If not, narrow your focus.** You probably can't say much in two pages about all of "Education by Poetry," but you might be able to develop a nice argument about the Self-Belief in that space.
- **Repeat the above process until you've arrived at what you think is a workable argument with a reasonable amount of support to back it up.**
- Now you need to ask yourself the most important question in writing, "**who is my audience?**" Your audience, of course, is your TA, and you can assume that your TA has read the text you're talking about but has not formulated any opinions or conclusions about it. **You need to show your audience the evidence and support** that led you to your conclusions and explain how and why you came to the conclusions you did. **Just because you assert something (no matter how strongly you assert it) doesn't mean that your audience will be convinced of your assertion.** Just because you read a certain line in a certain way doesn't mean that your audience will read it in exactly the same way. Make sure that your argument doesn't rest on assumptions that your audience may not share or that you haven't clearly articulated. You have to convince your audience that your argument is a sound one.
- "**What is the most effective way to present my argument?**" There are as many answers to this question as there are writers of essays and arguments to be argued. Still, here are some general tips:

**Write in a style and voice that is easy, natural, and clear.** You're not a 17th century scholar; don't try and sound like one.

**Say what you mean and mean what you say.** This might sound simple, but it's the hardest thing to make your writing do.

**Present your argument in a clear, coherent order.** Don't jump from point to point without telling your audience where you're going.

Remember: **Writing is a process. It involves thinking, reading, writing, rereading, rethinking, and rewriting. Like a work of art (which it is), it is never finished; only abandoned. It's a grueling, painful thing, especially when we have to throw away something that we've already written, but it's the only way we can really know what we think and communicate that thinking to others.**

**Format:** First and final drafts must be typewritten or word-processed. Use a title page with the following information: your name, your TA's name, course and unique #, date, paper number, and paper title. Use space-and-a-half for the text of the paper, with 1 inch margins all the way around the text. Use only 10 or 12 pt. plain fonts (Times 12 or Geneva 10 are good models). Do not justify on the right hand side. Please staple the pages together. Do not use Headers or Footers with your name in them and do not put the title on the 1st page of the text.

Computers are available at the Student Microcomputer Facility (SMF, or "Smurf,") on the 2nd floor of the Flawn Academic Center (FAC), also known as the Undergraduate Library (UGL). You should get a user account with the SMF as soon as you can.

Become familiar with computing resources. Some departments provide computer labs; check with your advisor. There is also a list of computer locations (and other student resources) in *The Student Guide to First-Year Writing, 3rd edition*; eds. Englund, Sheryl and Shannon Prosser (available at local bookstores).

**Scholastic dishonesty:** Turning in work that is not your own, or any other form of scholastic dishonesty, will result in a major course penalty, including possible failure of the course. A report of the incident will be made to the Office of the Dean of Students. Do not use editing services other than those offered by the [Undergraduate Writing Center](#) (FAC 211) or the [UT Learning Center](#), where approved tutors are trained to help you resolve your own problems so that all your writing reflects what you have learned. If you have any questions about your work, talk to your TA or check out the [Academic Integrity Site](#) (<http://tinyurl.com/lr7kwz>) at Student Judicial Services and the [Statement on Scholastic Responsibility](#) (<http://tinyurl.com/modb8f>) at the DRC.

**You are not expected to use any sources or research for your papers, but if you do, you must provide your TA with photocopies or printouts of all sources you use. If you have any questions about the use you are making of sources for your assignments, see your TA before you turn in the paper.** And here's some suggestions for the [Appropriate Use of Wikipedia](#) (<http://tinyurl.com/nq3j9d>).

**Complaints:** Bring any questions you have to your TA first. Questions about grades must be presented in writing within one week. You should state your claim and provide reasons for it. Complaints or concerns will be resolved in a meeting with me (Bremen), you, and your TA.

Check the website to review what an argument [is not](#); some [sample essays](#); the exercise on "[Writing an Argument](#)" that we went through in lecture with "The Revolutionist"; and some [logical fallacies](#), courtesy of Sheridan Baker's *Practical Stylist*. And (ouch) conservative columnist David Brooks takes Harriet Miers to task for her inability to "[write clearly and argue incisively](#)."

Finally, here's the [Two-Page Paper Grading Guide](#) and some more guidance on [how to write an argument](#) from [Purdue University's Online Writing Lab](#).

## The Two-Page Paper Checklist:

In descending order of importance, consider these questions –

1. Can you easily determine **what is the argument here and why is it important?**
2. Does the essay **maintain a consistent focus** on that argument or does it stray off its stated or implied purpose?
3. Is the development of the argument **clear, purposeful, and substantial?**  
**Clear:** you can see a progression from one point to the next  
**Purposeful:** each paragraph has a discernible function in developing that argument  
**Substantial:** sufficient support and explanation is shown to the reader
4. Does the writer **maintain coherence** between paragraphs? between sentences?
5. Do **individual sentences** convey their meaning clearly?
6. Are **individual words** used properly? Are they *le mot juste*? (For example, how many times--and in how many forms--do you use the verb "to be"?)

### Discussion Sections – Teaching Assistants – TA Office Hours

<a href="#">34625</a>	TH 8:30 AM - 9:30 AM (JES A207A)	Jenny Howell
<a href="#">34630</a>	TH 8:30 AM - 9:30 AM (PAR 310)	Laura Beerits
<a href="#">34635</a>	W 10:00 AM - 11:00 PM (RAS 211B)	Jordan Lamfers
<a href="#">34640</a>	W 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (RAS 313B)	Arturo Nevarez
<a href="#">34645</a>	W 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM (CBA 4.344)	Laura Beerits
<a href="#">34650</a>	W 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM (JES A307A)	Arturo Nevarez
<a href="#">34655</a>	W 1:00 AM - 2:00 PM (JES A216A)	Liz DeMott
<a href="#">34660</a>	W 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (SZB 526)	Jenny Howell
<a href="#">34665</a>	W 4:00 PM - 5:00 PM (MEZ 1.206)	Sally Treanor
<a href="#">34670</a>	T 5:00 PM - 6:00 PM (MEZ 1.102)	Sally Treanor
<a href="#">34675</a>	T 5:00 PM - 6:00 PM (SZB 524)	Liz DeMott
<a href="#">34680</a>	W 5:00 PM - 6:00 PM (MEZ 1.102)	Jordan Lamfers

## GENERAL GRADING GUIDE:

**A Students working at this level engage fully every assignment and demonstrate a willingness to examine their own thinking and assumptions. All work reflects a level of thinking far beyond the obvious and the superficial. Students come to class fully prepared to discuss assigned readings and to participate actively in all phases of the course. All assignments are submitted on time and all make-up work from authorized absences is managed in a timely fashion. Obviously, all work is the student's own.**

- Student's essays contain few, if any errors in sentence structure and coherence, and they develop fully an interesting, insightful, tightly focused argument. They provide the reader with clear support and argumentation that fully justifies the author's conclusions, and they are written in a style that is both felicitous and sophisticated. Their arguments are both complex and fully developed.
- Reading journals indicate not only the questions and problems a student has while working with a text, but also an honest attempt at logical answers and solutions. In addition, the journals provide a full and rich argument on the student's reading of the texts studied. Finally, the conference about the journals is led by the student and consistently focused on the reading skills emphasized in class. These conferences demonstrate a strong understanding of the student as a reader and a clear understanding of the underlying principles of the course.
- All conferences are led by the student and are focused on the identified reading or writing skills identified in class.

**B Students working at this level competently engage every assignment and consistently attempt to examine their own thinking and assumptions. The majority of the student's work reflects a level of thinking beyond the obvious and the superficial. Students come to class fully prepared to discuss assigned readings and to participate actively in all phases of the course. Most assignments are submitted on time and most make-up work from authorized absences is managed in a timely fashion. Obviously, all work is the student's own.**

- Student's essays contain few, if any, errors in sentence structure, and they develop a clear, coherent argument. Support and explanation of that argument, however, are insufficient either to convince the reader completely or to make clear how the author reaches his or her conclusions. The essays' arguments may also be somewhat general and/or incompletely developed.
- Reading journals indicate not only the questions and problems a student has while working with a text, but also some attempt at logical answers and solutions. In addition, the journals provide an adequate argument on the student's reading of the texts studied. Finally, the conference about the journals is primarily led by the student and somewhat focused on the reading skills emphasized in class. These conferences demonstrate an improved understanding of the student as a reader and an adequate understanding of the underlying principles of the course.
- All conferences are primarily led by the student and are focused on the identified reading or writing skills identified in class.

**C Students working at this level do not yet engage every assignment and inconsistently demonstrate a willingness to examine their own thinking and assumptions. Only a minor portion of the student's work reflects a level of thinking beyond the obvious and the superficial. Students come to class minimally prepared to discuss assigned readings and to participate actively in all phases of the course. A majority of assignments are submitted on time and most make-up work from authorized absences is managed in a timely fashion. All work is the student's own.**

- Student's essays are fundamentally sound at the level of sentence structure and diction, but their arguments rely too heavily on assertion. Specific support is either unclear or missing, and the focus of the essay may stray from its stated argument to make a more general and unrelated point. There may also be problems in coherence, complexity, or in the overall development of arguments.
- Reading journals often indicate the questions and problems a student has while working with a text, but make only minor attempts at logical answers and solutions. In addition, the journals provide only an opinion of the text, not a supported argument on the student's reading of the text. Finally, the conference about the journals is not fully focused on the reading skills emphasized in class or remains at superficial level (e.g., "It's important to use a dictionary" or "I learned to reread").
- All conferences are led by the student with some help, but lack consistent focus.

**D Students working at this level seldom engage any assignment and consistently demonstrate an unwillingness to examine their own thinking and assumptions. The student's work reflects a level of thinking that is obvious and superficial. Students come to class ill-prepared to discuss assigned readings and to participate actively in the course. Some assignments are submitted late; some assignments are missing completely. Make-up work from authorized absences is missing or seriously late. Obviously, all work is the student's own.**

- Student's essays contain problems at the level of sentence structure and diction. They are marred by repeated mechanical errors and/or awkward constructions that obscure the essay's meaning. Argumentation here relies almost completely on assertion, with no clear support or development, and gives little or no analysis. Paragraphs contain weak or no coherence and/or focus.
- Reading journals might indicate the questions and problems a student has while working with a text, but seldom attempt logical answers and solutions. They often deal with only a portion of the text or address the entire text on only a surface level (perhaps offering a plot summary or personal connections to a story line or character). In addition, the journal provides only broad judgmental statements on the texts studied, not a supported argument on the student's reading of those texts. Finally, the conference about the journals is unfocused and ignores required discussion of particular reading skills.

- Required conferences are sometimes ignored by the student or the student is not prepared to discuss the identified reading or writing skills identified in class.

**F This level of work is obviously unacceptable. Work is often not submitted, or the student may completely ignore the requirements of the assignment, or the student is in violation of The University of Texas at Austin academic integrity policy.**

**Scholastic dishonesty:** Turning in work that is not your own, or any other form of scholastic dishonesty, will result in a major course penalty, including possible failure of the course. A report of the incident will be made to the Office of the Dean of Students. Do not use editing services other than those offered by the **Undergraduate Writing Center** (FAC 211) or the **Learning Skills Center**, where approved tutors are trained to help you resolve your own problems so that all your writing reflects what you have learned.

You are not expected to use any sources or research for your papers, but if you do, **you must provide your TA with photocopies or printouts of all sources you use.** If you have any questions about the use you are making of sources for your assignments, see your TA **before** you turn in the paper.

## Conferences: Presenting the Journal

Since the journal is your gesture of making meaning, it will not be graded directly or read through systematically. Instead, **we want to respond to your own responses to what is going on in the journal.** At two points in the course you'll have individual conferences for 5-10 minutes. **You'll summarize for your TA the high points of your journal and interpret yourself as a reader.** And you'll probably be asked some hard questions about your responses and your summary. At the end of the course, **you'll have a final 15 minute conference. Your work in your journal will count 20% of the final grade, and your grade on the journal will be determined by how you present it to your TA in that final conference.** In other words, you'll want to prepare by reviewing it, selecting especially significant parts to read to your TA, and summarizing and interpreting your work so as to show what you made of the course for yourself.

adapted from Gary Lindberg's "The Journal Conference: from Dialectic to Dialogue,"  
in *The Journal Book*, ed. by Toby Fulweiler (1987)

### Guidelines for Final Journal Conference –

- **Your conference should be 12-13 minutes in length.** You are in charge of the time; therefore, you must prepare carefully both to identify the points you want to make about yourself as a reader and to offer evidence for those points. **Think about the conference as a conversation that you lead.** Your TA will ask questions occasionally (and you should be able to answer them swiftly with references to your journal) and will offer comments where appropriate. You, though, have to manage your time wisely in order to cover everything you need to say. Since several conferences have been scheduled consecutively, you cannot go over the time allotted. Practice your conference, then, with a classmate or a friend
- Use **Nabokov, McCarthy, Frost, and/or Perrine** to prepare the points you want to make about yourself. Go back through these essays now. What do you see in them that you didn't earlier? What do you understand now that you didn't earlier? What has been the story of your "education by poetry" this semester? Your comments must be—as always—**specific, supported with evidence from the right hand sides of your journal, and indicative of the growth that accompanied each new reading.**
- **Do not feel obligated to prove tremendous improvement.** It is perfectly acceptable to discuss a problem you are having with an area of reading or with a text. You still might not fully understand something in the Nabokov or the Perrine, for example. Bring that up in the conference. **This conference should be an honest one.** After all, if you are to improve your critical reading and thinking skills, you have to first identify areas of difficulty. **A thoughtful consideration of your experience in this course will be more successful than an empty assertion about how much you've grown as a reader, writer, and thinker.**

- If we are looking for anything in these conferences, here's what we're looking for: **A thoughtful reflection on (not recounting of) your experience as a reader over the course of the semester.**
- **Your grade is based on the conference.** Remember, though, that you cannot possibly have a full discussion without a thorough journal—period. **You will, know your grade when you complete your conference.**
- Check the website for the Powerpoint Presentation of a [Final Journal Conference](#) that I showed in lecture; [True Journal Stories](#), a film student's journal conference; and another [Final Journal Conference](#) from a former student.

### **Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259

### **Please Note:**

My lectures are protected by state common law and federal copyright law. They are my own original expression and I record them at the same time that I deliver them in order to secure protection. Whereas you are authorized to take notes in class thereby creating a derivative work from my lecture, the authorization extends only to making one set of notes for your own personal use and no other use. You are not authorized to record my lectures, to provide your notes to anyone else or to make any commercial use of them without express prior permission from me.

### **Password Protection**

The URL for the class web site is: <http://www.en.utexas.edu/Classes/Bremen/e316k/> and there is a link to The American Literature Archive at <http://www.en.utexas.edu/amlit> . Some of the material is password protected to comply with copyright law. To access this material enter the following –

Username: texas  
Password: bevo