Introduction to Graduate Literary Study  F 2014

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Life is an ongoing dialogue; when we enter, it’s already going on; we try to get the drift of it; we leave before it’s over. –Kenneth Burke

Without some kind of theory, however unreflective and implicit, we would not know what a “literary work” was in the first place, or how we were to read it. –Terry Eagleton

Lit Crit–that game of bumper cars! –Roger Levin

Texts (ordered at New Jersey Books only—not the U Bookstore)
Mohsin Hamid, The Reluctant Fundamentalist (Harcourt, 2007). Around Week 10 we’ll know if there will be time to discuss this (short) novel in Week 14. You may well want to read it in any case—a provocative postmodern “9/11” novel, a #1 best seller when it first appeared and made into a feature film (a thriller). See more details in Week 14.
Other readings (including sel. from the 3 books below) are in “Course Documents” on Blackboard. Print, annotate, and bring paper copies to class, not electronic copies on laptops or e-readers. (In-class note-taking on a laptop is fine.)

A substantial literary handbook, like M. H. Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace. 6th (2000) or later ed. A keeper. Dana Reference has this and other good glossaries as well as the specialized Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics (PEPP). For dictionary definitions and histories of words consult The Oxford English Dictionary. (“Webster’s” and college handbooks with brief entries aren’t adequate for graduate-level study of literary terms and schools of thought.)

OPTIONAL (NJB may have or can get used copies for you)
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Course expectations

By the end of the semester students are expected to (1) understand important historical developments, schools, and debates in literary theory and central terms in major theorists’ work; (2) become more critical readers of theory writing, literary texts, and literary criticism, as well as better ‘close readers’; (3) command an expanded lexicon of literary terms and the skills for writing well-organized, clear academic prose that attends to nuance, precision of expression, technical correctness, and MLA Style; (4) gain in confidence and skill with oral presentation and collegial dialogue; (5) command a range of sources and methods for doing graduate-level research; and (6) develop individual appreciation for practicing a scholar’s habits of mind.

Ground Rules

Attendance policy and courtesies: Participation is 20% of your final grade. You are expected to be present and prepared to contribute ideas and questions to the open-ended dialogue in every seminar. If you’ll be unavoidably more than 15 minutes late, call the professor’s office beforehand if you can. Absences must be explained; every unexcused absence will lower your grade. Share floor time with others. If you’re shy, this is your chance to practice academic discussion among friends. Please turn off cell phone ringers when you come in.

Format for written work handed in: 12 pt. Times New Roman type, double spaced, with 1” margins all around. At top right corner: name, due date (not ‘today’s date’), and name of the assignment. Center your own title. Number pages after 1 at top right (pen ok). No cover page or plastic folders, please! Sorry, written assignments cannot be accepted as e-mail attachments.

Format for posts on Discussion Board (20% of grade): Always draft it first; proofread; and post when you’re satisfied. No attachments. Put your name, the assignment title and its due date first. Center your title if any under that. Single space, but please double-space between paragraphs (and have some). Cite quotations or summaries from our course texts with the page number like this (Richter 10) or this (Plato, in Richter 30-32)—after that, just the page number in parentheses if the rest of your piece is about the same text. (Do not use “p.”) No need for “Works Cited” in BB posts unless you’re using sources other than our course texts. Once in “Discussion Board” with your blank box, you’ll see it has its own buttons for italics, bold, and underlining. Print out and bring to class. If you have difficulties using BB, let the professor know right away.

MLA style is expected in English academic papers. Practice it at every opportunity, and make a point of learning from mistakes; you are expected to have mastered using this professional code.
for your purposes by the end of this course, although not to have memorized the style book. Refer to your copy often. Also see “Tips for Using MLA Style” later in this syllabus.

Revised work: If you’re asked to revise (“R” grade), attach the original version (with my written comments) at the back. The highest grade stands. If you want to revise something, consult the professor first. Note that a true “revision” is rethought, and often reorganized. Merely making the professor’s corrections on your paper and turning it in again isn’t a revision. Revisions, too, aren’t accepted via e-mail attachments.

Academic vocabulary: Aim for precision and learn from errors flagged on your papers. The Graduate Editor’s Guide should help.

In this course the following expressions are banned in writing assignments: relatable, reference (used as a verb), showcase (used as a verb outside Broadway or exhibition contexts), person that (use “who”), time period (redundant), and surrounding (used in place of an idiomatic preposition). Instead of “The issues surrounding the speech,” write “addressed in the speech” if that is what’s meant—or “issues provoked by the speech” if there was controversy. The bushes surround (are around) the house—that is what the verb means—but the gardener does not make trimming recommendations “surrounding the bushes”—s/he speaks about them. “Surrounding” is pretentious, vacuous, and imprecise; and rarely functions as a preposition.

Schedule for Intro to Grad Lit Study, F 2014

CT = Critical Tradition  N = Norton Frankenstein  BB Blackboard  X = xerox.

Read Richter’s CT introductions for each theorist assigned. Bring printouts of readings to class. It is recommended that you read the selections in the sequence given for each week. Note that this Schedule could be revised.

WEEK 1: EARLY LIT CRIT – Being and Representation

Sept. 3
Advance reading
Richter, “Introduction” (CT 1-8 only)
Plato, Book X from The Republic (CT 25-38)
3 on BB (under Course Documents): “Plato and Aristotle,” “Early Lit Crit Contexts,” and “Semeia” (read to middle p. 2)
Literature: Calvino, “Cities and the Sky,” from Invisible Cities (BB)
Advance writing: POST #1 on Calvino (specific details e-mailed to the class) by Sunday night 8/31. Bring print-out to first class.

WEEK 2: EARLY LIT CRIT – Midrash and Allegory

Sept. 10
Bring your first self-assessment (1 ½ to 2 pp.), described in “Self-Assessments” (BB).

“Hebraic Thought, Torah, and Midrash” and “Allegoria” (BB)
Optional: Bruns, “Midrash and Allegory: The Beginnings of Scriptural Interpretation” (BB)
Finish reading “Semeia.” Bring back “Early Lit Crit Contexts” and the Calvino parable.
Research and Writing Cluster:

“Research Exercises 2014” (Assignments, BB). Read and print out introduction; look over the sections. No need to print out all. Choose at least your first topic after this class.

“Resources for Research 2014” (Assignments, BB)

“Intro GLS Bibliography” (Assignments, BB). Glance through. You can use it as a model for your Works Cited.

WEEK 3: ROMANTIC THEORY of/and LITERATURE
Sept. 17
Hunter, “Introduction” to the 2nd Norton ed. (N ix)
Frankenstein, vol. 1; also study title page and dedication to the 1818 ed. (N 3-4)

Baldick, “Assembling Frankenstein” (N 173-83)
Introduction to Percy Shelley (CT 344-46)
Williams, “Dialogue with Percy Bysshe Shelley” (CT 364-68)

>Optional: Shelley, Defense of Poetry (CT 346-63); Wordsworth, “Preface,” Lyrical Ballads (CT 304); intro to Wordsworth (CT 304); intro to Coleridge (CT 321-22 only); Mary Wollstonecraft (CT 275).

WEEK 4: HISTORICAL AND TEXTUAL SCHOLARSHIP
Sept. 24
POST #2: Compare Percy Shelley’s anonymous Preface to the 1818 edition with Mary Shelley’s Introduction to the 1831 edition. See details on Discussion Board. Comment on another post.

Frankenstein, vol. 2
Anon. [Percy Shelley], Preface to the 1st ed., 1818 (N 5-6)
Mary Shelley, Introduction to the Third ed., 1831 (N 165-69)
Glance through the contemporary reviews (N 215-40). What were critics’ main objections?

Robinson, “Texts in Search of an Editor” (N 201-4 only--the list of text versions by date)
“1831 Frankenstein excerpt” (BB). A two-page passage from the 1831 edition to compare with parallel material in your 1818 one
Mellor, “Choosing a Text of *Frankenstein* to Teach” (N 204-11)


Seminar report (2 people): Advised by principles in A&F’s “Textual Study” and by close reading, an editorial team will lead us in discussing specific differences, and types of differences, between the target passage in the 1818 edition and the parallel 1831 passage (on BB or X). How do these textual differences make for meaning differences? Speculate about some reasons for Mary’s 1831 revisions. See the professor for suggestions about how to set this up.

**WEEK 5: FEMINIST CRITICISM AND FRANKENSTEIN**

Oct. 1

**POST #3:** Evaluate the argument in one of the assigned feminist essays on *Frankenstein*. See details on Discussion Board.

*Frankenstein*, vol. 3


Richter, “Feminist Literary Criticism” (CT 1502-16)

De Beauvoir, “Myths: Of Women in Five Authors,” 1949/1953 (CT 673-78)


>Optional: Compare with Baldick on *Frankenstein* and *Paradise Lost* (N 179)

>Optional: Selections from Genesis (N 289) and *Paradise Lost* (N 290)

“Writing Literary Allusion” (BB)


along with “How to Unpack Theoretical and Critical Texts” (Syllabus, p. 17; cf. Richter CT 13-22.


(“DuPlessis-1,” “DuPlessis-2,” BB)

Seminar report (3 people): Present the class with a dialogue among you about the differences and similarities between the three feminist critics assigned, and offer some evaluations of their work. (All three students should make contributions about all three essays, instead of each taking one to talk about.) How could they differ as much as they do? What are their “feminist” presuppositions? What other assumptions lie behind their arguments?

**WEEK 6: ROMANCE, ANTI-ROMANCE, REALISM, AND THE NOVEL**

Oct. 8

*DUE: First Research Exercise.*
POST #4: Using the Bakhtin material, explain how two distinct types of discourse in Frankenstein are related, “dialogized.” OR: Relate Bakhtin’s notion of “the word with a sideways glance” to a sampling of any character’s discourse. Details on Discussion Board.

First Cluster:

Frankenstein, vol. 3
Levine, “Frankenstein and the Tradition of Realism,” 1973 (N 311-16)
Look up archetypal criticism, gothic novel, epistolary fiction, romance, realism, and novel in a literary handbook that gives titles and genres of English novels in circulation by 1818.

Second Cluster:

Richter, Mikhail Bakhtin (CT 575-77)
Bakhtin, “Heteroglossia in the Novel” (CT 588-594): on Little Dorrit
Bakhtin, from Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics (trans. Caryl Emerson, 1984): study just the chart in CT 594-95.
Bakhtin, “Discourse in Dostoevsky,” from Problems (BB)

Seminar report #1: Apply some of Bakhtin’s discourse concepts to several passages in Frankenstein. Tell us what this kind of analysis adds, if anything, to our understanding of the novel. This report overlaps with the Post for this week.

Seminar report #2: Identify elements in Frankenstein that correspond to Frye’s cycle of “romance.” (This isn’t the same thing as the novel’s relationships with Romantic literary theory and practice.) Does anything in the book push against, modify, or ironize “romance”?

WEEK 7: WHAT IS “ENGLISH”?

Oct. 15
No post this week.
Arnold, from “The Study of Poetry,” 1880 (CT 412-14; 429-34). Go on with “Arnold Cont’d” (BB): skim 88-99; read from Burns p. 99 onward and pay special attention to the last para.
Literature: Espada, “Alabanza: In Praise of Local 100” (“Espada Poem,” BB). Stretching a bit to allow for obvious cultural differences, what might enable Arnold to see value in this poem?

“Formalisms” (CT 749-63). Note names of movements or schools of thought, dates, leading figures, and their central terms.
Look up “paradox” and “symbol” in Abrams’ Glossary or the PEPP (at Dana Reference). How is “symbol” different from “imagery,” “metaphor,” or “motif”?
Seminar report: How does Brooks recast our understanding of the Romantics (revisit your notes). What is gained or lost in his New Critical approach to poetry? Is the concept of mimesis involved in his reading of Wordsworth or Donne? How is Brooks’ interpretation ‘situated’? Does he know it? Can you imagine a differently-situated reading of Donne’s poem?

WEEK 8: STRUCTURALISM and SEMIOTICS

Oct. 22

POST #5: Using Prince’s “signals” for clues, identify the narratees in a delimited passage of Frankenstein (not a whole chapter). Details on Discussion Board.

Richter on structuralism and semiotics (CT 819-25)
Eagleton, “Structuralism and Semiotics” (BB)
  >Lévi-Strauss, “The Structural Study of Myth” (CT 859)

Handey, “The Symbols on My Flag (and What They Mean),” 2008 satire from The New Yorker (BB). How is Handey comically mixing up “symbol” with other literary figures?

Narratology

Seminar report (two people): Lead off our discussion of “Cities and Signs” with your dialogue about how it relates to semiotics and what (else) it “means.” Remember, Calvino is a creative writer, not a theorist, though he plays with theory in Invisible Cities. (If you like, you may also relate this parable to another course theory, or work in Handey.)

WEEK 9: DECONSTRUCTION and CRITICISM

Oct. 29

No post this week.
Eagleton, “Post-Structuralism” (BB)
Barthes, “From Work to Text,” 1977 (CT 878-82); on Barthes (CT 832-33, 868).
  Think of Frankenstein as “a work,” then as “a text.” What changes?
  >Optional: Derrida, “The Father Logos” (CT 926-32); “Différence” (CT 932-49).
  > Optional: Scholes, “Canonicity and Textuality” (BB)
Think about: What moves would a deconstructionist critic make in analysing Frankenstein? How well does this novel lend itself to deconstruction?

Seminar report: What is Eagleton’s angle on post-structuralism? Does he seem to give an accurate and fair account of it? What are his beefs and reasons for them? And/or: Lead us in a discussion of various things a deconstructionist reading of Frankenstein might do--including something that Eagleton would probably scoff at.
WEEK 10: NEW HISTORICISM and CULTURAL STUDIES

Nov. 5
DUE: TBA
Richter, “New Historicism and Cultural Studies” (CT 1320-42); on Foucault 833-34.
Foucault, from The History of Sexuality (CT 1627-33 to “domain”).
“Foucault Handout” (BB).
Guillory, from Cultural Capital (CT 1472-84).
>Optional: Foucault, “What Is an Author?” (CT 904-14).
Butler, “Frankenstein and Radical Science,” 1993 (N 404-16), along with “How to unpack theoretical and critical Texts” (Syllabus, p. 17)


Seminar report # 1: Lead us in a debate about Butler’s New Historicist method of interpreting Frankenstein. Do you see any flaws in her method? See the professor for details.

Seminar report #2 (preferably someone who has studied Foucault before): Lead us in a discussion of what kinds of questions a Foucaultian critic might ask about Frankenstein. Could any of his key terms be productively applied (such as regime of truth, “the romantic god-term of ‘author’ [CT 833], “network of power relations” [1630])? See “Foucault Handout” too.

WEEK 11: MARXISMS

Nov. 12
DUE: Second Research Exercise.
Richter, “Marxist Criticism” (CT 1198-1216). Note names of movements or schools of thought and their dates, leading figures, and their central terms.

Literature:
“A Bed for the Night” (“Brecht Poem,” BB). What’s ‘marxist’ about this poem’s structure?
Calvino, dialogue between Marco Polo and Kublai Khan, conclusion of Invisible Cities (“Calvino Khan,” BB)

Marx, “The Alienation of Labor” (CT 400-405; 397-400)
>Optional: Michie, “Frankenstein and Marx’s Theories of Alienated Labor” (BB)

Global Capitalism:

Seminar report # 1 (a student who has studied marxism): Lead us in a discussion of the boons and challenges of applying marxist concepts (not only alienation of labor) to Frankenstein.

Seminar report #2: Lead us in a discussion of how Klein on alienated labor updates Marx.
WEEK 12: ‘RACE-ING THEORY’

Nov. 19

Post your paper proposal (2 pp.) on Discussion Board by Nov. 19 (see Syllabus p. 14 for specs). Bring a paper copy for me. Students will be paired off to help each other refine their proposals (off line) during the week of Nov. 19-26.

First Cluster

Gates, “Writing, ‘Race,’ and the Difference It Makes” (CT 1890-1902)
  >Optional: Gates and Baker (CT 1903-1909)
Morrison, from Playing in the Dark, 1992 (CT 1791-1801).

Second Cluster

  Think about: compare the different historical methods and handling of evidence by Malchow, Mellor, and Butler (Wk. 10).

Seminar report #1: Carefully identify and explain two or three of the ‘points at issue’ in the debates going on within and among the First Cluster readings for this week. Help the class evaluate them.

Seminar report #2: Lead the class in discussing how Malchow, Butler, and Mellor use historical method and documentation differently in their arguments.

Nov. 26: No class. Thanksgiving Break

WEEK 13: POSTCOLONIAL THEORY

Dec. 3

POST # 6: By Monday night, post n outline of a lesson plan for teaching some terms/concepts in marxist thought, race theory, or (reading ahead) postcolonial theory or global theory to a specific demographic of high school or college students. Details in “Lesson Plan Post” link, BB.
Sample: “Lesson Plan Example,” BB.

Review Gallagher section on “Nation, Race, and Empire” (pp. 187-90 in “Historical Scholarship” (assigned in Week 10). BB.
Richter, “Postcolonialism and Ethnic Studies” (CT 1753-64); on Edward Said (CT 1801)
  >Optional: Said, from Introduction to Orientalism (CT 1801-14)
Fanon, TBA.
“More on Postcolonial Theory” (BB).
Richter, “Dialogue between Fredric Jameson and Aijaz Ahmad” (CT 1768-69)
Jameson and Ahmad, “Dialogue” (CT 1829-36).

John Ball, “Imperial Monstrosities: ‘Frankenstein,’ the West Indies, and V.S. Naipaul,” ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature, 32.3 (July 2001): 31-58. “Imperial Monstrosities” (BB). Read at least up to p. 12 in the pdf; the rest, on Naipaul, is optional.

>Optional: Sullivan, “Race, Gender, and Imperial Ideology in the Nineteenth Century” (BB).

Seminar report (preferably two people): Explain some ‘points at issue’ in the debates going on among Said, Jameson, Ahmad, and Chow. Help the class get into them. Are any relevant to interpreting Frankenstein? Is Fanon?

**WEEK 14: GLOBALIZATION, POSTMODERNITY, POST-POSTCOLONIALITY (AND OTHER “POSTS”)**

Dec. 10

*DUE: Second self-assessment* (2 pp.) tonight or Thursday 5 pm in the professor’s mailbox.


**Literature**

“Hamid,” BB. Contexts and Questions.


**NOTE:** This short postmodern novel, by a British Pakistani author who has lived in the US, entangles us in a mare’s nest of issues: CIA spycraft in Pakistan, possible assassination and terrorist plots, immigrant identity, cross-cultural romance, Islamophobia, Islamist fundamentalism, American ‘free market fundamentalism’ in a global context, and smoldering resentment of US hegemony. The novel is constructed as a monologue, addressed to “you,” by a former young business whiz who has moved back home after excelling at Princeton and on Wall Street (terrain the novelist knows intimately). His mostly silent interlocutor, never directly quoted, is a mysterious American stranger in a Lahore outdoor café. The mood gets more ominous as dark begins to fall.

>Optional: Harcourt interview with the author (March 2007): [mohsinhamid.com].

>Optional: “Klein Market Fundamentalism,” BB. (Ch. 2 in Shock: background on Milton Friedman’s ideas and how they were spread.)

Seminar report (preferably one or two people who have studied post-colonial theory): Explain some of the ‘points at issue’ in the debates going on within and among Said, Jameson, Ahmad, and Chow. Help the class get into these issues. Are any relevant to a potential interpretation of Frankenstein?

Dec. 15 if not sooner in the professor’s mailbox: Critical essay due (with optional SASE). Write a final paragraph assessing how well you think you carried out your project, what dilemmas you encountered in using critical theory, and/or what you would like to do with it next. Also include some comments about the collaborative process in refining your proposal.

Assignments

1. Seminar report (10% of the final grade): Each student is responsible for one 15-minute presentation on an assigned topic the class needs to know about and/or debate. (Discussion time is extra.) Reports given by 2-3 students are to be collaborative and dialogical (back and forth); ask the professor about the time frame.

   Watchwords for a good report:

   >Ahead of time, discuss with the professor what your particular assignment is. The syllabus lists mostly general topics, not the details. Topics are not “wide open.” On the weekend before your report, e-mail the professor your plan. Also ask for help if you become unsure about what you’re doing with the report or how to shorten it. 90% of seminar reports are not helpful to the class because they go off on their own tangents.

   The purpose of advance notice is trouble shooting to help you avoid common mistakes:

   1) Not serving your classmates’ needs with the report. The “seminar report” is a report to the seminar. It is for the class; you are addressing them, not the professor, or yourself. Picture them when practicing at home.

   2) Wasting class time by getting widely off-point, dwelling on a minor aspect of the topic just because it interests you, displaying any extra research you did on the assigned topic when the class doesn’t need it, or presenting too long.

   3) Failing to provide context, define key terms, situate a theorist, or explain what you are doing first before doing it. Think of your listeners’ needs.

   4) Spending the whole report summarizing a reading already assigned to the class. You need to do something with it, such as posing questions for discussion or debate, or relating it to another something else we’ve read or discussed. These points will be clarified in your advance consultation with the professor.

   5) Making the organization of your remarks clear. Verbally punch the main points and transitions. (A report with 15 main points is too long and may be shapeless.)
**In class, mind the time.** Practice and time yourself at home. (You can’t afford to skip this step. Many students, absorbed in ‘perfecting’ the report the night before, fail to be effective because they didn’t time it.) Have a watch in front of you in class.

**Mind your audience.** In planning and delivery, keep your fellow students firmly in mind. You are teaching and dialoging with your peers. Look at them often. What do they need to know?

**Speak clearly and SLO-ly.** 90% of seminar reports are delivered too fast, trying to “beat the clock.” Cut yours to the most important points and effective examples. Do not mumble or ramble. You want most of all to be understood. **Measure your words:** pause within each sentence to let points sink in (pauses can be planned). Explain any specialized terms or names others may not know.

If you have prepared a good report, but stumble a bit in delivering it because you’re **nervous,** do not apologize: start that sentence over or just keep going, maybe slowing down a bit to catch your own breath.

**Don’t speak from a script** 90% of students read from a prepared paper, even when told not to do it. This won’t work in our class. Talking from an outline may work; you will be stopped if you are reading from a script we can’t follow.

**If you like, bring a brief, 1-page handout.** It could be an outline or a set of quotations you’re discussing, with full citations for any sources other than our course readings. Handouts are not required, though.

**Keep in mind that you are not delivering the last word on a subject.** There will always be more to say. It is not the speech of your life or your Ph.D dissertation defense. It is just a “report” to help the class understand something better. That is all.

2. **Posts (20% of the grade):** The 1-2 page writings required some weeks, on topics posted on Discussion Board, will help you either prepare for the upcoming seminar or reflect on what you read for the last one. Everyone is also required to read several other posts every time and expected to comment on them in class. Additionally, you can “Reply” to your classmates’ BB posts or in your own.

Draft, revise, and proofread before posting. **Do not do an “attachment.”** You may request the opportunity to rewrite a post after our discussion and turn it again (and repost) the following week. But you are **required to post something by the due date** (Sunday nights); after that, you can’t expect the professor to read it. **Exception: anyone with a Seminar Report that night may post a day or two after the class.**

Be sure to **print out your posts** and **bring them to class.** Save them; you’ll want to look yours over when you do the self-evaluation late in the course.

3. **Two Research Exercises (5-6 pp. MAX each, exclusive of Works Cited; 30% of the grade).** These aren’t full-length “research papers” but smaller-scale exercises to help you learn about and practice the tools and methods of the trade and appreciate what scholars do. A Research Exercise doesn’t need to have a thesis. Choices will be provided in four distinct categories of scholarly work, with a wealth of subjects, authors, literary periods, genres, and issues.

When you write these, cut long-winded introductions, state the problem you’re investigating, get right into the subject, lay out the issues and evidence, and aim for the art of conciseness with clarity. You’ll practice many skills: historical and literary reasoning, careful note-taking, sifting materials, proofreading for accuracy, providing documentation, constructing Works Cited, and
making all conform to MLA style. Along the way, you’ll learn some curious things about writers, readers, books, and the world. See “Research Exercises” (in “Assignments” on BB) for ground rules, required format, and lists of topic choices. Make use of “Resources for Research” and the “Intro GLS Bibliography” (both in “Assignments,” BB). And the Altick and Fenstermacher readings; their book, which has sections not on BB like “Problems of Authorship” (pp. 89-106), is on Book Reserve at Dana.

4. **Annotated bibliography for one of these exercises** (the other one will just have a Works Cited page): An alphabetized list of works on the subject, with publication information for each work presented in MLA format, double-spaced, with a period at the end of each entry. Follow that with a short, compact, informative description of the item. Typically, annotations begin with a fragment and may be followed by 2-3 more sentences. (Some annotated bibliographies you will find in books are evaluative as well, but for this assignment yours will only be descriptive--no opinions.) Example below (imagine it double-spaced in 12 pt. type and notice the indent):

A substantive introduction to major modern literary theories and schools of thought, summarizing and comparing them to bring out relationships and differences, relating them to the historical contexts in which they arose, and evaluating each one from the writer’s marxist standpoint. Chapters cover “The Rise of English”; phenomenology, hermeneutics, and reception theory; structuralism and semiotics; post-structuralism; psychoanalysis; and political criticism. [It’s not necessary to list chapter topics or titles if a book has many.]

FYI: for other ways to organize an annotated bibliography, see *MLA Handbook* 5.3.3.

5. **The nature of the final project is to be announced after consultation with the class about another idea.**

   The original idea is below:

   Essay relating contemporary critical theory encountered in this class to *Frankenstein* or *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (8-10 pp., 20% of the grade). What does theory say to the novel and vice versa? You can also draw on any theorists Richter’s introductions discuss, essays in the Norton *Frankenstein*, more (unassigned) critical essays about *Frankenstein* in Course Documents, or those mentioned in “Hamid” (BB). Summarize any critic’s argument you discuss.

   Most published literary criticism engages with other critics or joins an ongoing debate. The assignment is not just to write your own essay of literary criticism but to engage with others’ ideas in a fair, independent-minded way and show that you understand one or more theories presented in the course and can use theoretical terms appropriately. The grade will be lowered if your paper is very ‘light’ on theory.

   In the finished essay, it is fine to raise good questions, or even organize the essay around them, for which you do not have all the answers; speculate about what some of those answers might be.

   **General possibilities** (other ideas for your essay must be cleared with the professor):

   ★ Analyze some aspect of the novel from the perspective of a theorist you have learned about in the course, or using some of his/her key terms.

   ★ Analyze the novel in such a way that you demonstrate the inadequacy of a theory, complicate it, or contest its assumptions.

   ★ Situate your argument within an actual debate among critics or a field of alternative interpretations.
Use theory along with literary analysis in taking issue with another literary critic’s interpretation of the novel. Critics in the Norton Frankenstein are fair game.

Develop some of your ideas in a Post or Seminar Report into a substantial essay on the novel that uses critical theory.

Conduct some type of literary-historical project identified in our course; because this requires research, start getting your ducks lined up as soon as possible.

Use the standard format for papers (see Ground Rules) and include a Works Cited page. If you quote a fellow-classmate, give name, course title, and date in Works Cited. End notes usually aren’t unnecessary.

A paper proposal (2pp.) must be submitted by the deadline on the Schedule. Preparing it may require some reading ahead in the course. (1) State your topic and purpose (purpose statements aren’t theses), setting some parameters so that the essay is likely to accomplish something, instead of rambling around in a subject with broad generalizations.

(2) Name the theorist(s) and/or literary critic(s) who will be your interlocutors and state why you’ve chosen them to work with --why they’re relevant or appropriate to your novel. Give a very brief, accurate, and fair account of their ideas and key terms that you’ll engage with. (If you’ve not completely nailed them down yet, explain where you will look for them and what you hope to do with them.)

(3) Project a thesis -- or more than one. You’ll refine this thesis later and may replace it.

(4) Raise some questions you hope your work will answer or address.

(5) Provide a MLA-style bibliography. This will be brief since the essay won’t be a “research paper” unless you choose the last option above.

6. Two self-assessments (not graded but required). You will write a 2-pp. evaluation of where you’re coming from as an interpreter of literature at the start of the course, and one near the end reflecting on your experience or changes. Find the details on BB in “Assignments.” These self-assessments are absolutely confidential and will not influence your grade.

7. For yourself:

Keep a running list of terms new to you--technical literary terms, buzzwords for critical theories, useful pieces of academic discourse you encounter, and good old ‘vocabulary words.’ Take care with quotation marks around borrowed words; note source and page. (You may want to use a quote in a paper later on). In definitions, use your own words as much as possible—to learn—rather than just copying and pasting large swathes from sources.

Keep track of your mistakes, in this list or another one, such as run-on sentences, problems with introducing quotations, punctuation errors, mistakes with idioms (“The argument within the essay” should read “in the essay” or “of the essay”), and misused words (“she referenced the novel” rather than “she referred to the novel” – FYI, “reference” is vague and not a verb).

Work on precision with language. In reading, notice the verbs used for intellectual acts: e.g., “the critic states” uses a bland, flat-footed verb with little content and no connotations; “the critic maintains” or “speculates” or “interrogates” says more. Watch how theorists qualify their statements. Look for how a critic transitions from one idea or section to the next. Notice diplomatic tactics critics use in attacking other critics. Underline these moments in your text.
Also take note of styles of expression you don’t want to emulate. Since these are private notes, you can express your disgust or outrage however you like.

**Final Grades**

Each final grade is individually crafted and based on the student’s actual work during the term. Substantial class participation can boost a final grade in borderline cases; zero participation, unexcused absences, or missing Posts will bring it down. In general, to earn an A in this course, you need either to earn all A’s, or a preponderance of A’s on graded work, or make a strong finish with some A’s already behind you. *The grade of Incomplete is rarely given.* Approximate proportions for the formal assignments:

- 20% class participation
- 10% Seminar report
- 20% Posts
- 30% two Research Exercises, one with an Annotated Bibliography
- 20% critical essay

~~APPENDICES~~

1. **Tips for using MLA style**

*You may see other styles used in your reading and on Internet sites. In our Program, though, you’re required to use Modern Language Association style, our discipline’s common “code” (a form of abbreviated communication among us) for quotations, in-text citations, double-spaced Works Cited list, and endnotes (if any).*

1. **Citations:** To inform the reader where you got information or a quotation, you must use parenthetical in-text citations, like this (Eagleton 5). *Omit “p.”* Use a term in the citation keyed to an item in your list of Works Cited. If you cite two Eagleton publications, add an abbreviated title: (Eagleton, *Literary Theory*) 5 and (Eagleton, *Ideology* 235). Keep in-text cites short (see *MLA Handbook* 6.3).

When you are quoting from or referring to the same source several sentences in a row, use the author’s name and/or abbreviated title only in the first in-text cite or else write the name into your sentence. After that, just cite page numbers: *don’t keep repeating the author’s name unnecessarily in the parentheses.* When a reference to a different source intervenes in that paragraph, or you start a new one, the citation game starts over.

**In-text cite from an Internet source:** Put in the parentheses the last name of the author, an abbreviated title, or the title of the web site (italicized) where you found the information. The term must be coordinated with the item’s name on Works Cited. *Never put a URL into the paper— it interrupts the flow of your argument and looks weird.*

2. **Quotations:**

Refer to your quotations as “this passage” or “these lines” or “Jane Eyre’s pathetic plea.” After quoting something, *don’t write, “This quote says.”* (In the novel original the words aren’t a “quote.”) Quotations within the text itself could be called dialogue, monologue, interior monologue, or perhaps a literary allusion. Generally avoid the slang term “quote” in papers.

**Double-check your quotations against the original source for accuracy down to the last comma, page number, and date.** This is standard scholarly practice.
Lead into and out of all quotations with your own phrases or sentences, connecting the quote to your argument, providing context, or mentioning the author. Quoted words don’t explain themselves; don’t just “paste them in.” A sentence introducing a quotation usually ends with a colon. If a phrase leads into it, use a comma.

In quoting only part of a source’s words, space ellipses accurately to indicate that something has been left out and never cram them together, like this: ....

A quotation of more than three lines should be indented 8 lines from the left under your text, double spaced, and punctuated exactly as in the original, with your parenthetical cite after the quotation’s final punctuation mark (the one exception to the general rule about end punctuation). If you’re quoting several lines of poetry, separate the lines as in the original. (If you are discussing more than a few lines you might want to add line numbers at the right margin.)

Example of a short quotation that is a whole sentence led into by your sentence:
Homer opens *The Iliad* by announcing his tragic theme: “Anger be now your song, immortal one, / Akhilleus’ anger, doomed and ruinous. . .” (1.1-2).

* This cite is to Book 1, lines 1-2. (Roman numerals have mostly gone out of style.) Notice the punctuation: a colon after your sentence; double quotation marks around the quote; the spaced slash to indicate the poetic line break on your text page; the three spaced ellipses to show that Homer’s sentence continues; a space between the quotation mark and the parenthesis; your final period after the citation.

* “Homer” or “Iliad” aren’t needed in the parens because you just told your reader you’re writing about Homer’s *Iliad*.

Example of a short, partial quotation within your own sentence. (You can often efficiently work in a short one so long as it doesn’t disturb your sentence structure.)
Homer’s great poem is about “Anger . . . doomed and ruinous” (1.1-2).
* The spaced ellipses indicate that you have deliberately left some words out of the original sentence because more isn’t needed for your purposes. No ellipses are needed after “ruinous.” You are quoting only a phrase.

Example of a quotation with a whole sentence or more in the middle left out:
Wilde exclaimed, “I have been denied my rights. . . . Where is justice in this court?”
* Notice the four ellipsis points and how they are spaced.

Example of a one quotation within another:
Ellman relates that Wilde demanded at one point in the trial, “‘Where is justice in this court?’” (43).
* Note the comma before the quotation (it could be a colon, but the quotation is short). The question mark must appear in its original place, not at the end of the whole sentence—it isn’t your question mark. *After the cite, there must be end punctuation even though the quotation ends with question or exclamation mark in it.*

* Single quotation marks are used inside doubles because you are quoting Ellmann quoting Wilde on p. 43 of his biography of Oscar Wilde. Your Works Cited lists only one work by Ellman. No need for his name in the parentheses, right?
3. **Punctuate titles correctly:** In general, use double quotation marks around short works (“The Tyger”) and italics or underlining for longer works (Paradise Lost). Do not switch between italics and underlining: choose one and be consistent. The Bible, like the Qur’an, is not italicized as a title unless it’s a special edition or translation, like *The Jerusalem Bible*.

4. **Works Cited** appears double-spaced on a separate page at the end of your essay that isn’t counted in the total required pages. Follow MLA’s WC format; do not number the items, no matter what you did in college! The items on the list and in-text citations must be verbally coordinated. Two items by the same author are listed under his/her name once and then arranged alphabetically by title. Thus:

   Eagleton, Terry. *Ideology* etc.
   ----. *Literary Theory: An Introduction* etc.

   * In reproducing publication information for a book, use the title on the title page (not on the cover or the binding). Use upper and lower case, even if the publisher’s design department has put the whole title in lower case or used an ampersand. Be sure to include any subtitle in Works Cited at least. Date? Use the latest one given on the publication information page in most cases. Note if it’s a 2nd or later ed. Always include the translator’s name in Works Cited.

   * Follow MLA Style in omitting corporate words, not needed to make the publisher clear:
     - Oxford: Oxford Univ. P, 2005 – *don’t need to spell out “University”; “P” is fine.*
     - London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010 – *the ampersand belongs to their name; but omit “Publishers”*
     - New York: W. W. Norton, 2008. – *omit “and Company.”*

   * Don’t state the obvious, like “London, England” or “San Francisco, California.”
   * Don’t list search engines in Works Cited (or anywhere)—only the actual sources of information or ideas they ‘found’ for you that you cite in the paper (see *MLA Handbook* ch. 5). Ebscohost is a search engine. Leave it behind!

   * Follow MLA style (Sect. 5.6) for Internet citations in WC, ending with date of access. Before leaving a web site collect all the publication information you may need later. Online material must be cited accurately and fully in the bibliography.

5. If you like, add a separate list of **Works Consulted** for other research sources you looked at but do not quote, summarize from, or refer to in the paper. *If you summarize from a source, you must give a full bibliographic citation in Works Cited.*

6. **What to cite:** Except for truly general knowledge, *always cite sources of ideas and information, whether you are quoting or paraphrasing, summarizing, or even just referring to something in a source, such as facts you didn’t otherwise know.* Material on the Internet is considered “published.” In any written work, plagiarism from published sources, *including web sites,* is grounds for an F in the course at minimum. The *R/N Policy on Academic Integrity* explains other kinds of plagiarism too and the legal procedures that can be initiated. To make
sure you know what plagiarism is and how easily it can happen, especially while taking notes, read the *MLA Handbook* (Ch. 2; summary 60-61, 7th ed.).

7. **Proofread meticulously.** Learn this marketable skill through practice. Read each paragraph of a late draft aloud to yourself slowly; you’ll catch more errors and unnecessary repetitions. Read quotations against originals to check for accuracy and to make sure you haven’t ‘accidentally’ plagiarized. Last-minute pen corrections are okay in this class.

2. **HOW to UNPACK THEORETICAL AND CRITICAL TEXTS**

In “Unpacking Critical Theories” (*CT* 13), Richter recommends these three steps: 1. Identify the key sources the writer is using (literature, historical material, theorists, or other literary critics) (20). The anthology’s index or Abrams’ *Glossary* might be helpful.

2. Determine the writer’s stance toward sources (20). What is s/he doing with or to them? If the attitude is critical, where in the essay do you pick this up?

3. Identify the writer’s theoretical commitments (21). Who does s/he name, and what key theory terms or buzzwords come up? Is s/he arguing with another theorist? On what grounds?

All your skills in critical reading of prose will also come into play. You will need to read complex pieces more than once (“study”). Here are more moves to try—not necessarily in this order—that should help you get a fix on an essay. As you work through it, annotate your text in pencil because you may change your mind. Using highlighter is not annotating.

4. How is the piece organized—Where does the introduction end? What are the argument’s major phases or sections? Mark them off in the book. Look for transitional phrases or paragraphs between them. This will help you get the logic of the argument.

5. Is there a thesis argued through most of the piece? (It may not be in the first or even second paragraph.) Annotate the topics of successive paragraphs to find a main thread. Bracket digressions. Are there sub-theses?

6. What central questions (explicit or implicit) drive this piece? Just about every thesis is an answer to a question. (There may also be unconscious questions.) Write them out even if the author doesn’t.

7. Try to place the writer on Richter’s chart, p. 3. Is s/he writing mainly about form, issues of representation, the author, the audience, or the text’s relations with history or society? Or some combination? (Essay titles can be clues.) Mark in the margin where these different issues come up. Doing this may help you identify the writer’s theory commitments.

8. Figure out the debate (if any) this writer is joining or what/who s/he is contesting. Find the places in the essay where debate is going on. What ideas, group of thinkers, or interpretation is s/he answering, anticipating, or addressing? What differing sides are mentioned? How is the writer distinguishing his/her views from others’? What even larger issues may be at stake?

9. What kinds of evidence and/or reasoning is the writer using to support his/her arguments? Mark these places.

10. What kinds of language is the writer using? Examine diction, similes, metaphors, irony and other figures of speech. Does s/he exaggerate to make a point? Look for understatement, “weasel words,” the writer’s neologisms, big abstractions, questions, qualifying phrases and clauses or their absence even when needed.
11. Critique: Does the writer adequately support his/her arguments? Are there slippage points or gaps? Is any discussion of causes and effects convincing?
   Do others’ views seem fairly represented?
   If the writer is drawing on several different theories, is the combination logically coherent? Are the assumptions underlying them incompatible?
   Is the writer suppressing the complexity of a theory and just borrowing its buzz-words?
   Is the writer suppressing the complexity of the literary text under discussion?
   Does s/he have any sacred cows—literary texts, authors, ideological commitments? If so, does this limit the value of the writer’s argument or not?

3. GRADUATE EDITOR’s GUIDE
Polishing style only begins with correcting your typical errors, such as run-on sentences or mistakes in agreement. Tense switching, missing or superfluous commas, mistaken idioms (“analysis on”), abstract nouns used as verbs (“she referenced the book”), words used incorrectly, mispunctuating, and redundant expressions (“time period”) fuzz the thought you’re trying to express.

common eras
Many examples below are taken from graduate students’ papers.

Verb Tense
When writing about what happens in a literary work or what the author is doing in it, use present tense: “Frankenstein demands,” “Mary Shelley alludes to Paradise Lost in this section.” Use past when writing about historical acts and events: “Shelley wrote the novel in a rush”; “She had been listening to ghost tales.” Double-check to make sure you haven’t gone off-track: “Frankenstein demanded.” Only a historical person can demand in the past tense. The literary work actually ‘happens’ in the present time of reading, every time you open the story, even if it’s told in the past tense. (Remember present perfect: “Frankenstein has arduously climbed the mountain before he encounters the monster.”)

What’s wrong with these sentences?
1. The rejection the monster faced is so discouraging that he swore death to all mankind.
2. Percy Shelley writes the review in 1818, but it was not published until after his death

Punctuation
The rule here many people don’t know: The COMMA is not to indicate a ‘pause’: it’s a visual separator, marking off certain words in a sentence so that they are not mistaken as belonging to the immediately contiguous words, causing the idea to be misread. A group of words interrupting the main clause that doesn’t restrict its meaning is marked off from it by a “pair o’ commas.” If the phrase or clause is absolutely necessary to the meaning, it’s considered restrictive and has no commas around it.
   e.g.: “The Parliament of Bees,” published in 1641, defines itself as. . . .
   The interrupting phrase here is non-restrictive--it just offers extra information.

The woman who is accused of the deed lives with the Frankensteins. Restrictive clause.

3. On Columbus Day, 1917 the Secretary of War sent a communiqué to the British foreign
minister.  Missing comma after year.  Date phrase needs a pair. Cf. “in Columbus, Ohio, . . .”

4. Mrs. Hostler, a charwoman became victim number 12.  Interrupting descriptive element needs a second comma to enclose it.

5. He moved to the house of John Broggan, whose wife was Burke’s cousin.  Non-restrictive

6. The policeman knocked on the door that looked damaged.  Restrictive--says which door.

7. The policeman knocked on the door, which looked damaged.  Non-restrictive.

8. They moved to Bloomsbury where they spent the rest of their lives.  Correct?

9. He had withdrawn his lawsuit because, “...it would have been impossible for me to have proved my case without putting Lord Alfred Douglas in the witness-box against his father.”  (Wilde 130)  Four errors. One is a shift in voice in a syntactically continuous sentence: change to “He had withdrawn his lawsuit because, he said, ‘it would have been . . . father’”(Wilde 130).  OR:  He had withdrawn his lawsuit because “‘it would have impossible for [him] to have proved [his] case . . .’” (Wilde 130).

10. Despite his arguments for the language of common men in poetry; Wordsworth did use some poetic diction to elevate his subject matter-a continuing problem for his later imitators.  Here the writer confuses by using a hyphen (“matter-a”?) instead of a double dash.

11. The Daily Telegraph published a similar piece, stating that, “...this man Wilde in the act of his defense condemned himself....”  (Ellman 690).  What’s wrong?

    Compare:  In a similar piece, the Telegraph stated, “this man Wilde . . . condemned himself. . . .” (Ellman 690).  This is correct.  The first three ellipses are spaced out to indicate—what?  Four ellipses is a different signal.  Your readers deserve to know which it is!


13. twentieth century life  Hyphenated adjective: twentieth-century life

14. seven foot tall creature  Hyphenated adjective: seven-foot-tall creature.

15. We were assigned advanced reading for the first class.  Problem?

Dangling Modifiers (“DM” – often comes at the beginning of a sentence)

16. Released from prison on May 19, 1897, Wilde’s career was essentially dead.

    Corrected:  Released from prison, Wilde found that his career was essentially dead.”

17. Running through the door, her skirt got caught on the knob.  Her skirt ran all by itself?

Idioms (“ID”)

18. The person that wrote this fable was daft.  If the noun is human, use who. Never use “that” to refer to people.  It’s depersonalizing.

A verb paired with the wrong adverb or preposition:

19. After researching more on this poem, I found . . .

    Corrected:  After researching this poem further . . . One doesn’t “research on” something; the verb “research” takes a direct object, not a prepositional phrase

20. An article from the Times web site says. . . . The article is on the site. You took the quote from the site.
What’s wrong with these?
21. a group in society that prides itself of virtue
22. prevalent in England since the 1600s until the late Victorian era
23. My criticism on *Frankenstein* is that
24. Conrad, by the request of his publisher, revised the story.
25. The people in the room that had signs

**“WC” (wrong word choices, redundant, or convoluted)**
26. The throngs of poets that imitated Wordsworth reduced nature poetry to sentimental drivel.
27. The critic showcases Mary Shelley’s treatment of the Monster. “Showcase” is what’s done on Broadway, connotes ‘flashy’ or visual display. Try “focuses on” or “treats” or “reveals” . . . .
29. The dictionary references three meanings for “symbol.” Try “gives.” ”Reference” is a noun or adjective, as in “reference book.”
30. The witness referenced Wilde’s relationships with boys. Try “referred to.” In Wilde’s trial, the witness probably did more than just “refer to”-- try “denounced,” “condemned,” “documented.”
31. It was during this time period that Redundant. Use either “time” or “period.”
32. This would be a guiding tenant for the Modernist poets. The one with the lease?
33. In terms of analysis of the poem itself, critics place different levels of importance on the poem. Make it simpler and eliminate repetition.
34. She made a point to say that. . . . “She made a point of saying” has a specific meaning.
35. The reviews are very different, as are the periodicals and the audiences in which they seek to target.
36. The argument within the article Or: The language within the novel. Use “in.”

**More Classic “WC,” “Id,” punctuation, and other problemas**
37. The author purports that the edition is flawed. Something “purports to” (as in, “The opinion poll purports to explain where the candidate’s strengths lie.” The expression “purports to” implies falseness. Also, “purports” doesn’t take a direct object.
38. The novelist’s purpose was to showcase depravity through this character.
39. Summing up the debates to the two endings of *Great Expectations*. . . .
40. He made a revision to the original speech. He made changes to the original speech. Which is better and why?
41. More succinct he sums up the main idea of the speech.
42. Faulkner learned about how to make better speeches.
43. He efforts to pit the text against itself to substantiate his reading. Efforts is a noun, not a verb. What verb would be better?
44. Mary Shelley was a direct participant of popular science culture. Idiom: participant in
45. Mary Shelley, a direct participant in popular science culture put it in her novel.
46. Reading the text through this theoretical lens creates some pitfalls. Mixed metaphor! Just try to picture the idea. Bet you can’t.
47. Whereas specific morality is denoted upon characters in wrestling, the viewer of the nightly news gets to choose their alignment as signified in whom they are against.
48. Roy puts forth the idea that. . . . *Flowers put forth buds—trees, leaves. Ideas need different verbs.*

49. Achilles “doomed and ruinous” anger (1.2) leads him to step back from the war.

50. Homer starts off strong “Anger be now your song” like Achilles (1.1-2).

51. He did not set out to satirize the political climate of England, but its literary debates

52. This was a key component to the 19th-century vision of the savage. *Use “component of.”*

**Noun wrongly used as a different part of speech:** besides “reference” . . .

53. That was a cliché expression. I hope I wasn’t being cliché when I said that Frankenstein, too, is a “monster.” (The first sentence is wordy: “That was a cliché.” The adjective form is “clichéd.” Although one can refer to “clichéd” speech (the correctly spelled adjective), a human being isn’t “clichéd”–substitute another term or rewrite: “The idea that Frankenstein, too, is a “monster” is a cliché in literary criticism.”)

**Empty transitional phrases (= just “paper clips”)**

Most transitional expressions indicate the logical relationship of one thought or paragraph to the next. Paper clips just hook things together. They have no content, logical or otherwise.

54. Moving on to the next point, the writer uses a lot of clichés. *Who is moving on?*

55. The Arab street was revolting. As such, it prompted American diplomats to leave. (The first sentence is ambiguous in meaning, possibly insulting to an Arab. “As such” has no content; transitions should indicate more precisely the relationship between thoughts. Instead: “Because the Arab street was revolting, the American diplomats left for their own safety.”

Other transitions with logic content: “As a result,” “In other cases,” “Next,” “On the other hand,” etc.)

56. The poem drives toward an anti-climactic conclusion. As such, it ends on a weak note out of keeping with the earlier part of the poem. *How could this be rewritten and condensed?*

57. Another point is that this captivity narrative was surprisingly lacking in total stereotyping of the Indian tribe. “Another” functions like “and” here: “and” “and” “and” “and” is a merely cumulative structure with no logical articulation of points. Cf. “also” used over and over to start off sentences or repeated in successive sentences. Use “search” to find this error.

58. Firstly, . . . Secondly, . . . Thirdly, . . . Fourthly, . . . This is merely enumerative: what are the logical relationships between the content of the first and second points, second and third, etc.? It’s also tediously repetitive without giving new information. And words like “Firstly” sound old-fashioned. Who says that any more, besides pompous characters in novels?

**All-time classic paper-clip expressions**

59. I was thinking in terms of coming over. *What does this mean? I am thinking of coming over to your house? I was thinking about it? A lowly preposition is what you need: it has content.*

60. The critic’s argument in terms of *Frankenstein* is very impressive. *You mean “about.”*

61. The rules in terms of plagiarism are very clear. *You mean “about.”*

62. This essay/the class/the speech was relatable. “Relatable” is imprecise, to say the least. To what or whom did the essay, etc. “relate”? On what grounds, in what way? Does the writer mean he/she could “relate to” it? But what does that mean? “I liked it.” “It felt comfy.” “I understood it.” “I could relate it to my life.” “I could connect it with our discussion.” Avoid this word in academic writing and strive to be specific.  

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