Research Assignment - Brockland-Nease
Various Interpretations, Critical Schools, and Research-Assisted Writing

Critical Schools

On our Prequiz several weeks ago, I asked you to identify the main interest of each of a number of critical schools, or methods of reading (feminist, Marxist, mythological, formalist, etc.). The schools named there were just a small sampling of the possibilities. For the next few minutes, we're going to talk about those and some other possibilities.

On pages 1580 through 1615, Robert DiYanni (our text's editor), discusses and exemplifies formalist, structuralist, biographical, historical, psychological, feminist, Marxist, reader-response, mythological, and cultural methods of reading. After each section, he offers a list of recommended further readings that will demonstrate and/or explain the methods and interests of each of these styles of interpretation. For my purposes, an examination and awareness of these various possibilities for interpretation is intended to open your mind to the unlimited potential for meaning in any text and to your active role, as reader/audience, in making that meaning. Literature is often more valuable to us when we know that we are empowered: our reactions to a piece of literature are both valuable and legitimate, so long as they are honest and reflect some real attempt, on our part, to read the work. With this knowledge, we can see literature as less elitist, academic, and separate from the world and more as a tool for the communication of ideas that may actually turn out to be useful to us in every aspect of our lives and our work.

Briefly, then, let's see if we can figure out what kinds of things people tend to seek and make out of texts: how about a

Biographical critic?

Historical critic?

Psychoanalytic critic?

Cultural critic? Within this big category, we might also discuss feminist and Marxist critics, two of the most popular schools of our century.

Mythological critic?

Formalist & Structuralist critics?

Reader-response critics are interested in the theory of what we're doing right now—the assertion that meaning may not exist in a text but may instead be inspired by a text and consequently formed either within the reader's mind or somewhere between the reader and the text. Sometimes this involves discussion of the reader's own experiences outside of the text—his or her life and the things within it that parallel or contradict what the reader finds in the story.
For this reason, there is the danger of moving too far away from the text, of losing contact and forgetting to link our lives to the pieces of the text that appear relevant (we begin to write personal reactions rather than analytic interpretations). If we keep this danger in mind and take care to avoid it, however, reader-response goals can help us learn a lot about our world through the texts we read, even if those texts appear to deal with worlds very different from our own. In a sense, this keeps texts alive: What does Oedipus Rex, for instance, written 2500 years ago, say to and about Osama-bin-Laden? What does it say to George Bush? What does it say to Ralph Nader?

**Description of Assignments**

Over the next couple of weeks, you will be working on two projects. Each of these projects challenges you to recognize the possibility that a literary work can be read and interpreted in a number of different ways. As we have discussed, meaning in literature is not found but made, and the product made depends a great deal upon the values, interests and experiences (as well as analytical skills) of the reader.

The first of these assignments (in order of due dates) will be a group presentation (GIVE OUT AND GO OVER ASSIGNMENT SHEET).

Does anyone have any questions about the group assignment? Please do not hesitate to ask them as they come up over the next few days. Get together with your group soon to meet each other and to discuss which Critical Focus Option you'd like to pursue.

The second project actually includes two assignments: (1) annotations, and (2) an applied theory paper. These two assignments will involve the same primary source, and the annotations assignment will help you to both complete and do a good job on the applied theory paper. To complete these assignments, you will select ONE of the works we have read together (not all works are eligible, however), read the work carefully, write a preliminary draft interpretation of the work (your ideas), and then research the available secondary sources in an effort to find both support for and alternatives to your analysis. Please note that it is important for you to write your initial essay paper before you pursue your research. While research has many purposes, one important function it serves is to help you substantiate the claims YOU want to make. Having a base reading in mind will help you to maintain a critical, analytical stance on this project. The applied theory paper is an ESSAY and not a REPORT.

On the other hand, the annotations I mentioned are brief reports of a sort. To annotate a secondary source is to describe the source and evaluate its usefulness for your purposes. You will annotate three secondary sources for this project. Those three sources may but do not have to be the sources you will end up using to support your applied theory paper. The assignment sheet I am about to give you will provide the questions you must ask about your secondary sources in order to evaluate them effectively. (GIVE OUT ANNOTATIONS ASSIGNMENT and APPLIED THEORY PAPER ASSIGNMENT). Over the weekend, read these assignments closely and let me know of questions
you have.

Calendar of Events

- 6/30 (Wednesday) Library Orientation Session, 9:30 am, Lane Library Room 206
- 7/2 (Friday) Group Focus Options Due, 9:30 am, Gamble 107
- 7/6 (Tuesday) Group Preparation Day (meet with your group instead of class)
- 7/7-8 (Wed & Thurs) Group Presentations, 9:30 am, Gamble 107
- 7/9 (Friday) Annotations Due, 9:30 am, Gamble 107
- 7/14 (Wednesday) Applied Theory Paper Due, 9:30 am, Gamble 107

For the remainder of today, we are going to discuss FINDING and EVALUATING secondary sources, or in other words, CONDUCTING RESEARCH. On Wednesday, we are going to meet in the Lane Library for an orientation to literary research using the resources available through Armstrong Atlantic State University. Some of these resources are on-line resources, but many of the most valuable resources are physically in the library itself.

First of all, what is a secondary source? What's the difference between a primary source, a secondary source, and a reference source?

Okay, now, how do I recognize a valuable secondary source?

Finally, how do I FIND valuable secondary sources?

Be wary of the internet. There are effective ways to use it, even for academic research, but there are many more useless sources on the internet than valuable ones. DO NOT, for our projects, under any circumstances, utilize a commercial search engine in order to find sources. The sources you will come up with via Yahoo or Google, etc., will not be of the analytical quality or focus that you need for these projects. Instead, use the internet to help you conduct a search of academically acceptable DATABASES. These are controlled-access resources that attempt to enforce standards of quality such as whether something is analytic or summary in purpose, whether it provides information of sufficient detail to interest a college student or academic researcher, whether it is from a creditable source, and whether it follows respected research and development methods. In other words, all of the sources you find in an appropriate database have the potential to be useful in some sort of academic project—they're not just something a 6th grader decided to put on his or her personal website.

On Wednesday, Mr. Freeman will show you how to find and use these databases, as well as how to find and use the resources on the shelves of the Lane Library. These are the resources you will need in order to complete the projects we've been discussing today.
ENGLISH 1102 • GROUP PRESENTATION PROJECT

“A Rose for Emily”

Description of Project
Working with other class members, you will analyze this short story from one particular critical perspective and present the results of your analysis before the rest of the class.

Instructions
If you have not already done so, read "A Rose for Emily," which is in our textbook. Meet with your group members to discuss the story and your group’s strategy for organizing your research, discussing your findings and presenting your analysis.

Each group will have several tasks, which may be distributed among the group members or shared by all--your group will work out its own plan to assure that everyone contributes to the presentation project. For example, your group may select someone to take notes during the group’s discussions, someone to be the spokesperson for the group on the presentation day, and someone to initiate the research and create a bibliography, or your group may elect to share these tasks among all of the members.

Specifications
To complete the assignment, your group must find, read and explain to the class at least one secondary source (preferably an article from a journal or essay collection) that examines the aspect of the story that has been selected by your group. Using that or those secondary sources to help stimulate and guide your ideas, work with your group to develop a reading of the story based upon your group’s assigned angle.

On Wednesday and Thursday, July 7th and 8th, each group will share its findings with the class in an organized, rehearsed ten to twelve minute presentation. Your group can ask questions of the class and answer questions from the class as part of its presentation, but a significant portion of the group presentation should be a prepared delivery that explains your research findings.

In addition to the presentation, your group will turn in a works cited list (one copy for the whole group) and a written “transcript” of your presentation (again, just one copy for the entire group--some variation between the written and oral presentations, caused by questions asked or answered, is permissible). Each member of the group should sign
his or her name to the presentation.

If a case should occur in which one or more group members do not share in the work of preparing or delivering the presentation (in the judgement of the other group members), the working group members should speak with me about their concerns no later than Friday, July 9th. Unless such objections or concerns are raised by group members, one grade shall be assigned for the presentation, and all members of the group will receive that grade for the project. The major criteria for evaluating the project will be compliance with instructions, effective use of primary and secondary sources in the analysis, and organization of ideas.

Our class will not meet as a class on Tuesday, July 6th. During this time groups should meet to prepare their projects. Groups are also encouraged to meet at other times to complete preparations, and should work together to develop a plan of organization and a schedule that complies with the needs of each group member.

Preliminary Group Assignments

1. Niya, Katherine, Jay
2. Mande, Nicholas, Alpesh
3. Bradly, Will, Israel, Niki
4. June, Jenna, Sarah

Critical Focus Options
(a) the South; (b) women; (c) "normality"/mental health; (d) William Faulkner

***Your group must tell me its chosen focus no later than Friday, July 2nd-focus selection will be on a first come/first served basis. Only one group may present each option.

ENGLISH 1102 • ANNOTATIONS ASSIGNMENT

Description of Assignment
Annotations include both a list and an evaluation of selected secondary sources. This assignment requires that you find, evaluate and write a review of THREE critical secondary sources, each of which discusses the primary source you have selected for your upcoming applied theory paper. You will turn in a works cited list which includes the three secondary sources, presented in MLA form, and you will also turn in three paragraphs (one for each secondary source) that contain your responses to the questions below. Your answers should be phrased in complete sentences and should be free from grammatical errors.

Instructions
To complete this assignment, read several secondary sources written about the primary source you have selected; then choose the three secondary sources that you find most useful to your argument. Present these three sources in a "works cited" list using MLA form, and also attach an evaluation paragraph for each of the three sources. Your evaluation paragraph must answer each of the following questions:

- Who is the author of the secondary source and what qualifies this person to be a trusted authority on your primary source?
- What is the thesis or point that the secondary source is attempting to prove about your primary source?
- Has the author of the secondary source utilized adequate primary support for his/her argument?
- What secondary support does this author provide for his/her argument?
- Does the book or article include a bibliography or works cited list?
- How current is this secondary source, and if it is not current, what makes you believe that the ideas are still relevant?
- Who is the intended audience of this secondary source (in other words, is the source too basic or too advanced for your use)?
- How will this secondary source relate to the thesis of your applied theory paper?

**Other Specifications**

This assignment must be typed; the works cited list will be single-spaced (with double space between each entry), but the annotation paragraphs should be double-spaced. Each annotation paragraph (one per source) should be between 100 and 200 words long. Answers to the above questions should appear in complete sentences.

This assignment must be turned in to me at Gamble 107 no later than 9:30 am on Friday, July 9, 2004.

**Note:** You should make every attempt to select secondary sources that will be helpful to you on the applied theory paper assignment. However, because the annotations will be completed before the applied theory paper is due, it is certainly possible that your applied theory paper will develop in a direction you had not anticipated when you prepared your annotations. Therefore, you are not required to use the same secondary sources for the annotations that you use on the applied theory paper. You may find it necessary to find one or more new secondary sources as you complete the later assignment. You should, however, evaluate any new sources carefully, for yourself, to assure that these sources will be assets to your paper.
This essay, which will be approximately 1000 to 1250 words in length (excluding excessively lengthy quotations), will present and support a thesis that meets the following criteria:

- Your thesis will identify and state the theme of the work as you interpret it.
- Your thesis will also attempt to place your interpretation within the most closely related critical school we have discussed.

In addition to stating and supporting this thesis, your essay will

- show which literary tools the author has employed in order to develop this theme (use the terminology we have discussed in class); and
- explain how these tools relate to the theme you've created; and
- provide secondary critical support for at least some points within your argument; and
- demonstrate that you have read and considered at least one alternative reading, viewpoint or critical school interpretation of your work; and
- explain why your reading is more consistent with the work as a whole than you perceive that alternative reading to be.

Like your earlier poetry analysis essay, this assignment includes a close reading on your part. However, with this project you will explore and provide secondary support as well as primary support, to give you experience in utilizing a broader range of resources to substantiate your analytical claims.

**Instructions**

Select one primary source from the list below. Identify the theme you have read into this piece (which does not necessarily have to be a theme we discussed in class), and provide evidence of this theme from your primary source as well as from a minimum of two approved secondary sources (utilize quotations, paraphrases, summaries and/or other means of referring to and incorporating your support texts).

One of these two secondary sources must provide a different or alternative style of reading than you do. For example, your interpretation might be a psychoanalytic interpretation of the work, focusing on what the piece can teach us about human behavior. Your alternative secondary source might be a mythological reading of the work, focusing instead on what the piece says about the relationship between God and mankind. You and the alternative critic may both discuss the same symbol or the same word or the same setting or the same character, but you will assign one meaning to that element while the alternative critic will assign a different meaning. Show how you believe your meaning to be more consistent with the work as a whole than the alternative critic's is. This can often be accomplished by raising the question of important elements in the work that the alternative critic's reading leaves
"unread" (in other words, the critic does not explain those things and how they fit).

You are not expected to talk about everything in the poem, play or story you select, and you do not need to provide a plot summary. Assume that your reader has read the work. Your task is to explain what you understand this story to say about the topic at stake (for example, about kingship or marriage or evil or soccer or whatever you think the piece is about). You will, therefore, be providing a "reading" of the story that is either theological, historical, psychoanalytic, feminist, etc.

Type your paper. Include a complete works cited list in MLA form. Proofread your paper and eliminate all grammatical, mechanical and organizational errors. Turn in your paper to me at Gamble 107 no later than 9:30 am on Wednesday, July 14, 2004.

Evaluation Criteria
The evaluation (grade) of your essay will depend upon all of the following considerations:

- The clarity of your statement of the theme
- The accurate definition and application of literary terms and tools you identify
- The relevance and adequacy of primary evidence you provide
- The relevance and adequacy of secondary evidence you provide
- The grammatical, organizational and developmental soundness of your writing, including the accurate use of MLA form for citations and bibliography
- The degree to which you have followed the directions of the assignment
- The integrity and originality of your work (plagiarism results in automatic failure for the assignment)

Approved Primary Sources
(Select ONE):

- *Hamlet*
- "The Yellow Wallpaper"
- "Good Country People"
- *Endgame*
- "Everyday Use"*
- "The Convergence of the Twain"*

*Locating secondary sources for the latter three pieces may be more challenging than locating sources for the first three works. You can do it, but be prepared to dig a little longer.
I invite and encourage you to talk with me as much as you can or choose to throughout the research and preparation of your paper. My regular office hours are 11:00 to 11:30 on Mondays and Fridays and 8:45 to 9:15 on Tuesdays and Thursdays; other times are available by appointment.