Spring 1-15-1997

ENG 1002-045: Composition and Literature

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Paper 1

Write a three-page paper using one of the following topics or topic of your own choice that you have checked with me:

1. Consider Jake’s relationship with his car in “Love in L.A.” and the narrator’s relationship with her Barbie in Sandra Cisneros’s “Barbie-Q.” What do the car and the doll reveal about the characters? How do they function symbolically and how do they contribute to the theme of the stories? In what ways do the doll and the car function similarly? In what ways do they function differently? What do they suggest about the writers’ different perspectives?

2. Although Scratchy Wilson from “The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky” and Katherine Mansfield’s “Miss Brill” are radically different kinds of people, they share a painful recognition at the end of their stories. What does each of them learn? Discuss whether you think what each of them learns is of equal importance in changing his or her life? Eudora Welty thinks that “Miss Brill” is “more of a story” than “The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky.” Do you agree? Why or why not?

3. Discuss how the young black man’s expectations in “Battle Royal” are similar to what has come to be known as the American dream, that assumes that ambition, hard work, perseverance, intelligence, and virtue always lead to success. Do his expectations change? How and why? What does he believe at the end of the story? What is the author trying to say about the American dream?

4. Compare the use of settings in “The Hand” and in John Updike’s “A&P.” How do the two writers use setting to make meaning in their stories? Do the settings function symbolically? If so, how? What do the settings suggest about the two authors’ themes and concerns? How are they alike? How are they different?

5. How might Gail Godwin’s “A Sorrowful Woman” be read as a kind of sequel to “The Hand”? What themes do the two stories have in common? How do those themes develop? How do they change? Also, what kinds of images are at work in the two stories? How are those alike and different?

We will talk in class about how these essays should be written, but let me remind you about some of the most important points. The essay should be structured like an argument. You will, that is, be making one main point about whatever stories you have taken as your subject, and you will use details from the stories in order to support your argument. Your main point should be an INTERPRETATION that can be justified ON THE BASIS OF THE TEXT. The details you use to support your argument should be analyses, interpretations, and summaries of the text itself. Stay close to the text and use passages FROM the text to make your point.
Course Policy

Goals: The purpose of this course is to help you become better readers and writers by focusing on writing about literature. My assumption is that you've had some experience writing about literature, but none in college, and the best thing I can do for you is give you plenty of opportunities to try. For that reason, I will give you lots of in-class writings, short out-of-class writings, and essay-type questions. I will very often give you the chance to re-write, but I will also grade some of your in-class writing, which you will not be able to revise, because developing in-class writing skills will be important to you.

Attendance and Lateness: I will not count off for missed classes, but you will not be let off the hook for any missed exams (of course!!) or presentations. If you miss one of these, you need to have a doctor's excuse. Otherwise, missed classes will only count against your classroom participation. I will always be nice to you and respectful, no matter how many absences, excused or unexcused, you have. Do not mistake my demeanor for the intention to overlook absences. I will not hesitate to fail you for classroom participation, or to give you a D, if you are not here. If you have more than three unexcused absences, you should start to worry. Also, if latenesses become a problem, I will begin to count latenesses as absences.

Late papers: I will read drafts of papers, and I will counsel you about papers over the phone, but I will not accept late papers except under the most dire circumstances. Computer problems can be worked out in advance if you plan ahead. Give yourself a due date two or three days before the due date I give you. That way, you can work on the printing of the paper ahead of time, and if you have problems, you will still have time to solve them.

Assignments:
* Formal writings: You will have four formal papers, for which you will also be expected to produce drafts. (Showing up with completed drafts will count as part of classroom participation.) Two of those writings will be about works of literature we read together in class, and two will be about a novel you will choose and read independently.
* Informal and/or in-class writings: These will receive checks, check pluses or check minuses, depending on their detail, thoughtfulness, and accuracy. These will make up your classroom participation grade. If you have lots of check pluses, come to class, turn in rough drafts on time, and speak up, you will have an “A” for classroom participation. If you are lacking in an area, you will earn a “B,” etc.
* Essay exams: You will have two short essay exams. Essays will also be graded on their detail, thoughtfulness, and accuracy, as well as their organization and mechanics.
* Workshops: I will periodically ask you to workshop each others’ papers. I will expect a thorough job of these workshops and will sometimes grade the product.
* Presentations: You will be asked to present your third paper to the class. You will not have to do any extra research or reading for this presentation, but I will expect you to be prepared, to come to class with detailed note cards or outline.

Grades:
10% first three papers  
15% final paper  
5% presentation  
15% exams  
5% workshop grades  
30% classroom participation

Problems: If you have any problems regarding scheduling, grades, papers, etc., please call me at home, come to office hours, or make an appointment with me. I’d be happy to talk to you about any of your concerns.

Students with disabilities: Students with disabilities can receive help. Contact the coordinator of the Office of Disability Services at 6583.

Syllabus:

M J 13 introduction  
W J 15 introduction; “Story of an Hour,” p. 12  
W J 22 pp. 19-38; “A&P,” p. 487

M J 27 pp. 187-206  
W J 29 pp. 207-228

M F 3 “A Good Man is Hard to Find,” p. 358  
W F 5 first draft paper due; workshops

M F 10 pp. 1071-1106

M F 17 final draft paper 1  
A Doll House, p. 1505  
W F 19 A Doll House  

M F 24 A Doll House  
W F 26 first draft paper 2; workshop

M M 3 A Raisin in the Sun, p. 1733  
W M 5 A Raisin in the Sun

M M 10 final draft paper 2  
A Raisin in the Sun  
W M 12 pp. 607-613  
“Morning Swim,” p. 619  
“The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” p. 922  
“Musée des Beaux Arts,” p. 938

M M 24 pp. 719-729  
“Do not go gentle into that good night,” p. 770

W M 26 first draft paper 3; workshop
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