

ENGL 211: Survey of English Literature I  
ESSAY TOPICS

DUE: Outlines due OCTOBER 29, 2012

Essays due NOVEMBER 19, 2012

LENGTH: 6 pages + Title Page + Works Cited (Times New Roman 12 pt. font, double-spaced)

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. All papers must be handed in AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS on the due date.
2. NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED.
3. OFF-TOPIC PAPERS WILL BE ASSIGNED A GRADE OF ZERO.
4. Use MLA format for presentation, citation, and documentation (the *MLA Handbook* is available in the library if you do not own one, and instruction sheets are available from the Learning Skills Centre if you require additional help).
5. For the final paper, include a Works Cited page, NOT a Bibliography (I.e. you may only list books or articles cited in the essay).
6. You must use BOTH scholarly books and articles from scholarly journals in your research. You may use headnotes, introductions, and other texts from your textbook anthology as secondary sources, but remember that your focus must be on the texts specified in the essay topic. **NOTE: *Wikipedia*, *Sparknotes* and *Coles Notes* are NOT considered scholarly sources and do not count toward your Works Cited.**

NOTE ON SOURCES: You must include a MINIMUM of FIVE (5) secondary sources **in addition to the primary sources**. You may make use of the headnotes, introductions and "Perspectives" sections of your textbook, but you must not limit your research to these sources. Your textbook includes selected bibliographies for the major authors and for key themes and topics. You will also want to use the MLA (Modern Language Association) Bibliographic Database available from the "online databases" page of the library's website. There, you can do subject and keyword as well as author and text searches to find articles in over 10,000 literary journals and collections of essays. While many of these are available on-line in full-text form, you should remember **to leave yourself lots of time to take advantage of interlibrary loan** for sources available only in hardcopy that have to be requested from other libraries. If you have questions about using on-line bibliographic databases see the reference librarians or make an appointment to see me during office hours.

Topics begin next page.

Choose 1 (ONE) of the following topics and compose a cogent, well-organized, well-documented essay unified by a **significant thesis**. **CONCRETIZE AND ILLUSTRATE** your argument with **detailed reference to the primary texts** in the form of close reading, and with judicious and critical use of **secondary sources**. Clearly articulate the relationship between **FORM, CONTENT and CONTEXT**. Do not conduct plot summary.

Note that each topic also consists of a number of subtopics and questions. These are provided to help you to narrow your focus and to suggest avenues of exploration. You do not have to respond to every supplementary issue so long as your paper **clearly and explicitly engages with the main topic**.

### TOPIC ONE

Discuss the significance of the **first-person narrator** in TWO (2) of the following texts: Elizabeth I, "Speech to the Troops at Tilbury"; Wroth, from *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, Sonnet #1; Rochester, "The Disabled Debauchee"; Olaudah Equiano, "The Interesting Narrative..."; Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters: The Women's Coffee House*; John Donne, "The Flea."

Do not simply describe the use of first-person narrator but consider the ways that this choice of point-of-view influences your understanding of the significant ideas of the texts. You may wish to consider one or more of the following questions to get you started: What is enabled by a first-person narrator that cannot be achieved by a third-person or omniscient point-of-view? What are the limitations of first-person narration and how are these compensated for or exploited in the text? What is the role of irony in the presentation of a first-person narrator? How does gender, class or race influence the way that a narrator presents him- or herself? How does the genre (epistolary, journalistic, poetic) influence the use of a first-person narrator? How are authority and reliability established or undermined? How do all of these ideas relate to the formal qualities of the texts?

### TOPIC TWO

With reference to TWO (2) of the following texts, discuss the significance of **rule and government**: Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book I; Wyatt, "Whoso list to hunt"; Chaucer, "The Wife of Bath's Tale"; Philips, "Upon the Double Murder of King Charles"; Swetnam, "The Arraignment..."; Elizabeth I, "The doubt of future foes...."

Do not simply describe instances of rule and government but consider how the presentation of these concepts influences your understanding of the significant ideas of the texts. You may wish to consider one or more of the following questions to get you started: How are "rulers" and "subjects" defined? Is this definition limited only to kings and their subjects? How do the ideas of rule and government relate to individual households or even individual bodies and passions? What constitutes "good government?" Are rule and government always "good?" What conceptual models shape the presentation of rule and government? How is resistance to rule and government presented? What conflicting ideas characterize the experience of rule and government? How does gender, class or race influence the text's presentation and valuation of rule and government? How do all of these ideas relate to the formal qualities of the texts?

Topics continued next page.

**TOPIC THREE**

With reference to at least TWO (2) but NO MORE THAN THREE (3) of the texts in the following list, discuss the significance of **transience and loss**: *Beowulf* (selection indicated on the “Readings and Assignment Schedule” only); Milton, “When I consider how my light is spent”; Behn, “The Disappointment”; Henry Howard Earl of Surrey, “The Soote Season”; Marlowe, “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love”; Lovelace, “The Grasshopper.”

Do not just describe instances of loss or representations of transience and loss but consider how the presentation of these concepts or motifs influences your understanding of the significant ideas of the texts. You may wish to consider one or more of the following questions to get you started: What conceptual models shape the presentation of transience and loss? How are transience and loss valued? Are they always to be lamented? What is the role of consolation? What is the relationship between physical and spiritual loss? What is the relationship between time and eternity? What is the role of nostalgia? What are the roles of mourning or celebration in the context of transience and loss? How does class, gender or race shape the representation of transience and loss? How does genre shape the presentation of transience and loss (E.g. elegy, heroic, lyric, comedic/satirical etc.)? How do all of these ideas relate to the formal qualities of the texts?