

In-Class Writings (20%)

A primary task in this course is learning to argue cogently for the viability of your particular interpretation. Thus, at the beginning of most class periods we will ask you to write a one-paragraph response to an interpretive question about the text(s) assigned for that day.

- * These answers should be concise and direct, drawing upon **specific** references to the text for support.
- * You may use your books, but you will have only 5-7 minutes to answer.
- * Please make sure that you use 8 1/2" x 11" paper without ragged edges.

To be effective, even these short in-class writings need the essential elements of a sound argument:

- a **claim** or **thesis** that is interpretive and arguable,
- followed by supporting **evidence** (usually quotations from the text),
- then an **explanation** that briefly demonstrates how that evidence supports your thesis.

These responses will be graded with the following rubric:

Excellent (100 points)

Does all that a **satisfactory** answer does, *and* expands on the original question by exploring related issues and questions or by bringing other relevant texts into play.

Satisfactory (85 points)

Addresses the question with an interpretive thesis at the outset, *and* engages the question thoroughly; *and* supports assertions with specific references from the text, *and* cites references accurately; *and* explains how the references relate to the opening thesis.

Not satisfactory (60 points)

Fails to address the question at the outset, *or* lacks an interpretive thesis; *or* engages the question in merely the most perfunctory or obvious way; *or* cites no specific references from the text, *or* does not explain how the references relate to the opening thesis.

No grade (0 points)

Is not turned in by the end of the exercise.

Again, you should use the following three-part structure in your in-class writings:

- a. **CLAIM** (thesis)
- b. **EVIDENCE** (quotation—be sure to cite line numbers for poetry, page numbers for prose)
- c. **EXPLANATION** (your interpretation of the quotation insofar as it supports your opening claim).

This three-part structure is **NOT OPTIONAL** if you wish to do well on these assignments.

We also might give written homework or pop quizzes; if we do, they will be graded like the in-class writings.

Daily Preparation and Participation (20%)

You will earn a grade for your course participation according to the following rubric:

Excellent (100 points)--student does all of the following:

- Contributes regularly and enthusiastically to ALL class discussions; *and*
- sets an agenda for class discussion and moves it forward, while giving others room to speak; *and*
- states ideas clearly; *and*
- supports opinions with specific evidence from the text or elsewhere; *and*
- follows up on others' ideas; *and*
- refines own ideas; *and*
- takes the lead in engaging others in discussion; *and*
- rephrases accurately what others say; *and*
- asks genuine questions; *and*
- pays attention all the time.

Good (85 points)--student does all of the following:

- Contributes good -spiritedly to nearly all class discussions without dominating them; *and*
- states ideas clearly; *and*
- supports opinions with general evidence from the text or elsewhere; *and*
- maintains an active presence in the class; *and*
- rephrases accurately what others say; *and*
- engages others in dialogue, *and*
- pays attention all the time.

Average (75 points)

- Regularly listens attentively to others, *but*
- contributes sporadically to some class discussions; *or*
- offers relevant ideas and opinions, but sometimes digresses from the point easily; *or*
- does not always support ideas and opinions with evidence from the text; *or*
- gives little follow-up or refinement of ideas; *or*
- engages others in dialogue only to some extent.

Below Average (65 points)

- Physically present and actively listens; *but*
- contributes very little to class discussion, or offers unproductive comments; *or*
- does not exhibit control of the material or reading assignment under discussion; *or*
- usually speaks only when called on.

Failing (50 or fewer points)

- Frequently unprepared or regularly inattentive; *or*
- often either says nothing or offers unproductive comments; *or*
- sometimes either contributes in disrespectful ways or discourages group discussion.