

Introduction to Literature, English 200.700

Web Course

Winter, 2017, Jan. 3 – Jan. 20

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IMPORTANT! Warning about Three-week Winter Term Courses:

Winter Term schedules are very intensive and concentrated. Jan. 3 to Jan. 20 gives us only eighteen days to complete a semester's worth of material. During a three week January term a normal face-to-face class meets for three hours and fifteen minutes every day of the week, so you should expect to spend at least that much time during this online web course. You will be busy *every day*, both reading and writing.

IMPORTANT! Warning about Online Courses:

Students who do not understand the particular challenges of online courses often struggle and drop out. This is especially true of literature courses, in which the quantity and difficulty of the readings can be daunting. You must be self-motivated, disciplined, and good at time management to succeed in an online class. You must also have reliable access to a computer with high-speed internet on a daily basis. To evaluate whether you are a good match for online learning, check out the following:

1. Is distance learning for me?:

<https://www.wku.edu/online/orientation/for-me.php>

2. WKU's Orientation for Online Learners:

<https://www.wku.edu/online/orientation/>

Blackboard:

If you have not used Blackboard much, or if this is your first online class, you are strongly urged to complete Blackboard's Student User Training. These online modules will improve or refresh your skills. To sign up, log in to Blackboard. Click "IT Training" on the red banner (top right corner), then look for IT: Blackboard Student User Training. You will gain instant access upon signing up.

It is especially important that you follow the directions for properly submitting your papers to Blackboard.

Catalog Description: Introductory study of fiction, poetry and drama demonstrating techniques by which literary artists reflect human experience. Substantial student writing about literature will be required.

Colonnade (Fall 2014 and later) Learning Outcomes Met by this Course:

English 200 fulfills the following General Education Learning Outcomes for Arts and Humanities:

1. **Utilize** basic formal elements, techniques, concepts and vocabulary of specific disciplines within the Arts and Humanities;
2. **Distinguish** among various kinds of evidence by identifying reliable sources and valid arguments;
3. **Demonstrate** how social, cultural, and historical contexts influence creative expression in the Arts and Humanities;
4. **Evaluate** the significance of human expression and experience in shaping larger social, cultural, and historical contexts;
5. **Evaluate** enduring and contemporary issues of human experience;
6. **Read, comprehend, and analyze** primary texts independently and proficiently.

Specific Learning Outcomes:

In addition to the goals above, students at the course's end should be able to

1. **Use** basic literary terminology to analyze and interpret literary texts;
2. **Produce** convincing and clearly-written argumentative essays;
3. **Document** primary and secondary sources using MLA style.

Course Aims and Organization

This course will introduce you to the idea of literature as a distinct and particular kind of writing worthy of your attention and study. Our readings have been chosen to expose you to a variety of literary kinds and styles; they function as specific examples so that we may determine what qualities and features allow us to categorize them as literature. We will also attempt to establish the boundaries of literature: at what point does literature reach its limits, beyond which we experience other modes of writing and other human activities? Finally, we will seek to understand the value of literature: what is its unique contribution to human life and why does it matter? The texts for this class will challenge you to think about what you read in a formal and structured way; you will also confront their claims of truth, their views on the meaning of life and death, the importance of love, the reality of evil, and the foundational requirement of a literary culture: the freedom to read and write without censorship.

As an online course, we will use Blackboard for announcements, supplementary material, discussion board posts, and paper submissions. I will *not* be accepting hard copies of your papers.

If you have not used Blackboard before you are strongly urged to complete Blackboard's Student User Training. These online modules will improve or refresh your skills. To sign up, log in to Blackboard. Click "IT Training" on the red banner (top right corner), then look for IT: Blackboard Student User Training. You will gain instant access upon signing up.

Required Texts in these editions

I require these specific editions, and I will grade down on work that cites some other edition or source other than these. I will hold you responsible for the supplementary material in the Bradbury, Shakespeare, and Wiesel texts listed below. So please order your book by the ISBN number provided; these texts are readily available at the WKU book store, Barnes & Noble, Amazon, etc. It is your responsibility to get these texts, not mine or the bookstore's. Plan ahead!

Bradbury, Ray. *Fahrenheit 451*. Simon & Schuster, 2012. ISBN 9781451673319
 Edson, Margaret. *Wit: A Play*. Farrar Straus & Giroux. 1999. ISBN 9780571198771
 Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *Young Goodman Brown and Other Short Stories*. Dover Thrift Edition. Mineola NY: Dover, 1992. ISBN 9780486270609
 Shakespeare. *Twelfth Night*. Cambridge School Shakespeare. 3rd edition. Cambridge University Press, 2014. ISBN 9781107615359 (Or the 2nd edition, 2005. ISBN 9780521618779)
 Wiesel, Elie. *Night*. A new translation by Marion Wiesel. Hill and Wang. 2006. ISBN 9780374500016

Films

(You will be expected to see these films on your own at the appropriate time on the schedule. You will need to have access to the VPAL library, Netflix, Youtube, Amazon Prime, iTunes, and/or other video rental services)

Il Postino. Directed by Michael Radford. 1994.
Twelfth Night. Directed by Trevor Nunn. 1996.
Wit. Directed by Mike Nichols. 2001.

Notes on Reading and Writing

This course emphasizes the disciplines of reading and writing, skills that are particularly important in the study of literature, but also universally valuable. I will ask you to read *in a certain way* and also to write *in a certain way*. That is, I have very specific requirements, for both reading and writing, to which I expect you to conform.

The pleasures of reading literature are many, but I particularly want you to cultivate the intellectual pleasure of reading deeply and attentively, alert for the power of imagery, repeated motifs, conflicts, and oppositions. One way you will demonstrate that attention to the text is by using the discussion board to post your comments on a scene or quotation, explaining why it is worthy of our consideration. You should develop the habit of checking and underlining portions of the text, or writing down page numbers for later reference. Reading literature is to read not only stories, but *composed* stories, so you should also be alert for the stylistic marks of skilled writers in the exercise of their craft.

To write about literature begins with thinking: composing your own thoughts as inspired by the words encountered in your reading of the text. I will direct you in some cases, but the best writing comes when you follow the promptings of your own mind as it pushes you into new and unanticipated mental territory in the pursuit of thoughts and ideas not yet formulated or even known. That free and open inquiry must nevertheless be controlled, so I will expect you to discipline your writing according to my very precise guidelines, as given below. These requirements are designed to foster in your writing three things: a sense of structure in the organization of an essay; a focus on clarity, brevity, and concision as compositional virtues; and a writing practice that avoids narrating and instead analyzes, interprets, argues, and speculates.

Commentaries

These are short formal essays in which you discuss and explore an important aspect, idea, or theme in a work of literature. They should be focused on the text itself, not background material or historical context: what are the main ideas and viewpoints expressed in the text? What interesting and significant thematic problem does it develop? What significant imagery does it employ? What is a key quotation?

You should not consult other sources in writing your commentaries. This particularly means websites that specialize in analysis of literary works. Do your own thinking, and do not risk plagiarism!

Commentaries should be

1. double-spaced,
2. one-inch margins,
3. Calibri 11 or 12 font,
4. three paragraphs,
5. with a meaningful title and a Work Cited given in full,
6. all on a single page.
7. *I will not accept your commentary if any part of it extends to a second page.*
8. The first and third paragraphs should have exactly three sentences;

9. the middle paragraph should have at least four sentence (a good paper will develop the middle paragraph with as many additional sentences as the page allows).
10. Each commentary should quote from the text just one time, using MLA documentation.
11. The quotation should be significant and must be embedded in the middle paragraph; i.e., not in the first or last sentence, and should be introduced by your own words, not free standing in its own sentence.
12. Be sure to follow your quotation with an explanation, analysis, interpretation, disagreement, or other form of commentary on that specific quotation.
13. Avoid self-referential comments, references to “the reader,” evaluative comments about a text’s “effectiveness,” the use of “seems” and “appears,” and mere summarizing. I do not want to see phrases like “throughout the work,” or introductions to quotations that begin with “It has been said” or “So-and-so says it best.” Don’t use the words “truly” as an intensifier or “utilize” when “use” will do. Don’t give agency to “society” as in these phrases: “Society tells her” and “Society made him believe.” Never refer to anyone’s “comfort zone.” Don’t use the phrase “in the novel” as though you are looking into something and then describing what you see. Avoid phrases like the novelist is “able to” or the poet “uses,” or the poet “is trying to say,” phrases which are usually unnecessary or inappropriate.
14. Avoid writing in a narrative mode; in other words, do not tell the story of the reader or the author. You are not a journalist describing something that you are watching in the text. Nor are you a journalist who is describing a transaction between an author and a reader. So *avoid referring to the reader*.

I supply a checklist for commentaries as well as my own sample commentary as a “template” for you to use in your own writing. Notice that the title indicates that it is *about* the Davies Commentary, so please don’t imitate it when you write your own titles; your titles should indicate the theme of your commentary, not that it is your commentary or that it identifies a particular assignment.

Initial Writing Exercise

Your first assignment for this course will be an exercise in writing and re-writing sentences. My intent is to turn your academic writing away from a narrative style to proper textual analysis and interpretation. You will be given points on how thoroughly and completely you do the revision exercise, not on achieving the perfect “right” answer. Once you have submitted the assignment you will have access to my own revisions of the sentences with explanations. If you take this exercise seriously, and if you study the accompanying documents (“Checklist for Commentaries,” “Basic Rules for Sources,” “Davies Commentary Template”) you should avoid problems in writing for this class.

Course Assignments and Requirements

This is a reading course, and it is extremely important for you to keep up with your reading of these texts. This will require daily reading. I expect you to purchase the required texts and have them in your personal possession! The readings are varied, from short poems to long novels and plays, but all of them will demand your full attention. Do not think that a short poem does not merit extended attention; poems should be read numerous times until you have achieved a familiar intimacy with the words and their arrangements—what Coleridge says is the mark of good poetry: the best words in the best order.

As is traditional in literature courses, you should be prepared to demonstrate your comprehension of these texts by discussing them in discussion board postings and writing about them in formal essays. Remember to observe the rules for writing listed in the Supplement to this syllabus. The formal commentaries and papers should demonstrate your competence in writing analytic and interpretive essays according to traditional standards of style, citation, and documentation. You will write four short commentaries on our readings through the course. This will be followed by two longer papers. There will be a final comprehensive exam (multiple choice and true/false questions) to test your knowledge of factual material covered in the course.

1. Initial assignment on re-writing sentences

This exercise on our Blackboard course must be done on the first day of class. This is a crucially important exercise if you want to do well in this course.

2. Daily assignments

I expect you to keep up with the reading/viewing schedule for each day of class.

3. Blackboard discussion board postings

I expect regular Blackboard discussion board postings, in which you respond to the assigned reading and prompt for that day with at least 100 words. The prompt is meant to focus your attention, but you may also write about what you find particularly worthy of attention in the text (and why), a question that you would like to explore, or any kind of insight you have in response to the reading. It is always a good idea to find a significant quotation. You may also reply to or respond to another student's posting. While you should be careful to maintain good grammar, spelling, and punctuation, these postings are meant to be informal and personal expressions of immediate and spontaneous thought.

Do not rely on other interpretive material such as online study guides. Your thoughts must be your own! See note on plagiarism below.

Follow these guidelines for all online posts and responses:

- A. Be sure your posts are relevant, thoughtful, and to the point; don't stray off-topic.
- B. Use care in writing all posts and proofread them to avoid typos and errors.
- C. Demonstrate your close engagement with the texts under discussion by citing evidence to support your claims. (A good rule of thumb: every post should include at least one quotation).
- D. Avoid speaking subjectively, or relying on personal experience or anecdotes.
- E. Be concrete and specific; avoid unfounded assertions and broad generalizations.
- F. Give your posts informative or creative titles (i.e. not "Post #4").

4. Commentaries

These short, formal papers are designed to demonstrate or establish basic competency in formal writing. The rigorous rules, requirements, and rationales for the Davies Commentary © can be found elsewhere in this syllabus.

5. Term papers

Your two term papers should be 3-4 pages long, and must include a secondary source taken from the supplementary material in your assigned texts for both *Night* and *Twelfth Night*. You should quote from both the primary and secondary text, cite your texts, and provide a complete "Works Cited" according to the standard format of MLA. Any plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the course. If in doubt, ask!

6. Final Exam

The final exam will consist of a combination of objective questions (multiple choice, true/false, fill-in the blank), passage identifications, and short answers. The final exam will be cumulative, and will be completed in a proctored setting at the course's conclusion. You will need to register for the exam in advance.

7. A note on video lectures: these videos are low-tech, unrehearsed introductions to the content of the course, often from previous classes. Nevertheless, they are an integral part of this course and you will be held responsible for their content.

Grades

1. Initial assignment on re-writing sentences	20 points
2. Dictation exercise	30 points
3. Discussion board postings:	
13 postings at 10 points each	130 points
4. Commentaries:	
4 commentaries at 30 points each	120 points
5. Papers:	
2 term papers at 100 points each	200 points
6. Final exam	100 points

Total points possible: 600 points

Important Winter Term Dates

Tuesday, January 3: Classes Begin Last day to register for Winter Term. Last day to change from audit to credit. Students registering on this date will be subject to a late registration penalty of \$50.

Wednesday, January 4: Last day to drop a class without a grade. Last day to receive 100% refund.

Thursday, January 5: Last day to receive a 50% refund if student withdraws from a Winter Term class. A \$50 Schedule Change Fee will be assessed for course withdrawal or changing from credit to audit at this time.

Wednesday, January 11: Last day to withdraw from a Winter Term class. Last day to change from credit to audit.

Friday, January 13: 60% point of the Winter Term.

Monday, January 16: MLK Day (university closed)

Friday, January 20: Final Examinations

Schedule

Module One: Introduction to the Course

January 3, Tuesday: On Writing for this course

1. Watch:

Davies, Lecture video, "Writing about Literature"

2. Read these documents on Blackboard:

Syllabus, including:

1. Checklist for Commentaries
2. Basic Rules for Sources
3. Davies Commentary Template

3. Complete:

Davies, "How To Re-write A Sentence" Exercise **Due** in assignment drop box:
Midnight, Jan. 3

4. Review:

Answers to “How To Re-write A Sentence”

5. Watch:

Davies, lecture video, “Writing Good Sentences”

Module Two: First Introductions to Literature, #1

January 4, Wednesday: What Makes a List of Names Poetry?

1. Read and discuss:

Vladimir Nabokov’s *Lolita*: Selection on Blackboard

2. Complete:

Discussion #1 by midnight, Jan. 4

Module Three: First Introductions to Literature, #2

January 5, Thursday: A Child’s Introduction to Literature

1. Read:

1. Margaret Wise Brown’s two children’s books, *Goodnight Moon* and *The Runaway Bunny*. You can do this on-line (just Google the titles and explore what comes up) or go to Barnes & Noble and look for the books.
2. Davies, “*The Runaway Bunny and the Hermeneutics of Reading: The Elusive Search for Meaning.*”

2. Complete:

Discussion #2, by midnight, Jan 5

Module Four: First Introductions to Literature, #3

January 6, Friday: An Introduction to the Forms of Literature: Prose and Poetry, both Free and Bound

1. Watch:

1. Davies, Lecture video, “Review of First Introductions to Literature”

2. Watch and Complete:

Dictation writing exercise: Due in assignment drop box by midnight, Jan. 6

3. Read:

Davies, "Reflections on the recitation assignment"

Module Five: What is Poetry?***January 7, Saturday: The Poetry of Figurative Language*****1. Watch:**

1. Lecture video by professor: "What is Poetry?"
Intensity of language's sound and meaning.
Linguistic level: the individual word.
2. Michael Radford's film *Il Postino*. Keep notes on what it says about poetry.

2. Read:

1. Pablo Neruda's "Ode to a Beautiful Nude"
2. Song of Songs (Song of Solomon), Selections

3. Complete:

Discussion #3, by midnight, Jan. 7

Module Six: Sonnet Form***January 8, Sunday: Lyric Poetry in a Classic Form*****1. Watch:**

Davies, lecture video, "Sonnet Form and Meaning"

2. Read:

Poems for Memorizing (on Blackboard). You will be required to memorize one of these poems and write it from memory at the final exam.

3. Complete:

1. Discussion #4 by midnight, Jan. 8
2. **Commentary #1:** an explication of Donne's "Death be not Proud." **Due** by midnight, Jan. 8

Module Seven: What is Story? #1: Drama***January 9, Monday: Edson's "Wit"*****1. Watch:**

1. Davies, Lecture video, "What is Story?"
Intensification of normal life: people performing actions in space and time.
Linguistic level: the sentence.
2. Davies, Lecture video, "What is Drama?"
Story by enactment
3. Mike Nichols' film, *Wit*

2. Read:

Margaret Edson's play, *Wit*

3. Complete:

1. Discussion #5 by midnight, Jan. 9
2. **Commentary** #2: on *Wit* as an "allegory of the soul." **Due** by midnight, Jan. 9

Module Eight: What is Story? #2: Narrative and Literary Theme

January 10, Tuesday: Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown" and "My Kinsman, Major Molineux"

1. Watch:

1. Davies, Lecture video, "What is Narrative?"
Story by telling
2. Davies, lecture video, "Literary Theme"

2. Read:

Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown" and "My Kinsman, Major Molineux"

3. Complete:

1. Discussion #6 by midnight, Jan 10
2. **Commentary** #3: On the theme of one of Hawthorne's stories. **Due** by midnight, Jan. 10

Module Nine: Memory and Imagination

January 11, Wednesday: Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451

1. Watch:

1. Davies, lecture video, "Literary Theme"

2. Read:

Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, Parts 1-2

3. Complete:

Discussion #7, by midnight, Jan. 11

Module Ten: Literature and the Human Condition**January 12, Thursday: Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* and Arnold's "Dover Beach"****1. Read:**

1. Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, Part 3
2. Matthew Arnold's complete poem, "Dover Beach"
3. Harold Bloom's essay on *Fahrenheit 451* in our text

2. Watch:

1. Davies, lecture video, "Dover Beach"

3. Complete:

1. Discussion #8 by midnight, Jan. 12
2. Commentary #4: on "Dover Beach" and *Fahrenheit 451*. **Due** by midnight, Jan. 12

Module Eleven: Literature and its Boundaries**January 13, Friday: Mapping Literary Limits****1. Watch:**

1. Davies, lecture video, "*Dolce et Utile*: The Literary Axis of Pleasure and Instruction"
2. Davies, lecture video, "What Lies Beyond Literature?"

2. Read:

1. Davies, "The Literary Axis of Pleasure and Instruction"
2. Davies, "Reflections on the Nature of Poetic Language"
3. Davies, "On the Boundaries of Literature"

3. Watch/read:

1. Video of Janis Joplin singing "Maybe"
2. Text of the lyrics for "Maybe"

4. Read:

Selection from the novel *Tom Jones*, by Henry Fielding

5. Watch:

Video of the ballet, *Swan Lake*, by Tchaikovsky

6. Complete:

Discussion #9, by midnight, Jan. 13

Module Twelve: Literary Order and Meaning, Part One***January 14, Saturday: Wiesel's Night*****1. Watch:**

Davies, lecture video, "On *Night*"

2. Read:

1. Elie Wiesel's *Night*
2. Davies, "Notes on a Literary Reading of Elie Wiesel's *Night*"

3. Complete:

1. Discussion #10, by midnight Jan. 14

Module Thirteen: Literary Order and Meaning, Part Two***January 15, Sunday: Wiesel's Night*****1. Read:**

1. The supplementary material in Elie Wiesel's *Night*
2. Davies, "Advice on Writing on *Night*"

2. Complete:

*Term Paper #1: A Literary Analysis of *Night*, Due* by midnight, Jan. 15

Module Fourteen: Literary Love, Part I***January 16, Monday: Shakespeare's Twelfth Night, Act I*****1. Watch**

1. Davies, lecture video, "Intro to *12th Night*; Act I, Scenes 1-2"
2. Davies, lecture video, "Act I, Scenes 3-5"

2. Read:

2. Cambridge Shakespeare *Twelfth Night*, Act I
3. Cambridge Shakespeare *Twelfth Night*: "What is the play about" (152-157)

3. Complete:

Discussion #11 by midnight, Jan. 16

Module Fifteen: Literary Love, Part II

January 17, Tuesday: Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, Acts II and III

1. Watch:

Davies, lecture video, Acts II and III

2. Read:

1. Cambridge Shakespeare *Twelfth Night*, Acts II and III
2. Cambridge Shakespeare *Twelfth Night*: "Characters" (158-163)

3. Complete:

Discussion #12 by midnight, Jan. 17

Module Sixteen: Literary Love, Part III

January 18, Wednesday: Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, Acts IV and V

1. Watch:

Davies, lecture video, "Acts Four and Five"

2. Read:

1. Cambridge Shakespeare *Twelfth Night*, Acts IV and V
2. Cambridge Shakespeare *Twelfth Night*: "The Language of *Twelfth Night*" (164-167) and "Illyria" (168)

Module Seventeen: Literary Love, Part IV

January 19, Thursday: Trevor Nunn's *Twelfth Night*

1. Watch:

Trevor Nunn's film production of *Twelfth Night*

2. Read:

1. Trevor Nunn's screenplay redaction of the film

3. Complete:

Discussion #13 by midnight, Jan 19

Module Eighteen: Conclusion to the Course

January 20, Friday

1. Watch:

Davies, lecture video, "Review of the Course"

2. Complete:

1. **Term paper #2**, on love in *Twelfth Night*, **Due** midnight, Jan. 20

2. **Final Exam**: you must register with the Distance Learning Testing Center to schedule a time to take your proctored final exam.

Note

This syllabus and its requirements, texts, and procedures are subject to change if necessary or appropriate.

ADA Notice

Students with disabilities who require accommodations (academic and/or auxiliary aids or services) for this course must contact the Office for Student Disability Services, Room A200, Downing University Center Annex. The OFSDS telephone number is (270) 745-5004 V/TDD. Please do not request accommodations directly from the instructor without a letter of accommodation from the Office for Student Disability Services. Since this is a web course, you will need to mail the letter of accommodation to me or see me on campus to get it signed.

Writing Center Assistance

The Writing Center is located in Cherry Hall 123. Our writing tutors have been trained to provide helpful feedback to students at all phases of a writing project: they can help you brainstorm ideas, structure your essay, clarify your purpose, strengthen your support, and edit for clarity and correctness. But they will not revise or edit the paper for you. See instructions of the website www.wku.edu/writingcenter <<http://www.wku.edu/writingcenter>> for making online or face-to-face appointments. Or call (270) 745-5719 during our operating hours (also listed on our website) for help scheduling an appointment.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism occurs when a student knowingly or unknowingly submits another person's published or unpublished (print or web) writing as his/her own, has another person dictate what should be written, or has another person write an assignment and submits that work as his/her own. Plagiarism or academic dishonesty on any single assignment,

including short papers, reflective assignments, and drafts, will result in a course penalty up to course failure. Length or nature of the assignment will not be factors in course penalty. In other words, plagiarism in a one-page paper might result in course failure just like plagiarism in a six page paper might.

Basic rules for using sources in your writing:

- A. Acknowledge your use of direct quotations with quotation marks.
- B. Never begin a sentence with a quotation.
- C. Begin with your own words leading into and announcing the quotation.
- D. Generally you should mention the author and text as you lead into the quotation.
- E. Make sure your sentence and the quotation form one grammatically correct sentence.
- F. Follow the quotation with your commentary: explain, interpret, analyze!
- G. Provide information about the precise location of your quotation so your reader can also find it (use in-text citations to give page number and author/text if not already provided in your lead-in).
- H. Never begin a paragraph with a quotation; first establish what you intend to say in your opening sentence.
- I. Don't end a paragraph with a quotation; end with your own conclusion.
- J. In a paragraph use a source to support, defend, or clarify your ideas and to help you move from the first sentence to the last.
- K. Long quotations should be block-indented.

Basic rules for organization in writing:

- A. Always think in a three-part structure: introduction, body, conclusion.
- B. The sentence is to a paragraph as the paragraph is to an essay: introductory sentence/paragraph, followed by the body of the paragraph/essay, followed by the concluding sentence/paragraph.
- C. Use paragraphs to bring order to your sentences; there should be coherence within paragraphs and development between paragraphs.
- D. An introduction should announce what you are writing about, provide some background/context, and state the purpose of the writing.
- E. The body of the writing should develop the ideas in the introduction; explain, demonstrate, argue, persuade, analyze, clarify, refute, justify!
- F. The conclusion should convey a sense of significance, accomplishment, and appropriate closure.

Check list for papers:

- I. Title
 - A. Do you reveal the core content of your paper?
 - B. Have you made it interesting?
- II. Introduction
 - A. Do you clearly present the major subject of your paper, including the author and the text that you will be writing on?
 - B. Do you explain why this subject is interesting, important, worthy of discussion, etc.?

- C. Do you provide a strong and clear thesis: that is, the claim or assertion that you are making about the subject?
- III. Development
 - A. Do you provide any necessary background information to orient your reader?
 - B. Do you use separate paragraphs for different parts of your paper?
 - C. If you have made any references to the text, or have quoted from it or any other source, have you properly cited and documented them?
- IV. Conclusion
 - A. Have you made sure not to introduce any new ideas in your conclusion?
 - B. Do you review and summarize the significance of your views on the subject?

Checklist for Commentaries; Professor Davies

1. My paper uses Calibri 11 or 12 font throughout. _____
2. I have a title that reveals the content of my commentary. _____
3. My introduction has exactly three sentences. _____
4. I do not use a quotation in my introduction. _____
5. My introduction reveals the main subject or idea of my commentary, with the third sentence making a claim about that subject or idea. _____
6. My development paragraph is four or more sentences long. _____
7. I do not use a quotation in the first sentence of my development. _____
8. My development focuses on the main subject or idea mentioned in the introduction. _____
9. I have chosen a quotation that is appropriate to the subject and that says something important about it. _____
10. I lead into the quotation in my own words, rather than starting the quotation at the beginning of a sentence. _____
11. My lead-in and the quotation together form a grammatically correct sentence.

12. My source is quoted exactly. _____
13. I have properly cited the quotation. _____
14. I follow up the quotation with a comment, explanation, analysis, or interpretation of the content of the quotation. _____
15. My conclusion has exactly three sentences. _____
16. My conclusion does not introduce new material or ideas. _____
17. My conclusion summarizes the significance of my analysis/interpretation of the subject matter that I have covered. _____
18. My conclusion does not contain a quotation. _____
19. I have a complete citation of my sources at the bottom of the page and my citation is correct in all its details: author, title, and publishing information.

20. I have checked for correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar. _____

The Davies Commentary as a Path to Successful Writing

Formal papers of analysis and interpretation are important modes of writing in college classes. The Davies Commentary is a very specific kind of formal paper that stresses concision, clarity, and structure. To be successful in writing these commentaries it is essential to follow all of the requirements outlined in the syllabus.

The commentary is a single page, three-paragraph paper, with a title and a “work cited” entry. It should focus on a particular theme, idea, image, or conflict in a text that you would like to explore. The introductory paragraph and conclusion have to have exactly three sentences—the minimum number for a paragraph. The introduction establishes the subject matter, including the text and author under analysis, with the last, thesis sentence making an argumentative claim about the subject. The middle paragraph should develop that argument and be at least four sentences long, but, as Davies says, “a good paper will develop the middle paragraph as fully as the page allows” (2). This gives some degree of individual freedom and flexibility in sentence length. The concluding paragraph will suggest the significance of the developed claim. The full requirements are outlined in the course syllabus.

The Commentary, with its detailed rules and requirements, demands extra attention and care on the part of students. Davies believes that this is not only good discipline but also a useful skill to develop for the future. The immediate benefit, however, will be a successful paper: succinct, clear, well organized, focused on its subject, and with no wasted words.

Work Cited

Davies, Lloyd. *Syllabus: English 200*. Bowling Green: Western Kentucky University, 2016.