Professor Jenna Alexander

Cultural Traditions II

Spring 2017

**Essay 1: Literary Analysis**

**Introduction**

In our readings, we are encountering various philosophers’ ideas about a range of issues: traits of human nature, concepts of power, issues of class, and limitations of established roles. We are also experiencing various authors’ literary works that offer examples of how these ideas may be considered by taking a closer look at particular characters and/or events.

For your first essay, you will be making an argument that uses one philosophical text to understand and analyze a literary text. Choose a specific element from one of the texts we have discussed and use this element as a lens – or framework – for analyzing one of the literary texts we’ve read. No outside sources or research should be used.

The philosophical texts that you will use to frame your analysis include:

* Kant’s “An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?”
* Rousseau’s “On Social Contract”
* Thoreau’s “Civil Disobedience”
* Wordsworth’s Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*

The literary texts that you will analyze include:

* Voltaire’s *Candide*
* Basho’s “Narrow Road to the Deep North”
* Gyatso’s “Love Poems of the Sixth Dalai Lama”

**Goals**

The goals of this assignment are (one) to demonstrate your understanding of various philosophical and literary texts from the Age of Enlightenment and (two) to practice literary analysis by going beyond a surface-level interpretation of the texts and making connections between ideas.

**Content**

For this assignment, you will write a **4-5 page paper** in which you focus on one (or possibly two) elements from a philosophical essay to help you explain how and why the literary text operates in a particular way. You could, for example, use Kant’s definition of “immaturity” to examine the character of Candide. You could use Rousseau’s idea of “sovereignty” to show how the main characters created a new, more enlightened community at the end of *Candide*. Or you could use the preface to Wordsworth’s Lyrical Ballads to think about Gyatso as an influential poet.

**The Process and Writing Calendar**

Monday, February 20 – Draft one due (Different from the syllabus)

Wednesday, February 22 – Draft due (bring two copies)

Friday, February 24 – Portfolio 1 due (along with the final draft of the Literary Analysis)

**Rubric/Requirements**

(Please note that some items, like analysis/reflection, are worth more points than others. Also, these requirements are subject to change as announced.)

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| **Structure/Organization:**   * Follow prompt, use approved topic * Clear, focused purpose * Well-written thesis, represents essay in entirety * Brief summary of the sources to help the reader(s) understand the argument * Introduction is attention-getting * Sets context, motive and criteria for analysis * Introduces the sources by providing relevant background information (author, publication information, etc.) * Clear organization that emphasizes content and strategies for development * Each paragraph clearly fits with purpose of essay * Utilizes effective transitions between main ideas and paragraphs (flows well) * Resolution/conclusion |
| **Development/Detail:**   * Analysis is clear and fully explained * Analysis demonstrates depth of thought, going beyond surface meaning for each example * Each main point (paragraph) analyzes specific detail from text and connects to thesis * Quotes are smoothly worked into paragraph, not dropped in * Quotes and support from text are fully explained in connection to thesis * Essay demonstrates a certain level of maturity, professionalism and appropriateness |
| **Polish:**   * Grammar * Active verbs, present tense * Clarity * Sentence structure and variety * Punctuation—commas, colons, dashes and semi-colons * Mechanics |