

English 478/CAAS 476
Winter 2009
Mon. and Wed., 1:00-2:30 p.m.
3437 Mason Hall
Office Hours:

Mon., 12:00-1:00
Wed., 2:30-4:00
By appointment

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**Redesigning the House that Race Built:
African American Literature, 1950-Present**

In describing her role as a writer, Toni Morrison has stated, “I knew from the very beginning, if I had to live in a racial house, it was important, at the least, to rebuild it so that it was not a windowless prison into which I was forced . . . but rather an open house, grounded, yet generous in its supply of windows and doors” (“Home,” 4). Focusing on African American fiction published from 1950 to the present, this course will explore the myriad ways in which African American writers have attempted to redesign the house that race built. We’ll situate our readings in relation to theoretical debates that have shaped literary and cultural studies over the last sixty years. Questions such as the following will shape our inquiries:

- In what ways do various texts unsettle categories such as “African American,” “American,” “blackness,” “authenticity,” and “identity”?
- How do particular works contribute to long-standing debates about the relationship between literature and politics?
- In what ways do literary texts participate in ongoing debates about feminist and gender studies, queer theory, postcolonial/diasporic studies, and critical multiculturalism?
- Finally, how has the marketing of African American literature and culture affected the production and reception of various works?

Course requirements include brief weekly writing assignments, three critical analysis essays, and active participation in class discussions.

Students must attend the first two class meetings in order to remain in the class.

Required Texts:

- Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (1952)
- Gwendolyn Brooks, *Maud Martha* (1953)
- James Baldwin, *Another Country* (1962)
- Toni Morrison, *Paradise* (1998)
- Ishmael Reed, *Flight to Canada* (1976)
- Michelle Cliff, *No Telephone to Heaven* (1987)
- Paul Beatty, *The White Boy Shuffle* (1996)
- Danielle Santiago, *Grindin’* (2006)
- Percival Everett, *Erasure* (2001)

Most of the books are available for purchase at Shaman Drum Bookstore (313 South State St., 662-7407). If you are interested in saving costs, you might purchase used copies of the books on-line, through Amazon.com or Half.com.

You will need to order two of the books (*Maud Martha* and *Erasure*) on your own because Shaman Drum does not carry them. I suggest that you order new or used copies from Amazon.com as soon as possible. Please do not wait until the middle of the semester to order these books because they are likely to be sold out and/or may not arrive in time to use.

Grading Standard:

- The grading standard for the course will be as follows: the letter “C” designates “adequate” work, “B” designates “good” work, and “A” designates “excellent” work. You will need to perform work that is consistently above average in order to receive a letter grade of “B” or “A” in the course.

Course Requirements:

I will determine grades according to the following rubric:

40% daily preparedness and participation, brief written assignments, attendance
15% Critical Analysis #1 [3-4 pages]
20% Critical Analysis #2 [4-6 pages]
25% Critical Analysis #3 [6-8 pages]

Preparedness and Participation:

- I will base forty percent of your grade on the quality of your preparedness and participation during class meetings. I expect you to read each assignment carefully before class, and to bring all reading materials to class on the day that we are scheduled to discuss them.
- Daily participation in the course entails being prepared to offer critical reflections about the readings, posing questions and responding to others’ questions, listening carefully and respectfully to other students’ contributions, and making links between our discussions and events in the wider world.

Brief Writing Assignments:

- Each week, I’ll ask you to complete a brief writing assignment designed to facilitate discussion. These assignments will usually be due on Sunday evenings (for CTools postings) or on Mondays during class, and they will usually be about one single-spaced page in length. **If you miss class, please check our C-Tools site for information about the weekly writing assignment.**

- **The assignments will follow formats such as the following:**
 - selecting a passage or quotation from a text and analyzing its relation to the overall text
 - selecting an issue or theme that emerges in a text and analyzing its significance
 - creating discussion questions to be shared with other students
 - responding to other students' postings or discussion questions
 - writing journal entries in response to the readings
 - writing a critical response to the readings, which might involve sorting out the central arguments, grounding assumptions, contradictions/tensions, and/or useful insights of particular texts
 - creating a conversation or critical comparison between two or more texts
 - posting a link to a photograph, drawing, song, or poem that relates in some way to the readings

- **I will evaluate these assignments according to the following numeric scale:**
 - **5: extraordinary**
 - An assignment that receives a 5:
 - thoroughly addresses all aspects of the assignment and may include analysis that exceeds the requirements of the assignment
 - offers especially thoughtful and insightful analysis
 - provides sufficient textual evidence to support its claims
 - shows consistent attention to detail and an effort to create work of superior quality
 - **4: excellent**
 - An assignment that receives a 4:
 - thoroughly addresses all aspects of the assignment
 - offers thoughtful and insightful analysis
 - provides sufficient textual evidence to support its claims
 - shows consistent attention to detail
 - **3: good**
 - An assignment that receives a 3:
 - addresses all aspects of the assignment, but some portions of the response may be less thorough than others
 - offers some thoughtful analysis but includes arguments that require further development or clarification
 - provides textual evidence to support its claims, but that evidence may not be sufficient or persuasive
 - shows some attention to detail but may include a few careless errors
 - **2: fair**
 - An assignment that receives a 2:
 - does not address all aspects of the assignment
 - offers very little analysis or analysis that is significantly underdeveloped or unclear
 - provides insufficient textual evidence to support its claims

- shows a lack of attention to detail and includes several careless errors
 - **1: poor**
 - An assignment that receives a 1:
 - does not address all aspects of the assignment
 - offers no thoughtful analysis
 - provides little or no textual evidence to support its claims
 - shows very little attention to detail and very little effort
 - **0: no credit**
- **PLEASE NOTE CAREFULLY:**
 - When the weekly writing assignment is a CTools posting, please **print a hard copy of your posting** and **bring it to class**.
 - Writing assignments are due during class. You will receive **no credit** for a weekly writing assignment if you submit it after the class period during which it is due.
 - If you are ill or cannot make it to class due to an emergency, you will receive full credit for the weekly assignment if you **email it to Prof. Sweeney by 5 p.m.** on the day on which it is due.
- At the end of the semester, I will add the scores for each of your assignments, and that numeric total will constitute a significant portion of your grade for preparedness and participation.

Attendance:

- Absences will negatively affect your overall performance in the course. Absences may be excused with a note from a doctor or health professional, a signed letter from a University team or program, or documentation of a family emergency. You are permitted only three unexcused absences. **Once you have reached your limit of three unexcused absences, I will lower your final preparedness/participation grade by one letter for each additional absence (i.e., an “A” will become a “B”).**
- If you miss a class, you are responsible for contacting other students to find out about what you have missed.

Three Critical Analyses:

- Over the course of the semester, I will ask you to produce three critical analyses related to our readings:
 - Critical Analysis #1 [3-4 pages]: due Mon., 2/16**
 - Critical Analysis #2 [4-6 pages]: due Mon., 3/30**
 - Critical Analysis #3 [6-8 pages]: due Mon., 4/27**
- Each critical analysis should include:
 - a title
 - a clear and detailed thesis statement that structures your overall argument
 - a clear and detailed topic sentence for every paragraph

- analysis of passages from our course readings
- Please use the **Modern Language Association parenthetical citation format** when quoting written material. To learn about this citation format, see: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_mla.html.

Late Submission of Critical Analysis Papers:

- Unless you notify me **in advance** about extenuating circumstances that will prevent you from submitting your critical analysis paper **in class on the day on which it is due**, your grade for the paper will **drop by one letter for each day** that it is late [i.e., if you submit a “B” paper three days late, your grade for the paper will be an “F”].

Plagiarism:

- Please visit the University of Michigan English Department’s website about plagiarism: <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/english/undergraduate/plag.htm>.
- The website provides a helpful explanation of what constitutes plagiarism and details the Department’s response to plagiarism. If you engage in an act of plagiarism, please know that:
 - **You will fail the assignment and the course.**
 - Your case will be forwarded, with an explanatory letter and all pertinent materials, to the Dean of Student Affairs.
 - The Dean will determine an appropriate penalty, which may involve academic probation and/or community service. If a student already on probation is caught plagiarizing, s/he is usually asked to leave the University.
- **If you are struggling with your writing, please let me know so that I can help you.** You can also visit the Sweetland Writing Center and work on your papers with a peer tutor. The Sweetland Writing Center website is: <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/swc/undergrads>.

Office Hours:

- I’ll meet with you during office hours to discuss your proposal for each critical analysis.
- I’m also happy to meet with you at any other time to discuss ideas that you’re having in relation to the class, to talk about your writing assignments, or to discuss any difficulties that may be affecting your performance.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Wed., 1/07: Introductions

Mon., 1/12: Black Is/Black Ain't: *Invisible Man*

Primary Text:

- Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (1952), 3-150

Writing Assignment [to be submitted during class on Mon., 1/12]:

- 1) Please formulate one thoughtful discussion question about *Invisible Man* (based on the Prologue and Chapters One through Six) and write a response to your question.
- 2) Please identify a passage from the assigned reading that calls for interpretation, and offer an analysis of the themes, symbolism, and/or significance of the passage.

Although quality matters far more than quantity, a rough guideline for the total length of this two-part assignment is one single-spaced page.

Wed., 1/14: [*Invisible Man*]

Primary Text:

- Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (1952), 151-230

Mon., 1/19: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day [NO CLASS]

Wed., 1/21: [*Invisible Man*]

Primary Text:

- Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (1952), 231-422

Writing Assignment:

Part One [to be posted on CTools by Tues., 1/20]:

Please remember to print out a hard copy of your question and of your response to another student's question.

- By **noon on Tues., 1/20**, please post one discussion question within the C-Tools Discussion Group to which you've been assigned.
- By **midnight on Tues., 1/20**, please respond to one question posted by another student in your Discussion Group.

Part Two [to be submitted during class on Wed., 1/21]:

- Please choose **one chapter** from the assigned reading [chapters 11-19] and analyze the Invisible Man's progress in his journey toward greater understanding of himself and the world around him. The following questions may help you to analyze the chapter:
 - What kinds of lessons present themselves to the IM over the course of this chapter?
 - Which situations, encounters, and/or individuals serve as catalysts for such lessons, and why?
 - In what ways, if any, does the IM gain insight or increase his awareness as a result of these learning opportunities?
 - In what ways, if any, does the IM repress potential realizations or prevent himself from acknowledging the reality of his circumstances?
- Please be sure to **cite specific passages** from the text as support for your analysis.

Mon., 1/26: [Invisible Man]

Primary Text:

- Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (1952), 423-581

Writing Assignment [to be submitted during class on Mon., 1/26]:

- Please offer a close reading of the "Epilogue" in *Invisible Man*. I encourage you to:
 - Identify and discuss the major ideas or themes that emerge
 - Carefully analyze dense passages
 - Discuss the significance of particular phrases or concepts
 - Highlight how ideas and themes that emerge in the "Epilogue" relate to other sections of the novel
 - Formulate questions or reflections about issues, ideas, or passages that merit further consideration.

Wed., 1/28: Invisible Woman: Maud Martha

Primary Text:

- Gwendolyn Brooks, *Maud Martha* (1953), 1-64

Mon., 2/02: [Maud Martha]

Primary Text:

- Gwendolyn Brooks, *Maud Martha* (1953), 65-180

Writing Assignment [to be submitted during class on Mon., 2/2]:

In an essay published in 1984, Mary Helen Washington writes about *Maud Martha*:

- *Maud Martha* is “a novel about bitterness, rage, self-hatred, and the silence that results from suppressed anger. . . . What the reviewers saw as exquisite lyricism was actually the truncated stutterings of a woman whose rage makes her literally unable to speak” (249).
- Washington also argues that Maud becomes “an accomplice to her own impotence,” exhibits “passivity in the face of the persecutory actions of others,” and resists “facing her anger” (252).

In an essay published in 2005, Valerie Frazier writes about *Maud Martha*:

- “The conflicts and turmoil that encapsulate Maud Martha’s life coalesce into a comprehensive pattern of domestic epic warfare”; *Maud Martha* is a “female epic with Maud Martha as the hero of her home/land.” She “fights a war against sexism, classism, and racism to establish her identity. Winning this war is of paramount importance and of epic heroic dimensions because at stake for Maud Martha, as representative woman, are home and family, as well as autonomy, creativity, and self-expression” (1-2).
- Frazier also argues that Maud “increasingly reveals herself to be a master strategist in terms of deciding when to strike out against threats to her domestic and existential self. . . . As a commanding general would, Maud Martha weighs the benefits and risks involved in asserting her voice and selectively decides the battles she will enter” (5).

Please choose **two chapters** from *Maud Martha* and analyze them in relation to Washington’s and Frazier’s arguments. In what ways, if any, do your chapters illustrate Washington’s argument about *Maud Martha*? In what ways, if any, do they illustrate Frazier’s argument? How would you situate your own interpretation of *Maud Martha* in relation to these two divergent interpretations?

Receive Assignment for Critical Analysis #1

Wed., 2/04: Dwelling Places: *Another Country*

Primary Texts:

- James Baldwin, *Another Country* (1962), 3-88

Mon., 2/09: [*Another Country*]

Primary Text:

- James Baldwin, *Another Country* (1962), 89-227

Submit Proposal for Critical Analysis #1

Wed., 2/11: [Another Country]

Primary Text:

- James Baldwin, *Another Country* (1962), 228-315

Mon., 2/16: [Another Country]

Primary Text:

- James Baldwin, *Another Country* (1962), 316-436

Writing Assignment [to be posted on CTools by Sunday, 2/15]:

- By midnight on Sunday, 2/15, please post a visual image, photograph, song, audio clip, song lyrics, or poem that relates in some way to the themes and issues that emerge in Baldwin's *Another Country*. Please write a few sentences outlining how your material relates to the novel, and be ready to discuss your choice further during class. Please also take a look at the postings of other students in your discussion group.

Submit Critical Analysis #1

Wed., 2/18: Hunting for Home: Paradise

Primary Texts:

- The Black Panther Party Platform & Program, 1966 [handout]
- Amiri Baraka, "Black Art" (1969) [handout]
- Michelle Wallace, "Anger in Isolation: A Black Feminist's Search for Sisterhood" (1975), *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought*, Ed. Beverly Guy-Sheftall (1995), 220-227 [handout]
- Toni Morrison, *Paradise* (1998), 1-49

Mon., 2/23: SPRING BREAK

Wed., 2/25: SPRING BREAK

Mon., 3/02: [Paradise]

Primary Text:

- Toni Morrison, *Paradise* (1998), 53-182

Writing Assignment [to be submitted during class on Mon., 3/02]:

- Choose a passage from *Paradise* that merits further analysis and offer an interpretation of the passage. What particular words, phrases, ideas, or themes seem particularly significant? How does the passage relate to larger themes that you see emerging in the novel?

Wed., 3/04: [Paradise]

Primary Text:

- Toni Morrison, *Paradise* (1998), 185-266

Mon., 3/09: [Paradise]

Primary Text:

- Toni Morrison, *Paradise* (1998), 269-318

Writing Assignment [to be posted on CTools by Sun., 3/8]:

- By 7 p.m. on Sunday, please post a discussion question within the group to which you're assigned.
- By midnight, please respond to another student's question within your group.

Wed., 3/11: "It will always be a mystery, history": *Flight to Canada*

Primary Texts:

- Ishmael Reed, *Flight to Canada* (1976), 3-55
- please view before class: Marlon Riggs, "Ethnic Notions" (1987) [60 mins.] VIDEO 10195-H 1987

Mon., 3/16: [Flight to Canada]

Primary Text:

- Ishmael Reed, *Flight to Canada* (1976), 56-179

Writing Assignment [to be submitted during class on Mon., 3/16]:

- In his neo-slave narrative, *Flight to Canada*, Reed addresses a number of issues, questions, or debates that pertain to the contemporaneous context of the novel and may seem relevant today. Please analyze a passage, theme, or issue from the novel that seems relevant to the present or to the period in which it was published. Why do you think that Reed addresses that issue, question, or debate in the context of his novel? What insights can you offer about the particular ways in which he addresses the issue? [Feel free to draw on "Ethnic Notions" in thinking through your response.]

Receive Assignment for Critical Analysis #2

Wed., 3/18: Postcolonial Perspectives: *No Telephone to Heaven*

Primary Text:

- Michelle Cliff, *No Telephone to Heaven* (1987), 1-84

Mon., 3/23: [No Telephone to Heaven]

Primary Text:

- Michelle Cliff, *No Telephone to Heaven* (1987), 87-208

Writing Assignment [to be submitted during class on Mon., 3/23]:

1) Please write your proposal for Critical Analysis #2.

2) Please write a response to one of the following questions/prompts. Because the paper proposal is also due, your response may be briefer than usual, but please try to touch on key points in your analysis.

- *No Telephone to Heaven* highlights the ways in which colonized people may internalize colonial ideologies. Provide specific examples from the text that elucidate this dynamic.
- What insights does *No Telephone to Heaven* offer about the roles that cultural representations play in perpetuating colonial thinking? In formulating your answer, consider some of the novel's references to movies and television, literary figures, fabricated historical figures, and actual historical figures.
- Analyze the novel's depiction of Harry/Harriet. What themes and ideas emerge from the ways in which the novel develops Harry/Harriet's character?
- Analyze Cliff's inclusion of the chapter about Bobby. In what specific ways does this chapter add to the novel's Postcolonial critique?
- Analyze the conclusion of *No Telephone to Heaven* (pages 199-208). Why do you think that Cliff ends her novel in this way? How do you interpret the final page of the novel?

Wed., 3/25: Framed: *The White Boy Shuffle*

Primary Text:

- Paul Beatty, *The White Boy Shuffle* (1996), 1-58

Mon., 3/30:[*The White Boy Shuffle*]

Primary Text:

- Paul Beatty, *The White Boy Shuffle* (1996), 59-173

Submit Critical Analysis #2

Wed., 4/01: [The White Boy Shuffle]

Primary Text:

- Paul Beatty, *The White Boy Shuffle* (1996), 177-226

Mon., 4/06: Keepin' It Real: Grindin'

Primary Text:

- Danielle Santiago, *Grindin'* (2006), 1-180

Writing Assignment [to be turned in during class on Mon., 4/6]:

- As you're reading Danielle Santiago's *Grindin'* [pages 1-180], please keep a reading journal in which you record the responses that you're having to the novel at various points. If it will be easier or more spontaneous for you to record your responses in handwritten form, you may do so as long as you write clearly.
- Please make **five thoughtful entries** in your reading journal; I encourage you to make more than that if you feel so inspired. Your reflections may take an unlimited range of forms, so please use your imaginations.
- **If you need some prompts to get started, here are some questions that might serve as starting points for responding to the book:**
 - After reading the assigned portion of Santiago's novel, how would you respond to Nick Chiles's argument about urban fiction?
 - In what ways, if any, does Santiago's novel connect with other novels, issues, or themes that we've discussed throughout the semester?
 - What observations or analyses can you offer about a particular character?
 - What comparisons can you draw between characters in Santiago's novel and characters in other books that we've discussed?
 - Which particular passages do you find especially interesting, surprising, pleasing, confusing, amusing, upsetting, ironic, contradictory, etc.? Why do those passages prompt you to feel that way?
 - Try brainstorming a list of free associations or words that come to mind as you're reading this book. What words or phrases would be on your list?
 - What kinds of mental images, if any, come to mind as you're reading particular passages?
 - What kinds of memories, if any, come to mind as you're reading particular passages?
 - Imagine two people having a conversation about Santiago's novel or about urban fiction. What would they say to each other in that conversation, and why?
 - What kinds of questions, ideas, or concepts come to mind as you're reading?
 - What connections can you draw between Santiago's novel and broader social issues or current events?
 - In what ways, if any, does reading Santiago's novel affect your ideas about the definition of literature, of African American literature, of reading, or of writing?

Wed., 4/08: [Grindin']

Primary Text:

- Danielle Santiago, *Grindin'* (2006), 181-238
- Megan Sweeney, "Fear of Books': Reading Urban Fiction," from "*The Underground Book Railroad*": *Cultures of Reading in Women's Prisons* (forthcoming) [handout]

Mon., 4/13: "How Much is That Negro in the Window?": Erasure

Primary Text:

- Percival Everett, *Erasure* (2001), 1-143

Receive Assignment for Critical Analysis #2

Wed., 4/15:[Erasure]

Primary Text:

- Percival Everett, *Erasure* (2001), 144-210

Mon., 4/20: [Erasure]

Primary Text:

- Percival Everett, *Erasure* (2001), 212-265

Writing Assignment [to be submitted during class on Mon., 4/20]:

Throughout the second half of *Erasure*, Everett includes numerous references to *Invisible Man*.

- What are some of the **precise ways** in which Everett references Ellison's novel, and **what is the particular significance** of each of those references?
- How, exactly, do the references to *Invisible Man* deepen our understanding of what is happening with Monk over the course of *Erasure*, and particularly towards the end of the novel?
- How do the references to *Invisible Man* help to underscore the larger themes and concerns that Everett seems to be addressing in *Erasure*?
- Be sure to consider explicit references AND more subtle, implicit references that emerge in the development of the plot or in the novel's engagement with particular ideas. Please identify **at least three specific ways** in which Everett is drawing on Ellison's novel.

EXTRA CREDIT QUESTION #1: [worth five points total]

Please choose **ONE** of the following passages and analyze its significance:

- Monk's dream on pages 255-256.

OR

- The passage starting with “So, I had managed to take myself . . . “ (257) and ending with “Hahal shalal hashbaz” (258).

Why do you think Everett includes the passage that you chose?

How does the passage help us to understand Monk’s thoughts, feelings, and actions at that point in the novel?

[These passages include references that will likely be unfamiliar, so you may want to find out more information about particular phrases or words by doing some on-line research. Be sure to cite any on-line materials that you reference.]

EXTRA CREDIT QUESTION #2: [worth five points total]

Both Ellison’s *Invisible Man* and Everett’s *Erasure* reference the myth of Daedalus and Icarus:

- About mid-way through *Invisible Man*, the narrator reflects, “[T]here were two of me: the old self that slept a few hours a night and dreamed sometimes of my grandfather and Bledsoe and Brockway and Mary, the self that flew without wings and plunged from great heights; and the new public self that spoke for the Brotherhood and was becoming so much more important than the other that I seemed to run a foot race against myself” (380). The narrator is referencing the myth of Daedalus and Icarus when he describes “the self that flew without wings and plunged from great heights.” [the errant son]
- *Erasure* includes the Latin phrase “medio tutissimus ibis,” which is from the chapter about Daedalus and Icarus in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (Everett 245). **The phrase can be translated as “in the middle most safe you will go,” or “you will go most safe in the middle,”** and it refers to something that Daedalus says to his son, Icarus. A bit later in *Erasure*, Monk writes, “I recalled the Icarus myth and pointed out to myself that whereas Icarus did plummet to earth, Daedalus in fact flew” (259).

If you’re not familiar with the myth of Daedalus and Icarus, find a brief synopsis of it on-line and then write a response to the following questions:

- How would you interpret Ellison’s reference to the myth in *Invisible Man*?
- How would you interpret Everett’s references to the myth in *Erasure*?
- How might Everett’s engagement with the myth—which constitutes one of many ways in which he signifies on, or reappropriates, *Invisible Man*—help to illuminate what is happening with Monk in the final section of *Erasure*?

Mon., 4/27: Submit Critical Analysis #3

- Please place a hard copy of your paper in the box outside my office door by **9 a.m.**
- I will not accept late submissions.

Critical Analysis #1

Mon., 2/09:

- Submit proposal for Critical Analysis #1:
 - provisional thesis statement
 - 1-2 paragraphs outlining your argument

Mon., 2/16:

- Submit Critical Analysis #1

For this 3-4 page, double-spaced analysis, please develop a **focused and specific argument** about Ellison's *Invisible Man* or Brooks's *Maud Martha*.

As you formulate your topic, try to identify an issue, theme, or question that you would like to think about in depth and that you can illustrate or support with evidence from the novel.

I'll provide feedback about your topic during your office hours meeting.

Please carefully attend to the following issues in constructing your argument:

Introduction:

- Does your introduction effectively set up the problem of the paper, i.e. the issue that you wish to discuss?
- Does your introduction address the “so what?” question, offering a sense of the larger significance of the topics that the essay will address?
- Does the introduction smoothly lead into the thesis statement?

Thesis Statement [THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THE PAPER]:

- Does your thesis statement clearly and succinctly articulate your essay's central claim and outline the main subpoints that the essay will cover?
- **Example of a poor thesis:**
 - In *The Marrow of Tradition*, Charles Chesnutt confirms some stereotypes but challenges others.
- **Example of a strong thesis:**
 - In *The Marrow of Tradition*, Charles Chesnutt draws on the stock characters of the coon, the mammy, and the black brute in depicting—respectively—Jerry, Mammy Jane, and Josh Green; Chesnutt ultimately challenges these stereotypes, however, by portraying each of these characters with more depth and complexity than they were typically afforded in turn-of-the-century plantation fiction.

Supporting Paragraphs:

- Does the **topic sentence of each paragraph clearly articulate the central argument of the paragraph?**
 - The topic sentences should serve as a **roadmap**; the reader should be able to discern the outline of the entire argument by reading only the topic sentences.
- Does each supporting paragraph directly relate to the essay's central claim?
- **Does each paragraph contain sufficient textual evidence to support its thesis and to support the central thesis of the essay?**
- Have you arranged the evidence contained in each paragraph in a logical and clear manner?
- Have you arranged the paragraphs in a logical order?
- Does each paragraph **contain ANALYSIS rather than mere summary** of plot details?
- Do you sufficiently **EXPLAIN the significance of the quotes** that you include?

Conclusion:

- Does your conclusion offer a clarifying summary without mechanically restating what the paper has covered and without adding any major new arguments?

Proper Quotation Format for an English/CAAS Paper [PLEASE NOTE CAREFULLY]:

- Please follow MLA guidelines for parenthetical documentation.
 - For MLA style, see:
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_mla.html
- If the quote ends with a period, place the period **AFTER** the parenthetical reference.
 - **Example:** Margot says to Cliff, "Say, Cliff, you ought to have a sign on you" (Dos Passos 271).
- If the quote ends with a question mark or an exclamation point, include that punctuation in the quote itself **AND** place a period **AFTER** the parenthetical reference.
 - **Example:** After passing the many tests required of her, Tanya asks, "What if I had failed the tests?" (Hart 132).
- The parenthetical reference should include **ONLY the last name of the author and the page number** on which the quote appears.
 - do NOT place a comma between the author's name and page number
 - do NOT include "p." before the page number

Critical Analysis #2

Mon., 3/23:

- **Submit proposal for Critical Analysis #2:**
 - provisional thesis statement
 - 1-2 paragraphs outlining your argument

Mon., 3/30:

- **Submit Critical Analysis #2**

For this **4-6 page**, double-spaced analysis, please develop a focused and specific argument about James Baldwin's *Another Country*, Toni Morrison's *Paradise*, or Ishmael Reed's *Flight to Canada*.

As you formulate your topic, try to identify an issue, theme, or question that you would like to think about in depth and that you can illustrate or support with evidence from the novel.

I'll provide feedback about your topic during your office hours meeting.

Please carefully attend to the following issues in constructing your argument:

Introduction:

- Does your introduction effectively set up the problem of the paper, i.e. the issue that you wish to discuss?
- Does your introduction address the “so what?” question, offering a sense of the larger significance of the topics that the essay will address?
- Does the introduction smoothly lead into the thesis statement?

Thesis Statement [THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THE PAPER]:

- Does your thesis statement clearly and succinctly articulate your essay's central claim and outline the main subpoints that the essay will cover?
- **Example of a poor thesis:**
 - In *The Marrow of Tradition*, Charles Chesnutt confirms some stereotypes but challenges others.
- **Example of a strong thesis:**
 - In *The Marrow of Tradition*, Charles Chesnutt draws on the stock characters of the coon, the mammy, and the black brute in depicting—respectively—Jerry, Mammy Jane, and Josh Green; Chesnutt ultimately challenges these stereotypes, however, by portraying each of these characters with more depth and complexity than they were typically afforded in turn-of-the-century plantation fiction.

Supporting Paragraphs:

- Does the **topic sentence of each paragraph clearly articulate the central argument of the paragraph?**
 - The topic sentences should serve as a **roadmap**; the reader should be able to discern the outline of the entire argument by reading only the topic sentences.
- Does each supporting paragraph directly relate to the essay's central claim?
- **Does each paragraph contain sufficient textual evidence to support its thesis and to support the central thesis of the essay?**
- Have you arranged the evidence contained in each paragraph in a logical and clear manner?
- Have you arranged the paragraphs in a logical order?
- Does each paragraph **contain ANALYSIS rather than mere summary** of plot details?
- Do you sufficiently **EXPLAIN the significance of the quotes** that you include?

Conclusion:

- Does your conclusion offer a clarifying summary without mechanically restating what the paper has covered and without adding any major new arguments?

Proper Quotation Format for an English/CAAS Paper [PLEASE NOTE CAREFULLY]:

- Please follow MLA guidelines for parenthetical documentation.
 - For MLA style, see:
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_mla.html
- If the quote ends with a period, place the period **AFTER** the parenthetical reference.
 - **Example:** Margot says to Cliff, "Say, Cliff, you ought to have a sign on you" (Dos Passos 271).
- If the quote ends with a question mark or an exclamation point, include that punctuation in the quote itself **AND** place a period **AFTER** the parenthetical reference.
 - **Example:** After passing the many tests required of her, Tanya asks, "What if I had failed the tests?" (Hart 132).
- The parenthetical reference should include **ONLY the last name of the author and the page number** on which the quote appears.
 - do **NOT** place a comma between the author's name and page number
 - do **NOT** include "p." before the page number

Critical Analysis #3

The day of your office hours appointment:

- **Submit proposal for Critical Analysis #3:**
 - provisional thesis statement and 1-2 paragraphs outlining your argument

Mon., 4/27:

- **Submit Critical Analysis #3**
- **Please place your paper in the box outside my office door by 9 a.m. I cannot accept any late papers.**

For this **6-8 page**, double-spaced analysis, please develop a focused and specific argument that **creates a conversation between two novels that we have read this semester.** In choosing the two novels that you want to discuss, **please include at least one of the following novels:**

- Michelle Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven*
- Paul Beatty's *The White Boy Shuffle*
- Danielle Santiago's *Grindin'*
- Percival Everett's *Erasure*

As you formulate your topic, try to identify an issue, theme, or question that you would like to think about in depth and that you can illustrate with evidence from both novels. **You'll need to formulate a very clear thesis about the particular comparisons and/or contrasts that you want to draw between the novels.**

I'll provide feedback about your topic during your office hours meeting.

Please carefully attend to the following issues in constructing your argument:

Introduction:

- Does your introduction effectively set up the issue that you wish to discuss?
- Does your introduction address the "so what?" question, offering a sense of the larger significance of the topics that the essay will address?
- Does the introduction smoothly lead into the thesis statement?

Thesis Statement [THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THE PAPER]:

- Does your thesis statement clearly and succinctly articulate your essay's central claim and outline the main subpoints that the essay will cover?
- **Example of a poor thesis:**
 - In *The Marrow of Tradition*, Charles Chesnutt confirms some stereotypes but challenges others.
- **Example of a strong thesis:**

- In *The Marrow of Tradition*, Charles Chesnutt draws on the stock characters of the coon, the mammy, and the black brute in depicting—respectively—Jerry, Mammy Jane, and Josh Green; Chesnutt ultimately challenges these stereotypes, however, by portraying each of these characters with more depth and complexity than they were typically afforded in turn-of-the-century plantation fiction.

Supporting Paragraphs:

- Does the **topic sentence of each paragraph clearly articulate the central argument of the paragraph**?
 - The topic sentences should serve as a **roadmap**; the reader should be able to discern the outline of the entire argument by reading only the topic sentences.
- Does each supporting paragraph directly relate to the essay’s central claim?
- **Does each paragraph contain sufficient textual evidence to support its thesis and to support the central thesis of the essay?**
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