

C&T 202 Sp05 section D: third paper

(due class time on Fri 4/22 unless you make other arrangements in advance)

Write an essay of 4-5 pp. (or 1200-1500 words) in which you trace an idea or theme through several works that you've read this semester. To choose a topic you will need to identify:

- (i) the idea or theme that will be your topic and
- (ii) the works you will discuss (chosen so that you give substantial attention to works in the most recent part of the course—roughly since the last reflection day, March 21).

Although the idea or theme will form your topic, choosing the specific works you will discuss is probably the most important part of deciding what you will write on. This paper is not designed to be a direct comparison, so you should discuss more than two works; but be careful not to choose so many that you are unable to say much about each—three is perhaps the best number. You do not need to give equal attention to these works; however, works from the most recent part of the course should together get a substantial amount of your attention (you can take that to mean roughly a third or more).

Since this is not a comparison, the idea or theme you discuss may appear in these works in different ways, and the ways it appears may vary among the works you discuss. It may be something that is explicitly mentioned in a work, or it may be something that you bring to the work in interpreting it. It may concern the content of the work, its form, or its style. It may even be something that is relevant to the work by contrast, something that is absent from the work and whose absence is of interest.

Although the discussions of individual works may vary significantly, you should have something to say about them as a group, some way of drawing them together so that your treatment of the whole group of works is something more than the sum of the individual discussions. This is something you should bear in mind when choosing the works you will discuss, and trying to say to yourself why you are choosing a certain group works is one way to see how you might draw the individual discussions together.

The organization of this paper can vary considerably depending on the sort of idea or theme you are discussing and the ways it appears in the various works. One approach that will be appropriate in many cases is to first introduce the idea or them, then discuss the works one by one, and finally conclude by drawing together these individual discussions and commenting on the group as a whole.

Here are a few examples of possible topics. As with previous assignments, my aim is to illustrate some of the different forms this assignment can take rather than to collect the most likely choices of topics that would fit it. So you certainly should not feel limited to these examples; but you also should not feel that you cannot use one of them as your topic. And if one seems close to the topic you'd like to use, do not feel that you need adopt the particular form of that topic that

is given here; in particular, you might wish to write about one of these ideas or themes but with regard to a group of works different from the ones I've mentioned.

- Education is a significant theme in Frederick Douglass and “The Coming of John,” and it appeared also, in different ways, in *Frankenstein* and *The House on Mango Street*. Both the process of education and its consequences appear (in varying degrees) in these works. These works might be discussed all with regard to one of these two aspects of education or some with regard to one and some with regard to the other.
- The relations between parents and children (and different generations more generally) appear in “The Coming of John,” *Lone Star*, and *Zoot Suit*—and less prominently in other works, too, such as the Berman film and *The House on Mango Street*. And, as with education, a variety of different aspects appear. But, unlike education, there is relatively little explicit discussion of these relations, so in developing this topic you would deal less with what is said about the idea or theme than with how what happens may be understood in terms of it.
- Frederick Douglass moved north to improve the conditions of his life, as did the immigrants whose letters are collected in *Between the Lines*. On the other hand, Booker T. Washington said, “Cast down your bucket where you are” (EE-8). Washington speaks against migration only briefly in connection with this injunction, so the idea is virtually absent from the selections by him; still, it is closely enough related to what he does say that his work, too, could be discussed in connection with the idea.
- The idea of fighting for your rights appears in Douglass, in Du Bois, and in *Zoot Suit* (among other works), but it appears sometimes more as an idea discussed and sometimes more as an idea exemplified (as in Douglass's life). You would not need to limit yourself to only one of these ways the idea might appear; that is, you might consider both ways it is discussed and ways it is exemplified.

Don't hesitate to seek my help if you find it difficult to formulate a topic; and, of course, I'll be glad to help, too, as you are working on your essay.

These are due class time on April 22 (and don't skip class to finish—come to class and set a new due date), but I'll be happy to accept them electronically. Either e-mail attachments or the Blackboard drop box are fine. In both cases, please check for a confirmation that I've received your file and have been able to open it.