

Writing 4A – The Critical Essay: Literature and the Arts

Week 1

Sunday, July 17

Introductions/Class rules/ Plagiarism Contract/ Student and Teacher expectations

Monday, July 18

Morning: Writing Diagnostic
Read Alice Walker, “Everyday Use”
Talk about story and bring out analysis points
Discuss and read aloud “Reading with Pen in Hand” and “Making Reasonable Inferences”
Free response: Write about an ordinary object you have seen or used in your home or at school that you consider to be not only useful but also art.
Discuss story and talk about how to pick out critical information

Afternoon: Discuss note taking strategies when reading and listening
Practice these strategies
Introduce the concept of high and low art
Read “Keeping a Journal”
Discussion: What is Art? (keep track of concepts on board)

Evening: Meet in classroom and discuss conventions of public readings
Read “The Lesson” aloud and discuss material for reading to an audience versus reading text on a page
Attend reading: Binnie Kirshenbaum and Jay McInerney

Tuesday, July 19

Morning: Discussion of reading styles and both authors.
Read Kate Chopin, “Story of an Hour”
Begin lesson on thesis statements and formal paper structure.
Read “Arguing a Thesis”
Get into small groups for thesis brainstorming
Begin paper writing for Essay 1

Write thesis statements and intro paragraphs
Discuss high and low art, recall passages from previous day

Afternoon: Go through five paragraph thesis structure
Pass out cockroach example essay
Explain inverted pyramid structure

Write body paragraphs and conclusion

Evening: Lab time: Revise essay drafts written that afternoon

Wednesday, July 20

Morning: Discuss: The difference between film and literature—how literature is adapted and concerns of audience
Read “Identifying Your Audience and Purpose”
Film: *The Joy that Kills* (film adaptation of “Story of an Hour”) (1 hr.)

Afternoon: Break into small groups: Discuss main differences in film and text and which is more effective for the audience and why
Present group findings to class
Read “Brainstorming” and “Focused Free Writing”
20 minute free-write

Visit Schick Gallery exhibit: “Anything but Realism”
Handout on Surrealism, Dadaism, and political reactions to realism movements

Evening: Lab time for 1 hour to finish typing draft for peer review
Jamaica Kincaid and Henri Cole reading in Davis Auditorium

Thursday, July 21

Morning: Read handout “What is Art?”
Discuss concepts introduced in essay
Discuss loose essay structure
Peer review in small groups: each student does two reviews
Charles Simic poem
Further discussion of Surrealism
Examination of Salvador Dali and Rene Magritte works
Discussion of surrealist ideas
Pick surrealist painting to analyze for next paper

Afternoon: Yaddo project: pick famous writers to research
Lab time for conducting research on project
Type final revision of essay 1 and turn in

Evening: Film: Martin Scorsese’s *The Age of Innocence*

Friday, July 22

Morning: Take students to Yaddo for garden tour and discussion of assigned personalities
Onsite presentations of each personality or artist

Afternoon: Assign essay 2
Discuss *The Age of Innocence*: high art and low art

Week 2

Sunday, July 24

Evening: Finish essay 2 and turn in; begin revision process on essay 1

Monday, July 25

Morning: Read “Reading and Writing about Visual Culture”
Individual analysis of Dorothea Lange’s “Migrant Mother” without reading text
Share ideas in class and then read the accompanying information with short lecture on historical circumstances of Dust Bowl and Hooverville, and the Great Depression
Read samples of journal entries and then show students series of pictures and ask them to journal for 15 minutes in class; plan to use these journal entries to construct essay 3
Read article from *Smithsonian* on posing photographs and authenticity
Discuss validity of constructing art versus discovering it in natural context

Afternoon: Picasso essay, “Art and Truth”
Student journal writing
Assign essay 3 on art and truth

Read Claude McKay, Countee Cullen, Gwendolyn Brooks, and Zora Neal Hurston

Lecture on Black Arts Movement

Music from Harlem Renaissance: computer lab research on aspects of Harlem Renaissance and Black Arts movement

Gil Scott Heron: Black Arts music

Students choose one poem to explicate and begin explication

Use notes to begin thesis formulation for essay 3

Evening: Students work on finishing essay 2 and begin essay 3 draft

Tuesday, July 26

Morning: Historical information about Harlem Renaissance
Read Langston Hughes, “Harlem” “Theme for English B” “Salvation”
Discuss poem explication
Practice poem explication as a class
Write thesis as a group for a sample essay
Demonstrate quoting techniques for poetry
Practice MLA parenthetical citations

Students revise work done the previous night on essay 3
Peer pairs for peer review
Discuss art as dialogue
Read Sacco and Vanzetti; review immigration in 20th c. America
Read “Not Sacco and Vanzetti”
Group work discussing dialogue
Switch papers from revised essay: students create a short response to their peers’ essays and use strategies of artistic dialogue (add to the discussion as well as tweak the ideas in the original)

Afternoon: Introduce concept of literary style as barrier to acceptance as art
Introduction to minimalism
Read Raymond Carver, “What We Talk About When We Talk About Love”
Discuss in small groups
Present findings to class
Read aloud Carver parody, “What We Talk About When We Talk About Donuts”
Discuss strategies of parody as literary form
Does parody automatically devalue the original work or heighten the value and raise it to artistic status?

Evening: Revisions based on peer review for essay 3

Wednesday, July 27

Morning: More work on revisions from essay 3 in computer lab
Introduce “surprise ending in fiction”; talk about literary or artistic value
Read Shirley Jackson, “The Lottery”
Stop before the end of Jackson’s story; have students write the ending on their own
Read student endings in class

Have students read the rest of the story and compare their endings to the author's: Do they feel cheated by the ending or like the twist?

Afternoon: Student Reading: In progress work

Evening:

Turn in essay 3

Assign parts and read aloud Susan Glaspell, *Trifles*

Switch around so everyone has a part at least once

Finish acting out *Trifles* if the class hasn't done so

Journal on how students feel about drama as art vs. poetry, painting, fiction, or sculpture

Thursday, July 28

Morning: Discuss value of art in a culture: differences in cultures for art funding
Discuss societal standards of what qualifies as art; reiterate high and low art discussion
Read article on art theft from *Smithsonian* magazine
Discuss valuable art students have seen or witnessed and its purpose in serving a culture

Afternoon: Contemporary art versus classical art (dance, sculpture, painting, and music); examine why people recoil from modern or contemporary art claiming that "they could do that" so it's not art
Read X. J. Kennedy, "Nude Descending Staircase" and compare to Marcel Duchamp's painting of the same title
Read John Updike, "Before the Mirror" and compare to Picasso's *Girl Before a Mirror*; discuss Cubism and stylistics
Introduce found poetry and provide examples
Discuss merits of found poetry; tell students to find something to bring to evening session in order to create their own found poems

Evening: Use samples to create found poems individually; work on a group poem from found work

Friday, July 29

Field Trip Massachusetts MOCA (note taking or journal response at end of day)

Week 3

Sunday, July 31

Evening: Use notes to construct an argument about a sculpture or painting from the museum. Free write in journal about the experience. Focus on one work or a group of works that are related thematically

Monday, August 1

Morning: Discuss cultural values of art: view Van Gogh's paintings
Discuss Van Gogh's biography
Have students draw or present ordinary everyday thing they would consider an art object if they were a practicing contemporary artist
Does Van Gogh's tragic story make his art more valuable?
Discuss the value of art once an artist is dead.
Show paintings of Jackson Pollack

Afternoon: Break students into groups. Let them draw a piece of paper with the name of an ordinary object on it. The group then has to decide how to present the object to others to make it artistic as if it were entered in a show or writing contest.
Class presentations of each group

Evening: Students are asked to write down an object noun
Each student draws a piece of paper and then has to write a perspective piece from the perspective of that object
Read David Sedaris excerpt from *Me Talk Pretty One Day* about performance art

Tuesday, August 2

Morning: Discuss if the advent of multiple artists make something less valuable or artistic
Do exercise of poetry writing: Exquisite Corpse
Play telephone game to demonstrate how story telling can change and be refined; have each person add their own twist to the story so that it gets tweaked

Afternoon: Pick topics for essay 4
Work on formulating thesis and body paragraphs
Write first drafts
Peer review

Evening: Revise essay 4 based on peer review

Wednesday, August 3

- Morning: Continue revising essay 4
Read Ernest Hemingway, "Cat in the Rain"
List comparisons on board between Hemingway's style and Raymond Carver's style
- Afternoon: Turn in essay 4
Read F. Scott Fitzgerald, "Babylon Revisted"
Compare Fitzgerald to Hemingway
Trick the Teacher writing exercise using a style reviewed in class
- Evening: Film: Richard Brooks' *The Last Time I Saw Paris*

Thursday, August 4

- Morning: Commercial success as artist
Review Hemingway and Fitzgerald: plots of stories about artists' success
Finding meaning in success
Read "What is Art?" from *Short Takes*
- Afternoon: Journal about if concept of art has changed, how etc.?
Share these ideas in class.
Turn in final journal projects
- Evening: Review time for anything left undone or not finished

Friday, August 5

- Morning: Student reading
- Afternoon: Convocation Ceremony
Meet with Parents