



**ENGL 1201W | SPRING 2021**  
**CONTEMPORARY**  
**AMERICAN LITERATURE**  
**Online | Asynchronous**  
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*[T]he American writer in the middle of the 20th century has his hands full in trying to understand, and then describe, and then make credible much of the American reality. It stupefies, it sickens, it infuriates, and finally it is even a kind of embarrassment to one's own meager imagination. The actuality is continually outdoing our talents, and the culture tosses up figures almost daily that are the envy of any novelist.*  
—Philip Roth, "Writing American Fiction" (1961)

### **Description and Goals**

From the Cold War and the social movements of the 1960s to the rise of digital culture and the political instability of today, American life since World War II has been characterized by tumult and upheaval. How have American writers responded to the vast social and political challenges of this chaotic period? How have authors handled the emergence of rivals to literature's cultural primacy in the form of new media such as cinema, television, and the Internet? What are the major movements, trends, and genres in American literature from the postwar period to today? To answer these questions, our course will provide a historical survey of American literature from the mid-twentieth century to today. We will read a wide variety of literature, including fiction, poetry, drama, essays, memoirs, and comics, and we will situate these works in their social and historical contexts even as we analyze their artistic qualities to learn how literature remains relevant to our ever-changing society. Finally, as this is a writing-intensive course, we will respond to literature in written argument.

### **Required Book**

Levine, Robert S., ed. *The Norton Anthology of American Literature, Volume E: Literature Since 1945*. Ninth edition. New York: Norton, 2017.

**ENGL 1201W satisfies the Literature Core requirement.**

ENGL 1201W focuses on analysis of written works of literature, chiefly fiction and drama, and it consistently and specifically addresses issues of language and meaning in the works studied. Moreover, the design provides for the continuing study of the formal dimensions of literature, with recurring attention to genre, style, characterization, vocabulary, and symbolism and their capacity to evoke a powerful response from readers. Furthermore, at every turn the course examines the social and historical contexts of the literary works as well as their content.

**ENGL 1201W satisfies the General Core guidelines.**

ENGL 1201W involves reading, study, analysis, and critical interpretation of several literary texts written by American authors. Through a systematic arrangement of lectures, small-group discussions, writing assignments, and oral discussion, this course improves the ability of students to read, write, think, and speak as liberally educated adults. Furthermore, ENGL 1201W supplies a dimension to liberal education best provided by the arts: it teaches students to discriminate, with precision and nuance, among shades of emotion while likewise sharpening the critical judgment they need to recognize appeals to fraudulent as well as genuine, excessive as well as appropriate, shallow as well as deep emotion and feelings.

**ENGL 1201W fulfills Student Learning Outcomes.**

Students in this course will master a body of knowledge and a mode of inquiry. The central question of this course is how the contemporary American novel has responded to the influence of new and mass media in popular culture. We will look at the ways in which novelists formulate the problem of mass media, how they re-articulate the role and function of the novel in response to it, and whether or not their novels succeed in establishing a new aesthetic for twenty-first century fiction.

**ENGL 1201W is a Writing Intensive course.**

This course meets the Council on Liberal Education guidelines for a Writing Intensive course. This means that the course:

- integrates writing into course content, through writing assignments that work toward specific course objectives and writing activities that take place throughout the semester
- provides explicit instruction in writing
- requires a cumulative minimum of 2,500 words of formal writing apart from any informal writing activities and assignments
- includes at least one formal assignment that requires students to revise and resubmit drafts after receiving feedback from the course instructor
- requires that at least one-third of each student's final course grade must be tied to the written work done in the course and that a student cannot pass the course and fail the writing component

**Delivery Method**

The lecture will be delivered in a completely online, completely asynchronous format, to accommodate the different schedules and time zones of our large class. Each week, I will release video lectures adding up to about 120 minutes of instructional time to Canvas on the readings listed below in the course schedule. My lectures should be posted by noon on Wednesday of each week. You can listen to the weekly lectures at your convenience and as you prefer as long as you have listened to each week's lecture by the beginning of the subsequent week, since your discussion assignments will be based on the previous week's readings. Your discussion section may use a variety of delivery methods as specified in the section syllabus given to you by your T.A.

**Instructional Time**

For the lecture, you will be responsible for reading the course materials assigned each week and for listening to my lectures. You should, therefore, plan to spend about four to five hours a week on Section 001: about two hours to listen to lectures and about two hours to read the required materials. The discussion sections will require a further 50 minutes per week of participation, in the form of participation in discussion forums, writing activities, or other assignments on Canvas.

**Technology**

This course will require that you use a device that can access Canvas. Per the College of Liberal Arts, "It is recommended for students to use a desktop or laptop computer less than six years old with at least 1GB of RAM, and to use the most recent version of Chrome or Firefox with JavaScript enabled. Internet connections should be at least 512kbps." If you require support for technology issues, please see this website: <https://it.umn.edu/working-learning-campus>

**Assessment**

All of your course work will be submitted through Canvas and you will receive feedback through Canvas.

## Course Policies

### Grades

#### *Grading Policy.*

- A (90-100): Outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements;
- B (80-90): Significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements;
- C (70-80): Meets the course requirements in every respect;
- D (60-70): Worthy of credit, even though it fails to meet course requirements fully;
- F (0-60): Work was not completed.

The University uses plus and minus grading within the above ranges (e.g., 80% is a B-, 83% is a B, and 87% is a B+).

*Incompletes.* A grade of incomplete (“I”) is given only in a genuine and documented emergency, and *only* for work which is due during the last 2 weeks of the course. You must make arrangements for an incomplete before the last day of class.

### Disability Accommodations

The University of Minnesota views disability as an important aspect of diversity, and is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. The Disability Resource Center (DRC) is the campus office that collaborates with students who have disabilities to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations.

- If you have, or you think you have, a disability in any area such as mental health, attention, learning, chronic health, sensory, or physical, please contact the DRC office on your campus (612-626-1333) to arrange a confidential discussion regarding equitable access and reasonable accommodations.
- Students with short-term disabilities, such as a broken arm, can often work with instructors to minimize classroom barriers. In situations where additional assistance is needed, students should contact the DRC as noted above.
- If you are registered with the DRC and have a disability accommodation letter dated for this semester or this year, please contact your instructor early in the semester to review how the accommodations will be applied in the course.
- If you are registered with the DRC and have questions or concerns about your accommodations please contact your access consultant/disability specialist.

Additional information is available on the DRC website: [diversity.umn.edu/disability](https://diversity.umn.edu/disability) or email [drc@umn.edu](mailto:drc@umn.edu) with questions.

### Student Academic Integrity and Scholastic Dishonesty

Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else’s work as your own can result in disciplinary action. The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as: plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials

without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering, forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis. Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an “F” or “N” for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask.

### **Student Writing Support**

Student Writing Support (SWS) offers free writing instruction for all University of Minnesota students—graduate and undergraduate—at all stages of the writing process. In face-to-face and online collaborative consultations, SWS consultants from across the disciplines help students develop productive writing habits and revision strategies. Consulting is available by appointment online and in Nicholson Hall, and on a walk-in basis in Appleby Hall. For more information, call 612-625-1893 or go to [writing.umn.edu/sws](http://writing.umn.edu/sws). In addition, SWS offers a number of web-based resources on topics such as avoiding plagiarism, documenting sources, and planning and completing a writing project.

### **Students for Whom English is a Second Language (Department Policy)**

University policy requires that undergraduate students in the same class be held to the same standards of academic performance and accomplishment. Students for whom English is a second language, however, may have difficulty with the readings, lectures, discussions, and writing assignments in a course. The University offers many resources to assist non-native speakers of English, including courses and consultations through the [Minnesota English Language Program](#), the [Center for Writing](#), the [Department of Writing Studies](#), and [International Student and Scholar Services](#).

### **Student Conduct Code**

The University seeks an environment that promotes academic achievement and integrity, that is protective of free inquiry, and that serves the educational mission of the University. Similarly, the University seeks a community that is free from violence, threats, and intimidation; that is respectful of the rights, opportunities, and welfare of students, faculty, staff, and guests of the University; and that does not threaten the physical or mental health or safety of members of the University community. As a student at the University you are expected to adhere to Board of Regents Policy: Student Conduct Code. Note that the conduct code specifically addresses disruptive classroom conduct, which means "engaging in behavior that substantially or repeatedly interrupts either the instructor's ability to teach or student learning. The classroom extends to any setting where a student is engaged in work toward academic credit or satisfaction of program-based requirements or related activities." To review the University's Student Conduct Code, please see:

[http://regents.umn.edu/sites/regents.umn.edu/files/policies/Student\\_Conduct\\_Code.pdf](http://regents.umn.edu/sites/regents.umn.edu/files/policies/Student_Conduct_Code.pdf)

**Use of Personal Electronic Devices in the Classroom**

Instructors determine if personal electronic devices (such as cell phones and laptops) are allowed in the classroom. Students may be directed to turn off personal electronic devices if the devices are not being used for class purposes. Students are not permitted to record any part of a class/lab/other session unless explicitly granted permission by the instructor. If the student does not comply, the student may be asked to leave the classroom. For complete information, please reference the policy on Student Responsibilities: <http://policy.umn.edu/education/studentresp>

**Sexual Misconduct**

I want to let you know that, in my role as a University employee, I am required to share information that I learn about possible sexual misconduct with the campus Title IX office that addresses these concerns. This allows a Title IX staff member to reach out to those who have experienced sexual misconduct to provide information about the personal support resources and options for investigation that they can choose to access. You are welcome to talk with me about concerns related to sexual misconduct. You can also or alternately choose to talk with a confidential resource; the University offers victim-advocacy support professionals, health services professionals and counselors that will not share information that they learn about sexual misconduct. (This applies to teaching assistants as well.)

**Offensive Material (Department Policy)**

In this course, students will be required to read words or view images that they may consider offensive. The ideas expressed in any given text do not necessarily reflect the views of the instructor, the English Department, or the University of Minnesota. Course materials have been selected for their literary, cultural, and/or historical value, in order to achieve specific learning objectives and course goals. These materials are meant to be examined in the context of intellectual inquiry and critical analysis, as appropriate for a university-level course. If you are easily shocked and/or offended, please contact the instructor to discuss whether this course is suitable for you.

**Other Policies**

For extensive information about UMN policy regarding the above topics and others— Student Conduct Code; Makeup Work for Legitimate Absences; Appropriate Student Use of Class Notes and Course Materials; Grading and Transcripts; Sexual Harassment; Equity, Diversity, Equal Opportunity, and Affirmative Action; Disability Accommodations; Mental Health and Stress Management; and Academic Freedom—I strongly encourage that you visit the following link: <https://cla.umn.edu/english/undergraduate/advising/classroom-policies>

## Course Assignments

### *Grade breakdown.*

Participation	30%
Essay 1	15%
Essay 2	25%
Essay 3	30%

*Participation.* Participation. In this class, your participation will be measured by your efforts in your discussion section. You will be asked by your T.A. to respond in short writing assignments, discussion forums, or (optional) synchronous meetings to the course materials, and points will be awarded or subtracted based on your work. Please see your section syllabus for further details.

*Essays.* You will write three essays for the course. The first will be a 500-600-word essay that will require you to provide a close reading of a passage in a text from the first third of the course and devise a thesis about its significance. The second will be a 700-800 word essay that will ask you to devise an argument about one of the course texts as a whole. The third will be a 1200-1300-word argumentative essay for which you will devise a thesis about the similarities or differences between two texts from the course. For the first essay, you will submit a draft that will be graded as well as a graded final submission. For the second essay, you will submit a formal proposal before turning in the final draft. For the third essay, you will be trusted to submit the final draft without a mandatory preliminary process, though you may of course ask the T.A. or instructor for guidance or feedback, though we will not read complete drafts. I will provide more detail as the due dates approach. Late submissions will be lowered by a letter grade for every day not submitted. You will submit your essays to your T.A. on the Canvas site for your discussion section. The full written instructions for the essays can be found beginning on page 11 of this document.

## SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS<sup>1</sup>

### Week 01 (01/19/21) - Late Modernism

Introduction, *Norton Anthology of American Literature*, vol. E  
Elizabeth Bishop, "The Man-Moth," "Questions of Travel"

### Week 02 (01/25/21) - Modern Tragedy

Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*

### Week 03 (02/01/21) - Realist Fiction and the Existential Mood

James Baldwin, "Sonny's Blues"  
Flannery O'Connor, "A Good Man is Hard to Find"  
John Cheever, "The Swimmer"  
Philip Roth, "Defender of the Faith"

### Week 04 (02/08/21) - Confessionals, Beats, and Counterculture

Robert Lowell, "Home after Three Months Away"  
Sylvia Plath, "Lady Lazarus," "Daddy"  
John Berryman, from *The Dream Songs*  
Allen Ginsberg, *Howl*, "Footnote to *Howl*"  
Jack Kerouac, from *On the Road*  
***DUE 02/12/21: Essay #1 first draft***

### Week 05 (02/15/21) - Postmodern Manifestoes and Poems

Postmodern Manifestoes  
John Ashbery, "Soonest Mended," "Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror"  
Frank O'Hara, "Why I Am Not a Painter," "The Day Lady Died"

### Week 06 (02/22/21) - Postmodern Fiction

Thomas Pynchon, "Entropy"  
Philip K. Dick, "Precious Artifact"  
Ursula K. Le Guin, "Schrödinger's Cat," "She Unnames Them"  
Grace Paley, "A Conversation with My Father"

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<sup>1</sup> Most readings are in *The Norton Anthology* and are listed in the table of contents. Those marked (\*) will be on Canvas. Though I have not placed them on the reading schedule, I will expect you to read the short author biographies that preface the selections in the *Anthology*.



**Week 07 (03/01/21) - Liberation Literature**

Joan Didion, from “Slouching Towards Bethlehem”  
Adrienne Rich, “Diving into the Wreck”  
Ishmael Reed, “Neo-HooDoo Manifesto”  
Lucille Clifton, all selections

***DUE 03/05/21: Essay #1 final draft***

**Week 08 (03/08/21) - Multiculturalism**

Toni Morrison, “Recitatif”  
Leslie Marmon Silko, “Lullaby”  
Amy Tan, “Two Kinds”  
Gloria Anzaldúa, “*La conciencia de la mestiza / Towards a New Consciousness*”

***DUE 03/12/21: Essay #2 Proposal***

**Week 09 (03/15/21) - Modern Tragedy Redux**

August Wilson, *Fences*

**Week 10 (03/22/21) - Realisms Redux: Dirty, Magical, Lyrical, Postmodern**

Raymond Carver, “Cathedral”  
Louise Erdrich, “Fleur”  
John Updike, “Separating”  
Don DeLillo, from *White Noise*

**Week 11 (03/29/21) - Post-Postmodern Poetry and Nonfiction**

Frank Bidart, “Ellen West”  
Louise Glück, “The Drowned Children,” “October”  
Li-Young Lee, “Persimmons”  
Maxine Hong Kingston, from *The Woman Warrior*  
Art Spiegelman, from *Maus*

***DUE 04/02/21: Essay #2***

**Week 12 (04/12/21) - The New Sincerity**

David Foster Wallace, from “Consider the Lobster”  
George Saunders, “CivilWarLand in Bad Decline”  
Junot Díaz, “Drown”  
Jhumpa Lahiri, “Sexy”

**Week 13 (04/19/21) - The New Authenticity**

Natasha Trethewey, "Native Guard"

Lydia Davis, all selections

Jennifer Egan, "Black Box" (\*)

Charles Yu "Systems" (\*)

**Week 14 (04/26/21) - Conclusion**

Conclusion

***DUE 04/30/21: Essay #3***

**ENGL 1201W ESSAY #1 (500-600 words)**

**Worth 15% of your grade**

**Draft #1 due to your T.A. via Canvas by 11:59PM on 02/12/21**

**Draft #2 due to your T.A. via Canvas by 11:59PM on 03/05/21**

The best literary criticism tends to work from the assumption that how something is conveyed in literature is as important as what is conveyed. For this reason, literary critics have cultivated an art of close reading—that is, an art of paying very careful attention to how language works in a selected passage from a text.

Your assignment is to select a passage that we did not discuss in class from one of our readings. Choose a short excerpt—about 5-10 lines of type—to explicate in a close reading.

After you select the text, place it at the beginning of your paper in a single-spaced block quotation. Following the block quotation, you do not need a full introductory paragraph, but you should have at least one sentence that summarizes your overall interpretation of the passage. Even though it is the first sentence I will read, it might be the last sentence you write, since you will have to perform the close reading to know your argument about the text.

Your thesis should go beyond the obvious or the summary. For example, an unsuccessful thesis would say, “James Baldwin discusses music in ‘Sonny’s Blues.’” This merely states a fact about the text without offering an interpretation of its broader significance or its complexity. A more successful thesis: “James Baldwin shows in ‘Sonny’s Blues’ that music can unite communities, heal individuals, and help to resist oppression.” (Please do not use that thesis in so many words.)

Your thesis should be followed by an explication of the passage. “To explicate” means “to make explicit.” The text uses imagery, metaphor, allusion, point of view, symbolism, style, irony and other literary devices to suggest or imply a meaning, and it is your job to articulate that implied or suggested meaning by explaining how the literary devices make us understand the world in certain ways. You should conclude your essay by explaining how the passage you selected ties into broader themes—either those of the period as a whole or else of some other large historical, social, political, philosophical, religious, aesthetic, or literary concept.

You have several options for structuring this essay. You can simply follow your chosen excerpt in order, sentence by sentence. This is the simplest option, and there is nothing wrong with it. Another structure would divide the passage into different themes or devices that you would like to explore; so, for instance, you could devote one paragraph to a reading of the passage’s imagery, another to the passage’s irony, etc. Or you can surprise us with a structure of your own invention. You do not have to address every single feature of your text; choose to focus on those that best express your sense of the piece’s overall meaning.

Draft #1 is mandatory but ungraded; if you do not turn it in, you cannot earn higher than a B on the assignment. Your final grade for this assignment will be based on the final draft. Please be sure, however, that draft #1 is as good and complete as you can make it, which will make the job of revision for draft #2 much easier.

This essay should be at least 500 words and no more than 600 words. Use a standard font, double-spaced, with one-inch margins. Provide a heading with your name, date and the assignment, and include a descriptive, arresting title (e.g., “‘Cup of Trembling’: Music as Redemption in ‘Sonny’s Blues’”) centered one line above the essay’s first line.

This assignment does not require a bibliography, but in-text parenthetical citations should follow MLA guidelines. Please use line numbers rather than page numbers when quoting poetry. There is no need to consult outside sources for this essay, but if you do so please make clear what they are. For literary analyses, there is no need to cite page or line numbers for anything other than direct quotation.

Grading Criteria: To earn an A, an essay must have a strong thesis, a clear structure, a persuasive use of evidence, and an effective (and proofread) style. An essay without a strong thesis, or one with a strong thesis but lacking two of the other criteria, will earn a B. An essay that lacks three or more of the criteria will earn a C or below.

**ENGL 1201W ESSAY #2 (700-800 words)****Worth 25% of your grade****Proposal due to your T.A. via Canvas by 11:59PM on 03/12/21****Paper due to your T.A. via Canvas by 11:59PM on 04/02/21**

Your assignment is to choose any text (other than a text or author you wrote about for the first essay) and write an analytical, argumentative essay of 700-800 words explaining how the text treats one of its themes. Your essay will be driven by an argument, or thesis, that communicates your interpretation and that organizes the essay's evidence toward the end of proving your claim.

Your thesis should be as concrete as possible, and it should go beyond the obvious or summary. “*A Streetcar Named Desire* is about gender” is an ineffective thesis because too vague; instead you should tell your reader exactly how the novel or poem treats its theme and what the text ultimately communicates about it—e.g., “*A Streetcar Named Desire* shows [X] about gender.” This thesis should be stated near the beginning of your essay; it does not necessarily need to be confined to a single sentence, but it should be worded as concisely and specifically as possible. You may only arrive at a definite idea of your thesis after having written most or all of the paper, but it is imperative that you then go back and place it at the beginning to offer your reader a map of your argument.

Please note: this essay should not be a summary of the text, nor should it be a recitation of historical or biographical facts about the life and times of the author. It is a literary interpretation—a characterization of the text's meaning and effect through a careful selection and explication of its elements. A plot summary or a historical or biographical recitation cannot be given a high grade for this assignment. Historical information should only be used to contextualize your interpretation; as for plot, assume your reader already knows it. You may allude once or twice to the author's biography for context, but there is no need to do so, and your argument should not depend on it.

Your essay following the thesis should be divided into discrete sub-topics organized as individual paragraphs (e.g., paragraph one examines how *Streetcar* portrays femininity, paragraph two shows how it portrays masculinity, and paragraph three explains how the play combines these portrayals into its overall view of gender). You may want to give these paragraphs opening sentences that announce their theme, but you do not have to do so as long as the organizing principle of the paragraph is clear.

You should make judicious use of quotations; do not quote more of the text than you plan to discuss in detail. Also be sure to introduce the quotation rather than dropping it into the middle of a paragraph, and to follow the quotation with an explanation of its significance for your argument, with particular attention to its literary features (metaphor, tone, rhyme, imagery, etc.).

Your opening paragraph should provide some context for the ensuing discussion: you might begin with historical or literary information. Your conclusion should not only restate your argument but also suggest an avenue for further exploration; in resting your case, invite others to respond.

Though you will have the opportunity to revise between the first and final drafts of the first essay, this is not an invitation to submit work that is incomplete, not proofread, or otherwise unfinished for your first draft. The first draft must be a complete and polished essay meeting all the requirements for the assignment. The better it is, the less work you should have to do in revision. The final grade will be an average of the grades for the first and final drafts; it is in your interest to make the first draft as good as it can be.

This essay should be at least 500 words and no more than 600 words. Use a standard font, double-spaced, with one-inch margins. Provide a heading with your name, date and the assignment, and include a descriptive, arresting title (e.g., “‘The Kindness of Strangers’: Gender Roles in *A Streetcar Named Desire*”) centered one line above the essay’s first line.

This assignment does not require a bibliography, but in-text parenthetical citations should follow MLA guidelines. Please use line numbers rather than page numbers when quoting poetry. There is no need to consult outside sources for this essay, but if you do so please make clear what they are. For literary analyses, there is no need to cite page or line numbers for anything other than direct quotation.

For this essay, you will submit a proposal that specifies the essay’s thesis and structure. The proposal is mandatory but ungraded; if you do not turn it in, you cannot earn higher than a B on the assignment. Your final grade for this assignment will be based on the final draft. Please be sure, however, that the proposal is as complete as you can make it, which will make the job of writing the essay much easier. Please consult your T.A. for further or more specific instructions.

Grading Criteria: To earn an A, an essay must have a strong thesis, a clear structure, a persuasive use of evidence, and an effective (and proofread) style. An essay without a strong thesis, or one with a strong thesis but lacking two of the other criteria, will earn a B. An essay that lacks three or more of the criteria will earn a C or below.

**ENGL 1201W ESSAY #3 (1200-1300 words)****Worth 30% of your grade****Due to your T.A. before 11:59PM via Canvas on 04/30/21**

Your assignment for the final essay is to devise an argument that compares or contrasts how two of the course texts treat a single theme. (You don't have to choose two texts of the same length; you can compare a short story with a novel. You may choose texts from the first half of the semester, but please do not write about the texts you chose for your first and second essays. )

Like the second essay, this one will be organized around a non-obvious thesis; this thesis will be most effective if it states your overall argument about how your chosen theme is treated in both your chosen works. Most theses for this assignment will probably either have a comparative and contrastive structure: for example, "Both 'Fleur' and 'October' show that nature..." (comparative), or, "While 'Fleur' demonstrates [X] about nature, 'October' shows [Y]" (contrastive). Either way, your thesis, stated near the beginning of your essay, at the conclusion of a contextualizing introductory paragraph, should sum up your whole claim.

The remainder of your paper will consist of paragraphs, each organized around a discrete sub-topic of your argument, which substantiates your claims through the use of clearly introduced and explicated textual evidence, either direct quotations from your chosen texts or citations of specific events from them.

As for the essay's structure, there are at least two possible ways of proceeding. You could arrange your argument by topic: each paragraph will compare or contrast your chosen texts on the grounds of their relevance to the subtopics of your thesis. On the other hand, you could spend the first half of the paper on one text and the second half on another. An example of each structure:

*Thesis:* Both "Fleur" and "October" show [X] about nature through [a], [b], and [c]

*Topical structure:*

[a] in "Fleur" and "October"  
 [b] in "Fleur" and "October"  
 [c] in "Fleur" and "October"

*Text structure:*

[a, b, and c] in "Fleur"  
 [a, b, and c] in "October"

Your essay should conclude with a paragraph that sums up your argument and suggests areas of further inquiry.

This essay should be at least 1200 words and no more than 1300 words. Use a standard font, double-spaced, with one-inch margins. Provide a heading with your name, date and the assignment, and include a descriptive, arresting title (e.g., “‘Violence Has Changed Me’: The Force of Nature in ‘Fleur’ and ‘October’”) centered one line above the essay’s first line.

This assignment does not require a bibliography, but in-text parenthetical citations should follow MLA guidelines. Please use line numbers rather than page numbers when quoting poetry. There is no need to consult outside sources for this essay, but if you do so please make clear what they are. For literary analyses, there is no need to cite page or line numbers for anything other than direct quotation.

Grading Criteria: To earn an A, an essay must have a strong thesis, a clear structure, a persuasive use of evidence, and an effective (and proofread) style. An essay without a strong thesis, or one with a strong thesis but lacking two of the other criteria, will earn a B. An essay that lacks three or more of the criteria will earn a C or below.