

## Junior Seminar

# America After the Fall

## American Literary History

Reed College  
Spring 2008  
Prof. Laura Leibman

## English 301

Tuesdays &  
Thursdays 10:30-  
11:50 ETC 205



Albrecht Dürer (German,  
1471–1528), "Adam and  
Eve" (1504)

Class-email:  
[eng301@lists.reed.edu](mailto:eng301@lists.reed.edu)

My Group is:

1. Bradstreet \_\_\_\_\_
2. Taylor \_\_\_\_\_
3. Wheatley \_\_\_\_\_
4. Dickinson \_\_\_\_\_
5. Whitman \_\_\_\_\_



*The New-England Primer Improved, 1762*

## Course Description

This course, a study of the methods and a sample of the materials of American literary history, will focus on epic and lyric poetry. Texts will include Milton's *Paradise Lost* and the poetry of Anne Bradstreet, Edward Taylor, Phillis Wheatley, Emily Dickinson, and Walt Whitman. In addition, there will be substantial reading in literary theory and an extensive critical bibliography project. We will consider questions about genre, literary authority, tradition and innovation, canon formation, and intertextuality. Primarily for English majors, for whom the junior seminar is usually required no later than the end of the junior year.

Webpage: <http://moodle.reed.edu>

## Required Readings

- MILTON, *PARADISE LOST* (OXFORD)
- PHILLIS WHEATLEY, *COMPLETE WRITINGS*, ed. VINCENT CARRETTA
- *POEMS OF EDWARD TAYLOR*, ed. DONALD E. STANFORD
- *THE COMPLETE POEMS WALT WHITMAN*, ed. FRANCIS MURPHY
- *THE POEMS OF EMILY DICKINSON: READING EDITION*, ed. R. W. FRANKLIN
- *THE WORKS OF ANNE BRADSTREET*, ed. JEANNINE HENSLEY
- SHUMWAY, *CREATING AMERICAN CIVILIZATION*
- GIBALDI, *MLA HANDBOOK FOR WRITERS*

## RECOMMENDED:

- LENTRICCHIA, *CRITICAL TERMS FOR LITERARY STUDY* ("CT")
- *THE NEW PRINCETON ENCYCLOPEDIA OF POETRY AND POETICS*

## Schedule of Readings

### Week 1

T 1/29 David Shumway, *Creating American Civilization*, pp. 1-122 (PS41 .S48 1994)

R 1/31 David Shumway, *Creating American Civilization*, pp. 123-220 (PS41 .S48 1994)

Week 1 AB/CHE	Sign up for Groups. This determines which Author you will be doing for your Annotated Bibliography and Critical History Essay. <b>By Friday of this week create a personal Common-place Book page for yourself on the Moodle.</b>
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### Week 2

T 2/5 Evan Carton and Gerald Graff, "Criticism Since 1940," *Cambridge History of American Literature*, ed. Sacvan Bercovitch, Volume 8, pp. 263-388 (PS92 .C34 1994 v.8)

In Class: Library Session

R 2/7 Evan Carton and Gerald Graff, "Criticism Since 1940," *Cambridge History of American Literature*, ed. Sacvan Bercovitch, Volume 8, pp. 389-453 (PS92 .C34 1994 v.8)

Week 2 AB/CHE	Summit Search for your Author under "Library of Congress (L.C.) Subject Heading" e.g. "Taylor, Edward." Make sure you look for the following and order what we don't have from summit. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Your author--Bibliography</li> <li>2. Your author—Concordances</li> <li>3. Your author--Criticism And Interpretation (and Criticism And Interpretation History, etc.)</li> <li>4. Other Likely useful categories</li> </ol> <b>In a word doc, make a list of the books (or articles in books) on your author by DECADE. Must be posted on your Common-place Book page by Friday.</b>
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### Week 3

T 2/12 Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Books 1 & 2

R 2/14 Milton Critical Essays

- Bloom, "Clinamen or Poetic Misprision," *The Anxiety of Influence* (19-45) (PN1031 .B53)
- William Spengemann, "Paradise Lost: Milton's American Poem," *A New World of Words: Redefining Early American Literature*, pp. 94-117 (PS185 .S67 1994)
- (Optional: Renza, "Influence" *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, 186-202)

**Group 1: Précis of Bloom or Spengemann. To receive credit, your précis must be posted on the Moodle at least 24 hours before class.**

Week 3 AB/CHE	Do an MLA Search for your Author <a href="http://library.reed.edu/find/databases.html#in">http://library.reed.edu/find/databases.html#in</a> with a SUBJECT search for your author e.g. "Taylor, Edward." SORT them by DATE (ascending). (You can also check to see if you have a good spread of years by clicking on LIMIT and then "LIMIT your results by YEAR." SAVE your search. <b>Order all early articles and any later articles that look promising from ILL or Summit if they are not in Reed's collection. In a word document, make a list of the articles by DECADE of 50-100 articles.</b> You will want to balance the distribution of works over time: for example, ten works should (if possible) date from before 1958; ten from 1958-1968; ten from 1968-88; ten from 1985 to 1998; and ten from 1998 to the present. <b>This needs to be posted</b>
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	<p>on your Common-place Book page by Friday (can be uploaded as a word doc). Add to this list the works that you found in books from last week. (Make sure you pick up your summit books when they arrive.)</p>
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#### Week 4

T 2/19 Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Books 3-5

R 2/21 Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book 6-7

- Fish, "Rhetoric," in *Critical Terms for Literary Study*
- Fish, "'With Mortal Voice': Milton Defends Against the Muse" *ELH* 62(1995): 509-527. (<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/elh/v062/62.3fish.html> >)

**Group 2: Précis of "With Mortal Voice." To receive credit, these must be posted on the Moodle at least 24 hours before class.**

<p>Week 4 AB/CHE</p>	<p>Read about your author in at least two years from each decade from 1963-present ALS. After 1998 you can use Project Muse <a href="http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/american_literary_scholarship/">http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/american_literary_scholarship/</a>, but the years before this are in the stacks. Make notes on trends in the scholarship. <b>By Friday post a one-page document that lists the critical works or trends by decade.</b></p>
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#### Week 5

T 2/26 Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Books 8-9

- Lewalski, "Milton and Idolatry" *SEL* 43 (2003) 213-32. ([http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/studies\\_in\\_english\\_literature/v043/43.1lewalski.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/studies_in_english_literature/v043/43.1lewalski.html) >)

**Group 3: Précis of "Milton and Idolatry." To receive credit, your précis must be posted on the Moodle at least 24 hours before class.**

R 2/28 Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book 10

- Froula, "When Eve Reads Milton: Undoing the Classical Economy" *Critical Inquiry* 10 (1983), 321-347. ([http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/studies\\_in\\_english\\_literature/v043/43.1lewalski.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/studies_in_english_literature/v043/43.1lewalski.html) >)

**Group 4: Précis of "When Eve reads Milton." To receive credit, your précis must be posted on the Moodle at least 24 hours before class.**

<p>Week 5 AB/CHE</p>	<p><b>Highlight 25 articles (or book chapters) on your list that you will be using for your annotated bibliography by Friday at 5pm.</b> You will want to balance the distribution of works over time: for example, five works should (if possible) date from before 1958; five from 1958-1968; five from 1968-88; five from 1985 to 1998; and five from 1998 to the present. Please also try to include a range of types of criticism. This means as you begin to read the articles, you should note for yourself what criticism it appears to be. (See Carton and Graff for help determining what type of criticism it is.) Please note that you do not need to do the same articles as the rest of your group. For many of these authors, there are many more articles than any one of you will be able to cover. If you are working on an author for which there are hundreds (or thousands) possible essays, you may want to narrow your topic either by poem (E.g. "Song of Myself"), or subject (versification, democracy, sexuality, gender, influence on other writers, relationship to one specific writers, etc.). However you narrow your topic you will want to make sure that you do not delete all the essays from early decades.</p> <p><b>Your second task for the week</b> is to meet with your group and discuss which articles you'd like to assign for the class on your author in the upcoming weeks.</p>
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	You can assign 1-2 articles. <b>These should be posted on the Schedule of Readings page of the Moodle by Friday.</b> Notice that <b>you will also need to indicate 1-3 poems that should be (re)read from the poet in order to appreciate the article better.</b> If the article is not available on JSTOR or an online database to which Reed has access, please leave one Xerox copy outside my Office that I can make multiple copies of for reserve. This copy needs to be submitted by <b>Friday</b> as well.
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## Week 6

T3/4 Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Books 11-12

- Pechter, *Critical Inquiry* 11 (1984): 163-170 (<<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0093-1896%28198409%2911%3A1%3C163%3AWPRFPS%3E2.0.CO%3B2-L>>)
- Froula, *Critical Inquiry* 11(1984), 171-178. (<<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0093-1896%28198409%2911%3A1%3C171%3APSMBWS%3E2.0.CO%3B2-S>>)

**Group 5: Précis of either Pechter or Froula. To receive credit, your précis must be posted on the Moodle at least 24 hours before class.**

R 3/6 Anne Bradstreet, *The Works of Anne Bradstreet*, ed. Jeannine Hensley

- “Anne Bradstreet and her Poetry,” by Adrienne Rich, pp. ix-xxii
- “Anne Bradstreet’s Wreath of Thyme,” by Jeannine Hensley, xxiii-xxvi
- “Epistle to the Reader,” “Introductory Verses,” “To her most Honoured Father,” “The Prologue,” pp. 3-17
- “A Dialogue between old England and New,” pp. 179-88
- “The Flesh and the Spirit” through the end of the book, pp. 215-295

**Group 2: Close Reading Essay. Timed. Must be posted 24 hours before class.**

**Group 4: Comparison Essay. Timed. Must be posted 24 hours before class.**

Week 6 AB/CHE	<b>Annotations 1-5 due on your Common-place Book page by Friday. Each entry must include a the entry in proper MLA format, the type of criticism you believe it to be, and précis (one page max.)</b> Please note that your annotations do not need to be done in chronological order. For an example of how to do annotations see < <a href="http://academic.reed.edu/am_studies/resources/AmStudBibF00.pdf">http://academic.reed.edu/am_studies/resources/AmStudBibF00.pdf</a> >
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## Week 7

T 3/11 Anne Bradstreet

- Bethany Reid, “Unfit for Light”: Anne Bradstreet’s Monstrous Birth.” *The New England Quarterly* 71.4 (1998): 517-542. (< <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0028-4866%28199812%2971%3A4%3C517%3A%22FLABM%3E2.0.CO%3B2-B>>)
- Read the “Bradstreet, Taylor, and Early Colonial Poetry” section of *Literature to 1800 in American Literary Scholarship* for **one** year from 1998-2005. **Put in a link on your Common-place Book page to the section of the year you read**  
<[http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/american\\_literary\\_scholarship/](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/american_literary_scholarship/)>

R 3/13 Anne Bradstreet

**Group 1 to choose secondary readings. Please indicate 1-3 poems that should be (re)read from the poet in order to appreciate the article better.**

Week 7 AB/CHE	<b>Annotations 6-12 due on your Common-place Book page by Friday. Each entry must include a the entry in proper MLA format, the type of criticism you believe it to be, and précis (one page max.)</b>
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**3/15—3/23 *SPRING BREAK!*** Please make sure that you not only read, but *study* the junior qualifying readings if you taking the qual in April.

### Week 8

T 3/25 Edward Taylor, *The Poems of Edward Taylor*, ed. Donald Stanford

- Introduction, pp. xvii-xli
- "1. Meditation," p. 1
- "3. Meditation. Can. 1.3 Thy Good Ointment," pp. 7-8
- "36. Meditation. 1 Cor. 3.22. Things to come yours," pp. 57-60
- "Meditation 26. Heb. 9.13.14. How much more shall the blood of Christ, etc.," pp. 129-130
- "6. Meditation. Joh. 15./13. Greater Love....," pp. 190-192
- "97. Meditation. Can. 1.2 Let him kiss me with the Kisses of his mouth," pp. 227-229
- "Miscellaneous Poems," pp. 339-347

**Group 3: Close Reading Essay. Timed. Must be posted 24 hours before class.**

**Group 5: Comparison Essay. Timed. Must be posted 24 hours before class.**

R 3/27 Edward Taylor Articles

- Karen E. Rowe, "Prophetic Visions: Typology and Colonial American Poetry," *Puritan Poets and Poetics: Seventeenth-Century American Poetry in Theory and Practice*, ed. Peter White: 47-66. (Print Reserve)
- Walter Hughes, "'Meat Out of the Eater': Panic and Desire in American Puritan Poetry," *Engendering Men*, ed. Joseph Boone and Michael Cadden, pp. 102-121 (Print Reserve)
- Read the "Bradstreet, Taylor, and Early Colonial Poetry" section of *Literature to 1800* in *American Literary Scholarship* for **one** year from 1998-2005. **Put in a link on your Common-place Book page to the section of the year you read**  
[http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/american\\_literary\\_scholarship/](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/american_literary_scholarship/)

**3/27-3/30 ASECS Conference in Portland** see <<http://asecs.press.jhu.edu/2008annualmtg.htm>>

Week 8 AB/CHE	<b>Annotations 13-20 due on your Common-place Book page by Friday. Each entry must include a the entry in proper MLA format, the type of criticism you believe it to be, and précis (one page max.)</b>
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### Week 9

T 4/1 Edward Taylor

**Group 2 to choose secondary readings. Please indicate 1-3 poems that should be (re)read from the poet in order to appreciate the article better.**

R 4/3 Phillis Wheatley, *Complete Writings* (please read the entire book)

**Group 4: Close Reading Essay. Timed. Must be posted 24 hours before class.**

**Group 1: Comparison Essay. Timed. Must be posted 24 hours before class.**

Recommended Lecture: Bryan Wolf, Professor of American Art History, Stanford University  
 "Teapots and Air Pumps: Science, Sentiment and Painting in the 18th Century." Bio 19, 5:30 PM

**4/4-4/7 English Junior Qualifying Exam**

### Week 10

T 4/8 Phillis Wheatley Articles

- Robert Kendrick, "Re-membering America: Phillis Wheatley's Intertextual Epic." *African American Review* 30.1 (1996):71-88.  
<<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=10624783%28199621%2930%3A1%3C71%3ARAPWIE%3E2.0.CO%3B2-E>>
- Read the "Early National Slavery and African American Voices" section of *Literature to 1800* in *American Literary Scholarship* for one year from 1998-2005. **Put in a link on your Common-place Book page to the section of the year you read**  
<[http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/american\\_literary\\_scholarship/](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/american_literary_scholarship/)>

R 4/10 Phillis Wheatley

**Group 3 to choose secondary readings. Please indicate 1-3 poems that should be (re)read from the poet in order to appreciate the article better.**

Week 10 AB/CHE	<b>Annotations 21-25 due on your Common-place Book page by Friday. Each entry must include a the entry in proper MLA format, the type of criticism you believe it to be, and précis (one page max.)</b>
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### Week 11

T 4/15 Emily Dickinson, *The Poems of Emily Dickinson: Reading Edition*, ed. Franklin

- Introduction, pp. 1-11 (numbers below refer to poem numbers, not pages)
- 260. "I'm nobody! Who are you?"
- 320. "There's a certain slant of light"
- 353. "I'm ceded—I've stopped being their's"
- 409. "The soul selects her own society"
- 446. "This was a poet—it is that"
- 477. "He fumbles at your soul"
- 479. "Because I could not stop for death"
- 591. "I heard a fly buzz when I died"
- 764. "My life had stood – a loaded gun"
- 1050. "I am afraid to own a body—"
- 1353. "To pile like thunder to it's close"
- 1525. "The road to paradise is plain"
- 1695. "I see thee clearer for the grave"
- also select ten other poems of your own choosing.

**Group 5: Close Reading Essay. Timed. Must be posted 24 hours before class.**

**Group 2: Comparison Essay. Timed. Must be posted 24 hours before class.**

Week 11	<p>Critical History Essay: the introduction to your annotated bibliography. If you have not done so already, begin work on your introductory essay describing and analyzing what you have discovered and providing a brief account of the main trends in scholarship. In this essay, you should finally offer some account of what you think drives the development (or lack thereof) that you see in this history. The essay should be ten to fifteen pages long, double-spaced.</p> <p><b>Please email me by Friday at noon who the members of your peer-review group will be for the essays.</b> Peer-review groups should consist of 3-4 people, each of whom is working on different authors.</p>
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R 4/17 Emily Dickinson Articles:

- Cristanne Miller, "Chapter Three: Reading the Poems," and "Chapter Four: Names and Verbs: Influences on the Poet's Language," *Emily Dickinson: A Poet's Grammar*, pp. 113-130 & 131-159. (PS 1541.Z5 M48 1987)

- Jennifer Leader, "Fitting In: Emily Dickinson Among Others." *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 15.1, (2006): 83-94.  
[http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/emily\\_dickinson\\_journal/v015/15.1leader.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/emily_dickinson_journal/v015/15.1leader.html) OR Read the "Emily Dickinson" section of *Whitman and Dickinson in American Literary Scholarship* for one year from 1998-2005. [http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/american\\_literary\\_scholarship/](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/american_literary_scholarship/) (Put in a link on your Common-place Book page to the section of the year you read)

## Week 12

T 4/22 Emily Dickinson

**Group 4 to choose secondary readings. Please indicate 1-3 poems that should be (re)read from the poet in order to appreciate the article better.**

R 4/24 Walt Whitman, *The Complete Poems*, ed. Murphy

- Introduction, xxvi-xlii
- "One's-Self I Sing," p. 37
- "Song of Myself," pp. 63-124
- "To the Garden the World," p. 125
- "I Sing the Body Electric," pp. 127-135
- "As Adam Early in the Morning," p. 145
- "Scented Herbage of my Breast," pp. 146-47
- "Whoever You are Holding Me Now in Hand," pp. 148-149
- "City of Orgies," p. 158
- "We Two Boys together Clinging," p. 162
- "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," p. 189
- "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," p. 275-80
- "The Dalliance of Eagles," p. 300
- "Beat! Beat! Drums!" p. 308
- "The Wound-Dresser," pp. 333-335

**Group 1: Close Reading Essay. Timed. Must be posted 24 hours before class.**

**Group 3: Comparison Essay. Timed. Must be posted 24 hours before class.**

Week 12	<b>Full drafts of your essays are due to me and to your peer-review groups by Friday at noon via the Peer Review Forum on the Moodle.</b> Peer-review groups should consist of 3-4 people each of whom is working on different authors.
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## Week 13

T 4/29 Walt Whitman Articles:

- F.O. Matthiessen, "Only a Language Experiment," *American Renaissance*, pp. 517-625 (<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/heh.00004.0001.001>) OR (PS201 .M4)
- Read the "Walt Whitman" section of *Whitman and Dickinson in American Literary Scholarship* for one year from 1998-2005. **Put in a link on your Common-place Book page to the section of the year you read**  
[http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/american\\_literary\\_scholarship/](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/american_literary_scholarship/)

R 5/1 Walt Whitman

**Group 5 to choose secondary readings. Please indicate 1-3 poems that should be (re)read from the poet in order to appreciate the article better.**

Week 13	Meet with Peer review groups to discuss your drafts. <b>Editing comments due to me and your group members by Friday at noon via Peer Review Forum on the Moodle.</b> Here are some things you might want to consider:
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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <i>Bibliographic entries</i>: are these all in correct MLA format?</li><li>2. <i>Précis</i>: are these succinct but pithy? Do they indicate why the article is important as well as what its major argument is? Are the four parts of the academic argument clear for each entry? Is there an honorable attempt at coverage in terms of decades and type of criticism, or is something essential missing? If so, what is it?</li><li>3. <i>Essay</i>: Is there a clear argument about how scholarship has changed over the decades?</li></ol>
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### Reading and Finals Week

Friday May 10 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Upload your final version of your paper and annotated bibliography by 5 pm.</b> (as a word doc) using the <b>Peer Review Forum</b> on the Moodle
Monday May 11 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Final version of your peer-groups essays should be posted on your Common-place Book (and emailed to Laura) by 5pm.</b> As a group, please write a three-page introduction to your collection of essays that discusses common trends in scholarship as well as ways that scholarship on each of the authors diverges.



## Assignments

### E-PORTFOLIO: Your Common-place Book

Although I am asking you to send me some of your work as word docs via email, all of your work for this semester will also be posted online on the “Common-place Book” portion of the class’s Moodle. You will be responsible for creating and maintaining your personal Common-place Book pages as well as a group webpage. During the first two weeks, we will learn how to use the technology you will need to complete the course assignments, and to create your homepage. If you have any questions after this session, though please feel to ask me or email [moodle@reed.edu](mailto:moodle@reed.edu) for help.

Five items need to be posted on your Common-place Book throughout the semester: (1) your précis (2) your close reading paper (3) your comparison essay, (4) links to the sections of *ALS* you read for each poet, and (5) your annotated bibliography and critical history essay. Your annotated bibliography assignment has seven parts that should be posted at the dates listed above on the syllabus: (a) a list by decade of all of the books and articles on your poet, (b) a shorter list by decade that indicates which articles/chapters you will annotate, (c) a one-page review of *ALS* by decade, (d) 25 annotations, (e) a critical history essay (10-15 pages), (f) editing comments on your peer-review group members’ drafts (1/2-1 page per paper), and (g) a three-page introduction to your peer-review group’s papers (part “g” may be co-authored, but the rest needs to be your own independent work).

Please note: assignments must be posted by the dates listed on the syllabus. You may, however, continue to update them throughout the semester.

### 1. PRÉCIS (1 page in Word)

Analyzing critical articles is one of the basic skills required of English majors at Reed and is one of the skills tested on the Jr. Qual. For this class, your précis must include both a short paragraph summarizing the argument of the article and a long paragraph discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the argument. Here are some more suggestions to get you started:

### A. Summarizing

Before writing your summary of the article, you should decide what the author's main claims are, prioritize and summarize them, and mention some of the most important evidence the author offers to prove his or her main claims. Pay attention to topic sentences and repetition, and try to determine when the author is introducing a new argument, and when she is simply providing examples or explaining the evidence she has offered. Your summary should be as "objective" as possible. That is, you should try your best to represent the argument as you think the author would and reserve your commentary for the critique section of the paper.

One of the most common mistakes I find in student Précis is that a student has read the opening of the essay carefully and then skimmed the rest of it. While in some disciplines, you might be lucky enough to find a summary of the argument (an abstract) at the beginning of the article, opening abstracts are unusual (unfortunately) in Literary Criticism articles. Often, the summary of the argument is at the end of the article. A second trick to remember is that authors often justify their article's existence at the opening by explaining how it fits into a critical debate. You should take note of what the author thinks is the larger significance of his or her work.

As Joseph Williams pointed out in his visit to Reed, most academic arguments have at least these four basic components:

- (1) **Common Ground:** What is the context that the author intends to qualify or question. This may be either a commonly held belief (some people...) or an argument made by a specific critic.
- (2) **But...:** Introduces a question about something key that is not known, fully understood, or contradicts this common ground.
- (3) **So What?** States the significance of the question raised.
- (4) **Thesis:** the answer to problem/question. States the author's main claim.

You should make sure that you have looked for these aspects of the argument. If they are in your article identify them.

### B. Writing a Critique

This is your chance to express your opinion about what you have read and to show off your analytical abilities. In your response you might consider some of the following. Remember to use specifics to back your claims:

- What did you find particularly interesting or useful about the critique?
- Is this a valid/good/bad way to approach the readings for the day?
- How might the scholar's arguments help us in our previous discussions?
- How does this piece relate to others we have read?
- Is the author's argument logically sound?
- Did the author use evidence persuasively to support this argument?
- Who do you think was the original audience for this article? How do you know? If you (or students like you) are not the intended audience are there any specialized terms that you did not know that you will need to define for your readers?
- Is there any information or evidence that you wish had been included in the article that wasn't there?

One of the most common mistakes I find in students' analyses of arguments is that people assume if they didn't understand the argument the first time they read it, it is either poorly written or uninteresting. Since articles are mostly written for specialists in the field, you can assume that they will be difficult and will require at least a second reading. It is also highly likely that they will contain specialized language that is unfamiliar to you, but is part of the common knowledge of specialists. You will want to keep a dictionary or a dictionary of literary terms on hand to help you as you read the work (e.g. *The Oxford Companion to American Literature* at [www.oxfordreference.com](http://www.oxfordreference.com)).

Similarly, the author probably assumes that almost all of her readers will have a Ph.D. in English or American literature and hence she will most likely make reference to works you have not read. You may find it useful to look up allusions as you are reading if you feel that the argument requires it (again the *Oxford Companion* is a good resource).

**Sample Précis: "The Politics of Embodied Poetics: A Critical Synopsis of Michael Bibby's 'The Territory Colonizes': Sitting the Body in Women's Liberation Poetry.'"**

In the third chapter of his *Hearts and Minds: Bodies, Poetry, and Resistance in the Vietnam Era*, Michael Bibby examines the centrality of the female body in the language and imagery of Vietnam-era feminist poetry and attempts to contextualize this poetics of corporeality in relationship to other contemporary cultural discourses of protest and liberation. The chapter focuses on the larger historical and discursive context of Vietnam-era feminism, and here Bibby argues that this articulation of feminism was chronologically and conceptually subsequent to the discourses of black nationalism and Third World liberation. Specifically, Bibby states that the essentialist nationalism of these movements was the inspiration for an analogous development in Women's Liberation, the difference being that biological gender rather than skin color (in the case of black nationalism) came to be seen as both the fundamental subject of historical and political struggle and the mark that, across all other categories, unified those engaged in \*the\* struggle against oppression. The Women's Liberationist poets of the Vietnam era, argues Bibby, re-appropriated the power to see inside themselves, to diagnose, to represent their own bodies, and they did so precisely by emphasizing the female body in their poetry.

Though sometimes repetitive, Bibby's chapter is written with exemplary lucidity, a strength one does not generally associate with works that cite Sartre and Gramsci within the first few pages. Bibby uses the technical terminology current in the larger academic conversation about the politics of discourse, but he doesn't confine himself to those terms, nor does he attempt, in contrast to many other participants in this conversation, to make a virtue out of obscurity. His efforts to illuminate the complex relationships between a variety of liberationist discourses are generally successful, and the excerpts of poems, essays and manifestos that he provides in the text are consistently instructive and well chosen. The major weakness of his chapter, at least for our purposes, is that he more concerned with the \*politics\* of corporeality than with the \*poetics\* of corporeality in Women's Liberationist poetry. Thus, while he provides ample political context for this emphasis on the female body in this poetry, he does not engage at all with questions of a literary-historical nature. As poets identifying the struggle against patriarchy as their fundamental praxis, one would think that these writers would be responding to patriarchy not simply in terms of the larger society, but also in the poetic tradition itself. Bibby does not, though, give any space to discussing how the poetics of the gendered body in Vietnam-era feminist poetry stands in relation to the image of the female body in the broader poetic tradition.

**Exemplary Summary Paragraph: "There's no place like a Tomb: The Paradox of Freedom in Structure." (Please note that this does not include the second paragraph on analysis that your paper will need!!)**

Some critics claim that Emily Dickinson's lyric style is extremely formal and closed, while others see her work as drastically open. In "Emily Dickinson's Fairer Houses," Lesley Wheeler explores this contradiction, positing the paradoxical nature of a "poetic of enclosure" (15) to enable the understanding of Dickinson's work as both in a sense "open" and "closed." According to Wheeler, Dickinson "uses the limited space of the lyric, which she often depicts as a kind of house, to mimic and subvert qualities of modesty and reserve typically associated with femininity" (22). She utilizes "the house" as a metaphor for lyric poetry, highlighting its nature as an "enclosure" and comparing it to societal beliefs regarding femininity/domesticity; she further compares the experience of being in "the house" to the suffocating "constriction" of a tomb. This motif of death, tombs, graves, etc., appears often in Dickinson's work, presented as a sort of welcome "escape from a culture" (15) that limits the acceptable activities of women. The idea of "enclosure" surmounts that of a simple house and becomes elevated to the status of life itself, as if gender, society, possessing a body at

all, become so restrictive that death becomes a welcome release, that "the narrowness of the tomb yields a paradoxical freedom"(15). And yet, according to Wheeler, Dickinson keeps to a narrow, perhaps suffocating form. In this way, Dickinson shows how "confinement may be positively transformed, as domestic enclosures yield to poetic escapes" (34).

## **2. CLOSE READING (2 hour timed essay. 1 hour preparation, 1 hour to write it. Must be typed.)**

**Prompt: Explicate one of the assigned poems and, paying close attention to figurative language, rhythm, rhyme, make an argument about the relations between form and content. This is a timed essay. Please take one hour to prepare your thoughts about the poem and one hour to write the essay. The essay must be typed.**

Being able to write a close reading (Explication) of a poem is another one of the skills that you are expected to master as an English student at Reed. In fact it is one of the three basic skills that you are asked to perform on the Junior Qualifying Exam (the other two are analysis of an argument [Précis], and analysis of narrative).

To "explicate" comes from a Latin word meaning to unfold. The purpose of an explication or close reading is to unfold the significance of a poem. Explication pays close attention to the parts of a poem in order to support a larger argument about its overall impact. For your paper you will want to choose one of the poems assigned for the day. You do not need to focus on all of the qualities of the poem, but you do need to discuss (or use as evidence) at least four different stylistic elements. These could include form, meter (or rhythm), figurative language, setting, diction, tone, speaker, or setting.

One of the greatest challenges of an explication is synthesis. Even as you divide the poem into its composite elements, you will want to discuss how those elements come together to form a whole. As writer Diane Hacker points out, division--like classification--should be made "according to some principle": she notes, "to divide a tree into roots, trunk, branches, and leaves makes sense; to list its components as branches, wood, water, and sap does not, for the categories overlap" (and seem random and disconnected). [Diane Hacker. *The Bedford Handbook for Writers*, 3rd. ed. Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1991: 91] Your essay should reveal how the parts of the poem, like the parts of a tree, relate and form a totality. Ideally, your paper should reveal some of the wonder and excitement that first inspired you to choose this poem.

## **3. COMPARISON ESSAY (2 hour timed essay. 1 hour preparation, 1 hour to write it. Must be typed.)**

**Prompt: Compare one of the assigned poems (or short passage from a poem) of the day to a short poem previously read in this class (or if you are comparing to Milton a short passage in *Paradise Lost* –less than 100 lines). You will want to limit your analysis in some way by paying attention to one or two specific formal elements or themes. Whatever you seek to compare, you should support your analysis with specific examples from the poems. Stronger essays will see that stylistic (formal) and thematic elements are interdependent and hence will in some way reference both. This is a timed essay. Please take one hour to prepare your thoughts about the poem and one hour to write the essay. The essay must be typed.**

## **3. ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY (25 entries) AND CRITICAL HISTORY ESSAY (10-15 pages double-spaced in Word)**

Please see the boxes within the syllabus for details on this assignment. Examples are posted on the Moodle. Need help finding articles? Jack Levine is at the reserve desk Thursdays 6-9pm.