Short Paper Assignment Prompts

When you create your MLA header, please list the prompt to which you are responding below the space allocated for the date, like so:

Your name

My name

English 213

Date

Prompt #1

Your original, unique title (not ‘Prompt #1)

Choose one prompt. They are divided into options that focus on a close reading of literary texts, those that focus on putting a literary text in conversation with a theoretical text studied in class (Fanon or Cesaire), those that focus on putting a literary text in conversation with a video or non-fictional prose text (Wainana’s essay, Cecil Rhodes’ statement).

Prompts for a Close Reading-focused paper. 1, 200 words.

The focus in this assignment is on close critical reading of literary texts. No outside research or contextual material is required. I want you to have the freedom to focus on parts of the texts that interest you.

Either: Choose and close read one scene (not an entire Act!) in Gurira’s *The Convert* which you think is particularly important to the development of the main dramatic action, the development of a particular topic, or the development of a larger metaphor or message. Develop an argument for why this particular scene is so valuable and what we gain by reading it the way you want us to read it. So, in other words, you’re going to make an argument for why it’s valuable and then a sub-argument for why that value is relevant.

OR

Choose and closely read two poems from the readings of weeks 1-3. Place these two works in comparative framework, and trace a particular topic (eg, violence; gender; colonization; nativism, etc), or literary dimension (eg, imagery; language; poetic form; view point) as it operates within and across the two texts. If you choose to trace a topic, you will still be expected to engage in some way with the literariness of the literary text.

Develop an argument for why this particular pairing of works is valuable, and a sub-argument for what we gain by reading it the way you want us to read it.

Prompts for Theoretical Connections-focused papers, 1,200 words.

The focus in this assignment is on drawing connections between a primary literary text and a theoretical text, especially insofar as we can see these two texts conversing on a specific theme, subject, or historical issue. Your goal here to put two texts in dynamic conversation such that you can make a point to the reader about the value of reading those two texts together. The question, to which your thesis will be a kind of answer, is: how does putting these two texts in conversation on a specific topic reveal something new or interesting about each? Or, alternately, what do we gain by reading the texts together that we might not otherwise gain by reading them separately?

One might say that all of the literary texts from weeks 1-5 articulate a critical account of colonialism, that reflects some form of anti-colonial consciousness. Choose one prescribed literary text from weeks 1-5, and one of the theoretical texts from weeks 1-5, and place these in dynamic conversation on the subject of anti-colonial consciousness.

OR

Choose one of these topics: the land; violence (physical or otherwise); anti-colonial resistance; religion and/or spirituality; traditional/pre-colonial identities and cultures; psychological alienation; community formations (eg, political, ethnic, racial); patriarchy; capitalism. Choose one prescribed literary text from weeks 1-5, and one of the theoretical texts from weeks 1-5, and place these in dynamic conversation on your chosen topic.

Prompts for Contextual Connections-focused papers, 1,200 words.

The focus in this assignment is on drawing connections between a primary literary text and a contextual text or film, especially insofar as we can see these two items conversing on a specific theme, subject, or historical issue. Your goal here to put two texts in dynamic conversation such that you can make a point to the reader about the value of reading those two texts together. The question, to which your thesis will be a kind of answer, is: how does putting these two texts in conversation on a specific topic reveal something new or interesting about each? Or, alternately, what do we gain by reading the texts together that we might not otherwise gain by reading/viewing them separately?

One might say that all of the literary texts from weeks 1-5 articulate a critical account of colonialism, that reflects some form of anti-colonial consciousness. Choose one prescribed literary text from weeks 1-5, and one of the contextual texts/videos from weeks 1-5, and place these in dynamic conversation on the subject of anti-colonial consciousness.

OR

Choose one of these topics: the land; violence (physical or otherwise); anti-colonial resistance; religion and/or spirituality; traditional/pre-colonial identities and cultures; psychological alienation; community formations (eg, political, ethnic, racial); patriarchy; capitalism. Choose one prescribed literary text from weeks 1-5, and one of the contextual texts/videos from weeks 1-5, and place these in dynamic conversation on your chosen topic.