Fall 2019, Composition 1121

Prof. Scanlan

Essay 3: Research Essay on Colson Whitehead’s *The Intuitionist*

This essay asks students to practice these writing skills: library research, close reading, quotation, analysis and synthesis, and writing an accurate works cited page.

Options:

1. Write an essay that examines the philosophies of Intuitionism and Empiricism as they relate to the two camps of elevator inspectors, especially to the idea that one might be better than the other; or, perhaps these philosophies work in tandem. In this option, students should research both ideas and provide accurate definitions from reliable sources. Students might consider tracking opposing characters (such as Fulton and Pompey or Pompey and Lila Mae) and ask how they may, or may not, adhere to these philosophies--and what results emerge from decisions to stick with one philosophy over another.

2. Write an essay that explores the symbolic, thematic, and metaphorical importance of the Black Box. Consider what the box is and why it is of such interest to the institutional and corporate powers in the novel. How does the black box connect to technology, to Lila Mae (or other central characters), and to the future of race relations in New York? Students might ask how the mystery of the black box connects to a hard-boiled or noir novel; why does the tough exterior of the city of characters and the details tell readers about the meaning of the black box?

3. Write an essay that researches and explores the novel’s emphasis on the history and development of the elevator and how this mode of transportation connects, by analogy, to race and race relations in the 1950s and 1960s. Students might also address the fact that Lila Mae is a woman, the only female elevator inspector. Students might also consider the idea of passing (see, James Fulton) and uplift. The conclusion might consider how these technologies and relations help readers come to a new understanding of our historical present.

Your essay will be graded in terms of **FOUR** major features:

1. First Page: A clear introduction, title, thesis, method, and a conclusion that is more than a summary (25 points)

2. Formal Writing: Concrete nouns, well-structured sentences, and clear paragraphs (25 points)

3. Close Reading of Texts: accurate exploration of articles and the novel; (25 points)

4. Quotations, In-Text Citations, Works Cited Page: at least 6 quotations; correct works cited page (25 points)

Research component: Students must include at least three library sources to support their argument and include a works cited. Students must use and quote from at least one peer-reviewed article. Students may use book reviews, encyclopedia articles, and author interviews. Quality matters, though. If students select unreliable or poorly written sources, it will affect the quality of the student essay.

Details: This essay must be at least 1000 words long—use the word count feature on your word processing program. It must be typed, double-spaced, and use Times New Roman 12-point font. Please use spell-check and grammar-check. Use our Standard Journal/Essay Format, which is modified MLA style (see the Purdue OWL on our OpenLab website for guidance).

**Due Dates:**

Dec 3: First Draft due in class. Two typed pages minimum. Peer review day.

Dec 10: Final Draft Due at the beginning of class. No late papers will be accepted. Early submission is accepted.