

Project 1: Oppression Journal // Wednesday, February 10, 2016

(This assignment is worth 15% of your semester grade)

This assignment has two major components: (1) an Oppression Journal, which will be a fictional piece you create, written in the first person POV, from the perspective of someone who is oppressed or disenfranchised in ways comparable to Offred's situation in Atwood's novel; and (2) an Explication of one of your classmates' Oppression Journal, which will be an analytical response in which you deconstruct their use of multiple elements of fiction and draw comparisons between their choices and Atwood's. Your work on this project should help you to develop an understanding of Margaret Atwood's decision to use a first person narrator for *The Handmaid's Tale*, specifically as it relates to the presentation of the theme of oppression.

Please read this entire handout, as it outlines all of your responsibilities. You are responsible for all of the scaffolded assignments built into this project (**in bold** below), even if you are absent on the days they are due.

Purpose: The purpose of this assignment is to challenge you to understand Atwood's artistic decisions through imitation and application. This assignment asks you to apply Atwood's narrative point of view (first-person) to an original creative text, and then to evaluate another student's (or other students') use of that point of view. To successfully complete this assignment, you will have to read *The Handmaid's Tale* carefully enough to understand the subtleties of Atwood's political message, and be able to communicate that understanding both in your emulation of it and in your analysis of it in comparison to a second text.

Basic Information (details about each part of the project are available below the due date calendar):

2/10: Paper assigned today.

Part I: Create a journal (diary) that has been written in the first-person by someone who is oppressed by actual social, political, or economic conditions anywhere in the world today. In class, we will brainstorm possible topics; you may find it useful to read news sources for context about the conditions or societies about which you'll be writing. If you consult any text, you must include it in a Bibliography at the end of your journal.

2/17: **Idea page** due in class (5 points) (will be accepted through 3/30). Before today's class, you need to determine which topic you want to focus on. Choose a topic you can discuss comfortably. If you need to educate yourself about the topic, read recent newspaper articles from the *New York Times* or *Washington Post*. Do not use web pages like wikis or personal blogs. By this date, you should have read at least half of *The Handmaid's Tale*. Bring to class today one "idea page." This can be whatever you need it to be: sketch out (with words and phrases) who your character is. Where does he or she live? What does a typical day look like? With whom would your narrator typically interact? What are the structures of power that inform each day?

2/24: Complete **rough draft of Oppression Journal** due the start of class (10 points). To receive full credit for a rough draft, you must submit a printed and stapled draft that is at least 900 words long and which represents a good faith effort to complete the assignment. Since this part of the project is creative in nature, it can take whatever form you think is best suited for your own goals as a writer. In class, you'll work with at least one other student to identify areas of your draft that are working well and areas that may be in need of revision. Be prepared to explain how your text imitates (or challenges) Atwood's. You'll complete a **peer review handout** in class (5 points), which you'll need to submit to Prof. Devers by 3/30. Class starts at 6:00; arriving after 6:10 because of issues related to computer failure, international shortages of printer ink, or locust plague will mean that you cannot submit your draft or participate in peer review. Plan ahead. Print your draft on 2/23; wake up 15 minutes earlier.

3/2: **Oppression journal posted to our class blog** before 11:59 PM tonight (25 points). Use the tag Project 1 (and any other relevant tags) to help identify your work. Journals must be at least 900 words long. The title of your post should be the title of the text you've created, followed by your name: "The Golden Ticket" by

Derek Jeter. DO NOT upload as files or documents; post them to the blog by Adding a Post. Copy the text into the body of the post; when you're done, click "Publish." Use the tag Project 1 (and any other relevant tags) to help identify your work. Any text posted on 3/3 or later will not be graded. These texts will be graded on creativity (10 points), demonstrated understanding of the chosen topic (10 points), and appropriate use of first-person point of view (5 points).

Part II: Write an explication of one of your classmates' original texts. Your explication should (a) use close-reading techniques to demonstrate significant uses of at least three elements of fiction in another student's Oppression Journal, and (b) compare the student's use of first-person point of view with Atwood's use of it in The Handmaid's Tale.

3/9: **Annotation** due at the start of class (10 points). To complete the annotation, you will need to:

1. Read the entire piece (you may need to read several before you find one you want to work with).
2. Select a passage that you find particularly interesting and/or significant. The quotation you select must be at least six lines long. You'll eventually have to write about at least three elements of fiction within this quotation, so keep that in mind while you're selecting quotations.
3. Copy that quotation into a new Microsoft Word document. Select a line spacing that is at least a multiple of 3.
4. Annotate (which means to mark up or provide notation upon) the passage. This means (yes, I'm serious) defining or providing a synonym for every word in the quotation. Every one. Even "a." Even "I." All of them. This page might become messy; that's OK. Feel free to color code or draw connecting lines among relevant words and phrases as they emerge. See the samples below (starting on page 13). The first is from <https://englishisgreaterthanmaths.wordpress.com/category/int-2/>; the second is from <http://trullenglish.weebly.com/annotating-text.html>. You can find more by doing a Google image search for "annotation."

3/16: Complete **draft of Explication** due at the start of class (10 points). To receive full credit for a rough draft, you must submit a printed and stapled draft that is at least 600 words long and which represents a good faith effort to complete the assignment. An explication is a prose piece that is developed from the annotation you completed already. Your explication will explain the passage you've analyzed, focusing only on the elements of fiction that are found within that section. You may refer to significant themes that appear in the Oppression Journal as a whole, but you should work hard to avoid broad generalizations that try to analyze the entire journal in a single sentence. Think of your explication as a written-out explanation of the type of analysis you've been completing in your quizzes. While you can organize your ideas in whatever manner you think works best for your goals as a writer, one model to consider is as follows:

Epigraph: The quotation you analyzed in your annotation.

Paragraph 1: Introduce the Journal by providing a brief (3-4 sentence) summary of the whole journal.

Paragraph 2: Analysis of the use of first person point of view in the quoted passage, quoting specific words or phrase from the passage itself.

Paragraph 3: Analysis of a second element of fiction (your choice). Again, to support your analysis, quote specific words or phrases from the analyzed quotation.

Paragraph 4: Analysis of a third element of fiction (your choice). Again, to support your analysis, quote specific words or phrases from the analyzed quotation.

Paragraph 5: conclude with comparative analysis that evaluates the effect of one of the elements you've analyzed above in relation to Atwood. Treat your classmates' texts with the same respect you'd want them to give you. Write objectively and analytically. This assignment isn't asking you to compare a student writer with a professional one; instead, you're being asked to evaluate discreet and specific artistic decisions in light of their effects on a reader.

In class, you'll work with at least one other student to identify areas of your draft that are working well and areas that may be in need of revision. You'll complete a peer review handout in class (5 points), which you'll need to submit in class by 3/30. Class starts at 6:00; arriving after 6:10 because of issues related to printing,

transportation, or alien invasions will mean that you cannot submit your draft or participate in peer review. Plan ahead. Print your draft on 3/15; take an earlier train.

3/23: **Explication** posted to Open Lab as a comment by midnight tonight. Explications should be at least 600 words long (30 points). Please refer to the paper rubric in your syllabus for information about how this explication will be evaluated. Post your explication AS A COMMENT on the original post containing the text you analyzed. **DO NOT CREATE A NEW POST; DO NOT ADD NEW MEDIA, FILES, OR DOCUMENTS.** Click “Add Comment” and paste your paper into the comment field; then click publish. Your comment may not appear right away, especially if you haven’t posted to Open Lab yet this semester. If your screen name isn’t your actual name, you must sign your comment so that I and the class know who’s writing. If I can’t identify you, you won’t get credit for this part of the project. Follow MLA format for citations; however, you should only be quoting, paraphrasing, summarizing, or citing two texts: Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* and the student-produced piece. Analysis papers will be graded using the formal paper rubric distributed on the first day of class. Any comments posted on 3/24 or later will not be graded.

3/30: **Peer review work** submitted in class.

Reminder about Academic Integrity: Responsible scholarship requires you to submit work that is entirely your own, and that properly cites and acknowledges any source material. Acts of plagiarism will result in a zero (0) for this assignment, and may result in further penalty. This assignment does not call for any research or “outside sources.” Please ask if you have any questions.

Advice: Start now, and be creative. Take risks. Work on the project a little bit every day, even if that work is just reading Atwood’s novel. For Part I, select a setting that allows you to generate sympathy for and interest /in your narrator. Which of Atwood’s decisions about Offred will you imitate? Which will you ignore in favor of something different? How would Atwood’s text have been different had it been written entirely in third person?

Remember to seek out any assistance you need: use the resources on campus or visit my office hours if you have questions about your progress or goals for this assignment. I’m happy to read drafts if you give them to me in advance. I’m always happy to discuss your progress on any assignment, at any stage.

You cannot successfully complete this assignment by reading summaries of *The Handmaid’s Tale* online. This assignment isn’t about memorizing content; it’s about understanding art. This is work you have to do yourself.

NY borough

- most populous borough of NY
- poorer area

Brooklyn Cop by Norman MacCaig

U.S. slang for police man

simile — Built like a gorilla but less timid, suggests he is brave, but brutal

tells us he is big and strong — thick-fleshed, steak-coloured, with two

stereotypical image of a NY cop. — hieroglyphs in his face that mean — he is seeking out violence. Hieroglyphs = ancient carvings, suggest face like stone, hard. could also suggest hard to read.

the — trouble, he walks the sidewalk and the thin tissue over violence. This morning, when he said, "See you, babe" to his wife, he hoped it, he truly hoped it. — tender associations

metaphor — He is a gorilla — the divide between civilization + violence is only ever paper thin.

changes from the first line — reinforces the image + emphasizes the savage, primitive nature of the cop. — to whom "Hiya, honey" is no cliché. — something that has been overused so much that it loses its effect.

Should the tissue tear, should he plunge through into violence, what clubbings, what gunshots between Phoebe's Whamburger and Louie's Place. — suggest falling quickly, uncontrollably, into violence

— sound like they could be mafia hangouts

Who would be him, gorilla with a nightstick, — (truncheon) — stereotypical police would carry a gun, as you can keep your distance. The nightstick suggests he may enjoy being able to use it against criminals, enjoys the violence.

whose home is a place he might, this time, never get back to?

And who would be who have to be his victims? — ambiguous rhetorical question.

Stanza One — build up an almost cartoon-like image of a stereotypical cop. Brutish, strong, stony faced, etc. However, it hints at a more tender side when he is at home.

Stanza Two — Shows how quickly the cop could be thrust from safety into chaos, suggest that violence is always present.

Stanza Three — Tone changes and moves from descriptive → reflective.

Themes

Abortion is wrong
 - destroys potential (another Jesus?) (a gift from God)
 - they were rich - had no reason apart from it was inconvenient

Narrator - the unborn child

TITLE
 Isaiah 9.6 "For unto us a child is born,"

'UNTO US ...'

unfinished quotation
 Made love or had sex?

STRUCTURE - continuous monologue of 35 lines

Somewhere at sometime
 They committed themselves to me

Repetition for emphasis

And so, I was!
 Small, but I WAS!

Alliteration Joy at being conceived

Tiny in shape
 Lusting to live

safety Security (Metaphor)

I hung in my pulsing cave.

feels love already

Soon they knew of me
 My mother - my father

I had no say in my being
I lived on trust

A feeling, an earnest desire, a want

And love
 Tho' I couldn't think
 Each part of me was saying
 A silent, "Wait for me
 I will bring you love!"

no rights to live, had to hope parents wanted him

unable to fight back

I was taken
Blind, naked defenceless

Turning Point

Bitter at being aborted (betrayed)

By the hand of one
 Whose good name
 Was graven on a brass plate
 In Wimpole Street,
 And dropped on the sterile floor

no legal redress. A 'thing' not a 'human'

Of a foot operated plastic waste bucket.
 There was no Queens Counsel
 To take my brief.

Good reputation but does evil things

The cot I might have warmed
 Stood in Harrods shop window.

When my passing was told
My father smiled

No grief filled my empty space
My death was celebrated

It removed an inconvenience

She had no more right to call herself a woman than a drag queen.

With two tickets to see Danny La Rue
Who was pretending to be a woman
Like my mother was.

PURPOSE - to make reader sympathise with narrator / foetus and therefore disagree with abortion

ORGANISATION - 35 line continuous monologue

EMOTIVE TONE - 1-16 happy 17-35 angry and bitter

TECHNIQUES - metaphor repetition alliteration

INDIVIDUAL WORDS - I was, I WAS! Lived on trust 'Had no say' 'dropped'

CONTRAST - Joy of new life which is destroyed. Contrast is in narrator's feelings before/after turning point.