WRIT 100: Pretty Hurts
Paper III Assignment
Thus far, the papers for this course have focused on close analysis of primary textual sources. Close reading and analysis is the foundation of all good writing, but there are plenty of questions that can’t be answered solely with evidence drawn from a single text. For Paper III, you will identify a poem in *Domestic Work* that requires some contextual information drawn from outside the text in order to be fully understood. You will combine close reading of the poem itself with research into the poem’s context and analysis of the secondary sources your research turns up. Your goal is to show your reader how the addition of specific contextual information (historical, biographical or even theoretical) enhances, complicates, changes or disrupts our understanding of the poem.

Writing your paper in 7 easy steps

1. Choose a poem
Select a poem from *Domestic Work* that leaves you with a question that can’t be answered through close reading alone. Which poems left you feeling as if your reading was incomplete because you lacked some external knowledge that was referenced in the text? Were there any poems that seemed to require an understanding of a particular historical moment, a specific term, or a historical person or people? Is there a poem that makes more sense when you apply some of the theoretical or critical concepts we’ve been discussing in class to your analysis? Write your question about the poem down, being as specific as possible.

2. Close read your poem
Before you get too deep into the context, take a moment and do a thorough close reading of the poem. Make sure you’ve noticed as many details as you can, and that you have a good sense of how the poem works on the level of language, structure and form. If you were going to write a close reading about this poem, as you did for *The Bluest Eye*, what would your thesis be? Write that thesis down.

3. Find the answer to your question
Use the resources available to you to find an answer (or several answers) to the question you posed in step 1. Consult the librarians at Leyburn, ask me for assistance, and use the databases available on the library website. You can also consult Google and Wikipedia, but you should use those as resources to lead you to reputable and appropriate sources, not as an ends to themselves. Find at least one reputable source (that means that it should appear in a scholarly book or article) that answers your question.

4. Integrate your answer & your close reading
Look back at your close reading from step 2. How does your new knowledge enhance, change, challenge or even contradict your close reading? What do you now understand about the poem that you didn’t before you began your research? Now that you have both read the poem closely and researched its context, what can you show your reader about the poem that she wouldn’t have noticed on her own?

5. Decide on a structure
At this point, you’ll want to think carefully about how best to structure your paper. What are the main claims that you want to make about this poem and its context? Is there an order that will make more sense to your reader? What information does your reader need first, and what claims need to be saved for last? Aim to let the needs of your particular argument guide the organization of your paper.

6. Write your paper
Use your notes and your conclusions about the best structure for your argument to guide you as you get your ideas all out onto the page.

7. Look back at the beginning and end
You probably had a thesis in mind when you started writing, but once you’ve drafted your paper, take some time and re-visit that thesis. Is your initial thesis actually what you ended up writing about? Often, your argument changes—sometimes substantially—as you work through your analysis. If that’s the case, re-write your thesis to reflect your new argument. Use your conclusion to remind your reader why your argument is important: that is, how does your thesis help your reader better understand the poem?
Who your paper should address

Your audience for this paper should be a hypothetical classmate who has attended class and done the reading, but has not been overly studious or attentive. This classmate will definitely notice if you make an obvious claim, but there is also room to teach her something new about the readings and concepts from class. Your classmate does not need full, detailed summaries of the readings, because she has already read them, but she does need concise reminders to help locate herself in the text and to remind her of what the important points were.

What your paper should do

- **Integrate** specific contextual information with your close reading of a single poem from *Domestic Work*
- **Make an argument** that shows how specific contextual information enhances, changes, challenges or complicates your close reading of the poem
- Use **specific textual details** to support each claim in the paper, and follow each piece of evidence with **analysis** explaining how those textual details prove your claim
- Have a brief **introduction** that introduces the poem and contextual information you’ll discuss, what you’ll be arguing, and why that argument is important
- Have a brief **conclusion** that reminds your reader what your argument and most important points were, and how and why that argument is important
- Be **1500-2000 words** long
- Be formatted according to **MLA style**, with special attention to proper citation and attribution

After your paper is written

**Peer review and submission instructions**

We will conduct peer reviews of your papers in class on **Tuesday, March 15**. You should bring a copy of your paper with you to class; you should also upload your paper to the “Paper III peer review” folder on Sakai.

After our in-class peer review session, you should revise your paper according to your classmates’ feedback and upload it to the “Paper III” folder on Sakai by **midnight on Friday, March 18**.

**Grading**

Paper III is worth 16 points. Two of those points are allocated to peer review, one for submitting a completed draft by the appointed time, and another for participating in the in-class session and submitting feedback. The final paper will be graded on the 14-point scale; for more details on that scale, see the “Grading Scale” handout.

**Revisions**

While you may continue to revise your paper throughout the semester, your initial revision must be submitted to me by **Thursday, March 31** in order to be eligible for further revision. This policy is both to help you keep up with the many writing dates, and to help me comment on and return papers to you in a timely fashion.