Your final paper is an opportunity to bring together the skills and ideas that you've been developing over the course of the semester. This project should be something that excites and interests you: it should be an occasion to follow up on the most engaging aspects of the course material and to connect those elements to your own enthusiasms. You have several options available to you. Pick the one that will allow you to best explore your interests.

Assignment description

Over the course of the semester, we’ve worked on a number of skills necessary to writing an analytic paper. In this final paper, you will bring all of those skills together to make an argument about one or two of the texts we’ve read this semester. This is your opportunity to extend your argument beyond a single scene and make claims about your broader understanding of the text. You have several options for the form your paper might take, and the audience you will address. No matter which option you choose, your paper should still have a clearly defined, focused scope, and should draw evidence from specific places in the text.

Research and secondary sources

You may want to draw on critical or historical sources to support your argument. You should make use of the library resources, as well as your professor and classmates, as you conduct any research for your paper. The way you use secondary evidence will depend on the argument you want to make, but you should look to your outside sources to help explain relevant historical context or to back up claims you want to make about the way specific events relate to your reading. You might also refer to other scholars’ work on the text you are analyzing in order to support, complicate, refute, or expand the arguments those scholars have made. However, the bulk of this paper should be focused on your argument, and should draw evidence from the primary texts. Your outside sources should play a supporting role; they should not steal the show.

Important dates and grading

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper proposal</td>
<td>Wednesday, Nov. 11</td>
<td>1 point (along with paper conference)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper conferences</td>
<td>Wednesday, Nov. 11</td>
<td>1 point (to receive full credit, you must submit a paper proposal and attend your conference)</td>
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<td>Friday, Nov. 13</td>
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<td>Monday, Nov. 16</td>
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<td>Paper workshop</td>
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<td>Paper draft</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final paper</td>
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Paper options

A) Traditional analytic paper

Description
Make an argument about one or more of the texts from the class, aimed at an academic audience (in this case, your classmates and professor). Your paper should combine close readings, summary, and synthesis in order to show your reader something interesting that emerges when you consider two or three texts in relation to each other, or consider a single text in relation to an expanded context.

Some approaches you might consider in this paper include:
- Analyze one text in terms of another. Pick two texts that you think speak to similar issues. How does one help explain, clarify, or complicate the other? What’s gained by reading these two texts together?
- Explain a text in terms of its historical context. Think about the importance of understanding a particular text within its historical moment. What does looking closely at the historical context add to your understanding of the text?
- Conduct an expanded formal reading of a text or texts. Here, you might apply an argument you developed in one of your close readings to a larger piece of the text, or to two texts that exhibit similar formal qualities.
- Identify an important pattern in the text. What is the pattern and how does it work? How does it help you better understand the text?

Your paper should:
- Have a clear, focused thesis that identifies an argument that can be addressed in the scope of the paper. Your thesis should be contestable; that is, it should present an argument that your reader might reasonably disagree with and therefore needs proving. It should not be a summary either of the text or your secondary sources.
- Support your thesis with details drawn from your texts, and follow each piece of evidence with analysis that shows how your evidence proves your claim.
- Address no more than three literary texts (poems and short stories) and/or six songs or videos. This paper is not a place to talk about everything we’ve read over the course of the semester. Your thesis should identify the text or texts that your paper will analyze.
- Be 1750-2500 words long, and formatted according to MLA standards.

B) Cultural criticism for a non-academic audience

Description
Make an argument about one or more of the texts from the class, aimed at a specific audience or community of readers (readers of a specific blog, magazine, newspaper, etc.). Your paper should combine close readings, summary, and synthesis in order to show your reader something interesting about the text or texts. It should also make an argument for why your argument is relevant to this particular community of readers.

The same approaches from option A apply to option B, though your explanation for why your argument is significant will differ according to your audience. You should also write a short reflective essay on why you chose the specific publication venue for your essay, what expectations and interests your audience is likely to have, and how you addressed those expectations and interests in your essay.
Your paper should:

- Have a **clear, focused thesis** that identifies an argument that can be addressed in the scope of the paper. Your thesis should be **contestable**; that is, it should present an argument that your reader might reasonably disagree with and therefore needs proving. It should not be a summary either of the text or your secondary sources.
- **Connect** your thesis to your audience’s interests.
- **Support** your thesis with details drawn from the texts, and follow each piece of evidence with **analysis** that shows how your evidence proves your claim.
- Address **no more than three literary texts** (poems and short stories) and/or **six songs or videos**. This paper is not a place to talk about everything we’ve read over the course of the semester. Your thesis should **identify** the text or texts that your paper will analyze.
- In a separate section, **analyze your paper**. Tell your reader why you chose your particular audience, and how you framed your argument with that audience in mind.
- Be **1750-2500 words** long in total, and formatted according to MLA standards. Your main argument should be **1500-2000 words** long, and your reflective essay should be **250-500 words** long.

C) Curated artifact collection

**Description**

Create a collection of 8-10 artifacts about a specific place and write an essay about those artifacts. Your artifacts can be textual (stories, poems, blog posts, articles, books, etc.), visual (images or videos), aural (songs or other recordings), or even physical (buildings, monuments, objects, etc.). They should all work together to show something about regional identity and interests.

**Your collection should have two parts:**
- A blog post that describes each artifact and includes images or recordings of each artifact, along with links to any artifacts that are posted somewhere online.
- An analytic essay that makes an argument about how the collection addresses regional identity and what it shows about that identity.

**Your project should:**

- Include a blog post that **describes and depicts** your artifact collection through images, recordings and, when appropriate, web links.
- Include an **analysis** of your collection. Here, you will **make an argument** about how the artifacts in your collection work together to address some aspect of regional identity. You will need to **define** the specific region that the artifact represents and connect the details of each artifact to your overall argument. Your audience will not necessarily be familiar with the region you discuss, so you may need to do some research to allow you to provide any information your reader needs to know. If you do cite secondary sources, be sure to show how this information helps your reader better understand your artifacts and the argument you are making about them.
- Have a **clear, focused thesis** that articulates the specific ways your collection addresses a particular regional identity, and show why that approach to region is significant or useful.
- **Support** that thesis with details drawn from your artifacts, and follow each piece of evidence with **analysis** that shows how your evidence proves your claim.
- Be **1750-2500 words** long in total, and formatted according to MLA standards. Your artifact description should collectively be **250-500 words** long, and your main argument should be **1500-2000 words** long.