

## COURSE JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT

World Literature 271 is a 'W' course because one of its goals is to help you improve your writing. Regardless of what writing instruction I can give you, the best way to improve your writing is to write and write often. Simply writing lots of words, sentences, and paragraphs can lead to surprising improvement in your writing--the more words, the better. The magic is that the words you write don't have to be read by anyone else to help your writing skills improve.

To understand how this works, compare writing a great number of words to practicing the piano between piano lessons. The piano teacher does not have to listen to each practice session in order for the student to improve; in the same way, someone else (an instructor) does not have to read the words written for the writer to improve. **But in each case the student will improve in proportion to the practice time that he or she invests.**

**Therefore, dedicating yourself to this assignment can do more to improve your writing than anything I or any book can do.**

### THE COURSE JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT

**The goal of a Course Journal entry is to consider the literary work in question and write as many sentences and paragraphs as possible within the time limit. Your journal response might include your general reaction to the literary work, questions you have about it, your reaction to class discussions, or reflections on your earlier thinking after having the benefit of class discussion and additional time to reflect on the piece of literature.**

Writing a journal entry requires a special time set aside to write original sentences and paragraphs about the readings we'll be covering. Plan on about **fifteen to twenty minutes per journal entry**, with about two to three entries per week.

To make a journal entry, first read the selection in question and then write an honest reaction to it. What did or didn't you understand? What did you agree or disagree with? What questions would you ask the author, given the opportunity? What inferences can you draw about the culture in which the selection was written? Did you enjoy the selection? Why or why not? Go deeper than deciding whether a selection appealed to you or not. What's important is WHY you found it appealing or unappealing. Responding to this second-level question can refine your thinking, your knowledge of yourself, and your values.

One key to being successful is to let the words flow quickly. Disregard spelling and punctuation; just be sure you can make out what you have written at a later time because I may ask you to share a general sense of a journal entry or you may want to return to an entry to revise it.

Also please keep in mind that since I will not read in detail any of your entries, you can be absolutely honest with yourself. No one but you will read the content of your journal entries without your permission. It's best to view your journal entries as conversations with yourself, the author, and the selection.

## SPECIFICS

You need not worry about correcting spelling/readability/sentencing errors nor be concerned that someone else will read what you have written. Just be sure you can make out what you've written.

- A minimum of fifteen minutes minimum per journal assignment. (Please see the tentative list of journal assignments below).
- Please be sure to accurately number and date each journal entry.
- Keep all pages together in a notebook or on a USB thumb drive—I will ask you to show me your journal in progress at various times throughout the quarter.
- Please bring journal writing materials with you to each class. Occasionally, we'll write a journal entry together.
- As you write a journal entry, please remember the goal is to produce a large quantity of words within the time limit. Since I will not read the content of your entries, poor spelling and punctuation will not be a factor in your journal grade; only the number of words will.
- At first, expect to sit with pen in hand waiting for the ideas to come. If you are patient, in time your mind will begin to generate content that your pen can record. A fifteen to twenty minute writing session can yield from half a page to several pages of writing depending upon your mood and perseverance.
- **Note:** Your journal must demonstrate that you have read the readings, attended the discussions, and made an honest attempt to meet the requirements of this assignment. Journals that appear "fabricated" at the last minute will not be accepted.
- **No one but you will read the actual sentences you write—only the quantity you write will be checked.**

### Literature Journal Entries (Tentative)

- *The Epic of Gilgamesh*—2 journal entries
- The Hebrew Bible—2 journal entries
- *The Iliad*—2 journal entries
- *The Odyssey*—2 journal entries
- Literature of India—1 journal entry
- The Christian Bible—2 journal entries
- Life in the Middle Ages—1 journal entry
- *Beowulf*—1 journal entry
- Dante's the *Inferno*—3 journal entries
- The *Thousand and One Nights*—1 journal entry

- *Don Quixote*—2 journal entries
- *Hamlet*—3 journal entries
- *Paradise Lost*—1 journal entry
- Open Journal entries 2-4
- Total—23 designated \_\_\_ open

You can use the following questions as journal prompts:

What was your initial reaction to the selection?

What did or didn't you understand?

What did you agree or disagree with? Why?

What questions would you ask the author, given the opportunity?

What inferences can you draw about the culture in which the selection was written?

Did you enjoy the selection? Why or why not?

Where do you think the story will go next? Where would you take it if you were the author?

What theme does the selection suggest? In other words, what does the selection suggest about the nature of life and experience? Try to state this in a sentence.

Does the selection respond to any of our beginning questions?

*How does the world work?*

*Who or what is in charge of it?*

*What is the nature of that "Who"?*

*What is our relationship to that "Who"?*

*What does that mean for us as humans?*

In-depth responses can refine your thinking, your knowledge of yourself, and your values.