ENGLISH 212-__: INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN LITERATURE

COURSE OVERVIEW

We will read from a wide range of American literature using the most recent (9th), shorter, two-volume edition of The Norton Anthology of American Literature. Our approach will that of a chronological survey moving from the inception of narratives relating to the “New World” and the Americas to modern United States literature and culture. English 102 is a prerequisite. You must read and agree to all Course Policies as they appear below.

Objectives

- Read and discuss selections from major American writers.
- Trace the development and examine the conventions of American literature.
- Identify cultural traditions and tensions represented in the readings.
- Analyze perceptions of national identity and language.
- Define literary terms and concepts relevant to the study of American literature.
- Engage with these issues in group discussions and written responses.

Requirements

- 25% Writing Folder I (0-100 points)
- 25% Passage ID Mid-Term Exam (0-100 points)
- 25% Writing Folder II (0-100 points)
- 25% Passage ID Final Exam (0-100 points)

Grading Scale

- 90-100 = A
- 80-89 = B
- 70-79 = C
- 60-69 = D
- 0-59 = F

Exams

For both the mid-term and final exams, you will identify 20 thematic passages from the assigned readings by author’s last name only and by title of the reading. A list of authors and titles is not provided. Each passage ID will usually be two or three sentences, but sometimes only a poetic line or two or even just a phrase of literary significance that you should recognize. The time limit for each exam is one hour. The best way to do well on the passage ID exams is to read the assignments, pay attention in class and make notes, and then study in a way that you can eventually call to mind each author, what he or she has written, and are able to name two or three
features of each writing. Use the online student study guides to help you prepare. Written by former 212 students, they are a great resource that I have provided for you to do well on your exams.

Note: It is your choice whether or not to take the final exam. If you choose not to take the final, I will record the same grade that you made on the midterm. However, if you take the final and make a lower grade, I will throw that grade out and record your midterm grade. Also Note: there is a possible maximum 5-point curve to your final average in this course. I always want at least five people to make “A”s in the class. That means that if the highest final averages are 85, 86, 87, 88, and 89, then those people would make As, and the curve for the entire class would be five (5) points.

Writing Folders

You will write eight essay responses to the readings, four for your first folder and four for your second folder. These essays must be supported by direct quotations and specific examples from the assigned readings. Each response will be begun in class and shown to me at the end of the period allotted for them, the remainder assigned as homework. Response papers do not require the rigor of a formal academic essay, but your finished version should be thoughtful and written at the college level. For example, the use of the first-person “I” is perfectly appropriate. The overall purpose of the in-class weekly response is to raise questions, react to ideas or biases, and think about how the readings are related to the aesthetic, social, and philosophical questions that frame our contemporary lives. Your response paper each week does not need to be finished in class, but I should see that you have made a reasonable attempt to begin an essay. This might be an outline, a set of notes, an introduction, or a few paragraphs. You will will need to finish the response outside of class, and the finished response needs to be between three and four single-spaced handwritten pages, or between two and three double-spaced word-processed pages. I will initial each response at the end of the classes allotted for them. If you wrote using a laptop or tablet, show it to me and I will sign a blank sheet of paper that you provide stating that you worked on a digital copy that day. If you miss a class during which we work on responses, you must complete the work on your own time and file it in your folder, but I will not initial it and it will lose points unless you show me appropriate university documentation.

What follows is very important: For each response folder to be eligible for the full 100 (A+) points, all in-class responses must complete and initialed by me. The folder must include a final, word-processed 4-5 typed revision/expansion of ONE of your four responses of your choice that is or reflects or completes the following:
(1) well written at what I consider college level prose, that is
(2) formatted and documented according to current MLA specifications, that
(3) directly quotes several times (at least three) from the reading list assignments on the syllabus,
(4) that directly quotes at least one time from an outside, scholarly source that you obtain through Louisiana Tech’s Prescott library database and
(5) whose source title page, and page or pages from which you quote, you include in your folder. If not indicated on the source’s title page, you must
(6) also include a cover page or title page providing bibliographic evidence that you obtained the source through Tech’s library database (and not simply throught the Internet).
Response folders that do not contain this one 4-5 page word-processed essay are not eligible for a grade and will receive a grade of zero. Folders that plagiarize or closely pattern their essays after the sample student essays I have posted as learning models for you on my website will also receive a zero. Please, learn from them! I posted them for your benefit, but do not plagiarize from them. Folders will also lose 10 points or one letter grade for each unsigned in-class response, and will also lose points at my discretion for incomplete, irresponsible, or inaccurate work. On the other hand, complete all these items and do them well and you can expect a very good grade. If you do not receive a great grade on the folder, then you have not kept up with the weekly assignments, you have not carefully followed these directions, and/or you have not written an MLA essay at the college level.

READING SCHEDULE

- Course Introduction
- Review Course Policies

**Week One:**

- “The Iroquois Creation Story” 32-35
- Christopher Columbus: *from “Letter of Discovery”* 45-50
- John Smith: *from “A Description of New England”* 66-69
- William Bradford: *from “Of Plymouth Plantation”* 75-87
- John Winthrop: *“A Model of Christian Charity”* 93-104
- Anne Bradstreet: “Here Follows Some Verses upon the Burning of Our House” 125-127
- Mary Rowlandson: *from “A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of”* (read all included “Removes”) 132-151
- Edward Taylor: *“Huswifery”* 158
- Cotton Mather: *“The Wonders of the Invisible World”* 160-165
- Nathaniel Hawthorne: “The Minister’s Black Veil” 685-694
- Responsive Writing Day 1 or Film

**Week Two:**

- Jonathan Edwards: “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” 192-204
- Benjamin Franklin: *from The Autobiography* 221-235, 268-284
- Thomas Paine: “The Crisis” 346-351
- Thomas Jefferson: *from “The Declaration of Independence”* 354-360
- Olaudah Equiano: “The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavas Vassa, the African, Written by Himself” 372-405
- Philip Freneau: “On the Religion of Nature” 419-420
Week Three:

- William Cullen Bryant: “Thanatopsis” 538-539
- Ralph Waldo Emerson: “The American Scholar” 582-595
- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow: “A Psalm of Life” 708-709
- John Greenleaf Whittier: “Snow-Bound: A Winter Idyll” 714-730
- Walt Whitman: “Song of Myself” 1088-1110 (first 31 sections)
- Responsive Writing Day 3 or Film

Week Four:

- Nathaniel Hawthorne: “The Birth-Mark” 694-706
- Edgar Allan Poe: “The Fall of the House of Usher” 749-762
- Margaret Fuller: from “The Great Lawsuit” 806-814
- Harriet Jacobs: “Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl” 879-899
- Frederick Douglass: from Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself 1028-1069
- Herman Melville: “Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall-Street” 1157-1183
- Emily Dickinson: “Much Madness is divinest sense” 1264 (poem 620)
- Responsive Writing Day 4 or Film

Week Five:

- Writing Folder One Due, Midterm Exam
- Conferences, return graded work

Week Six:

- Mark Twain: “The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County”: 104-108
- W.D. Howells: “Editha”: 316-326
- Ambrose Bierce: “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge”: 327-333
- Henry James: “The Beast in the Jungle”: 399-429
- Sarah Orne Jewett: “A White Heron” 434-441
- Kate Chopin: “Desiree’s Baby”: 442-446
- Mary E. Wilkins Freeman: “A New England Nun”: 460-468
- Booker T. Washington: from Up from Slavery: 471-479
- Charlotte Perkins Gilman: “The Yellow Wallpaper”: 511-523
- Edith Wharton: “Roman Fever”: 540-549
- Responsive Writing Day 1 or Film

**Week Seven:**

- Theodore Dreiser: Sister Carrie: 597-603
- Stephen Crane: “The Open Boat”: 603-630
- Jack London: “To Build a Fire”: 641-652
- Paul Laurence Dunbar: “We Wear the Mask”: 636
- Responsive Writing Day 2 or Film

**Week Eight:**

- Robert Frost: “Birches” 744-745
- Ernest Hemingway: “Hills Likr White Elephants”: 1032-1035
- William Faulkner: “A Rose for Emily”: 1009-1015
- Richard Wright: “The Man Who Was Almost a Man”: 1059-1067
- Langston Hughes: “Theme for English B” 1043
- Eudora Welty: “Petrified Man”: 1096-1106
- Flannery O’Connor: “Good Country People”: 1367-1380
- Raymond Carver: “Cathedral”: 1531-1542
- Responsive Writing Day 3 or Film

**Week Nine:**

- Film: Long Day’s Journey into Night: 2033-2109
- Responsive Writing Day 4

**Week Ten:**

- Writing Folder Two Due, Final Exam
- Conferences, return graded work
RESPONSE ESSAY TOPICS

Folder One:

Week One:

1. What do you think of when you hear someone refer to the “American dream?” Define your understanding of this phrase. How do the readings for this week remind you of your definition? In what ways do the readings contradict this view?

2. Contrast Hawthorne’s fictional view of the Puritans to the portrayals you see in one or more of the readings by Bradstreet, Taylor, Bradford, and/or Winthrop. After reading actual Puritan writings and seeing some of their interests and concerns, explain to what extent Hawthorne’s depictions seem to be fair or unfair.

3. Contrast John Smith’s interest in the New World as a place of entrepreneurial possibility to John Winthrop’s interest in America as one of social cooperation and spiritual growth.

Week Two:

1. Answer the question that Crevecoeur poses: “What Is an American?” Find examples of the features that he believes distinguishes Americans from people in other countries.

2. Contrast the character of Rip Van Winkle to the type of American that Franklin says we should strive to be in the “Autobiography.”

3. Select two readings from this week to contrast in order to illustrate competing 18th-century American narratives, whether fictional or nonfictional in nature: narratives that reinforce the developing idea that America represents liberty, self-fulfillment, and success for hard work, and narratives that challenge or throw into question this idea.

Week Three:

1. Explain how Walden can be understood as an attempt to put Emerson’s suggestions about how we should live our lives into action. In other words, how is Thoreau’s “living experiment” an application of the ideas put forth in Emerson’s essay “The American Scholar”?

2. Whitman has been called a great “leveler.” He sees us all as equals, no matter our professions, social status, race, gender, economic status, or even age. Find examples. Whitman also celebrates the Earth as a place of eternal, organic, cyclical renewal. Find examples.
3. How does the Whittier poem evoke nostalgic images of American life? What are these images? In a society that has changed drastically since the poem’s appearance, do these images have relevance for you today?

Week Four:

1. Although *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* is a fictional work, in what ways are the concerns represented in the brief selection you have been assigned either similar to or different from the issues that Douglass describes to readers?

2. How does Dickinson’s “Much Madness Is Divinest Sense” address a peculiar or ironic aspect of society’s relationship to the individual? Use your answer to explain Bartleby’s actions and fate in Melville’s “Bartleby the Scrivener.”

3. How can Hawthorne’s “The Birthmark” and Poe’s “The Fall of the House of Usher” be understood as promoting anti-transcendentalist viewpoints?

Folder Two:

Week Six:

1. How can W. D. Howells’s “Editha” and Ambrose Bierce’s “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” be understood as stories that challenge sentimental views of warfare and undercut romantic plots and unrealistic conclusions?

2. In the section of *The Souls of Black Folk* called “Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others,” W. E. B. Du Bois is critical of Booker T. Washington’s strategy for social advancement as outlined in the section of *Up from Slavery* referred to as “The Atlanta Exposition Address.” Explain their respective positions.

3. The stories by Chopin, Freeman, Wharton, and Gilman, different though they are, all share Realism’s characteristic of trying to portray adult relationships in a more mature and complex manner. Whether centered on courtship, marriage, or children, explain how two of these four writers portray relationships that are not patterned after the stereotypical “happily ever after” ending.

Week Seven:

1. First, summarize the characteristics of the movement known as literary Naturalism. Next, in Theodore Dreiser’s *Sister Carrie* and Stephen Crane’s “The Open Boat,” find examples that would support the argument that these writings are good examples of the form.

2. Jack London also wrote a children’s version of “To Build a Fire,” published in the Youth’s Companion in 1902. Do a search for this juvenile version and compare it to the one in the anthology. The differences are subtle, but important. Explain how these differences make one story a didactic cautionary tale for children, and the other a serious work of literary Naturalism.
3. Do what is called a “close reading” of the Dunbar poem “We Wear the Mask.” First summarize the poem as you understand it. Next, and this should be most of your response, list and explain every possible way that a reader might understand the word “mask” in the poem. Finally, state whether or not the poem can be related to the movement known as Naturalism.

Week Eight:

1. In the Robert Frost poem, explain how he employs a literal, natural, “outdoor” scene as the inspiration for a discussion of a poetic quality about life or a philosophical dilemma common to us all.

2. Provide a character analysis of Prufrock in T. S. Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.” Begin with physical descriptions and then move on to his personality, anxieties, regrets, and so on.

3. Both Richard Wright and Langston Hughes portray characters and speakers who are struggling with the concept of personal identity. Explain how this issue is at work in the Wright story and in the poem by Hughes.

Week Nine:

1. Which character in the play would you argue ultimately seems to be the most responsible for current poor state in which the family finds themselves? Which would you argue is the least responsible? Why?

2. As you watch the play, pay attention to the sounds in the background, the expressions, gestures, and clothing of the characters, and the sets or backgrounds. Using specific examples, explain how some of these reinforce thematic elements of the play.

3. Name and explain at least four ways in which suspense is built in the play. Describe each incidence and be specific.
COURSE POLICIES

If you have questions, please do not hesitate to ask them before class, after class, or during my office hours. If I do not hear from you within the first two or three classes, I will assume that you understand both the requirements of your syllabus and these course policies and you agree to abide by them.

Overview

Just be considerate and use your common sense: Set your phone on silent and put it away, be on time, pay attention, take notes, ask questions, work hard on your essays, hand them in on time, read all assignments, and study carefully for your tests. Practice these habits and you should be satisfied with your final grade.

University Policy Statements

1. Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Students needing testing or classroom accommodations based on a disability should discuss those needs with me during the first week of class and take responsibility for arranging alternate testing times and sites a minimum of two class periods before each exam or major assignment.

2. Honor Code: In accordance with the Academic Honor Code, students pledge the following: “Being a student of a higher standard, I pledge to embody the principles of academic integrity.”

3. Internet Access: If in the event of a natural disaster or other event that prevents the continuation of regular campus classroom meetings, courses will continue and the quarter will be concluded, if necessary, by meeting online through Blackboard, email, Moodle, or other open source software.

4. The Emergency Notification System: All Louisiana Tech students are strongly encouraged to enroll and update their contact information in the Emergency Notification System. It takes just a few seconds to ensure you are able to receive important text and voice alerts in the event of a campus emergency. For more information, please visit:

   http://www.latech.edu/administration/ens.php

Attendance

Students enrolled in any course who miss more than 10% of scheduled meetings, which is more than two T-Th/M-W classes, more than three M-W-F classes, or more than three Six-Week Summer Session classes, will have one full letter grade automatically deducted from their final quarter averages.

Further, students enrolled in any course who miss a class during which writing or collaboration is required will have up to one full letter grade (as many as 10 points) deducted from the major essay folder or major assignment due immediately following the unexcused absence. In other
words, if a document is required with your major essay or project and you do not have it because you were absent, your work is not eligible for all possible 100 points. Accordingly, students who miss two or three of these assignments within a particular writing process will have as many as two or three letter grades deducted from the folder due at the conclusion of that writing unit.

**Excusable absences** are limited to the following circumstances. If you want me to remove an unexcused absence or you want to be eligible for the points you missed on an in-class assignment, you must meet one of the criteria listed below within one week of your return to class:

1. If you miss class due to a university-sanctioned event, you must provide your original copy of official verification written on university letterhead. Students should only enroll in my courses if their schedules allow them to participate in class activities and assignments during regularly scheduled meetings.

2. If you experience a serious illness or injury that requires hospitalization or prevents you from going to class for a week or more, you must provide documentation such as a dated letter that includes a time period for recovery, your name and the name and phone number of the official writing it.

3. If you are called away by a funeral, you must provide documentation in the form of a dated obituary or announcement or a note from someone presiding over the service that includes your name and the name and phone number of the person writing it.

4. If you have a chronic condition or other special need that requires modification of any of these policies, present your information to Student Services for an official letter of verification.

5. If something unexpected happens, (allergies, stomach ache, car trouble, bad weather), you have the option of missing a class or two without the absence affecting your final grade in the course, assuming it was not a writing day. I don’t need to hear about it. If it was a writing day, then you can explain to me your problem, if you like.

**Punctuality**

Please do not come to my classes late. If a scheduling problem or time constraint prevents you from being punctual, you should not be enrolled in this class. Likewise, please do not leave my classes early. Leaving class early is no less an interruption than arriving late. Possibly the most inconsiderate choice you could make would be to leave in the middle of class to make or respond to a phone call only to return to class a few minutes later. I mark a person who arrives late, leaves early, or leaves in the middle of class and returns as **ABSENT**.

**Class Demeanor**

You have the opportunity to establish your reputation as a credible, mature writer and serious person worthy of respect, but careless behavior damages a student’s credibility in the same way that careless writing damages a student’s credibility. Your attendance, promptness, preparedness,
willingness to participate in a meaningful way, ability to hand in all the work, foresight to complete the work on time, and basic courtesy are all factors that create a background for the reader of your essays and exams. So put away your phone. Improve your mind. Be kind. Think of others. If, on the other hand, you choose to be inconsiderate, please spend your time elsewhere so the class will not disturb you.

**Missed Work**

If you miss a class, refer to the schedule, contact another class member, or see me during office hours. I cannot, however, repeat or post lecture material, which is often conversational or anecdotal in nature.

1. Quizzes cannot be made up without documentation that qualifies as an excused absence under my attendance policy.

2. If you miss an exam for a reason that qualifies as an excused absence under my attendance policy, you must present the required documentation, make arrangements with me to schedule an alternate test date, and take the exam within one week of your return to be eligible for a grade.

3. If you miss in-class work that is handed in or initialed at the end of class due to an unexcused absence, the work is not eligible for points. Collaborative in-class assignments such as peer reviews and group reports cannot be made up. If you think you have a special circumstance or situation, explain to me your problem.

4. If you are unable to complete daily in-class work because you are unprepared (you do not have your books, or files, or papers), the work is not eligible for a grade. Further, students who come to class unable or unwilling to work seriously on an assignment will not receive credit for attending. In other words, no “going through the motions”: you must be cognitively present as well as physically present.

5. If you add the class late or do not begin attending until the second or third time we meet, you are entirely responsible not only for the assignments you missed, but for these course policies as well. Adding a class or beginning to attend after it has already met is a choice that you make, not one that I make. If you are not prepared to do well on an assignment because you did not attend the first or second class, I am not obliged to repeat course content, modify an assignment or its due date, explain course policies, or make other exceptions or exemptions.

6. If you stop attending before the final scheduled class, you may not take the final exam early (or late) unless you provide documentation that falls within my excused absence policy.

**Essay Requirements**

1. English 212 formal essays must be 4-5 pages.

2. Essays are evaluated on a scale from 0 to 100: 0-59=F, 60-69=D, 70-79=C, 80-89=B, 90-100=A.
3. Essays in all courses must reflect correct MLA format and documentation style as they appear in the most recent edition of the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. Essays that do not use correct MLA format and documentation style are not eligible for a grade higher than D.

4. Essays less than the required length for a particular course level or assignment are not eligible for a grade higher than D. If 8-10 pages of writing are required, for example, do not hand in 7 ½ pages.

5. Essays with more than one major error in grammar, punctuation, or documentation are not eligible for a grade higher than D. Major errors include fragments, fused sentences, incorrect case or mood, and subject-verb agreement errors. Other important but less serious errors include misused apostrophes, lack of pronoun-antecedent agreement or incorrect pronoun reference, misuse of adjectives/adverbs, comma splices, and lack of parallelism, among others. Essays that contain more than one such second-order error are not eligible for a grade higher than C.

6. Essays that do not address the specific assignment are not eligible for a grade higher than D.

7. Late essays are penalized one letter grade (10 points) for each class period they are late. Essays are considered late after I call for them at the beginning of the class they are due. So if you hand in an essay, for example, ten minutes after I have collected them, the essay has lost one letter grade.

8. All required essays must be handed in to pass the course, even if an essay is so late it will receive a grade in the F range (0-59). If your syllabus, for example, states that five essays are required but you only hand in four, you fail the course. It makes no difference what grades you received on the essays you handed in or their percentages of the final grade.

9. I require all supporting work (notes, outlines, rough drafts, peer reviews, photocopies/printouts of quoted material, digital submission of essay) as well as the final typed version of an essay. If a student does not hand all the work that I ask for which documents the writing process, the essay automatically receives a grade equal to the amount of missing or poorly developed supporting work, which is typically one letter grade (10 points) per item.

10. All MLA essays your write must directly quote from outside scholarly sources (more than just your anthology or course texts) that you obtain through Louisana Tech’s Prescott library database. You must include each source’s title page and page or pages from which you quote in your folder. If not indicated on the source’s title page, you must also include a legitimate cover page or title page providing bibliographic evidence that you obtained the source through Tech’s library database (and not simply through the Internet). Essays that do not fulfill these requirements are not eligible for a grade higher than a D. See my sample student essays.

11. I will give you instructions about submitting each essay to Turnitin.com. Essay grades will not be recorded until you have uploaded your essay and I have approved it. If I suspect an essay written for another class has been handed in as an original assignment written specifically for my class, I will send it through an additional plagiarism website as well as access your transcript to see which English courses you have completed and then circulate the work to the appropriate
faculty members. If academic misconduct is confirmed, I change the essay grade to zero, you receive a F in the class, and I send a letter reporting you to Tech's Academic Honor Court, which could ultimately lead to suspension.

12. I keep your graded exams and term papers in my office for thirty days into the following quarter. You are responsible for keeping all work during the quarter. You are required to submit this work behind your final in-class essay.

**Suggestions for Revising and Editing Your Essays**

The following suggestions reflect some of the most common pitfalls of college writing. Use them as a checklist before handing in your paper:

1. Follow all requirements concerning MLA format and documentation as well as my Essay Requirements state above.

2. Hand your essays in on time.

3. Proofread your essay for word-processing errors such as duplications of words, missing words, unnecessary spacing, or needed spacing between words. Correct mistakes of any sort, no matter how small.

4. Check the spelling of your finished work using your WP program. Now look up every word in your essay that you are not absolutely certain has been used correctly. Many homonyms are commonly confused, and word-processers usually do not recognize these errors. Some of the most obvious include the following: its / it’s, their / there, to / too, affect / effect, accept / except, and so on.

5. Avoid beginning your sentences with “it” or “there.” Beginning a sentence in this fashion often reflects repetition, carelessness, and lack of control in an essay.

6. Unless otherwise specified, write using a formal or semi-formal tone. The register, or level of formality, should be appropriate for the essay’s purpose and audience. This means that you want to avoid slang, regionalisms, and colloquial or clichéd language.

7. Cut words and phrases from your essay that are not needed to develop a thought. You want to be specific, but you also want to be concise. A good way to begin cutting dead wood from your writing is to look for words we often use in our informal, everyday speech patterns but that do not belong in essays when used unconsciously. Some examples include “basically,” “really,” “definitely,” “totally,” “very,” “a lot,” and “thing(s).”

8. Avoid using “etc.” to conclude a sentence. “Etc.” is the abbreviated form of *et cetera*, meaning “and other things.” However, the contemporary college use of the term often means “I can’t think of another example to add to this list at the moment so this is how I will stop.”
9. When you use a direct quotation, ALWAYS introduce it or attach it to your own writing in some way. At the very least, use the relative pronoun “that” or a colon (“So-and-so argue that” or “He argues the following:”). Do not let a quotation stand alone in the middle of the paragraph. Better yet, vary the sentence structure and verbs you use when integrating your direct quotations within your prose. Make the sentences read naturally.

10. Within the framework of the assignment, choose a topic or approach that you think is original. That way, your essay is less likely to be judged against twenty other papers with a similar thesis.

11. If the essay treats literature, be certain that your thesis forces you to analyze the work in some way rather than merely summarizing events. Assume your reader has read the material you are discussing.

12. Always use specific references and direct quotations to support your work, but do not cite passages in lengthy block quotations without a good reason. In fact, avoid over-quoting sources in any manner. Your instructor wants to see that you can use sources judiciously and with a rhetorical purpose, not merely that you can quote from a source.

13. Avoid referring to your own essay: ‘This essay will argue three things.” Think in those terms, but don’t write it down.

14. Avoid making general, unsupported statements that do not progress your line of reasoning: “throughout history,” “in today’s society,” “everyone knows that,” or “this has always been the case.”

15. Do not title your essay “Essay #1” or “A Rose for Emily” or “Essay on ‘A Rose for Emily’.” Give your title some thought. After all, it is the first part of your essay that your reader evaluates.

16. Conclude in a manner that does more than simply repeats what you said in the introduction. Give your conclusion serious thought. After all, it is the last part of your essay that your reader evaluates.

17. When writing a timed in-class essay, use all of the time you are allotted. If you write for thirty minutes and then decide you are finished, you may want to reconsider. The purpose of an in-class essay is to respond as specifically and thoroughly as you can within the time you are given. It is your chance to show off what you know and how you are able to apply that knowledge and writing skill to a particular exam topic. If your hand is not cramped and you are not struggling to finish just one more sentence before I call time, then you probably did not prepare well enough to earn a grade of A or B on the writing.

18. Do not use initial or terminal ellipses. Only use them to indicate elided material within the quotation you present.

19. Ensure that all bibliographic material is contained in the works cited page or pages, but never in the essay itself or in the footnotes.
20. Use notes sparingly, if at all. If you use them, the reader should clearly understand why the remarks do not belong in the essay itself but provide helpful context.

21. Avoid expletive constructions (For example: It is important to note . . . There are . . .)

22. Don’t ever end paragraphs with quotations from critics. Only rarely end with a quotation from an author whose work you are analyzing. In most cases, paragraphs should end in the voice of the writer.

23. Avoid demonstratives without a noun prior to the verb (For example: “This is . . .” rather than “This book is . . .”)

24. Avoid incomplete comparatives (For example: This was a better strategy—better than what?)

25. Avoid parenthetical comments in sentences. Include remarks in the sentences outright or relegate the information to a footnote if tangential.

26. Use em-dashes (—) for long dashes and en-dashes (-) for hyphens.

27. Punctuation following an italicized word, as in a book title, is roman (as in Who wrote Absalom, Absalom!? or Who wrote The Descendant?).

28. Indicate decades numerically, without an apostrophe (The 1850s experienced a renascence in American writing). Do not abbreviate (the 1850s, rather than the ’50s).

29. Write out the names of centuries, such as the twentieth century, rather than the 20th century.

30. Works Cited: Only include sources actually cited in the body of the essay.

31. Avoid using abbreviations, particularly for titles (Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, not Huck Finn).

32. Always observe distinction between that/which, where/in which, and then/than.

33. Use italics for emphasis only to point to a word or phrase as such, draw attention to syntax, or clarify meaning; do not use italics merely to stress a main point.

34. Use only one space, not two, between sentences.

35. Cite the best texts for all of your quotations and references: a scholarly edition or a first edition.

36. Always cite original texts unless impossible to do so.

37. Avoid, when possible, corrupting quotations by inserting or interspersing words, especially at the beginning of passages. For example: it “is not possible,” rather than “[it] is not possible.”