Writing Exercise 3: Applying Theory | Due: December 2

Goal:
The goal of this assignment is to practice analyzing a literary text through a theoretical lens.

Assignment:
Your assignment is to select a passage from one of the texts we've read (prior to the due date of the paper) and perform a *close reading* of that passage using one of our theory readings/lessons as a basis for analysis. You will write a 350-word statement making an argument regarding how reading that passage through your selected theoretical lens offers a new or deeper understanding of the text's meaning and supported by evidence from the text.

The final product should do the following, in a **350-word** (12-point Times New Roman font, double spaced, one-inch margins on all sides, no extra space between paragraphs, no superfluous spacing)**:**

- Include a brief introduction that frames and defines the scope of your essay;
- Articulate a clear and compelling thesis that argues the meaning of a text through the application of a particular theoretical lens to your selected passage;
- Explain the theoretical approach you are employing and why it is relevant to this text;
- Develop your argument in interesting and persuasive body paragraphs, which are logically arranged to help your reader follow your argument;
- Persuade your audience to accept your claim by grounding your arguments (and response to possible counterarguments) in evidence from the text, through quotation, and compelling analysis of that evidence that ties it to your claims;
- Include a conclusion that culminates your argument and leaves your reader with a greater understanding of the text;
- Properly and accurately cite the text(s) within the essay <u>and</u> a works cited page using MLA style.

Invention and Inquiry:
In preparing this assignment, select one of our theoretical readings and a short passage of about 10-20 lines (if you are choosing a shorter poem, you may work with the entire text) from one of the texts we've read so far. First, perform a close reading on these lines—read the passage and carefully annotate it. Analyze the passage's technical and narrative elements—such as diction, sentence patterns, tone, figurative language, structure, plot, character, setting, etc. What observations about the passage and its meaning/significance do you have?

Next, read and carefully annotate the theory text you intend to use as a framework for understanding your selected passage. Write a brief statement that accurately explains how this theory can be used as a way of understanding a text (i.e., how is this theory a "lens" we can examine a text through). Consider why you think this theoretical lens is appropriate for the selected text.

Then perform <u>another</u> close reading on the passage from the text applying the theoretical lens you've selected. Analyze how the passage's technical and narrative elements may be understood differently through this lens. What new observations about the passage and its meaning/significance do you have now? How has the theory impacted the meaning of the text?

You may wish to consider questions such as: Does the theory make us read the passage differently? Why or why not? How so? How do the technical and narrative elements establish the meaning of the passage/text? How does the scene or passage illuminate a crucial element of the work as a whole? What in the passage or the theory adds light to our understanding of the themes developed in the text? What does the passage (through the lens of the theory) tell us about identity, power, class, race, gender, etc.?

Does the theory help us understand how the passage may be indicative of the values of the era/location in which the text was written?

When you have a firm grasp of the theory and specific elements of the passage and its meaning, develop an outline for your statement in which you develop a (hypo)thesis about how the theory helps us understand the meaning of the passage or the meaning of the text. Locate the evidence in the text and the theory that led you to this claim. Put these together in an order that seems to make sense and helps develop your argument. Develop your argument to persuade your reader to accept your analysis. Draft topic sentences that represent the reasons for accepting your claim and include quoted evidence from the text that support those reasons.

Once you have a sense of your evidence and arguments, write a rough draft in which you develop your point fully. Be sure to provide analysis of your textual evidence and explain to your reader how that piece of evidence supports your topic sentence and your thesis statement. Seek out feedback on your draft and revise!

In creating an argumentative essay with an "arguable" thesis (i.e., someone could have a different interpretation), it is important to know the difference between observation and argument. Move beyond observations and description/summary toward a unique, interesting assertion about meaning. Make your keen observations, then explain to your readers why those observations are meaningful. What evidence from the text supports your interpretation?

Audience and Tone:
This is an academic paper so it should be written using professional and authoritative language to present your findings. Your tone should be formal and informative. Your audience is your academic peers.

Specifications for Satisfactory:
To be considered Satisfactory, the exercise must do the following:

- ☐ Be submitted on Canvas by the due date specified
- ☐ Consist of at least 350 words
- ☐ Be properly formatted according to the assignment instructions
- ☐ Fully answer the prompt
- ☐ Include a clear and compelling thesis that argues the meaning of a text through the application of a particular theoretical lens to your selected passage
- ☐ Display a clear understanding of the theory and how it impacts a reading of the text through a clear explanation of the theory and the careful analysis of the passage and/or the thesis statement
- ☐ Present at least 2 relevant and enlightening quotations/paraphrases from the theoretical text
- ☐ Present at least 3 relevant and persuasive pieces of evidence from the text, through quotation
- ☐ Provide persuasive analysis for each piece of evidence (from both texts) that also explains how/why it supports the topic sentence and/or thesis
- ☐ Demonstrate a clear and logical progression of ideas
- ☐ Accurately cite each quotation/paraphrase using parenthetical notation within the essay
- ☐ Include a works cited page with full citation of the texts using MLA style
- ☐ Be written in a clear manner with appropriate academic tone with few or no mechanical issues

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If you have any questions or concerns about this assignment, I encourage you to e-mail me or come see me during my office hours. Also consider visiting the Miller Writing Center for help.