

# ENGL 374 Seminar Paper

engl 374-001 / autumn 2013-14 / drew university / chang



Think back to the start of the semester and the framing ideas of the course: What does it mean to “queer” American literature? How might we look at literature through the queer lenses? Sedgwick defines “queer” as “the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning” in bodies, identities, genders, sexualities, and particularly in the ways we define, think about, talk about, represent, and value these things. Siobhan Somerville defines “queer” as a way “to denaturalize categories such as ‘lesbian’ and ‘gay’ (not to mention ‘straight’ and ‘heterosexual’), revealing them as socially and historically constructed identities that have often worked to establish and police the line between the ‘normal’ and the ‘abnormal.’” We have been looking at American writing—some queer, some not—

and reading, thinking, and talking about sex, gender, sexuality, race, class, nation, and other intersections. Now you must coalesce these issues and ideas into a focused, extended, academic argument and analysis.

## Goal and Outcomes

As a capstone to the term, you will write an **8- to 12-page** seminar paper drawing on the critical question, claim, and research you started with your Research Proposal Memo. Revisiting and revising the ideas started by your memo, you will build on and draw inspiration from the course goals, framing questions, and critical readings, culminating in a seminar paper that:

- Focuses on and close read one (or two) of the course’s novels or texts or an appropriate text of your choosing, which must be approved at your Research Proposal conference.
- Articulates a specific, analytical argument that engages one or more of the theoretical and critical lenses raised by our class. For example: What does it mean to do a queer reading? How does the novel challenge heteronormativity? How does race, gender, and sexuality intersect?
- Integrates and incorporates recent, relevant, academic research. Your bibliography must have **8-12 authoritative sources**.
- Uses proper MLA parenthetical citation and bibliographic format.

Outstanding papers are specific in their claim, focused in their close reading and analysis of the text, present clear subclaims and support from research, offer stakes for the arguments at hand, demonstrate organization and coherence, and are carefully proofread, revised, and formatted.

## Guidelines and Due Dates

**Audience:** You will write for an audience that includes a general academic community, which includes your instructor, your classmates, and the authors of the essays we have read. Keep in mind that your audience is varied in many ways, including academic experience and familiarity with the texts, so you’ll need to consider of what information each type of reader will need to make sense of your essay. Another good way to think about your audience is to imagine the publication in which your essay could appear such as one of the scholarly journals from your bibliography.

**Format:** Formal, academic paper, appropriate title for your paper  
Use 12-point Times Roman, 1” margins, standard double-spacing, proper heading and name block, page numbers, and single-sided printing, neatly stapled together  
MLA citations and bibliography

**Paper Proposal:** Bring research proposal to your conference on \_\_\_\_\_

**Paper Draft:** Bring working draft to your conference on \_\_\_\_\_

**Final Paper:** Thursday, December 12 by \_\_\_\_\_