

Peer-Responded Journals

About twice each week, you will write journals engaging our course readings. Your audience will be a group of your peers. Journals and responses are due by class time. Late journals will be penalized according to the syllabus policy.

Schedule

The due dates for reading journals are indicated on the syllabus. On days that Journals are due, you will post 500-word journals to your forum on Oncourse. On days that Journal Responses are due, you will post a 250-word engagement/response for *each* of the two-page journals written by your group members.

In the case of an absence, it is your responsibility to contact both your peers and me prior to class and to make arrangements to exchange journals.

Journal Expectations

Your Thursday journal entries should not take the form of a mini-paper. They should not display a traditional beginning, middle, and end. They should not propose a thesis and support it thoroughly and in an orderly manner. They should not summarize the plot. Above all, they should not condescend to the material or sound like a book report. Instead, **they should represent your *struggle with that day's reading***.

You should write about what you do not understand, or about what you half-understand, or what you find interesting, or how this week's reading might connect to last week's readings or class discussions. You can spend the whole two pages on one point or start anew every other paragraph. You can problematize or extend or complexify or reduce—anything, as long as you struggle.

It's fine to start a journal with what you liked or didn't like in a text, but go further: use these journals as opportunities to think on paper about exactly why you had this reaction. The idea here is to test out interpretations and to practice thinking about fiction critically.

Response Expectations

For each weekly journal you receive from a classmate, you will write a 250 word engagement with/response to your peer's ideas, which you will exchange in the next class period. Address your peer directly ("I like your idea about..."). This response is not an evaluation of your peer's writing ("good ideas, but needs development"), but rather an engagement with her/him in an intellectual dialogue about the course's texts and ideas. For example, you could contribute how you think about the thing your peer admitted he/she only half-understood, or put your peer's ideas in conversation with that day's reading. Finally, in terms of struggle, these responses include the same expectations listed for the journals.

Evaluation

I will read your journals and responses every week, but I will not comment on them. Instead, I will grade your journals as a whole at the end of the semester. If you are troubled by not knowing where you stand, please come to my office to discuss your progress. Here are the grading criteria:

1. If you produce a sufficient quantity of prose on a weekly basis in the manner requested, it will be hard for you to get below a B–.
2. If, in addition to (1) above, you are engaged, you struggle, you open up, and you deal with the difficult, it will be hard for you to get below a B.
3. If, in addition to (1) and (2) above, you demonstrate significant improvement from the beginning of the semester to its end, it will be hard for you to get below a B+.
4. If, in addition to (1), (2), and (3) above, you demonstrate intellectual imagination, it will be hard for you to get below an A–.
5. If you want an A, do all the above in the extreme.

Format

Since you will write several of these over the course of the semester, please label each reading journal and journal response clearly:

Margaret Atwood Reading Journal 12 January 2012 I can't quite tell if Thurber is supporting or critiquing Walter Mitty's escapist fantasies. On the one hand, they clearly get	Margaret Atwood Response to James Joyce's 1/12 Journal 17 January 2012 I disagree with your ideas fantasy in "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty." I think that Thurber genuinely believes that fantasy is a
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Posting

Journals and Responses will be posted to Oncourse. Post your journal in your group's designated forum in Oncourse/Forums. I have created a separate thread for each journal. Post responses directly underneath your group member's journals.