Final Research Paper

Assignment Overview: For this assignment, you will work independently to identify a research topic or question of interest to you about any of the literary texts read in our class this semester. You may write on a single text, or compare multiple texts—however, there must be a strong connection between them beyond their inclusion in our class. You will also be required to use at least one outside, scholarly, peer-reviewed source about the text(s) you’ve selected.

A successful essay will do the following:

- Utilize a combination of original interpretation/close reading of selected text(s) and outside scholarly research.
- Clearly distinguish the writer’s views from those of other scholars.
- Contain a clear thesis statement that focuses the essay.
- Have a clear organizational strategy with an introduction, conclusion, and logically sequenced body paragraphs.
- Use evidence (including direct quotes from both the literary texts as well as outside research) as support for the thesis.
- Consist of writing that is clear and generally grammatically precise.
- Meet all length, formatting, and citation requirements (including in-text citations and a Works Cited page in MLA format).

Research Requirement: The essay must contain at least one scholarly, academic source. This may be an article from an academic journal or a book/book chapter from a university/scholarly press. The source may be used to support your thesis, or to provide a counterpoint or perspective slightly different from your own. Additional scholarly sources may be used if applicable, as well as non-scholarly credible sources (such as newspaper articles, author interviews, and so on), but these should be used sparingly. Note: When searching for academic and credible popular sources, use the Old Westbury library databases instead of Google or other Internet search engines. While many websites do contain credible information, they also may contain unoriginal or inaccurate material, be out-of-date, and so on. The databases from our college library are much more reliable and thorough, and will therefore be more helpful for this particular assignment.

Length and Formatting Requirements: This paper will 8-10 pages, typed and double-spaced. The document should have 1-inch wide margins, and be written in Times New Roman font, size 12. All quotes from the literary text(s) and any secondary sources must be cited in MLA format, and the document must include a separate Works Cited page.
Identifying a Research Topic: The most common advice in choosing a research topic is to pick something that is genuinely of interest to you. Once you’ve identified the main ideas or texts you’d like to write about, brainstorm and make notes. Are there any questions about the texts that you’d like to see answered? Was there a conversation or idea that came up in class that you’d like to explore further? Another strategy would be to browse the databases and skim the scholarly sources you find—what kind of arguments are they making, and how can you contribute to these scholarly debates?

Abstract and Summary of Scholarly Source: Following the Library Session, you will be asked to hand in a short abstract (summary) of your essay, and a summary of your outside research. This will help me to evaluate your topic and ensure that it is detailed enough to support a successful paper.