

Midterm Exam: 2017-2018

English 4 / Mr. Neff

Essays

- You will be writing ONE essay. Your response is worth 30 points. You'll write your essay # at the top of your page.
- In writing your chosen essay, follow any directions and guidance provided in that specific prompt as far as writing style and length are concerned, and consult the rubric at the end of this exam.

Prompt #1: Personal Narrative

The following prompts were considered to be some of the most original college app prompts of the last few years. Choose one and write a personal narrative in response to it. Regardless of which prompt you choose, **your response should be approximately 350-500 words (about 1 page).**

- When writing, consider what you learned about the style of a personal narrative while writing your College Essay, reading any samples or those your peers wrote, or learning any of the writing tips we discussed and tried along the way.
- Be sure to use your skills to craft an engaging response (e.g. attention-grabbing opening lines; use of descriptive showing/evoking versus solely telling/informing; use of anecdotes, imagery, specific details, etc.)
- Finally, craft a response that portrays you, the applicant, in a sincere and positive light.

Prompt 1A:

In her fourth year at [our university, a former student] was inspired to create Flash Seminars, one-time classes which facilitate high-energy discussion about thought-provoking topics outside of traditional coursework. If you created a Flash Seminar, what idea would you explore and why?

Prompt 1B:

Teen activist and 2014 Nobel Peace prize winner Malala Yousafzai said, "I raise up my voice — not so that I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard." For whom have you raised your voice?

Prompt 1C:

You get one do-over of any moment in your life. What would you do over, and why?

Prompt 1D:

Identify a recent Facebook post, tweet, text, Instagram photo, snap (etc.) of yours. What does it reveal about you and your digital identity?

Prompt #2: *Brave New World* Literary Analysis

Isaac Asimov, one of the most prolific and beloved SF writers, claimed that "modern science fiction is the only form of literature that consistently considers the nature of the changes that face us." In considering these changes in our society, dystopian science fiction writers often employ the tools of satire to observe what they see as flaws in their society, while also warning audiences to prevent a dark future from coming to pass.

Prompt:

In writing *Brave New World*, what warnings did Aldous Huxley make about where he thought society was headed? **In an organized essay of approximately 350-500 words:**

- Identify at least two significant warnings or predictions Huxley makes about his own society through the novel *Brave New World*
 - Cite specific text evidence of these warnings/predictions as they occur in the novel (consider characters, events, motifs, dialogue, etc.)

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- Analyze how this evidence connects with Huxley's warning. Further, what satirical techniques or literary devices does he use to develop this warning?
- Finally, put yourself in conversation with Huxley by advancing, complicating, or challenging his warnings: did they come true or not? Support your opinion.

Avoid plot summary unless you connect it to your analysis.

Prompt #3: Literary analysis across the year

Directions:

"Words, words, words." This is Hamlet's reply when the nosy Polonius asks him what he's reading, but it could just as well be our own: for all the discussion about eternally resonant themes and life-changing meaning in the works of everyone from William Shakespeare to Aldous Huxley, what authors create is nothing more than words on a page until readers interact with it and form their own meaning. The act of reading, isolating though it may seem, is ultimately an act of conversation between the living and (sometimes) the dead.

Choose three or four of the following excerpts/quotes—each from a different story, novel, poem, or article we explored this year—and put yourself in conversation with its ideas. For each quote you choose, write a concise but healthy paragraph analysis of how it connects with central ideas, themes, characters, and/or events from the work as a whole. Be as specific as possible in your analysis: you must support your claims about the quote's importance and meaning in the work it comes from.

Your responses should total approximately 350-500 words (approx. 1 page).

- **#1: Po Bronson and Ashley Merryman's article "The Creativity Crisis"**

[Researchers] at the College of William & Mary . . . found creativity scores had been steadily rising, just like IQ scores, until 1990. Since then, creativity scores have consistently inched downward. "It's very clear, and the decrease is very significant," Kim says. It is the scores of younger children in America—from kindergarten through sixth grade—for whom the decline is "most serious."

The potential consequences are sweeping. The necessity of human ingenuity is undisputed. A recent IBM poll of 1,500 CEOs identified creativity as the No. 1 "leadership competency" of the future. Yet it's not just about sustaining our nation's economic growth. All around us are matters of national and international importance that are crying out for creative solutions, from saving the Gulf of Mexico to bringing peace to Afghanistan to delivering health care.

- **#2: Kurt Vonnegut's short story "Harrison Bergeron"**

The year was 2081, and everybody was finally equal. They weren't only equal before God and the law. They were equal every which way. Nobody was smarter than anybody else. Nobody was better looking than anybody else. Nobody was stronger or quicker than anybody else. All this equality was due to the 211th, 212th, and 213th Amendments to the Constitution, and to the unceasing vigilance of the agents of the United States Handicapper General.

- **#3: Aldous Huxley's novel *Brave New World***

But I don't want comfort. I want God, I want poetry, I want real danger, I want freedom, I want goodness. I want sin.

- **#4: William Shakespeare's Sonnet 18**

So long as men can breathe or eyes can see / So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

- **#5: From your Independent Novel**

Share a quote (or close paraphrase) of something specific from your chosen independent novel. Respond to it as explained in the directions above.

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Rubric: Prompt #1 (Personal Narrative)

A "4" response (Advanced) = 30 points

- Writer provides a clear, focused answer to the prompt and
- illustrates this answer by effectively communicating a variety of strong, relevant examples (using both "showing/evoking" and "telling/informing").
- Writer's response contains an engaging opening and a thoughtful closing.
- Response contains no or minimal grammatical errors that do not detract from written voice.

A "3" response (Proficient) = 24 points

- Writer provides a clear accurate response to the prompt and
- illustrates this answer by effectively telling a variety of mostly relevant examples (mostly "telling/informing").
- Writer's response contains an adequate opening and closing.
- Response may contain minor grammatical errors.

A "2" response (Developing) = 18 points

- Offers an accurate response to the prompt
- Flawed or underdeveloped in ONE of the following:
 - Opening, development and examples in body, closing
- Response may contain grammatical errors that detract from written voice.

A "1" response (Limited) = 1-10 points

- Response to prompt may be off-topic or lack focus
- Flawed or underdeveloped in TWO of the following:
 - Opening, development and examples in body, closing
- Response may contain significant grammatical errors.

Rubric: Prompts #2 and 3 (Analysis)

A "4" response (Advanced) = 30 points

- Offers a focused, accurate, and insightful response to the prompt/question
- Supports claims with a variety of specific, relevant, and concrete evidence, including direct quotes, paraphrased evidence, or other specific text references
- Connects evidence to claims with insightful, perceptive, and fully explained analysis that's free of plot summary
- Contains no or minimal grammatical errors that do not detract from written voice.

A "3" response (Proficient) = 24 points

- Offers a clear, accurate response to the prompt/question
- Supports claims with mostly specific, relevant evidence, some of which may be repetitious
- Connects evidence to claims with adequately explained analysis that is mostly free of plot summary
- May contain minor grammatical errors.

A "2" response (Developing) = 18 points

- Offers an accurate response to the prompt/question
- Flawed in ONE of the following:
 - Either lacks specific, relevant evidence: evidence is vague or repetitious
 - Or lacks adequately explained analysis: analysis is superficial or unsupported
- May contain grammatical errors that detract from written voice.

A "1" response (Limited) = 1-10 points

- Offers an incomplete, limited, or inaccurate response to the prompt/question
- Lacks specific, relevant evidence: evidence is vague or repetitious
- Lacks adequately explained analysis: analysis is superficial or unsupported
- May contain grammatical errors that detract from written voice.