Guidelines for Writing Assignments in this Course

- Follow your own thoughts without consulting outside sources. This assignment does not require any extra research or bibliographies. Never use anyone else's words or ideas (from books, the Web, relatives, etc.) without giving them credit.

- Your main claim should reveal something about the text that a casual reader might not notice. Your goal is not only to observe explicit information found in the book but also to interpret it, to reveal what the author is saying indirectly. Go beyond denotation, into the realm of nonliteral meanings suggested by specific contexts. The thesis statement communicates your perspective or angle on the assigned topic, and will ideally reveal something unexpected—a twist.

- Quote specific details—usually single words and brief phrases—as evidence in support of what you are claiming about the text. Quotations should ordinarily be no longer than three words. This will make it less tempting to let the quotations speak for themselves. Your discussion should explain how the quotations support your claims when considered in their specific context.

- Maintain a coherent argument by keeping points relevant. Each point should support your main claim. It is fine to talk about other passages in the book (or in other books that we have read), but your writing should be constantly focused on a single argument.

- Your argument will be more convincing if you say things about what the author or text is doing with words—how the author/poet/writer/speaker uses language—rather than simply share your own impressions or beliefs. Try not to stray from focused discussion of the book itself into generalities ("Hoffmann is an important writer") or asides about yourself ("sometimes I feel like something is wrong with my liver"). Stay focused on the author's words.

- Assume that the instructor has read the book, and avoid simply repeating—summarizing or paraphrasing—what happens in the book.

- Give your paper a title that identifies your specific contribution. Your own essay title should NOT be italicized, underlined, in quotation marks, in all caps, or in bold type. It should be capitalized like a headline, e.g., Dance Machine: Olympia’s Sneeze and the Dance of Death.

- Use the present tense; this usually works best when writing about literature rather than describing historical events. Examples: At the start of the story, Nathaniel writes [not wrote] a letter. Olympia sits [not sat] at her window for long periods of time.

- Doublespace your assignments. Use a 12 point font.

- Number pages and include your name. Staple pages together for this course. Please do not submit special plastic folders.

- Italicize the titles of books and other major works. Examples: Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. But short stories use quotation marks: "The Sandman" by Hoffmann.

- Commas and periods go inside closing quotation marks, but they go outside parentheses. Example: The word "curtain," when considered in this context, suggests that the character is hiding something (*Sandman* 12).

- Cite titles and page numbers in parentheses. Titles not needed when obvious.