

Engl 68B: American Lit, 1865 to the Present
Fall 2015, Essay Assignment
Due: Tuesday, December 1st

Modernist fiction deals with the sense of alienation or isolation experienced in urban society. Sometimes, that sense is expressed by an unrecoverable loss or a missed opportunity; sometimes, by an unpardonable act or even an undeserved success. Whatever the precise circumstances, there is usually no going back for the protagonist. Your essay assignment is to look at two of the stories we have read (by different authors – Fitzgerald, Hurston, Wright, Faulkner, or Hemingway), and a third story by an author we have not read for class (from the following list: Sherwood Anderson’s “Hands”; Katherine Anne Porter, “Flowering Judas”; Jean Toomer’s “Blood-Burning Moon,” or John Steinbeck, “The Leader of the People”). Then compare and contrast the level of alienation in each story by looking at the way the author has chosen to depict it.

In addition, you will need to discuss at least one peer-reviewed analysis for each story. You can find such criticism in the library’s electronic databases (and *not* on regular web pages). My suggestion is that you use the most complete database for literature available: the MLA International Bibliography (in the library’s online database collection). Be sure also to follow MLA guidelines in quoting from those sources and in listing them in your Works Cited list at the end of the essay. Guidelines can be found in most composition handbooks (such as you might have used in Engl 1A or 100W) as well as at online sites like OWL at Purdue (owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/ for the general introduction, and then look for links to Works Cited examples). In discussing that critical material, remember that secondary sources cannot replace your own analysis of a text, and that, instead of merely quoting from a source, you need to support or reject what you are quoting through your own explanations and arguments.

This essay should be about 1500 words in length, or five to six pages double-spaced. Otherwise, the same requirements apply for this essay as for your earlier explications, including the submission of your work by class time on the due date at Canvas in Word or RTF format. Good luck, and I hope you enjoy writing the essay.