

ENGL 1102: COMPOSITION II

Lecture Notes

Week 1

Literary Theory for Short Stories

Types of Short Fiction:

Parable → teaches a moral.

Fable → illustrates a moral using the personification of animals

Initiation (coming-of-age or Bildungsroman) → shows the "rite of passage" to adulthood of a young main character

Short Story → characters depicted during a specific segment of their lives, using plot elements (see below)

Types of Narrators/Point of View:

- participant (1st-person narrative) vs. non-participant (omniscient = all-knowing, or selectively omniscient - tells the story from the perspective of one character, or objective - 3rd-person narrative)

- stream of consciousness - the story follows the characters' feelings and train of thought while there is little action

Plot = the map of characters and actions of a story that includes the following elements:

- exposition = introduction
- complication = a *dramatic situation* that presents characters in *conflict*
- climax = the highest point of tension
- resolution = the end of the story, which not always implies dissolution of conflict

Setting = time, place, weather, atmosphere

Naturalism = 19th-century literary movement inspired by Charles Darwin's theory of evolution that held heredity and the environment as responsible for people's actions and development while rejected any supernatural intervention. This line of thought coincides with the Calvinist predestination doctrine or with the cosmic irony or irony of fate (the idea of people as pawns of victims in the hands of fate so prevalent in ancient Greek dramas).

Symbol → stands for a deeper and different meaning (ex. wedding rings are a symbol of the circle of life, the wedlock, never-ending connection between spouses).

→ symbolic characters (Superman, etc.)

→ symbolic acts (hand shake meaning commitment/agreement)

→ denotation = literal meaning (wedding ring is a piece of jewelry designed to be worn on a finger)

→ connotation = symbolic meaning (wedding ring stands for marital commitment)

Symbolism was a nineteenth-century literary movement initiated by the French poet **Charles Baudelaire** (author of the volume of poetry *Flowers of Evil*), which focused on heavy use of symbols and metaphors in poems.

Narrative Techniques:

- *in medias res* (Lat. in the middle of things) - the story starts midway during the events
- *flashback* - a memory of what happened in the past
- *foreshadowing* - an anticipation of what will happen in the future
- *epiphany* - a moment of discovery, revelation, or realization

Tone = attitude

Diction

- *regionalism* (a word specific to a certain geographic region)
- *formal English* (used professionally)
- *colloquial English* (used with friends and family)

Types of characters:

- *flat* (one main trait; either good or bad) vs. *round* (both good and bad, more similar to real people)
- *static* (stays the same throughout the story) vs. *dynamic* (changes at various stages in the story)
- *protagonist* (usually the main hero, a positive character) vs. *antagonist* (a character that opposes the protagonist in a story)

"A Good Man is Hard to Find" by Flannery O'Connor

Did you know that Flannery O'Connor was born and lived in the state of Georgia? Can you detect any regionalisms in her writing? As you read this story, try to find the connotation of symbols like the parrots on Bailey's shirt and to identify moments of epiphany (when does the Grandma have them?) Are there any flashbacks and foreshadowing in the story? Do you see the Misfit as a victim of heredity and environment as Naturalists would have it? Which characters are round? Which are static?

Week 2

Borges' story "The Gospel" ends with a crucifixion, and Chopin's "The Storm" deals with adultery. Watch the following documentaries to get a different perspective on these topics:

- o *Extreme Devotion 2: Holy Facts* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XRDoEf5ZbJM>
- o *Paul Young Pt. 2 -- Pastor Commits Adultery* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QNFPhYEvGSc>

These videos have been uploaded on **Content → Handouts**.

I would also like to encourage you to research facts about the culture, history, and geography of Argentina (Borges's country) and of the state of Louisiana where Chopin's story takes place. The *Borges Interview* video you will find on **Content → Handouts** will help you get an insight into the mind of the Argentinean writer. Borges's story contains multiple allusions to Christ the Savior (the main character is 33 years old and will be crucified, etc.), but it also

raises issues of morality (punishable pre-marital intimacy) and depicts rural life in Argentina. Chopin's story illustrates the power of the setting (weather) on characters' behavior and has been acclaimed by feminists as an expression of women's sexual freedom. As you read these stories, consider the consequences of immoral actions on all characters involved.

Week 3

"The Parable of the Prodigal Son" is a universal story of sibling rivalry and a father's unconditional love. The prodigal (wasteful) son was more than likely involved in self-destructive behaviors that cost him his father's inheritance. Johnny, in the story "Sonny's Blues," fell prey to heroin addiction and may be very well regarded as a prodigal son. However, James Baldwin's story also touches on racial tension, trauma, and economic disadvantage. Take some time to read about the threefold discrimination James Baldwin faced in New York, growing up as a poor, gay, African-American male. Also look into his life in Paris. The video *James Baldwin and America's "Racial Problem"* posted on **Content**→**Handouts** may be helpful to better understand this author.

Week 4

Literary Theory for Drama

This week, we are transitioning to another literary genre, drama, manifested in theater productions. Ancient Greece has been hailed as the cradle of the theater, and your **Greek Theater** reading posted on **Content** → **Handouts** offers you essential concepts and precious images of the precursor of today's entertainment industry. Notice that architecturally the Athenian theater closely resembles our current stadia.

Later on, Aristotle, in his work *Poetics*, outlined a number of rules for tragedies. For example, he believed that a play should observe the 3 unities: of time, place, and action, meaning that **one main plot** was to start, develop, and end within **24 hours** in the **same place**. The consumption of drama had a kathartic purpose (**katharsis** means purging), namely to purge the audience's feelings of **fear, pity, and awe** towards the characters. (Modern playwrights like the German Bertolt Brecht shifted away from emotional purging and sought instead the audience's alienation, a concept called **Entfremdungseffekt/alienation effect**, in order to ensure its objectivity.) According to Aristotle, the tragic hero was usually noble, but plagued with one **tragic flaw (hamartia)** that caused his downfall. Protagonists of modern dramas border the dynamic traits of round characters instead.

Week 5

Sophocles's play *Oedipus the King* encapsulates classical literary themes like the power of fate over our life decisions and behavior, the revelation and punishment of evil-doers, and the hero who saves lives but falls prey to his own flaws. The Greek society in which the protagonist lived clearly condemned murder and incest, but not child abuse. Keep in mind that Oedipus was abused as a child and abandoned to die by exposure to the natural elements, which was a common practice in Greece with unwanted babies or children. Oedipus is the classical tragic hero who dies by his own hamartia of anger (it was anger that led him to kill his father). He is also the adopted child who is not told early enough about his origins, which leads him to flee

away from his adoptive parents on a way to fulfill the very prophecy he earnestly tries to avoid. Do you think there is anything Oedipus could have done to prevent himself from killing his own biological father and from marrying his mother? Think about the validity of prophecies, free-will, and predestination. Can you identify Aristotle's unities in this play?

Sigmund Freud read this play and focused on something Queen Jocasta tells Oedipus while trying to save him from the anguish of being close to discover he had married his own mother:
"Why should anyone in this world be afraid,
Since Fate rules us and nothing can be foreseen?
A man should live only for the present day.

Have no more fear of sleeping with your mother:
How many men, in dreams, have lain with their mothers?
No reasonable man is troubled by such things" (Scene III).

Jocasta obviously recommends a *carpe diem* (live up the moment) outlook on life. She also implies that it is normal for "reasonable" men to entertain sexual desires for their mothers in their dreams. This is what led Freud to formulate the *Oedipus complex*, a theory that was used in psychoanalysis to explain incestuous drives between men and their mothers. This theory is now obsolete and has been contradicted by many other scientists. The video *What Is Love? The Oedipus Complex and the Westermarck Effect* posted on **Content → Handouts** briefly explains this concept to you in addition to the excerpt from Freud that was assigned for reading this week.

Greek drama had a powerful impact on emotions and social mores. The article "The Birth of Tragedy" by Dr. Jonathan Shay posted on **Content → Handouts** reveals surprising elements about the chorus and the audience of Greek theatrical performances which we can relate to the PTSD of our veterans. As you read it, think about how society legitimizes otherwise taboo behavior like murder in certain situations: abortion, war, self-defense, death penalty. What about incestuous relations? Are they permitted in certain situations or cultures? What are the consequences of allowing murder or incest? We already know people who murder or see people being murdered have a high chance of developing PTSD, and that includes war veterans or women who practiced abortions. Look further into the medical consequences of incest off-spring. Scientific evidence seems to indicate that even if society approves of such acts, those who commit them still have to deal with their consequences.

Week 6

We live in a world in which communication and travel technologies have shortened the physical distances, but widened the emotional chasm between people and deeply disabled interpersonal relations. The play *Sure Thing* by David Ives cries out against the difficulty of finding mating compatibility in an urban environment, the either hyper-sexualized or hyper-intellectualized focus of today's dating, and last but not least family planning -- at the end of the play, the couple plans the number of children and possibly the colleges they will attend. With every bell ringing, the two dating partners get a new chance to do it over again better, which obviously does not happen in real life. The bell may also signal the fact that modern dating individuals gain

experience every time they interact with a dating partner and use that experience to do it better next time with a different partner. Incestuous and gay/lesbian relationships, mental issues, and exposure to different cultures also pop up as variants of past experiences. Can you identify these allusions in the play?

Sure Thing could be defined as a comedy, and we need to consider two types of comedy described below:

High comedy = witty dialogues, references to social, political, or economic issues, satirical humor, appealing to educated audiences

Low comedy = predominant physical action, farcical situations, vulgar jokes, appealing to mainstream low-education audiences

Week 7

The documentary *Genetic Roulette* raises issues of health and consumer's rights. It was produced in 2012 when the citizens of California were preparing to vote Proposition 37 that required mandatory labeling of GMO foods. This movie is also a type of drama, a contemporary tragedy in which we are all players and victims of an unbridled race for profits.

When you do your **Annotated Bibliography** for your **Research Presentation** due next week, keep in mind that an Annotated Bibliography is simply a list of Works Cited in MLA style, but immediately after each citation, you write a brief summary (or **annotation**) of that source. You can find a sample Annotated Bibliography on the **MLA Handout** posted on

Content→Handouts. To make sure you cite correctly each source, review the *MLA Handbook*, 7th edition, or the MLA format guidelines on Purdue Owl at

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

Week 8

Post your Research Presentation on Dropbox.

Week 9

Literary Theory for Poetry and Criticism

Poetry does not always rhyme, follow a prescribed number of syllables, words, lines, or stanzas, and neither does it render the author's exclusive and genuine thoughts, feelings, and biographical details. Most of the times, the poet takes up a **persona**, a role, hiding behind a mask just like an ancient Greek actor.

Types of poetry:

Lyric = expresses feelings and thoughts; comes from the Greek musical strings instrument - lyre.



Narrative = tells a story, using feelings and thoughts along with actions.

Dramatic = tells a story with feelings, thoughts, actions, and performance elements such as acting, dancing, singing; similar to Broadway musicals or movies such as *The Sound of Music*.

Didactic = teaches a lesson.

Diction

- regionalism (a word specific to a certain geographic region)
- formal English (used professionally)
- colloquial English (used with friends and family)
- *concrete words* (can be perceived with our senses - sight, hearing, etc.) such as table, milk **vs.** *abstract words* that express feelings, thoughts, and concepts like love, fear, memory, war, unity.

Symbol → stands for a deeper and different meaning (ex. wedding rings are a symbol of the circle of life, the wedlock, never-ending connection between spouses).

- symbolic characters (Superman, etc.)
- symbolic acts (hand shake meaning commitment/agreement)
- denotation = literal meaning (wedding ring is a piece of jewelry designed to be worn on a finger)
- connotation = symbolic meaning (wedding ring stands for marital commitment)

Figures of Speech:

Simile = a comparison containing the word "like" or "as"

Metaphor = a comparison that does not contain "like" or "as"

Personification = attributing human characteristics to an inanimate object or animal

Overstatement = **hyperbole** = exaggeration, making something bigger than it actually is

Understatement = making something less than it actually is

Paradox = an apparent contradiction

Imagism = a type of poetry initiated by Ezra Pound that prescribed that each poem should depict just one image; such poems were usually short, and they resembled the Japanese haiku, except that they did not follow any specific length pattern.

Imagism is a literature response to the emergence of photography at the beginning of the twentieth century. Poets attempt to zoom on an image and freeze a snippet of reality, using words.

On **Content**→**Readings**→**Poetry and Criticism**→**Poems**, you can find all the poems assigned for reading in this class in the order in which they are required.

In his poem "In a Station of the Metro," Ezra Pound creates the powerful image of fleeting faces in a subway station, people that are as delicate, fragile, beautiful and unique as flower petals. This particular location is metaphorically compared to a bough (branch), which implies the vastness of the world (just a branch of all the forests in the world) compared to the human limitations.

The poem "Oh No" by Robert Creeley can be read as a metaphor of the life's journey, of spending eternity in heaven or hell, of hitting the jail, ending up in a nursing home, a hospital, or at a party. The meaning of the poem changes, depending on what connotation we attribute to the symbolic word "it."

Week 10
Spring break! No assignment!

Week 11

Criticism is a specialized form of analyzing and interpreting literary works. This semester, we will explore several criticism schools, among which **Mythological Criticism** and **Formalism** this week.

Mythological Criticism = an interdisciplinary approach that combines elements of anthropology, psychology, history, and comparative religion.

Mythological literary analysis focuses on **myths**, which are stories meant to explain events or phenomena that are still clouded in mystery.

Carl Jung coined the terms *collective unconscious* and *archetype*, which are extensively used in analyzing literary texts from a mythological perspective.

The **collective unconscious** consists of abilities, emotions, or cognition transmitted genetically from generation to generation; fear of snakes, cravings for sweets and fat are genetically encoded in new-born babies, for example, because past generations experienced these needs or fears.

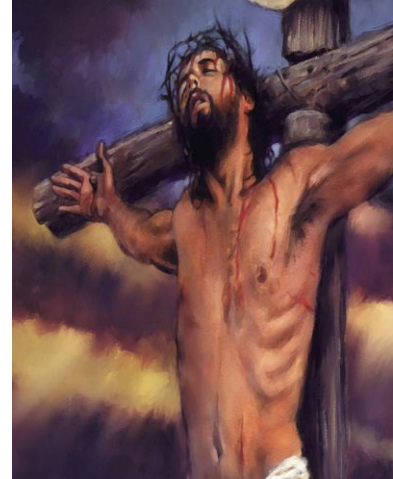
Archetypes are symbols, characters, situations, or images that evoke a universal response, such as *the healing pole* (see the serpent sculpted on a rod Moses put up in the desert to urge people to look at it to be healed of venomous snake bites, a version of which we see in the hyppocratic medicine symbol or Christ's crucifixion on the cross).



The LORD said to Moses,
"Make a snake and put it up on
a pole; anyone who is bitten
can look at it and live"
(Numbers 28:8).



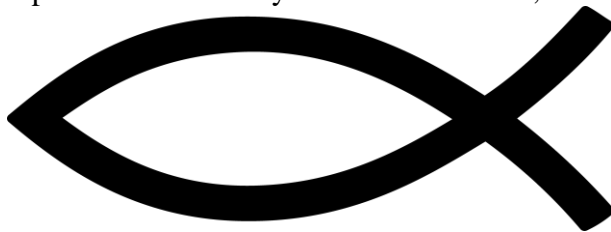
The Rod of Asclepius (the
Greek god of healing) became
a symbol associated with
Hippocrates oath even to
today's medicine practice



"...Christ died for our sins..."
1 Corinthians 15:3
"But he was pierced for our
transgressions, he was
crushed for our iniquities; the
punishment that brought us
peace was on him, and by his
wounds we are healed."
Isaiah 53:5

For further explanations on Carl Jung's theories, please watch the video *Introduction to Carl Jung* on **Content**→**Handouts**.

The poem "The Fish" by E. Bishop contains the symbol of the fish, which can be interpreted as an archetype and which has various meanings in different religious traditions. For example, in Roman and Greek mythology, the fish was a god of fertility. In Christianity, the symbol of the fish became a secret password among persecuted Christians in Rome in the first century after Christ's ascension. They were using the Greek word for fish - *ICHTUS* - because this word represented an acronym for "Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior."



- **Iota** (i) is the first letter of *Iēsous* (Ἰησοῦς), Greek for "**Jesus**".
- **Chi** (ch) is the first letter of *Christos* (Χριστός), Greek for "anointed".
- **Theta** (th) is the first letter of *Theou* (Θεοῦ), Greek for "God's", the genitive case of Θεός, *Theos*, Greek for "God".
- **Upsilon** (y) is the first letter of *(h)uios*^[6] (Υἱός), Greek for "Son".
- **Sigma** (s) is the first letter of *sōtēr* (Σωτήρ), Greek for "Savior".

Knowing this, think about possible interpretations for the poem. If we consider the fish as an archetype of fertility, is the poet talking about catching and letting go of a fish as in raising a child and letting go or as in having an abortion? If the fish is the Christian symbol, then what does it involve catching it and letting it go? Is it getting converted and falling away from faith? Is it catching new disciples and letting them go out in the world?

Formalism = a literary theory that focuses on the form of a work, particularly the language, and excludes external factors such as historical or autobiographical influences.

When looking at Williams' poem "This Is Just to Say," a formalist critic would analyze the length of each line (verse) or stanza, the punctuation (or lack thereof), the literal and connotative meaning of the poem, symbols, and other figures of speech. A formalist interpretation would not attempt to look at the author's biography and speculate that his eating the plums pointed to his marital or extra-marital issues. By formalist standards, neither can we try to paint a picture of the technological level of those times by invoking the "ice box" as opposed to our modern refrigerators.

Week 12

Biographical criticism = based on the belief that the work mirrors elements from the author's life experiences and system of values; the literary work tells the readers something about the author's biography, and the readers can decipher better the meaning of the work by studying the author's life. The author's gender, cultural environment, and internalized system of values also deeply influence the content of his/her work. We cannot ever separate the author's work from who the author is.

Caution! Authors are free to blend in fictional elements or to "speak" through a persona, playing a role. Not everything in a work of art has a biographical basis.

As you read the poems assigned for this week, what can you tell about each author based on these poems and without researching further? What experience may Jennifer Brutschy have had that equals a rebirth? Was it recovery after an accident or an addiction? Was it a religious conversion? The author of "English con Salsa" mixes English and Spanish and talks about teaching English to Mexicans. Is she a teacher? Her name looks definitely Hispanic. Did she have to go through waiting on tables when she first came to the U.S., or is she writing about what she saw in other people's lives? "White Lies" describes the desire of a young lady to appear white and rich to her classmates. Doesn't that mean the author was not white? I wonder if Natasha Trethewey's mother really washed her mouth with Ivory soap?

Confessional poetry, such as Sylvia Plath's "Lady Lazarus," is designed to **reveal secret biographical elements in a crypted, coded manner**. You get biographical clues like "Nazi lampshades" (those were lampshades made of human skin ripped off of Jews in Nazi concentration camps) and the German words "Herr Doktor" that indicate the author's Jewish descent and fluency in the German language. But unless you study Sylvia Plath's life, you could never guess what it is that she did once every ten years, or why she felt overpowered by this demon-like figure in her life, the doctor she calls both God and Lucifer in this poem. Sylvia Plath was allegedly sexually abused by her father who was a doctor between the ages of 5 and 10 when her father died and she first attempted to commit suicide; the poem tells us she attempted

suicide three times. She then landed in a marriage with an abusive husband who cheated on her. A few months after she wrote this poem, she insulated her three children's bedrooms by tucking wet towels around their doors, turned on the gas stove, and stuck her head into the oven, where her maid found her dead sometime later that morning.

Psychological criticism = analyzes the psychic mechanisms of the author, the characters, and the readers. Psychologists Carl Jung and Sigmund Freud delved into analyzing the mechanisms of the human unconscious, particularly through dreams.

As a psychological critic, you could argue that Sylvia Plath showed vivid signs of mental instability and depression in her poem "Lady Lazarus," or you could talk about how this poem makes you feel as a reader, or simply analyze the character of "Herr Doktor" (Mr. Doctor) who both offers love and protection as a god and inflicts pain as a demon.

Week 13

Historical criticism analyzes the impact of historical events on works of art, looks at the way in which the meaning of art changes as society changes, and regards art as a repository of history. For literature, the historical impact is a two-way street: historical realities influence the writings, and on the other hand, some writings bear strong activist powers that push for historical changes. Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* reflected the historical realities of the time in which it was written (namely the atrocities of slavery), but it also acted as a catalyst of change, empowering abolitionist circles and triggering the emancipation of slaves.

The poem "The Times They Are A-Changing" by Bob Dylan points out historical cycles marked by changes caused by generational differences and social classes upheavals. Above all, the poet emphasizes the need for individuals to adapt to these historical changes as a matter of survival. These verses represent in fact the lyrics of the song with the same title sung by Bob Dylan that you can listen to on **Content**→**Handouts**.

Week 14

The *Stalin Mass Murder Documentary* and Richard Wurmbrand's *Blessings from Suffering* posted on **Content**→**Handouts** show you a part of world history you may not be very familiar with. They are meant to enhance your insight into historical criticism, especially that there are many literary productions out there that depict communism, a regime that imprisoned, starved, and exterminated millions of people.

The Stalin documentary explains the starvation in Ukraine in 1932 that was an attempt by the central Russian government to keep Ukraine in their empire. If you watch international news, you probably know that Ukraine is still struggling to gain its independence from Russia, and Russia has been suppressing Ukrainians by military occupation.

Richard Wurmbrand was a Jewish Lutheran pastor who was kept in Romania's communist prison for fourteen years for his faith, and who is telling in this interview the story of a Christian woman, Anne-Marie, who led her communist torturer in jail to believe in Christ. Her words ring true and can touch our hearts today: "You have beautiful lips. Is it not better to use your lips to

say beautiful words instead of cursing? You have beautiful hands. Is it not better to use your hands to caress, to do good, and not to harm others?"

Sociological criticism = analyzes literature in the cultural, economic, and political context in which it is written or consumed. As Wilbur Scott said, "Art is not created in a vacuum," so everything that happens around the writer and readers will influence the content and the interpretation of literature.

Cultural Studies is a spin-off of sociological criticism, with a focus on the impact of cultural elements in literature. It is now standing on its own as an autonomous field of study, given particularly the strong trends of globalism that require cross-cultural versatility in all areas of information technologies and services.

Gender criticism relates to activist literature, such as writings promoting feminism and LGBT integration. Unfortunately, male affirmation remains little to none, which has led to what many have labeled as a "crisis in masculinity" triggered by socio-scientific developments thanks to which men are no longer indispensable for economic support and reproduction. Gender critics examine the impact of literature on social change in terms of gender roles. The twentieth century debuted with granting women the right to vote and to delve in a sexual liberation whirlpool. Advantages such as education and freedom to choose a spouse were followed by a strong tendency to blur gender and sexual borders which secured much needed social acceptance for people along the sexual orientation spectrum along with severe cases of depression, suicide, and a spike in AIDS proliferation. We need to learn to use our freedom well.

Reader-Response criticism examines the interpretation of readers and holds that a piece of literature can become anything in any reader's vision. Because readers make of a work of literature anything they wish, they may be regarded as co-authors. French literary critic Roland Barthes went so far as to announce "The Death of the Author" in his 1967 essay by this title, arguing that readers' interpretations add to the identity of a literary work.

Deconstructionist criticism resembles formalism and may produce unexpected and unconventional interpretations of literature, focusing on conflicts and contradictions. A deconstructionist critic would demolish traditional meaning before constructing surprising interpretations.

As you read our last poem this week, "Bilingual," try to look at it from various criticism perspectives. What can you infer about gender roles in the Hispanic and Anglo societies? Who rules at home? What ideological barriers is the author breaking as a woman pursuing a career? What do we learn about the Hispanic culture from this poem? If you were to look at cultural, economic, and political factors that emerge from this poem, what could you tell about the socio-economic status of this immigrant family in relation to the current political environment (pros and cons of an immigration reform in favor of illegal immigrants).

The **Poetry Test (PT)** due this week may contain elements of literary theory from **all** genres as described in the **Lectures Notes**.

Take advantage of the opportunity to make some bonus points by taking the Extra-Credit Test this week. Note that even if you answer correctly all the questions on this test, the maximum you can earn is 30 pts., which represent 3% of your final grade in this course.

Week 15

Take the Extra Credit Test (OPTIONAL) located on Quizzes.

Week 16

Review all readings, materials, and Lecture Notes to prepare for the **Final Exam**.

Week 17

You have worked hard this semester, and you are almost there now! This week, you will submit your final exam which contains questions based on the Lectures Notes and the literature readings you were assigned throughout this course. Although this is an open-book exam, it would be hard to answer the questions if you have not done these readings on time and if you have not actively participated in the discussions. Remember that you can use all and any materials while taking it, BUT the time constraints won't allow you to look for information and process it quickly enough to answer the questions.

*

* *

Thank you for being part of this wonderful learning experience! Hopefully you will take with you from this class valuable learning and writing skills that will make your college path considerably easier. And keep your eagerness to study and to be successful at whatever you do!