Due Dates:  
September 28, 2006:  Prospectus (50-100 words, typed) due in class.  
October 10, 2006:  Paper 1 due in class. Electronic version must be e-mailed to me (campbelld@wsu.edu) by 9 p.m.  
Length: 5-7 pages

The first paper will be a close critical reading of an aspect of one or more of the novels we have read. The choice of topics is somewhat open; however, your choice should demonstrate your ability to ask and answer interesting questions about the works, to read carefully, to interpret with skill and insight, and to write a clear, well-organized paper.

This paper consists of two parts: a typed prospectus (50-100 words) and a 5-6 page critical analysis of one of the topics listed below. Your paper can be a bit longer than this if you need more space for your analysis.

The prospectus is a brief typed proposal that covers (1) the overall subject of your paper; (2) its thesis or overall argument; (3) the works to be covered; (4) outside sources, if any. Turning in the paper’s introductory paragraph will also satisfy the prospectus requirement. The prospectus is not graded, but if it is not turned in, the paper will lose five points (1/2 of a grade).

Papers should be 5-7 typed, double-spaced pages long. Use a standard (11-12 point) font and be sure to number each page. Staple the pages together, and do not use paper clips or a plastic report cover. Use MLA style for citing sources. You must turn in a computer-readable (electronic) version by e-mailing your paper to me, campbelld@wsu.edu. The paper will not count and will not be graded until the electronic version is turned in.

Guidelines

Content is very important, but good organization, sentence structure, and editing skills are also important. Papers with comma splices, agreement errors, and other problems will be penalized accordingly. Citations and the Works Cited page should follow MLA format.

Your paper should be limited enough to provide a specific thesis and a close analysis of the texts; repeating broad, obvious generalities (i.e., “Women were limited by society’s expectations in the nineteenth century”) or ideas we have discussed in class will not be sufficient.

Topics

1. The evasive "I": narrative technique and point of view in The Blithedale Romance or Moby-Dick. What is the effect of first-person narration in one or both of these books? In what way does it multiply or complicate the novels’ themes? What does the first-person narrator expose, explain, or conceal?

2. All three of these works (The Blithedale Romance, Moby-Dick, and The Portrait of a Lady) examine the idea of the “foreign” versus the “familiar”: that is, they explore their protagonist’s fears about, and sometimes acceptance of, characters of another race, culture, or religion. Examine this idea in any one or two of the novels.

3. In a famous essay on The Blithedale Romance, Philip Rahv argues that Zenobia is one of Hawthorne’s “dark ladies,” as is Hester in The Scarlet Letter, Beatrice in “Rappaccini’s Daughter,” and Miriam in The Marble Faun. Rahv contends that Hawthorne treats these characters unjustly and that “inevitably the dark lady comes to a bad end while the blond is awarded all the prizes.” Leslie Fiedler makes a more sweeping statement about this issue in Love and Death in the American Novel, suggesting that James Fenimore Cooper does the same thing (in The Last of the Mohicans, for example). Would you agree with this assessment? What attitudes in literature or in nineteenth-century American culture does it reflect? Choosing one other work, consider Zenobia and The Blithedale Romance in light of these ideas.

4. Examine closely a single pattern or a few closely related patterns of images or themes in The Blithedale Romance or Moby-Dick. See the “Reading Questions on Moby Dick” handout for suggestions.

5. Choose one of the chapters in The Blithedale Romance or Moby-Dick and, through close reading, show the ways in which it exemplifies or relates to the book as a whole.

6. Your own topic. Some of you have already sketched out some interesting ideas in your weblogs; choose one that might lend itself to further discussion and develop it into a paper.