English 368  
Spring 2010 Paper 2 Assignment

Timetable:

**February 18, 2010**. Prospectus due (50-100 words, typed): please e-mail it to campbelld@wsu.edu so that I can get comments back to you more quickly.

**February 25, 2010**. Paper 1 typed rough draft due in class for the workshop.

**March 2, 2010**. Paper 1 is due. If you are turning in a paper version, it is due at the beginning of class. Turning in a paper version is optional. Your electronic version must be e-mailed to me (campbelld@wsu.edu) by 9 p.m. You must turn in an electronic version.

Requirements

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 three parts: a typed prospectus (50-100 words), a rough typed draft for the workshop, and a 5-7 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 and the rough draft are not graded, but if they are not turned in, the paper will lose five points (1/2 of a grade) for missing either the prospectus or the draft.

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 at 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*. 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. To what extent are characters in one or more of these novels punished or rewarded for being "behind a mask"--that is, assuming a disguise, a personality, or a life not their own?
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." 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. What conflicting, if implicit, definitions of "American" and "foreign" operate in any one of these novels? In what ways do they establish the idea of "American"?

5. Choose a chapter, pattern of imagery, or symbol in one of the novels and, through close reading, show the ways in which it exemplifies or relates to the book as a whole.

6. Examine the role that setting, space, and boundaries play in at least one of these novels. To what extent does the space or terrain that a character inhabits signify something about his or her nationality or sense of belonging?

7. In what ways do some or all of these novels critique idealism, or, more specifically, characters who pursue their own ideals at all costs?

8. 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.