HUMN 222 Office Hours: TR 1-2 PM

TR 2:30-4:10 PM Welles 225A

Black Humanities:

*The 1619 Project, A New Origin Story*

**Maria Helena Lima**

Spring 2023

**About Our Course**:

"What we understand about our history is the foundation for how we explain the present and the justification, the rationale for how we plan for the future"--Karin Wulf's Introduction to *the New York Times* Panel on "Slavery and the American Revolution."

HUMN 222 takes on *The New York Times* challenge to reframe American history, to consider the possibility that the origin of this country can be traced to 1619, the year that marks the arrival of the first enslaved Africans (from the land that would become Angola) to the land that would become the United States, in all its defining contradictions. Out of slavery, according to Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones, grew nearly everything that has truly made America exceptional. To name only a few:

its economic might;

its industrial power;

its electoral system, diet and popular music;

the inequities of its public health and education;

its income inequality;

systemic racism;

its legal system and the endemic racial fears and hatreds that continue to plague the nation to this day.

The American Documents set for the world a blueprint for freedom and equality despite the nation’s history of widespread injustice. The seeds for all that were planted long before the country’s official birth date, in 1776, when the men known as our founders formally declared independence from Britain.

We will read the book version of *the 1619 Project: A New Origin Story*, also focusing on the power of literature to represent the challenges to reframing American history.

**Course Objectives**: Students will

* explore the role of transatlantic slavery and its challengers (i.e. the Haitian Revolution) in the creation of European (white) modernity;
* explore the power of literature to represent the complexity of the African Diaspora and of African American realities, emphasizing the power of alternative (non-hegemonic) versions of history;
* consider moral, social, and political issues from an interdisciplinary perspective in an effort to understand how “we got to be this way” and then work to change the U.S. national imaginary and dismantle white supremacy.

**GLOBE Outcomes: (1)** Diversity, Pluralism, and Power (2) World Cultures and Values

and (3) Creativity and Innovation

**SUNY GenEd**: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice (DEISJ)

**About Maria Helena Lima**:

I have been teaching Humanities since the fall of 1992, but only in the fall of 2019 have I been able to add “Black Humanities” to the Geneseo General Education curriculum. I’m not saying Geneseo is unique in its resistance to dismantle white supremacy. What I’ve realized after many years of trying to decolonize the curriculum is how much easier it is to teach the way we’ve been taught – that everything started in Europe – because there’s comfort in the familiar. I agree with bell hooks, however, that true learning only happens with discomfort (and lots of it).

**Course Materials:**

1. the book we will read together, *the 1619 Project: A New Origin Story,* is a dramatic expansion of a groundbreaking work of journalism, offering a meaningful representation of the American past and present.
2. Supplementary materials can be found on Canvas and/or will be shared by email, so **you should check your email at least once a day** because news that is relevant to the course is happening EVERY DAY.
3. You can access *the Guardian, the Nation, The Progressive* and other national and international newspapers and magazinesonline.

I will show some sections of these documentaries in class, but you will be so much smarter if you watch them in their entirety. They can be used as sources for your final paper, the one that requires research. They are available in *Films on Demand, Netflix,* and/or *YouTube.*

*Africa’s Greatest Civilizations*  
<https://proxy.geneseo.edu/login?url=https://fod.infobase.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?seriesID=147146&wID=16099>

*Africans in the Americas: The Terrible Transformation*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GnV4QgbiF5Y&t=1774s>

*“Egalite for All: Toussaint Louverture and the Haitian Revolution”* at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3R4DQ4DlP4I>

*Reconstruction: America after the Civil War*<https://proxy.geneseo.edu/login?url=https://fod.infobase.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?seriesID=195812&wID=16099>

*The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution*

<https://proxy.geneseo.edu/login?url=https://fod.infobase.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?wID=16099&xtid=151306>

*13th* (the documentary) – [available through Netflix].

*Amend* : the Fight for America– Six-episode series is now available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1h9gmJxvZU0> **(preview)**

**Our Plan of Action**

**Our class meets every Tuesday and Thursday – Attendance is mandatory.** If you have extenuating circumstances, contact me by email ASAP to request either a google meet link or a classmate FaceTime invitation. Remember that 25% of your grade comes from participation. You cannot participate without being there. But sometimes even these ptions are not feasible so read the following very closely.

**Guide to Taking Notes for the Class (with thanks to Alice Rutkowski!)**

**Notetakers will be rewarded with EXTRA CREDIT**

●      Briefly summarize main ideas & talking points

●      Do not try to write everything that was said word for word

●      There’s no need to rewrite anything if it was said more than once

●      No need to include names or who said what (except if it’s an important announcement, such as a paper being due soon, or date changed)

●      Use an easy-to-read font like Times New Roman 12 and 1.5 spacing

●      There is no page requirement, so you should not be trying to make the notes longer than necessary (size is never an indication of quality or value)

●      Most important: think about what you want to know if you had missed class and were trying to catch up.

Making up Missed Classes

Please do not come to class if you feel sick. There is a simple process to make up missed classes, so it doesn’t affect your grade. Contact a student in the class for the notes of the day you missed.  DO NOT EMAIL ME to find out what you have missed. I hate those emails. So,

if you have missed class, this is what you do:

Read the notes from the class meeting in their entirety

1. Write two short paragraphs – each should describe a valuable insight you learned from reading your classmate’s notes
2. Write at least one question you still have about the class material covered that day
3. Email this material (put it in the body of an email, no need for a separate doc attached) to me.  The subject heading of the email should state your name and the date you missed class. The notes should have the name of the notetaker so they will earn extra credit for their effort.
4. You will get an email from me confirming that your makeup has been noted. If you do not receive such an email within ONE WEEK of your email, feel free to follow up and nag me.

**STUDENT HOURS**: I only have two “official/scheduled” office hours, but I will always be available to meet via Zoom or Google Meet. We will schedule an appointment through email. ALL COMMUNICATIONS between you and me will be via email, so you should check your emails frequently. You will email me requesting an appointment (I check emails every hour if not more often), and we will find a mutually agreeable time. If you don’t hear from me right away, texting is also an option although sometimes I forget to charge my IPhone…

**Contact Information**:

Email address: lima@geneseo.edu

Office # (585) 245-5242

Mobile # (585) 775-2118 (for F/T and WhatsApp)

**Assignments and Portfolio Grading:**

HUMN 222 is non-graded until the final grade. You must complete ALL written work to pass the course. You are also responsible for ALL readings, whether or not we have time to fully discuss them in class. Your final grade will depend upon attendance, active and engaged participation, including the day you lead the discussion (25%), progress in writing critically: two essays and their many revisions (65%) and a reflective essay written on the day of the final (10%) will be assessed.

I will return papers at individual ZOOM conferences, and you will be able to revise them for an “A.” I usually do not penalize late papers, but I need to know **before the assignment is due** that you need more time. Do NOT miss class on the days an essay is due.

**Portfolio Grading:** The writing assignments you turn in are first drafts.  While they should be free of spelling errors and grammatical mistakes (i.e., not rough drafts), they will not be finished products.  Think of them as work-in-progress—not graded until revised and reworked to “perfection.”  Your portfolio will be an extension and development of your work during the semester.

I tell all my students on the first day, the highest grade they can anticipate (if they do not talk in class) is a B- even if they can write like God themselves. Note that I will make a note of times you come to class unprepared. We need to look at specific passages TOGETHER, and your memory of the text will not be enough. If I fear many students have not done the assigned reading, **I’ll reserve the right to quiz the whole class on the material due that day to reward the students who are prepared.**

**WRITING:** Papers are to be typed, preferably Times New Roman 12’ font, with one and a half spacing and 1" margins, following MLA conventions for parenthetical citation and Works Cited. Your name, the title of the course, my name, and the date the paper is turned in should be typed on the top-left of the page, single-spaced; the title should be centered on the page, below all that. I do NOT use Canvas for paper submission and grading. You will submit ALL writing in google.docs or via email, a WORD file attachment: **your name is what appears on the subject line of the file you will email me as an attachment.** We’ll schedule a ZOOM appointment to go over my suggestions for revision.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS: **This schedule may change at any time according to class needs and demands. You need to be in class to note such changes or resort to the class list (our email addresses and phone numbers) to inquire about them. The class list is also a wonderful way to build community and make lasting friendships.**

**Week 1**

**(1/24-26)** Let’s get to know one another. For homework, you will write a paragraph (summary with a purpose) about the classmate you interview and email it to me. I need to see what kind of writer you already are. We’ll share a file called “WHO WE ARE” archiving your short bios.

Overview of the course/shared assumptions about the Humanities/who counts as human; Student-centered discussions: the day you’ll lead the discussion on a literary text/ the “moves that matter in academic writing”/ portfolio grading explained.

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| |  | | --- | | **Watch the PBS and CBS interviews with Nikole Hannah-Jones on the 1619 Project to decide**  **whether this class is for you:**  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7xzNyrFhzew> and | |

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q14BTdS6BRc>

Start reading the literary texts framing each chapter to find the one that grabs you – you will sign up to lead the discussion on that day (first come, first serve REMEMBER THAT), and the first paper you will write for the course will be about that text. I will have samples of discussion guides and papers from former students on canvas.

**Week 2**

**(1/31)** WATCH *Africa’s Greatest Civilizations*  
<https://proxy.geneseo.edu/login?url=https://fod.infobase.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?seriesID=147146&wID=16099>

Read (1) “Origins,” the Preface of *the 1619 Project* by Nikole Hannah-Jones (xvii-xxxiii).

**(2/2)** WATCH *Africans in the Americas: The Terrible Transformation*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GnV4QgbiF5Y&t=1774s>

“The White Lion,” a poem by Claudia Rankine (3-4).

**Week 3**

**(2/7) Kaelin Faery will lead the discussion on** “Daughters of Azimuth,” a poem by Nikky Finney (39-41).

Read Helen Scott’s “Was There a Time before Race” and my summary of *The Terrible Transformation* and Helen Scott’s argument (they are both on Canvas).

**(2/9)** Read(1) “Democracy,” Chapter 1 by Nikole Hannah-Jones (7-36).

(2) “Loving Me,” a poem by Vievee Francis (43).

**Week 4**

**(2/14 and 2/16) Classes cancelled this week because I was sick ☹ I’m really sorry.**

**You should have read** (1) “Traffic,” Chapter 16 by Kevin M. Kruse (405-10).

(2) **“**Why the D&C is looking back at how Rochester’s racial disparities emerged” (handout)

(3) “What’s Special about My Town: Rochester” (James Fallows, *The Atlantic)*

**Week 5**

**( 2/21)** Read (1) “proof [dear Phillis], a poem by Eve L. Ewing (93-4). **[ Genesis Flores]**

(2) “Race,” Chapter 2 by Dorothy Roberts (45-61).  (3) “Sugar,” Chapter 3 by Khalil Gibran Muhammad (71-87).

**(2/23)** Read (1) “First to Rise,” a poem by Yusef Komunyakaa (89-90). [**Annabella Vargas]**

(2) “Trouble the Water,” by Barry Jenkins (157-58). **[Alexander Rodriguez]**

**Week 6**

**(2/28) Diversity Summit -- required attendance to keynote and at least one panel -**

**I will be there the whole day 😊**

**(3/ 2)** Read (1) “Dispossession,” Chapter 5 by Tiya Miles (135-55).

(2) “Sold South,” by Jesmyn Ward (161-62). **[Joe Morse and Paris Paciorek**]

`` (3)“Before His Execution,” poem by Tim Seibles (191-92). **[Bethany Cobb]**

Also read Terry Eagleton’s “In Praise of Marx” (on canvas) and write a response for next class (email it to me).

**Week 7**

**(3/ 7) [Class on Zoom]** Read (1) “Capitalism,” Chapter 6 by Matthew Desmond (165-85).

(2) “We as People,” poem by Cornelius Eady (211-12). [**Jenna McFarland and Mai Harris]**

(3) “A Letter to Harriet Hayden,” by Lynn Nottage (215-17**).**

**(3/ 9) [Class on Zoom]** Read **(1)** “Other Persons,” poem by Reginald Dwayne Betts

(129-33). [**Lauren Badolato]**

Writing a Literary Analysis explained: start with the literary timeline

Sample Essay Analyzed: Ryan McDonald’s essay on “At the Superdome After the Storm Has Passed,” by Clint Smith: “The Tragic Reality of Tragedy”

**Week 8**

**(3/14-16) SPRING BREAK**

**Week 9**

**(3/21) Welcome back! Midterm essay is due today**

**We are watching HULU’s *The 1619 Project* in class today: “Capitalism”**

**(3/23)** Read (1) “Fear,” Chapter 4 by Leslie Alexander and Michelle Alexander (97-122)

*“Egalite for All: Toussaint Louverture and the Haitian Revolution”* at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3R4DQ4DlP4I>

(2) “Freedom Is Not for Myself Alone,” by Robert Jones, Jr. (125-26).

**Week 10**

**(3/28)** Read (1) “Inheritance,” Chapter 11 by Trymaine Lee (293-305).

(2) “Bad Blood,” poem by Yaa Gyasi (311-12). [**Kennedi Spencer**]

(3) “The New Negro,” poem by A. Van Jordan (307-8**). [Thalia Maynor]**

**(3/30)** Read (1) Politics,” Chapter 7 by Jamelle Bouie (195-208).

(2) “Citizenship,” Chapter 8 by Martha S. Jones (219-36).

(3) “The Camp,” by Darryl Pinckney (239-42).

**Week 11**

**4/ 4) Read** Stacey Patton, “Who’s Afraid of Black Sexuality.” *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (December 3, 2012)—on canvas

WATCH *Amend: The Fight for America –* Episode 6 --Marriage and the XIV Amendment <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sGZ6OeL5aTE>

**(4/ 6)** Read (1) “Church,” Chapter 13 by Anthea Butler (335-53).

(2) “Youth Sunday,” poem by Rita Dove (355).

(3) “On ‘Brevity,’” poem by Camille T. Dungy (356). **[Sydney Miller]**

**Week 12**

**(4/11)**              Read (1)

(2) “Race Riot,” poem by Forrest Hamer (285-86). [Samuel Hashton]

(3) “Greenwood,” poem by Jasmine Mans (289-91). **[Shannon Keenan]**

**(4/13)**  Read (1) “Self-Defense,” Chapter 9 by Carol Anderson (249-66).

*The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution*

<https://proxy.geneseo.edu/login?url=https://fod.infobase.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?wID=16099&xtid=151306>

(2) “no car for colored [+] ladies (or, miss wells goes off [on] the rails),” a poem by Evie Shockley (273). **[Sara Ortiz]**

**Week 13**

**(4/18)** Read (1) “Medicine,” Chapter 12 by Linda Villarosa (315-23).

(2) “1955,” poem by Danez Smith (325-26). **[Owen Reed & Paulo Martinez-Sanchez]**

(3) “From behind the Counter,” by Terry McMillan (329-32). **[Sarah Sfeir & Amanda Cruz]**

**(4/20)** Read (1) “Healthcare,” Chapter 15 by Jeneen Interlandi (387-94).

(2) “Unbought, Unbossed, Unbothered,” by Nafissa Thompson-Spires (397-99).

(3) “Crazy When You Smile,” poem by Patricia Smith (401-02). **[Matthew Kenyon]**

**Week 14**

**(4/ 25)** Read (1) “Music,” Chapter 14 by Wesley Morris (359-79).

We’ll WATCH the HULU episode on MUSIC

(2) “Quotidian,” poem by Natasha Trethewey (381-82).

**(4/26) WEDNESDAY – GREAT Day - no classes. You are required to attend at least two presentations. Your responses will count as extra-credit towards your participation grade. I will be at the Keynote – a signature will suffice there. 😊**

**(4/27)** Read (1) “The Panther Is a Virtual Animal,” poem by Joshua Bennett (385).

### **[Angelina Roberts & Gabi Thomas]**

(2)“Rainbows Aren’t Real, Are They,” by Kiese Laymon (413-14). **​ [Margaret Nwankpa]**

(3) “A Surname to Honor Their Mother” by Gregory Pardlo (417-18). **[Olive and Dylan]**

**Week 15**

**(5/ 2)** Read (1) “Progress,” Chapter 17 by Ibram X. Kendi (421-40) [**Yaro B. Martinez]**

(2) “At the Superdome after the Storm Has Passed,” by Clint Smith (443-44).

(3) “Mother and Son” by Jason Reynolds (447-48). [**Yaro B. Martinez]**

### **(5/ 4)** Read (1) “Justice,” Chapter 18 by Nikole Hannah-Jones (451-76)

### (2) “Progress Report,” poem by Sonia Sanchez (479-80**). [Sage Kearney]**

**Week 16**

**(5/ 9) Editing Day for Final Essay – Bring your draft to exchange with a classmate.**

**(5/11) STUDY DAY: Final Paper and Portfolio are DUE by 4 PM – MY OFFICE.**

**Week 17**

***FINAL EXAM DAY***: Monday, 5/15, 3:30-6:50 pm—**Self-Reflective Essay written in class**

**Black Humanities: Course Rationale**

“The metaphor of racism as a kind of global political struggle for territory has often been far more than a mere metaphor. European modernity, and the colonial projects that informed and supported it (both intellectually and materially), can be understood as the effort to purify the world for whiteness. The “geography of reason” has always been understood in racial terms, and colonialism was an effort to establish Europe and North America at the center of a globe whose organizing principle was this racialised understanding of rationality” --Michael Monahan, *The Creolising Subject* (2011).

The history of Africans and people of African descent lies at the center of the history of all humanity. For this reason, the tale of modernity cannot be told without full attention to their presence and global interconnections. Our course focuses on Modernity and the constitution of the modern ego – the European—that organizes the initial world-system and places itself at the center of history over and against a periphery that, we will argue, is equally constitutive of modernity. The forgetting of this periphery, which took place from the end of the fifteenth, Hispanic-Lusitanian century to the beginning of the seventeenth century, has led great thinkers of the center to commit what decolonial theorists call the Eurocentric fallacy in understanding modernity. According to Enrique Dussel, Kant ("Answering the Question: "What is Enlightenment?" [1784]) would not have been able to conceptualize the "exit of humanity ...from a state of self-caused immaturity" without the "encounter." As the first to leave Europe with official authorization (since, unlike earlier voyages, his was in no way clandestine), Columbus initiated modernity. Later with Cortés, the "I-conquistador" forms the proto-history of the Cartesian ego cogito and constitutes its own subjectivity as will-to-power. As to who the "lazy and the cowards" Kant refers to may be, the "causes which bind the great part of humanity" in what he characterizes as "this frivolous state of immaturity," Dussel offers the indigenous peoples in the Americas (and later in Africa). Latin America, we must not forget, was the first colony of modern Europe since Europe constituted it as its first periphery, before Africa and Asia.

In Dussel's formulation, European Renaissance explorers invented the Asiatic being of the American continent to leave the three parts of the world—Europe, Africa, and Asia—intact. The Asiatic being of these islands and peoples existed only in the aesthetic and contemplative fantasy of the "great navigator" and of those who followed him. As a result, according to Dussel, the Amerindian disappeared to be replaced by an Asiatic shadow (Dussel 32). Whereas canonical modernity gestated in the free, creative medieval European cities, in Dussel's revisioning it came to birth in Europe's confrontation with the Other. By controlling, conquering, and violating the Other, Europe defined itself as discoverer, conquistador, and colonizer of an alterity likewise constitutive of modernity. Modernity is the result, not the cause, of this occurrence, although the managerial position of Europe permits it to think of itself as the reflexive consciousness of world history, and to exult in its values, inventions, discoveries, technology, and political institutions as its exclusive achievement. Even capitalism is the fruit, not the cause, of Europe's world extension and its centrality in the world-system. Modernization initiates an ambiguous course by touting a rationality opposed to primitive, a process which, according to Dussel, culminates in Descartes' presentation of the ego cogito.

By placing Europe at the center of narratives of progress and civilization and European man as its highest achievement, the Enlightenment managed to leave Africans outside analytical history, forever requiring European rescue. Hegel’s introduction to his *Philosophy of History* indeed positsan inferior species that, in Michelle Wright’s words, “just happened to be in need of Western influence when the West just happened to need that African’s exploited labor, land, and natural resources” the most (30). When Hegel explains that the world is ruled by reason, which functions as the “Infinite Power,” its own “Infinite Material” and consequently the “Substance” and “Infinite Energy” of the “Universe,” locating the origins of philosophical thought in ancient Greece, he determines Europe to be both the birthplace of this method and the only region capable of producing it. Reason is produced as synonymous with European values and standards and, consequently, that which he determines as irrational is simultaneously characterized as non-European. As Hegel writes, “Universal history goes from East to West. Europe is absolutely the end of universal history. Asia is the beginning. Universal history is the discipline of the indomitable natural will directed toward universality and subjective liberty” (Hegel 138). The whole “science” of the 19th century indeed characterized Africans as “less capable of reason.” As Walter Mignolo explains further,

Since the Renaissance the *rhetoric of modernity was and continues to be built on the logic of coloniality: the denial and disavowal of non-European local times and spaces and non-European ways of life.*  The rhetoric of modernity was built on the opposition between Christian and non-Christians, masculine and feminine, white and nonwhite, progress and stagnation, developed and underdeveloped, First and Second/Third World. […] When Christians encountered lands and people they did not know and baptized the people Indians and the land Indies, and when later on in the sixteenth century the trade of enslaved Africans began, it was necessary to situate the human and humanity in relation to people whom the Bible did not account for, and in relation to the massive contingents of enslaved Africans displaced to Indias Occidentales. If the inhabitants of Indias Occidentales became *Indians*, enslaved Africans became *Black* and, therefore, lesser beings in relation to the prototype of the (*White*) human. (155-56, emphases in the original).

Works Cited

*Africa’s Great Civilizations*, a six-hour documentary with Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

*Africans in the Americas: The Terrible Transformation* (PBS Documentary).

Buck-Morss, Susan. “Hegel and Haiti.” *Critical Inquiry*. Vol 26. No. 4 (Summer 2000): 821-65.

Dussel, Enrique. *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of 'the Other' and the Myth of Modernity*. Continuum, 1995

Fischer, Sibylle. Modernity Disavowed: *Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*. Duke UP, 2004.

Hegel, Georg. *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History. Introduction: Reason in History*. H.B. Nisbet, trans. Cambridge UP, 1975.

Kant, Immanuel. "What Is Enlightenment? [1784]" *The Philosophy of Kant*. Ed. with an introduction by Carl J. Friedrich. The Modern Library, 1993. 145-53

Manning, Patrick. *The African Diaspora: A History through Culture*. Columbia UP, 2009.

Mignolo, Walter D. & Catherine E. Walsh. *On Decoloniality: Concepts. Analytics. Praxis*. Duke UP, 2018.

Monahan, Michael J. *The Creolizing Subject: Race, Reason, and the Politics of Purity*. Fordham UP, 2011.

Wright, Michelle M. *Becoming Black: Creating Identity in the African Diaspora.* Duke UP, 2004.

Midterm Essay (30%): A Literary Historical Analysis

The first step for a successful assignment is for you to choose a poem/literary text that you feel compelled to read *at least* five other times, looking up every allusion, before deciding to write about it ...

You must look up the context for the work (**start with the literary timeline**) and information on the writer to begin to identify themes and purpose.

Your analysis will center on what aspect of history the literary text illuminates. Refer to literary timeline as often as possible.

You will remember Frederick Douglass’s words in his 1892 autobiography: “The story of the master never wanted for narrators. The masters, to tell their story, had at call all the talent and genius that wealth and influence could command. […] Our part has been to tell the story of the slave” (xxviii).

You must remember that when we write about a poem, a play, a novel, a short story, or any other literary work, we argue for our interpretation, using the "facts" in the text as our evidence. A good paper on literature is argumentative: you will try to persuade your reader to read the text **through your vision of it**. Make sure to always contextualize your argument. Knowing the history that is either “the occasion for the text” or behind it is a MUST.

You will let the structure of your argument take priority over the structure of the text. After deciding on what you want to say about the text you are reading, you will find the best possible way of organizing your argument. The chronology of a novel, the scenes in a play or the sequence of stanzas in a poem are only very rarely the best way of organizing your argument because you may very easily sound as if you are retelling the story (plot summary), the poem, the play, rather than saying something **original** about it.

It is also very important to reach a certain balance between points you make in your own voice, instances when paraphrasing the text becomes crucial (paraphrasing with a purpose, you will remember), and passages where you allow your reader to hear the author’s voice, but you must avoid hit-and-run-quotes. Although the best evidence is the author's own words, only indent quotes (more than four lines) if *absolutely* necessary. We are adopting the MLA format for parenthetical citation and the “works cited” page. Make sure that all the connections between your claims and the evidence you select are clear. A “bad writer” will pile on quotations without showing how they apply to their argument.

Do not forget that by convention we write about literature in the **present tense**. If you read your paper out loud (which I strongly recommend), you will realize that by writing as if the events are taking place right in front of you, your claims on the work also seem harder to contest.

Make sure your interpretation fits the "facts" and does not neglect major aspects. Your argument will be stronger if you incorporate objections you will try to refute in the body of the paper rather than wait for your reader to remind you of such objections when it is too late. Remember that you are not the first person to write about any given text, nor the last. Your paper should include the existing conversation on the work or the issue.

The most conservative interpreters stick exclusively to the text because they are afraid to take risks. Your interpretations will go beyond the facts of the text to speculate on what they imply, the motivations behind characters' actions, for example, the meanings behind the words on the page. No text contains a single, fixed meaning since readers' determination of meanings are dependent on social, cultural, and literary assumptions that are prone to change.

You are encouraged to write in the first person rather than pretend to be objective/ impartial about what you are saying. Donna Haraway emphasizes the extent to which all knowledge is situated rather than "disembodied." Gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, historical and geographical location compromise the fictions of unified subjects and disinterested knowledges. Pay as much attention to the “what” of the texts you read as to the “who, when, and WHERE” of their production.

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**SELF-EDITING QUESTIONS FOR YOUR WRITING**

1. Does the introduction to the paper provide the background you need to understand the argument/analysis that follows? Does it attract your interest? How would you improve it? Write down the essay’s argument in your own words, as you understand it from reading the introduction. I write my introductions LAST.

2. Read every topic sentence of every paragraph at least twice. Does it introduce the paragraph well? Does it flow nicely from the last sentence of the paragraph that precedes it? Suggest ways of improving transitions and topic sentences. Remember that topic sentences must guarantee transition, establish focus of paragraph and, more important, tell your reader what the paragraph is doing to advance your argument.

3. Does the writer use quotations well? Circle at least two examples in the paper itself. Are there page numbers after every quote? Does the writer remember how to punctuate with quotation marks? How well do the quotes contribute to and support the writer’s argument? MARK ANY HIT-AND-RUN QUOTATION(S). Is there any section in the paper that would benefit from more quotes from the text? How many indented quotes are there? Are they 1.5 spaced without quotation marks and period inside the parentheses? Remember that you only indent if the quote is *longer* than four lines (we are using the MLA format).

4. How much does the writer vary the way to introduce their quotes? Evaluate all verbs used to introduce quotes and paraphrased information. Suggest ways of improving them. Remember that “SAY” is a weak verb. You CANNOT merely write last name and page number to introduce the research material (either a paraphrase or a quote).

5. Can you recognize the writer’s voice, the writer ethos, throughout the paper? Mark the passages in the paper where you miss the writer’s presence. Good writing means never exaggerate, nor condescend—watch for these too.

6. Do you disagree with any of the assertions made about the text(s), either interpretations or evaluations? Are there ways in which you would have handled the argument differently? Suggest ways in which the writer might incorporate your objections (by refuting them) into the paper.

7. Has the writer varied their sentence structure often enough? Could they have combined sentences more effectively? Remember “the arms of your sentence.”

8. Read over the concluding paragraph. Does it merely summarize the paper? What emotion/idea/ question does the writer try to leave you with?

9. Has the writer used the Present Tense consistently?

10. Tell me how reading this paper has given you a new perspective on the essay you are working on yourself.

11. Do you find the title appropriate to the argument? Is it catchy? Can you suggest another one?

12. What about the “works cited” page? Are the sources recent? Is the format MLA?

**Final Paper (35% of your grade)**

You can use the words below as an epigraph to your essay because they reveal why history is important (remember they are also the epigraph for the course).  Your paper will be arguing for the opportunity *the 1619 Project* offers the country to learn a more complete version of its history:

"What we understand about our history is the foundation for how we explain the present and the justification, the rationale for how we plan for the future"

--Karin Wulf's Introduction to the Panel on "Slavery and the American Revolution."

The central question your final paper will be answering is whether you embrace the rewriting of U.S. history with slavery at the core of what the country has become from the standpoint of the discipline/art/science you are focusing on...  Have the findings influenced the scholarship in your field?

You will start your research with the appropriate INDEX (Milne Library page) to find out how *the 1619 Project* has been received in your discipline.  Has your discipline been affected by this new “origin story?”  Every paragraph will be developing an aspect of your argument. Remember that I will read the title, the introduction, the topic sentence in each paragraph and the conclusion and KNOW what grade the paper deserves--either you have a clearly articulated argument, or you don't.​

For example, to build their argument Business/Accounting/Economics majors last fall focused on the following chapters:

(1) Matthew Desmond’s “Capitalism”

(2) Trymaine Lee’s “Inheritance”

(3) Tiya Miles’ “Dispossession”

STEM majors have tackled current miseducation in North American Medical Schools starting with Linda Villarosa’s chapter, “Medicine” and Jeneen Interlandi’s “Healthcare.”

Political Science students have responded to Nikole Hannah-Jones’ chapter, “Democracy,” and Jamelle Bouie’s “Politics.”

Music aficionados have focused on Wesley Morris’ chapter, “Music.”

Students contemplating Law School started with Leslie and Michelle Alexander’s chapter, “Fear,” and Bryan Stevenson’s “Punishment” to build their argument.

These are only suggestions.  I’m going to meet with each and every one of you to make sure you have an argument.

**You need a minimum of SIX (recent) ​sources outside the readings in *the 1619 Project.***These must be cited alphabetically on your "Works Cited" page obviously (MLA format)​ since they will appear in your paper​,​ but they are your textbook and they do not count​ as outside sources​.  Use the MLA format​ for parenthetical citations throughout the text.