A note on papers in English 2080

A good paper in this course, as in many others,

• addresses a real problem or question arising from course readings and viewings, class discussion, the assignment, and its writer’s judgment and experience. (Write on a topic listed on the sheet of prompts. If you want to do something else, consult with the instructor or reader.)

• maintains a position or thesis reflecting its writer’s own judgment — an interesting and probably complex thesis from which intelligent people could learn, perhaps by disagreeing with it. In other words, it doesn't simply "track" or summarize the text(s).

• supports and develops that position with plenty of appropriately interpreted detail from the texts it discusses. (These texts can be plays, films, the introductory matter in the Norton, critical articles, or other resources.) Detail is crucial: you must show readers the bases of your judgment as you develop them on the page. Critical essays live or die on their thoughtful interpretations of concrete details from the text[s].

• discusses the issues with critical detachment. (References to "Shakespeare's magical and sensitive dramatic art" will fall on deaf ears. Jocular mention of "the Bard," by the way, will trigger projectile vomiting in many readers.)

• is original in thought and language, i.e. is your own work except for material drawn from sources, which it fully and explicitly acknowledges. Representing another's work as your own is plagiarism, an infraction of the Academic Integrity Code, which you can consult at http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/Academic/AIC.html. In my courses, the normal penalty for a first infraction of the Code is an "F" in the course.

• makes reference, for all material drawn from sources, in a clear and uniform way. The best method: identify all sources in a “Works Cited” list at the end of the essay, and use MLA-style parenthetical reference throughout. Here's a model for quoting from and making reference to plays in the Norton using act, scene, and line numbers:

    Exclaims Juliet, "I'll to my wedding bed. / And death, not Romeo, take my maidenhead" (3.2.136-7). And later, Romeo asks, at the end of his life, Ah, dear Juliet
    Why art thou yet so fair? Shall I believe That unsubstantial death is amorous
    And that the lean abhorred monster keeps Thee here in the dark to be his paramour? (5.3.101-5)
Both lovers, in varying degrees, strive for what one writer calls "not the satisfaction of love, but its passion" (de Rougemont 15-16).

**Works Cited.** Here are sample "Works Cited" entries for Norton frontmatter and introductory material and for material posted on the Web. If you use other material, use these as models. Needless to say, Web sources need references just like others.


[Note: the second date is the date of access. And please do note: although the seventh MLA Handbook makes URLs optional, sort of, they are required in all electronic citations in this course.]


Zapf, Justin. *Justin’s A+ Term Paper Website.* 1 April 2006. 29 January 2011.  
[Why is this here? Has the writer cited Justin? Well, if any part of the above snippet owes anything to Justin, that must be referenced in the text and he must be cited in the “W.C. & C.” list]