

Take-Home Final Exam
English 2030, Spring 2010 | Dr. Lavery

Answer any **TWO** of the questions below. Respond with two fully developed, articulate, well written, grammatically correct essays of at least 750 words each. Please e-mail it to me by noon, Thursday, May 6 (david.lavery@gmail.com). Put both essays in the same file and name it with your last name.

Think of all these questions as open-ended "leading" questions. I do not, as is typical in essay exams ("Please explain the political, economic, sociological, and historical causes and effects of The New Deal in 20,000 words or less"), know the answers in advance. These questions do not have prefabricated "correct" answers. In reading and evaluating them, I will be judging how well you set about attempting to answer them as much as I will their equivalence to some idealized model. Try to make any case you set out to make convincing and imaginative. Write well, cite examples from the text, and convince me you have learned something, and you will be rewarded with a good grade.

1. We began the semester by reading A. E. Housman's "Terence This is Stupid Stuff" (you can find a copy here: <http://www.bartleby.com/123/62.html>), a poem, recall, in which a very pessimistic poet defends his depressing poetry and presents a theory of literature as a sort of immunization. Using at least three works we read this semester (any genre), show how they might immunize the reader.
2. We have read several women writers this semester, including Emily Dickinson, Kate Chopin, Elizabeth Bishop, Mary Oliver, Flannery O'Connor, Katherine Mansfield, Lee Smith, Z. Z. Packer, Susan Minot. Write an essay arguing for or against the distinctiveness of writing by women.
3. In the *Voices and Visions* film on Robert Frost, the poet announces his desire to be one of the poets who "wish to be understood." In an essay argue that other writers (not just poets) we have read (at least three) should be included in the writers who "wish to be understood" category. Why?
4. Horace Walpole once wrote that "Life is a comedy for those who think, a tragedy for those who feel." In an essay, make a case for two writers we have read this semester who exemplify the tragic and comic mindsets.
5. Several times this semester I have made reference to "the grotesque," a literary form which is half tragic/half comic, producing an ambivalent response in the reader/viewer. Facing the grotesque, it is often said, we do not know whether to laugh or cry. In an essay examine at least three examples from this semester's reading that might be described as grotesque.
6. Dictionary.com offers the following possible definitions for the complex word "irony": a) The use of words to express something different from and often opposite to their literal meaning. b) An expression or utterance marked by a deliberate contrast between apparent and intended meaning. c) A literary style employing such contrasts for humorous or rhetorical effect. d) Incongruity between what might be expected and what actually occurs: "Hyde noted the irony of Ireland's copying the nation she most hated" (Richard Kain). e) An occurrence, result, or circumstance notable for such incongruity. In an essay, examine three prime instances of irony (any kind or type) in this semester's readings.
7. Death is one of literature's great themes. In an essay, examine at least three works we have read this semester that have dealt with death.
8. Sex is one of literature's great themes. In an essay, examine at least three works we have read this semester that have dealt with sex.
9. All narratives (and virtually all poems) are told from a particular point of view ("first person," for example, or "omniscient"). Choose two works (fiction or poetry) and show how the POV shapes the work.
10. During our discussion of poetry, I asked you often (in order to encourage conversion of the seemingly abstract into the concrete) to "film this." In an essay about a single poem, explain how you would film it. (I realize that this may well produce a somewhat unorthodox essay. Go for it.)