JE002: Fundamentals of Literary Analysis

Course Description
Fundamentals of Literary Analysis is a two-semester course designed to develop and strengthen students’ skills in writing, literary interpretation, and critical thinking. A second key goal of this course is to expose students to a variety of major works of English literature in different genres. Students will become familiar with the elements of narrative fiction and gain the tools to productively analyze literary works with attention to form, content, and style. Students will lay the foundation for recognizing the allusions to earlier texts—in particular classical and biblical allusions—that permeate Western literature and will also get a sense of the development of writing systems and literary aesthetics over time. Other concepts covered include figurative language, tone, close reading, prewriting tactics, thesis development, diction and clarity, paragraph unity, argumentative structure, revision, and research.

Course Objectives
By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Recognize classical and biblical allusions;
- Identify different literary genres and their distinguishing qualities;
- Analyze texts in their cultural and historical contexts;
- Analyze the major elements of literary fiction, including plot, character, symbolism, and point of view;
- Identify stylistic features of literary texts, including diction, imagery, and tone;
- Refine a topic into a clear thesis supported with analysis and evidence;
- Use well-chosen textual evidence to support their claims;
- Anticipate counterarguments;
- Write unified and developed paragraphs.

Writing Assignments
Students are expected to compose written responses to the reading they complete for each class. These “informal” assignments, which total approximately 15 – 18 per semester, must be submitted by the time class discussion meets and are often shared or edited in class. Students then select their strongest informal assignments twice in each semester and edit them further to produce a portfolio collection of shorter work. In addition, students complete 3-4 formal assignments each semester, which progress from a single paragraph at the beginning of the year to a 4-page essay at the end of the spring semester. Before each formal assignment is due, students submit drafts and undergo an editing process which may include peer editing, a mandatory writing conference with the instructor, a proofreading exercise, or a combination of all three.

Required Texts
40 Short Stories: A Portable Edition,
edited by Beverly Lawn.
Sample Assignments

Reading Questions for “The Necklace”:
As always, remember that it is essential to be able to point to specific pieces of evidence that support your view. Wherever possible, include evidence from the story (including page numbers) in your responses to these questions so that you can easily point to it when you add to class discussion.

• Why does Mathilde Loisel borrow her friend’s diamond necklace for the ball? What do her motivations for doing so reveal about her character?
• What is ironic about the story’s conclusion?
• Do you find Mathilde Loisel to be a sympathetic character? What was your reaction to her years of knowing ‘the horrible existence of the needy’ (70)?

Paragraph:
Rewrite the last page of Edgar Allen Poe’s “A Cask of Amontillado” the story from Fortunato’s perspective. To do this, you will need to think about what your assessment of his character is, what his narrative ‘voice’ will look like, and how you will make that come across in your rewrite.