

42/59.249 Literature on Technology and Human Values
Short Paper on Values and Domestic Technologies
Paper to be turned in no later than class time on Tuesday, March 10.

For this assignment, worth 10% of your course grade, you will write a brief (3-5 page), argumentative essay of textual analysis. Your thesis and your argument should deal with the theme of this unit and must refer to at least two texts we've considered in class to date. This is not a research assignment; you should be able to write this essay from your reading, your notes, and your intellect. The thesis should represent your own, informed opinion about some feature of your chosen text, and your ensuing argument should support and defend that opinion with specific references to the text and explicit explanations of how those references support your thesis. If you are considering writing about a text other than ones on the syllabus, please **consult me before you begin working**. If you do consult any sources as you prepare your paper, you must include them with proper MLA citations.

Recall the guidelines for argumentative essays from your College Writing classes. I will expect:

- an intelligent, original, thoughtful examination of the texts you're discussing, with lots of detail, explicit analysis, and evidence to support your argument.
- an introduction with a strong, arguable thesis (see the sample below) based on your close reading and personal interpretation, and a clear indication of how you intend to support that thesis.
- an argument rather than an observation, synopsis or summary - a strong thesis will allow you to avoid these common pitfalls.
- logical, coherent, unified paragraphs with topic sentences as you develop and explain your thesis.
- a developed conclusion which reinforces the thesis and which defends your opinion.
- a carefully proofread essay with grammatical sentences and correct punctuation, as well as correct usage and spelling.

Thesis: Your thesis is the most important part of your essay. It can make your writing easy or difficult, and your argument strong or weak. Please take your time in carefully choosing and wording your thesis, as this will save you time and frustration while writing. One way to go about forming an analytical, argumentative thesis is to ask yourself a *why* question, and to make your thesis the answer to that question.

For example: *Why do these texts depict the home as a kind of prison?*

I can formulate a thesis as an attempt to answer the question:

In Fahrenheit 451 and in Demon Seed, Mildred and Susan, two women with very different personalities and value systems are depicted as prisoners within their homes. These texts represent technology as particularly dangerous to women's well-being, but draw divergent conclusions about whether the technology is, in and of itself, neutral, and about the causes of this imprisonment.

With this thesis, I am preparing to argue a thematic point (the question of technological neutrality) **and** a stylistic point (how these writers present terrorized female characters). I am definitely answering a *why* question, as opposed to a question that will lead me to summarize the plot. I can imagine a couple of logical organizational strategies that I could use to structure my argument, which, as you can see, will be an essay mainly contrasting the depictions in these two texts. I have a reasonable expectation that I can actually prove this point by thinking carefully about the evidence presented by the texts.

Physical guidelines for the paper: Do not use a cover page. The essay must be printed; the margins should not exceed 1.25 inches on any side; use a standard 12-point font. At the top of page one, indicate your name, the course number, and the date, with a single return between each item. Include a title for your essay, and center it above the body of the essay. Do not use the title of the text as your essay's title. Do not quote, italicize or underline your own title. Double space the essay; do not insert double returns between paragraphs. Staple your paper in the upper left before you come to class. Do not staple blank pages to your essay.

Please see the syllabus for my policies on late work, extensions, revision, and plagiarism.