The paper topic should include three literary and one visual text (a film or a TV show), or two literary and one visual text. Any/all of these texts (either literary or visual) can be outside the course syllabus. If you wish to go outside the syllabus (which I encourage you to do), think of a work of literature, film, or another pop-culture artifact, in which the representations of masculinity is significant and interesting. I recommend reading and thinking, so that not everyone presents and writes on the same texts. We need a variety of texts for the oral presentations to keep the audience interested.

The texts cannot be selected randomly; they must have a thematic connection to one another. For example: all of them represent connections between masculinity and race, or masculinity and class; all of them represent masculinity as performance, rather than an essential, biological notion; all of them represent complicated relationships between fathers and sons; all of them comment on what it means to be a man in contemporary America; all of them look at manhood at wartime. These are just examples; you may think of a myriad other connections. The thesis will formulate the connection between the texts in a meaningful, analytical manner, as well as point out possible differences between them. Linking all the texts together is extremely important. Always ask for help, if needed.

The paper must be 15 double-spaced pages long (Times New Roman 12 only); the list of Works Cited – which is required - is not part of the 15 pages. That means that each text gets 5 pages of analysis on average. The paper may or may not be broken into 3-4 different sections, by text or by topic (the sections, however, should not become a way to make the paper look longer). It’s OK (though not necessary) to go over 15 pages; however, writing fewer than 15 pages will affect the grade adversely.

The analysis of each text should be detailed, contain evidence from the text (in the form of direct quotations, carefully analyzed) to back up your claims, and should avoid plot summaries (i.e. recounting what happens in a novel or a film). The analysis of visual texts should contain visual evidence (a shot-by-shot analysis of movies, camera work, close-ups, visual characterization (costumes, make-up), the dialogue).

The language of the papers should be scholarly and formal, and they should be as free as possible of grammatical and stylistic errors. Spend a good amount of time on editing and proofreading. A visit to the Writing Center can be very helpful.
Research and Outside Sources:

You are required to use at least 3, but no more than 5 scholarly outside sources. The latest MLA documentation guidelines are available, free of charge, on the Purdue OWL website. One of these may come from the Masculinity Studies Reader or Herbert Sussman’s book, assigned for the class. Others should be found through database research. All sources must be properly acknowledged: see the plagiarism policy on the syllabus.

Here is important information on scholarly sources:
Appropriate sources include articles in scholarly journals, chapters in scholarly collections of essays, and selections from scholarly books. “Scholarly,” in most cases, means that a journal or a book is peer-reviewed and published by a University Press, or by a reputable academic publisher, such as Routledge, Palgrave, Ashgate, Rowman & Littlefield, and a few others. When in doubt about the quality of a source, speak to me. In most cases, online sources are not nearly as reliable as print ones, because they are not peer-reviewed. I discourage you from using online sources.

The outside sources should be relevant to your general topic (say, masculinity and war), but do not have to deal with the exact issue that you are addressing in your paper and do not have to agree with your interpretation.

Search scholarly databases, especially JStore, Project Muse, and the MLA (highly recommended), for recent scholarly work. Because masculinity studies is a very new field, with few exceptions, sources should be recent, ideally published in the last 5 years. Try not to go earlier than 2000.

Writings on gender theory (such as, for example, books or essays by Judith Butler), should you choose to include them, also count as outside sources.

Each source should be quoted at least once and no more than twice. Avoid including more than two long (4 lines or over) quotations from a scholarly source. Quote as much as absolutely necessary. Your ideas come first.

Read critics critically: a scholarly essay is not a piece of evidence to prove your point. Rather, it is a supplement to your own ideas. It is perfectly acceptable to disagree with a critic respectfully, as long as you give reasons for your disagreement.

Schedule: see the course syllabus for all the due dates.

Portfolio:

By May 8th at 5:00 p.m., you are required to upload the paper (which is due May 6th, 2:00 p.m., in hard copy) and self-reflection (to be discussed) to the Blackboard portfolio.
(the guidelines are on the syllabus). The portfolio must be shared with me and the English faculty.

**PRESENTATIONS**

The presentations, which will take place on **Friday afternoon, from 2 to 5 p.m., on May 2nd**, are required of every student in every section of ENG 497A. Please make sure that you are available that afternoon. **I will not be able to assign a final grade to a student who does not do his or her presentation.** Look at the syllabus for a detailed description of what will take place at these presentations.

Your presentation will be approx. 5 double-spaced pages long. You will have 8-10 minutes to speak (most people read from their 5 pages, though it’s OK, and even desirable, to look up from the paper and to make off-the-cuff comments).

There are two ways to organize your presentation:

1) it can be 5 pages from your 15 page seminar paper dedicated to one text (in this case, literary), or
2) it can be a condensed version/summary of your entire 15-page paper, in which you will tell the audience a little bit of what you have to say on each of the 3-4 texts, explaining how you had made a connection between them.

Number # 2 is preferred, though not required: it makes a better impression on the audience, and presents your work to a greater advantage.

Individual topics will also be discussed and adjusted to ensure a variety of topics.

**On April 21st and 23rd, in class, we will rehearse our presentations.** Every student will get to present his/her paper in a supportive environment over the course of two classes and will receive constructive feedback from the class, as well as advice from me on enhancing his/her presentation skills. **On April 21st and 23rd, you will also submit to me the titles and 500-word descriptions of your talks, which I will give to Prof. Vogrin, who organizes the senior presentations.**

**SUGGESTED TOPICS**

These are suggestions only; you are welcome to come up with your own topics. I have included the texts on the syllabus that are appropriate for the topic; feel free to substitute/add.

- Father-son Relationships (**A Lie about My Father, My Son’s Story, Boyz-n-the-Hood, Manhood for Amateurs**)
- Suburbia, Masculinity, and the American Dream (**“The Country Husband,” American Beauty, Grand Rapids, Hung**)
- Masculinity and Race (**Boyz-n-the-Hood, My Son’s Story, Trumpet**)

Masculinity and Class (a discussion of working-class and/or middle-class models of masculinity): Manhood for Amateurs, A Lie about My Father, Boys Don’t Cry, Boyz-n-the-Hood.

Men at War (The Things They Carried)
Men Objectified (Pumping Iron, Zoolander, Hung)
Female Masculinity (Trumpet, U-People, Boys Don’t Cry)
Male Bonding and Male Homosocial Desire (Zoolander, Knocked-up, Funny People, The Things They Carried, A Lie about My Father).

Other possibilities:

Masculinities in the Digital World
Young Adult Fiction and Masculinities
Masculinities and Sports
Masculinities in/and the Workplace
A Pop-Culture Icon as a Model of Masculinity
Characteristics of a Successful Paper in a 400-level Course

The paper:

1. Puts forth an interesting, thought-provoking interpretation of the text. Learns from, but also goes far beyond, class notes/discussion, as well as beyond clichés and “conventional wisdom” (i.e. “what you see is what you get.”)

2. Meets the minimum length required in the assignment.

3. Instead, uses close reading, that is, bases its interpretation on the analysis of specific passages in the text (i.e. backs up its opinion with evidence).

4. Uses enough textual evidence to support its interpretation but does not fill up the pages with long quotations.

5. Sets up an appropriate context but does not spend time on plot summary: telling what the text is about.

6. Develops the interpretation/ideas in specific detail and has fully fleshed-out paragraphs (min. 5-6 sentences on average).

7. Has a clear, specific thesis at the end of the intro paragraph, is well-organized (intro-body-conclusion), focused, and “flows” well: all paragraphs are connected to one another through transitions.

8. Uses language and tone appropriate in an academic paper (not too stuffy, not too chatty/informal).

9. Uses literary/historical/cultural terminology learned in class (if applicable) correctly and consistently.

10. Is largely free of grammatical and syntactic errors and observes the rules of documentation as much as possible.

11. (For research assignments): Uses appropriate, respected sources and documents them correctly and ethically. Does not use sources as evidence; instead, uses them as a means of supporting its own original ideas.