English 21 – Bennett

**Sophomore Synthesis**

**Guidelines**

The Sophomore Synthesis is a long-term independent reading assignment. Over the course of 5½ months, you will read 2-4 books and write an 8-10-page paper arguing a thesis about them.

**Choosing a Project**

You may choose to study a single author, or you may customize your book grouping.

If you choose a single author, there’s a list of pre-approved ones on p.3. If you want to go off-list, we can talk about it—your project should be both challenging and meaningful for you.

Categories of custom groupings include but aren’t limited to: region, ethnicity, time period, movement, tradition, style, topic, issue, character type, genre. Here are some specific projects proposed in the past:

 20th-century playwrights

 Mental health in novels adapted to film

 Unreliable narrators

 Happy endings

 Portrayals of gender roles in novels adapted to film

 Chinese-American, Dominican-American, Korean-American, Indian-American

 Detective novelists

 Immigrant females facing generational conflict

 Adoption

 The Beats

 Sci-Fi

 1920s

 African-American (Across centuries? One century? Contemporary?

Gendered? Single genre? Across genres?)

 Epistolary

 LGBTQ

 Convoluted sentence-writers

 Direct sentence-writers

 Ghosts

 Mixed-race

 Antiheroes

 Relationship violence

 Comedy

 Empathy

Works read for class do not count among the works you need to read, but in some cases you may include writing about them. All of your works should be by Americans, unless you have compelling reason otherwise.

Your essay may be purely analytical, or you may include a personal/creative element along with your analysis. Most of you have kept these approaches separate so far, but you will write a hybrid-genre essay or two before you write this big one.

**Grading**

The paper will count as a significant portion of your Q4 grade. You’ll receive both comments and a score on this one, and there won’t be further revision opportunity (due to time constraints), but you will have the opportunity to reflect on this project in your final portfolio.

**Schedule**

Below is a recommended schedule for your project. The deadline for the final draft—**4/15**—is not just a recommendation; it’s absolute, and no extensions will be granted.

• 11/4-11/14: Proposal—Email me your author/project choice and which books you plan to read.

Include a brief explanation as you why you’re making these choices. It’s best to run an idea by me in advance so your proposal will be approved more quickly and you can get reading.

• 12/18: Finish a third of your reading.

• 1/15: Finish two thirds of your reading.

• 2/14: Finish all your reading.

• 3/3: Thesis/Dredging/Outline

• 3/11: Part 1 of Essay Body

• 3/20: Part 2 of Essay Body

• 3/30: Part 3 of Essay Body

• 4/7: Complete Draft

**• 4/15: Final Draft Due**

**A Beginning List of Approved Authors**

Edward Albee

Sherman Alexie

[Julia Alvarez](http://american-author.blogspot.com/2008/02/julia-alverez.html)

[James Baldwin](http://american-author.blogspot.com/2008/02/james-baldwin.html)

[Russell Banks](http://american-author.blogspot.com/2008/02/russell-banks_25.html)

[Raymond Carver](http://american-author.blogspot.com/2008/02/raymond-carver_25.html)

[John Cheever](http://american-author.blogspot.com/2008/02/john-cheever_25.html)

[Pat Conroy](http://american-author.blogspot.com/2008/02/pat-conroy_25.html)

[E.L. Doctorow](http://american-author.blogspot.com/2008/02/el-doctorow_25.html)

William Faulkner

[F. Scott Fitzgerald](http://american-author.blogspot.com/2008/02/f-scott-fitzgerald.html)

Dorothy Allison

[Nathaniel Hawthorne](http://american-author.blogspot.com/2008/02/nathaniel-hawthorne.html)

[Joseph Heller](http://american-author.blogspot.com/2008/02/joseph-heller.html)

[Ernest Hemingway](http://american-author.blogspot.com/2008/02/ernest-hemingway.html)

Zora Neale Hurston

[John Irving](http://american-author.blogspot.com/2008/02/john-irving.html)

Edward P. Jones

[Barbara Kingsolver](http://american-author.blogspot.com/2008/02/barbara-kingsolver.html)

Junot Diaz

Maxine Hong Kingston

[Jack Kerouac](http://american-author.blogspot.com/2008/02/jack-kerouac.html)

[David Mamet](http://american-author.blogspot.com/2008/02/david-mammet.html)

[Herman Melville](http://american-author.blogspot.com/2008/02/herman-melville.html)

[Arthur Miller](http://american-author.blogspot.com/2008/02/arthur-miller.html)

[Toni Morrison](http://american-author.blogspot.com/2008/02/toni-morrison.html)

[Tim O'Brien](http://american-author.blogspot.com/2008/02/tim-obrien.html)

Flannery O’Connor

[Annie Proulx](http://american-author.blogspot.com/2008/02/annie-proulx.html)

Philip Roth

[John Steinbeck](http://american-author.blogspot.com/2008/02/john-steinbeck.html)

[Gore Vidal](http://american-author.blogspot.com/2008/02/gore-vidal.html)

[Kurt Vonnegut](http://american-author.blogspot.com/2008/02/kurt-vonnegut.html)

[Alice Walker](http://american-author.blogspot.com/2008/02/alice-walker.html)

[Tennessee Williams](http://american-author.blogspot.com/2008/02/tennessee-williams.html)

[August Wilson](http://american-author.blogspot.com/2008/02/august-wilson.html)

[Vladimir Nabokov](http://american-author.blogspot.com/2008/02/vladimir-nabokov.html)

[Richard Wright](http://american-author.blogspot.com/2008/02/richard-wright.html)

Eugene O’Neill

John Updike

Cormac McCarthy

Edwidge Danticat

Michael Chabon

Dennis Johnson

Tony Kushner

Tobias Wolff

Jhumpa Lahiri

Ernest Gaines

Robert Penn Warren

Eudora Welty

Henry James

David Foster Wallace

David Sedaris

Stephen King

T.C. Boyle

**Additional authors recommended for non-single-author projects**

Ta-Nehisi Coates

Claudia Rankine

J.D. Salinger

Ken Kesey

Matthew Quick

Dennis Lehane

Yaa Gyasi