

American Literature

Weekly writing assignments

1. Each week you will receive a writing prompt (posted on our class website under the “Weekly Writing” tab). You will write a response and submit to Turnitin. You will receive a completion grade (5 points) for submitting the assignment on time. Each assignment will be due by 9 p.m. on Friday. *If the assignment is submitted late OR does not meet the minimum word count OR does not respond to that week’s prompt, you will receive 0 completion points.*
2. At the end of each 4-week period, you will choose one assignment for me to grade. You will receive 50 points for the graded assignment based on format, content, organization, voice, and mechanics.
3. Each assignment must be completed using MLA format. You are not required to include a works cited page. You may write in the first person point of view.
4. Each assignment must be between 300 and 500 words in length.

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Format (spacing, heading, page numbers)	5 points
Content (examples, specific details)	20 points
Organization (title, transitions)	10 points
Voice (it sounds like you)	10 points
Mechanics (spelling, punctuation, grammar)	5 points

WEEK 4:

Read the following article and respond to the prompt listed. You may include quotes from the article in your response, but doing so is not required.

From “Today’s Internet is a Toxic Wasteland”

Erin Griffith – Fortune, 18 August 2016

Once upon a URL, the World Wide Web was a place of fantastic possibility. People went online to meet and befriend total strangers. They could share their passions and opinions on LiveJournal or GeoCities or even Myspace. The democratization of information, no longer controlled and distributed exclusively by the mainstream media, was liberating.

Today the web is far more sophisticated—the idea of blogging seems quaint, a handful of giant companies (mostly Facebook) controls what we discover, and teenagers all have their own “personal brands.” More notably the innocent, collegial, summer-camp feeling of the early web has been replaced by a cesspool of attention mongering and outrage. Peruse the Twitter mentions of any public figure, and you’ll find a trove of attacks and threats.

What’s worse, those threats now come in the form of push notifications to our smartphones. Author Jessica Valenti, for example, recently quit social media after an Instagram user sent a threat directed at her 5-year-old daughter. “I should not have to wade through horror to get through the day,” she tweeted in July.

Web services like Twitter had long hoped that the vibrant online communities they created would police themselves. Trolls and bullies would be shamed into playing nice.

But mob mentality and the impersonal way screens dehumanize digital communication have allowed hatred and venom to flourish online. Somewhere along the way to the web’s starry-eyed promise of a connected world, we lost track of common decency. Online harassment of women is becoming an “established norm,” according to a recent study by cyber-security company Norton, which found that 76% of the women under 30 surveyed had experienced abuse or harassment online.

Weekly Writing Prompt 4:

We are studying mob mentality as we look at the Salem Witch Trials. Do you agree with the author of this article? Do you think mob mentality makes the internet a dangerous and threatening place? Explain your response.