## Paper 1: Literary Analysis

Due dates
**First best effort due:** Thursday, September 23 in class, bring 3 copies for peer review
**Final draft due:** Monday, October 4 in class, bring one hard copy and post one to Sakai

Conferences
Make an appointment with me via email for sometime between Thursday, September 23 and Friday, October 1 to discuss your paper.

Overview

Your assignment is to construct an analytic, thesis-driven paper that explores a passage, theme, character, or relevant issue in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland*. This paper should work toward an interpretation that promotes a nuanced understanding of the text so that readers will gain detailed insight into a particular aspect of the novel.

Goals of the Paper

An important part of writing academic essays is to begin by asking a good analytical question, one that speaks to a real dilemma, a contradiction of meanings, or a hidden complexity that you explore—rather than "prove"—throughout your essay.  A provocative and genuinely open-ended question can help you generate an essay with a clear focus and purpose and one that analyzes rather than summarizes the developments of the text. The questions on page 3 can help you get started.

This essay is essentially an extended version of what we've been calling a "close reading" exercise.  As you know, the first step in this process is *observation* and *annotation*, or carefully reading and taking notes on such elements as narration, character development, dialogue, imagery, and word choice.  The second step is *interpretation*, or drawing implications from these observations and thinking about what they might mean in context.

The next step is to build a *thesis statement*—a main proposition that requires demonstration—which develops from your analytical question and your close reading of the text.  The "evidence" for your thesis should always come from the text (i.e. quotes from the text that you reproduce and analyze in the body of the paper). Your analysis of the evidence should persuade readers of the validity of your claims.

Audience

You can assume that you are writing to an audience who is already familiar with the material, though you should include brief "signposts" to orient the reader and indicate where you are in the narrative or the context of your quotations.  You want to act as a guide for your readers, showing them how you're connecting your evidence to your larger argument.  As you write, you should always be asking yourself, "what am I

getting at here?" or "what might I conclude about this feature of my evidence?" so that you can make your claims transparent to your readers.

Prose

While it takes time to hone your own writerly voice or style in academic essays, you can take certain steps to insure your writing is first and foremost clear, fluid, and lively. The most important of these steps is to use active prose. Though the novel you're writing about was written well in the past, discussing it in the present tense (and your current interpretations of the work) will make your writing much more lively, concise, and ultimately persuasive. Using active voice can also help you avoid using excessive use of "to be" verbs (e.g. rather than *there are* a number of interesting passages…," a sentence that begins with a more active, strong verb gets more quickly to the point, avoids repetition, and tells the reader what's important about the quote: "Gilman's novel demonstrates/implies/questions/suggests/ argues…").

*This paper will not require the use of secondary sources; the paper should be entirely your own arguments and ideas.

Additional Requirements
• 3-4 pages
• 1-inch margins, double-spaced,12-point font, stapled
• Cite page numbers for all quoted material

You can use these questions as launching points for your own analysis, and you're also welcome to go beyond them to address other issues/themes/ideas that interest you.

• How does the text represent gender and/or sexuality? Is gender or sexual identity represented as natural and immutable or is there some fluidity or possibility for alternative models? (consider also that the text might be doing both). Does the text suggest that gender is socially constructed rather than inherently or biologically determined? Do the characters change or evolve over the course of the story?

• How does the novel engage issues of race? Does it ignore the subject altogether? Does it normalize whiteness and/or implicitly create a racial hierarchy? Does the text express anxieties about racial 'others'? What do you make of the frequent use of the term 'savage'? How do these issues effect how we read Gilman's novel, particularly her feminist aims?

•How does Gilman represent science or particular sciences in the novel? In what ways is science deemed authoritative, progressive, emancipatory, or even restrictive? Is science gendered in the novel, or, in other words, does Gilman see gender as influencing certain forms of scientific practice or knowledge?

• What kind of relationship to the environment does Gilman imagine? How is it contrasted to Vandyck's world? How does Herland's relationship to nature help convey Gilman's message? How does their relationship to nature effect their society? What values does Gilman endorse through her discussion of the environment? Could she be considered an early environmentalist?

• How does the form or structure of the novel help to communicate Gilman's message? Think about other stylistic or narrative choices that she could have made—why tell the story through Vandyck? What if it had been told from the perspective of one of the Herlanders? How does Vandyck evolve as a narrator/character? Does the framing device undercut Gilman's message or goals in any way? Consider other narrative choices and their impact on how we understand the novel (e.g. how the story unfolds— what's included or not, the ending).