

Due **Monday, November 17, in class**. If you are not in class that day, you should still e-mail me the paper on that day by 10 a.m. Late papers will be penalized 1/3 of a grade for every day they are late, and cannot be returned at the same time as on-time papers.

The paper should be **5 pages, double-spaced**. This paper is worth 18% of the final grade. Plagiarism of part or whole of another's work will result in an "F" for this assignment.

Include a bibliography **ONLY** if you are using a different translation/edition or if you are citing outside sources (which is by no means required; citing outside sources does not by itself elevate your grade, and in some cases can even hinder the development of your argument).

Be sure to cite specific passages. Good citation does not necessarily require quotation; often paraphrase is more effective. Cite passages parenthetically: e.g., Mathilde says in despair, "Where am I to find pleasure"; "nothing," the narrator summarizes, "could distract her" (277).

As a reminder, essays that are five or more full pages, and that analyze more than one text, are eligible for the Writing Proficiency Portfolio.

There is no one right path toward a good paper. Yet it is crucial to have specific parts of the text in mind, and so the single most important tip for getting started may be to think in terms of the triad observation → analysis → argument. Review your notes and the readings in search of passages about which you can make observations, on which you can build analysis and then construct an argument. When making observations about a passage, the parts of the text that are difficult or perplex you can be deeply valuable.

Please indicate clearly which topic you are addressing. Also come up with a title for your essay. (Titles ideally have a "sexy" and a "substantive" part: i.e., they draw the reader's attention, but also give a strong indication of your argument.)

TOPICS

1. In what ways could we call Julien a political revolutionary? In what ways isn't he one? You can defend one claim or the other, or argue that both are true. How does the novel provide a basis for making your claim? What is Julien's "script" telling him or us what a revolutionary "should" do? How does his dutiful adherence to this script make him spontaneous, calculating, or just revolutionary?

(OVER)

2. Connect at least one political theorist we read (Marx, Robespierre, Schmitt, Sieyès, Weber, or Žižek) to either The Handmaid's Tale OR The Red and the Black. You might, for example, argue that one of the novelists writes fiction that implicitly assesses the theorist's political analysis, or that the theorist can help us understand the world portrayed in the novel, etc. For Stendhal's novel, for example, you could show how Weber's three types of political legitimacy illuminate the range of social positions in Julien's world, or you could show how Marx's 1844 analysis of bourgeois revolution as essentially *incomplete* helps us to read France in 1830. Many different ways of approaching this topic are possible, and be sure to define the connection as clearly as possible; don't offer a laundry list of connections.

3. A conviction central to Enlightenment thought is faith in "progress": the idea that human history moves toward utopia, or at least toward important political gains, variously defined (liberty, equality, fraternity, etc.). As we have discussed, both The Handmaid's Tale and The Red and the Black seem not to share this Enlightenment optimism. How is this assessment of the Enlightenment conveyed in EITHER Atwood or Stendhal? What seems to be the price, in one novel or the other, of a faith in progress? If you choose this topic, please be sure to ground your argument in non-obvious "literary" features of ONE text: metaphors of light and dark; the way language conveys a sense of history and futurity; the futures implied by how the stories end (which is not necessarily the same as the way the books end).

4. In very different ways, Atwood and Stendhal use the epistolary device of *letters* as an alternative to the exchange of ideas in the "public sphere" that occurs in political discourse. Do a close reading of passage(s) from either or both novelists to make an argument about how aspects of letter-writing (construction of the writer and of the audience, aspects of secrecy, possibilities of deception) are similar or different from the open exchange of ideas that occurs in the "public sphere." Possible passages: the status of Offred's chapters as "recordings," Julien's hidden manuscripts, the bizarre episode of "The Secret Note" (Stendhal 2.21), the real and fake letters about the adultery between Julien and Mdm de Rênal, etc.

5. Devise your own topic. Any self-made topics must be submitted to me for approval by me by Wednesday, November 12 (no exception).