

Introduction Discussion Prompts

Approach

Before I present content in class, I ask students to do a think/pair/share activity using general discussion questions. This foregrounds our work in class that day and encourage students to get into a headspace of personal relevance/connection to the material I am about to present. At times, students read a short article (on themes vs. topics, for example) ahead of class to prepare for this discussion. These are examples of questions I use to introduce and frame up some of the concepts we discuss when engaging with Bui, Nguyen, and Phi's work.

Unit Introduction

What types of literature have you read or studied in the past? What are some of your favorite genres or authors? When you hear the term "American literature," what type(s) of writing or authors do you think of?

What does the term diversity mean to you? How does it apply to the study of American literature? Why is it important to read literary works from a variety of perspectives in the context of American literature?

Introduction to Critical Lenses/Theory

Have you ever applied any of the 8 critical lenses you read about this week to a piece of literature? Did any of the lenses appeal to you or resonate more than others? Which of the lenses seemed confusing or difficult? What questions do you have about these lenses?

What associations do you have with the term "theory"? Have you ever used theory to enhance your understanding of a literary text? What was your experience like? Give examples of literary theories you are familiar with. If you are not familiar with any literary theories, that is absolutely fine. We will explore them together this semester.

Introduction to Themes: Space/Place and Identity

What is a theme in literature? How does it differ from a topic? Can you give examples of both?

This semester we will be working with the themes of space/place and identity. What are your personal associations with the concepts of space/place and identity? Make a list of concepts and Have you read any texts that deal with these themes?

How do you identify culturally? Think about dominant cultures that you have/have not been a part of, subcultures, the cultures of both large and small groups you have been a part of, etc. Is your cultural identification associated with a certain place or nationality?