**“The Art of Racing in the Rain” Literary Review**

**Objective:**

To practice the skills of literary criticism, comparative argument, and personal reflection by combining a class-driven writing task with independent reading of your own choice.

**Prompt:**

Over the course of LE I so far, you’ve written literary analysis, rhetorical analysis, presented research, and debated value and policy, all critical skills in the humanities. Now you’ll get to return to more familiar ground in an English class — reading a book!

Once we’re done with debates, I’ll present the class with a few short readings, all of them examples of book reviews. We’ll consider the elements that constitute a book review, and how the reviewer combines analytical, critical thinking about what they’ve read with their own personal opinion and voice to craft an assessment of a text’s merits. We’ll consider things like how to balance providing context and background with avoiding “spoilers,” how to make a personal reaction precise and specific, and how to conclude with a clear statement about the text.

Armed with your completed book reading and some basic working knowledge of what book reviews do and how they work, you’ll go forth to do two things:

1. **Find a review of the text you read, and read it, too. *(NOTE: a professional review, not a consumer review from users of Amazon.com, BN.com, Goodreads, etc. You can find professional reviews online by searching for Booklist, Kirkus, Publisher’s Weekly, Library Journal, or any major newspaper’s arts and entertainment section.)***
2. **Write a book review that discusses your take on the book you read, comparing it to this other critique (with which you might agree, disagree, or share mixed reactions).**

**Grading and Expectations:**

A successful literary review essay will:

* Provide a general reader (that is, one who can’t be assumed to have read the book, too) a basic understanding of the text, keeping plot summary to an essential and non-spoilery minimum.
* Adopt a clear point of view about the text (a thesis) supported by explanation, example, and evidence.
* React to at least one other prominent review of this text, putting this other reviewer’s feelings in relationship to or contrast with your own.
* Use language appropriate to its audience (imagine you’re writing for a major newspaper, or perhaps a well-known book blogging magazine).
* Be free of textual errors (that is, contain no spelling errors, typos, or other embarrassments of language use that undermine your writing ethos).

**Format and Deadlines:**

* Use MLA format, including 12 point font in Times New Roman, an appropriate left hand header and upper right hand running header, and a works cited (for your reviewed text and the review(s) you use to complete the assignment).
* Write and submit your work to Google Classroom in *Google Docs format only.*