

Combo Essay
due Friday, November 21st

In the Combo Essay, your goal is to put two texts into conversation with one another while using your own thinking to guide the essay. This can be a difficult thing to do. Richard Miller's "The Dark Night of the Soul" might be a useful example to look to here. Miller questions the roles of the literate arts and humanities in the contemporary world. To help develop and define his own thinking and argument, he explores many texts: Martin Amis's *The Information*, Jon Krakauer's *Into the Wild*, Rene Descarte's *Meditations on First Philosophy*, and Mary Karr's *The Liars' Club*. Each "meditation," as he calls them, focuses on a text in order to push his own grappling with his role as a teacher of the literate arts.

For the combo essay, you may want to take a similar approach. What is something that we've discussed in class this semester that has compelled you? What do you want to write and think about, to continue to grapple with? Figure this out first, without considering the class texts. Once you've settled on a question, then continue on to the next step: finding how Miller, in conversation with Percy or Griffin, can help you grapple with your question. Miller ponders the roles of the literate arts. Percy argues for an individual's sovereignty in genuine experience. Griffin simultaneously questions herself and others to think about larger questions of human connection. What do you want to question and explore? There are so many possible starting points here. As long as your question fits within our course theme of the University Student in the 21st Century, you should be able to put your own thoughts in conversation with two of the texts to further your grappling.

An alternate approach is to identify an aspect of one of the class texts that you would like to grapple with, and then bring in both a second text and your personal experiences that help you do this. For example, you may want to focus on a point that Miller makes about the teaching of reading and writing. How might Griffin or Percy help you come up with new questions to ask of Miller's text? How might you incorporate your own experiences?

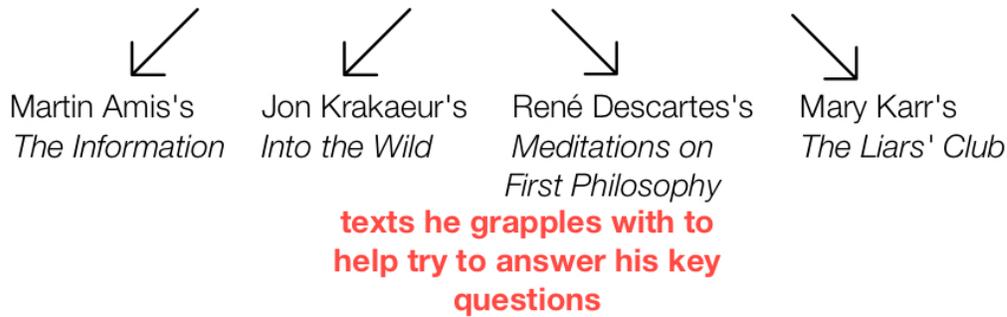
On the following page is a diagram that represents what is described above.

Whichever approach you take, your essay must explore a class text in a way that would not be possible without taking into consideration the thoughts of a second class text. (What would Miller say to Percy? Or Griffin to Miller? How does one author's thinking influence your understanding of another's?)

- read my feedback on both your Miller and Combo Warm-Ups
- take one of the approaches described above
- write 1000-1250 words
- include quotes and key phrases from the two texts you discuss
- follow MLA formatting guidelines (which includes a works cited page and an original title)
- bring two hardcopies to class on Friday, 11/21
- submit on Blackboard as a .doc/.docx file

Miller's key questions

"How – and in what limited ways – might reading and writing be made to matter in the new world that is evolving before our eyes? Is there any way to justify or explain a life spent working with – and teaching others to work with – texts?" (424)



Combo Essay possible approaches

