Please do both Part I and Part 2 of the Summer Assignment. Bring your paper and your eFast Log to class on the first day.

Part I: Reading Prompts – Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein (choose one)


After reading Frankenstein, please choose one of the following two prompts, and write a two-three-page paper in response to it. Please bring this writing assignment to your first day of class. Make sure you give it a compelling title, put your name on the paper, and use a standard, 12-point font. Regardless of which prompt you choose, be sure to use at least two quotations to support your analysis and interpretation, and feel free to refer to information contained in the footnotes.

Prompt 1

Consider the following quotes by Victor in which he expresses a complex mixture of remorse and responsibility toward the end of the tale.

During these last days I have been occupied in examining my past conduct; nor do I find it blameable. In a fit of enthusiastic madness I created a rational creature, and was bound towards him, to assure, as far as was in my power, his happiness and well-being. This was my duty; but there was another paramount to that. My duties towards my fellow-creatures had greater claims to my attention, because they included a greater proportion of happiness or misery (181-182).

Farewell, Walton! Seek happiness in tranquility, and avoid ambition, even if it be only the apparently innocent one of distinguishing yourself in science and discoveries (182).

Read the quotes carefully, and consider their context in the story. Respond to one or more of the following questions, but feel free also to analyze other related themes you find in this and any other section of the text.

• What is Victor’s view of the wellbeing and happiness of an individual versus that of a collective?
• Do you share Victor’s view and practice of scientific innovation and invention?
• What is Victor saying to Walton about ambition and responsibility?

Prompt 2 (alternate prompt)

Mary Shelley wrote this novel as a young woman who had already experienced pregnancy and loss. Her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, who died from complications of childbirth in 1797, wrote
Shelley asks in her Introduction, “How [did] I, then a young girl, [come] to think of and to dilate upon so very hideous an idea?” Is Shelley flagging the centrality of gender in her unconventional and “monstrous” story in 1818? The orphaned Creature has no mother or father, no kin, community, or history but raises himself through reading books. Victor refuses to make the Creature what he says he desires, a female mate like himself, and Victor violently and vindictively destroys it.

Please reflect on one or more of the following topics, noting the social relations in the novel—who has power and who is excluded. What connection might there be between Mary Shelley's life and politics, and her story?

- Although Shelley writes in the (male) voices of Victor, the Creature, Walton, and Clerval, what does the text say about women’s exclusion from autonomous relations outside of the family, including the university and scientific education? (e.g. the sexless, sister-to-become-wife Elizabeth stays home, along with Caroline, nurturing daughter and chaste wife; Justine the servant is executed; and Victor goes away to school).
- Does any male figure problematize or disrupt gender expectations and conventions?
- Noting the role of “nature” in the story, contrast Victor and the Creature’s view of “nature.”
- Discuss the Creature’s alienation, anguish, and rage. Could he be a metaphor for degraded “others” who suffer misrecognition, abjection, and exclusion from social relations and institutions?

Part II: eFast Log (handwritten)

Before arriving at UCSC, choose a 24-hour period. Note the time and date in your handwritten (not typed or spoken) Log, and then record some details of your eFast. Begin your eFast after you have turned off all digital communications devices and social media that you have access to.

During your 24-hour eFast, you will not text, email, or access the Internet. You will not post to, or view, social media, gaming sites, etc. Likewise, you will not use cell phones, computers, pads, tablets, or any other Internet-connected device (FitBit, AppleWatch, etc.), which also means no content streaming (NetFlix, etc.) of any kind. Most televisions, phones, and radio are digitized, so you may not use them either.

During the fast, however, you may read as much of any non-electronic media—(print) books, articles, newspapers, magazines, etc.—as you wish.

As your day evolves (or devolves), please write down some of the changes and challenges (or opportunities) you experience—in your routine, your expectations, your social relations, and your mindset. Include any consequences of not using digital media—both positive and negative. Throughout your 24-hour eFast, stop to record your experiences briefly in your Log. On the first day of class, you will share highlights from your Log with your peers.