

**Paper 1 Assignment (Five Questions)**

Due online (under “Assessments,” then “Assignments”) by Th 2/15, 11:59 p.m.

**Assignment (from syllabus):** In 700-800 words, write five paragraph-length questions that could be posed to the author of *South Pole Station* that reach beyond the obvious and about which you are genuinely curious. Think about how the novel explains the science of climate change, its development of a variety of characters at the research station, its relationship to historical events, its pacing and narrative strategies, its combination of humor and seriousness, its relationship to other novels, etc.

Grading breakdown: 1/3 for the depth of observations built into your questions; 1/3 for the uniqueness of your questions relative to classmate submissions (so don't share ☺) and to questions asked of novelists generally; and 1/3 for your writing clarity, organization, and mechanical polish.

**Further Guidelines/Adjustments:**

- Start by looking back through your margin notes, underlining, etc. Then ask yourself questions like these:
  - What patterns stuck out as you read, either in terms of *what* happens or *how* it's represented?
  - What characters attract you or get under your skin? Why do you think that is?
  - What relationships between characters are especially im/plausible, compelling or boring, etc.?
  - How is Shelby's fictionalized research station, South Pole, and/or Antarctica similar to and/or different from your preexisting visions of such locations?
  - How do the interruptions in traditional third-person narration (e.g. emails, lists, notes, excerpts) affect your reading experience?
  - Does this novel strike you as didactic or preachy? If so, why? If not, how does it avoid that fate, given its engagement with material people often find touchy?
  - How does the experience of reading and reflecting on this novel compare to what you expected when you signed up for a class on climate change fiction?
- Once you've done this kind of reflection for yourself, think about what remains unclear, curious, or otherwise provocative to you about the novel. Imagine that Ashley Shelby was giving a reading nearby and you had the chance to go listen and then ask her questions. Your goal should be to reach beyond simple/common/obvious questions and imagine ones she would be less likely to hear regularly. Often this two-part format works well:
  - (a) An insightful observation. (“I noticed that ...”) (“In text X, Y was the case, but in *South Pole Station*, ...”) (“During our conversations about *South Pole Station*, many of us wondered ...”)
  - (b) An invitation to elaborate. (“Can you share about how or why that came about?”) (“What does Z mean to you?”) (“Does that seem like an accurate portrayal of what the novel does?”)
- Look over the first few questions you generate and think about what sorts of angles they share and where you might go somewhere different. Another great way to spark an insightful question is to think back on your experiences with literary theory and to ask yourself what critical lenses might be especially valuable to bring to this novel. For those who had ENG299 with me, look back through the Klages volume and that syllabus particularly. What kinds of questions about *South Pole Station* might arise for:
  - A structuralist or poststructuralist?
  - A psychoanalytic theorist, a feminist or gender theorist, or a queer theorist?
  - Someone interested in questions of race, class, and ideology?
  - A scholar of dis/ability studies?
  - An ecocritic (with interests in climate change, but also other areas of ecology)?
- It's critical to give yourself time to draft, step away, and come back several times. Don't limit yourself to mere proofreading! *Revision* means “re-seeing,” and that never happens all at once. *Expand* (take your original curiosity further, place the question in a new context, put the novel up against another, etc.). *Combine* (two questions may overlap and putting them together could make one stronger question, giving you room to impress me further with an additional question. *Extract* (conversely, it might be that one question has spun off into a really distinct topic, and it makes more sense to render it as two). *Condense* (use not a word more than necessary to convey your meaning—each superfluous one eliminated will make your question's power more evident).