SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR THIRD PAPER

1. Give a close reading of Chapter 42 “The Whiteness of the Whale” (p.180-189). What is the White Whale to Ishmael? Does he himself give an answer to this question? How do you interpret the question that ends the chapter (‘Wonder ye then at the fiery hunt?’)? Where else in Moby Dick does the theme of whiteness come up?

2. Compare the characters Odysseus and Ishmael. In what respects are they similar, and in what respects do they differ? What can you infer from this comparison about the different ways of understanding polytheism in Homer and in Melville?

3. Father Mapple and Captain Bildad are set up by Melville as embodiments of distinct varieties of devout Christianity. Compare and contrast them. What is Melville’s attitude towards each?

4. Queequeg came to Christendom to learn "the arts whereby to make his people... still better than they were" (p.55). But he "thought he knew a good deal more about the true religion" (p.86). Can these two attitudes be reconciled? Can being committed to a specific religion still allow one to appropriate the practices of other religions?

5. What is the difference between the way Pip and Ishmael lack a fixed identity? How does each express in his life his realization that the universe has no fixed meaning? How does this explain Pip’s attachment to Ahab?

6. What does Ishmael mean when he says that the whale has no face (367), and why is that claim important? What alternative does it suggest to Ahab's desire to "break through the mask" (157)?

7. To what extent does Ishmael get in sync with various moods, views, and meaningful practices? Are there some he can’t get attuned to? What distinguishes the moods, views, and practices he shares from those he can’t share?

You are encouraged to propose a paper topic of your own. Before working on your topic, however, be sure to discuss it with your G.S.I.

Length: 5-7 double spaced pages. Please use Times New Roman 12 pt. font, 1-inch margins, and number your pages. Please print your GSI’s name and section time on the top right hand corner of page one of your paper.

Due: Friday May 11th at 5:00 PM in Howison Library [#305 Moses Hall]. (Moses Hall closes at 6:00 PM.) NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED.

Suggestions: Make sure that you have clearly answered the question that you selected. It helps to state, explain, and then defend a specific thesis. Avoid summary comparisons. Show differences as well as similarities in any comparison you make. Avoid simply repeating what was said in lectures and sections.

KEEP A COPY OF YOUR PAPER.