Assignment Sheet: Essay #1 Purpose This assignment is intended to: · Give you an opportunity to clarify and express your ideas about the literature we’ve studied. · Develop your ability to think critically about the themes those works of literature explore. · Strengthen your ability to write clearly, concisely, and persuasively. Assignment You will write a formal essay on any of the works listed on our syllabus. This essay should be roughly four to six pages and should draw upon outside research. While you are free to write on any topic, your essay should be argumentative in nature and should explore a very specific aspect of the work you choose to address. To help you get started, consider writing one of the following: An Interpretive Argument – Your goal in an interpretative argument is to go against traditional readings and interpretations and argue, based upon elements that are present in the text, for an alternate interpretation. One common approach to interpretive arguments is to expose the problems of a traditional interpretation of a work and to persuade your audience to accept your interpretation instead. For example, I could argue that while many believe Victor Frankenstein is the “true monster” of Frankenstein, the truth is that there are no monsters in the book, only imperfect beings who behave in imperfect ways. A Categorical Argument – In categorical arguments, you argue that a certain work/author either does or doesn’t belong to a certain category. For example, there is a category of things we call “sexist.” You could argue that Frankenstein either does or does not belong in this category. In short, your goal in categorical arguments is to question how works and authors have been previously categorized and to argue for a new categorization. A Thematic Assessment – In essays like this, you identify one theme of a work of literature and you test that theme. You explore whether that theme is correct. For example, one theme of Frankenstein is that people are more likely to commit evil when they are isolated from friends and family. But is this true? What does modern social science say about this? Was Mary Shelley right? Of course, there are many other approaches you can take to writing your essay. Those listed above are only a few you might want to consider as you get started. If you have an idea for an essay and would like to talk about it, feel free to meet me in my office or after class.