Choose ONE of the following topics and write a 5-7 page essay in response to it. You will need to draw specific examples from the texts we have read to support your points; use parenthetical citations to document the sources you use. Be sure that you are introducing your quotes adequately, creating smooth transitions between your own writing and that of your sources. Your essay should include a clear thesis statement in which you foreshadow your argument. Be sure to append to the essay a “Works Cited” page; see the course handout on citation (also on website) for assistance.

1. Betty Friedan’s The Feminine Mystique and Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s The Yellow Wallpaper are widely considered classic texts in American feminism. Compare chapter 1 of The Feminine Mystique and The Yellow Wallpaper in terms of: their ability to reflect upon life experience, their engagement with ideologies of domesticity and gender roles, their persuasive and literary power within their genres, and their visions of individual and social change. In the contemporary era, do either or both of these texts continue to have personal and political relevance? If “yes”, in what way? If “no”, why not?

2. Analyze the gender socialization of a person in your age range that you know well, using the following approach. First, describe this individual’s future vision of life 15 years from now. In other words, how does this person project her/himself into the future? Some issues to include: future occupation/profession, personal life, core values. What does this person imagine as a future occupation? Does this individual see himself or herself living alone, with a spouse/partner, with extended family, having a child (ren)? What values (moral, social, religious) are most important in this person’s life? Your analysis will explain the origins of this individual’s future vision in past gender socialization: e.g., influences of parents and other significant adults, socialization “props” (e.g. books, toys, games), schooling (including MIT), influence of peers, etc. Draw explicitly upon at least FOUR course readings that address issues of gender socialization (e.g., Friedan, Lorber, Thorne, Kimmel, Richardson); you are strongly encouraged to find another reading that speaks particularly to the experience of the person you are analyzing. Please note that your socialization analysis may fit some patterns described in the readings, and contradict others. Your role as a writer is to incorporate the readings explicitly into your essay, even if you are analyzing a person whose life narrative contradicts some of the gender roles described in the readings. Also keep in mind that “socialization” cannot be reduced to “gender socialization” and that gender socialization interacts with ethnicity, race and class. If you choose to write about yourself, be sure to use a pseudonym!