EVIL: AN INTRODUCTION, A QUEST, AN ASSIGNMENT.

Type EVIL into Google. Go on. Do it.

You'll come back with something like 317,000,000 hits, which may or may not include Google Books and/or video results. Since no one has time to slog through all that, here are some highlights from the first fifteen pages of hits. (Please note: though I have not exactly chosen these sites at random, they do not reflect my personal beliefs in any way. That's what the italic font is for. Sometimes. If you find cooler sites, let me know.)

- So You've Decided to be Evil: http://evil-guide.tripod.com/
  A handy guide for world domination.
- Evil on a Budget: http://www.trygve.com/evilonabudget.html
  A somewhat hilarious fake-magazine spread. Still helpful, if you truly wish for the appearance of evil.
- Villany: An Analysis on the Nature of Evil: http://www.andrewbernstein.net/articles/34_villainy.htm
  I am automatically skeptical about Andrew Bernstein's analysis because he uses the term Dark Ages *to describe the medieval period. Hmph. But this is a somewhat serious essay, anyway, and it proves that the internet can hold myriad personal opinions.*
- Evil Bible Homepage: http://www.evilbible.com/
  This site is affiliated with American Athiests states its aim as "fighting against immorality in religion" by pointing out all the "evil deeds" condoned by the Bible. Again, the internet is full of opinions. This is just one of them.
- PowerPoint is Evil: http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/11.09/ppt2.html
  Power corrupts. PowerPoints corrupts absolutely.
- Evil HR Lady: http://evilhrlady.blogspot.com/
  A blog—written by a nice lady, actually—about working in human resources.
- Google Investor Relations: http://investor.google.com/conduct.html
  Some of my friends have argued that Google has more potential than any other company on the planet to become an evil empire (others say that honor belongs to Facebook), but I can get down with a company whose basic policy is "Don't be evil." Can't you?
- Evil Eye Jewelry: http://www.evileyestore.com/
  Everyone looks...suspiciously happy.
- 100% EVIL: http://www.christophniemann.de/evil/
  Remarkable black and white drawings of evil furniture, evil showers, evil bunnies, etc. Look at the samples.
- Evil Clown Generator: http://scottsmind.com/games/evil_clown/
  Because clowns are the scariest, evilest things ever. If you don't believe me, go back in time and watch IT *when you were entirely too young. Or, look at pictures of John Wayne Gacy in clown makeup. I rest my case.*
- LesserEvil Snacks: http://www.lesserevil.com/
  These are supposed to be better for you, I guess? Or maybe it's that their company is smaller than most snack companies. Maybe both!
- Are You Evil? Profiling That Which Is Truly Wicked: http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=defining-evil
  Definitely worth a read. In fact, make sure *you read it.*

I've intentionally left out hits like the Wikipedia pages on Evil and the Problem of Evil, along with other websites that deal with those issues. But look. See. The word *evil* as we use it, just from the smattering of pages I've used as examples here, can mean just about anything. Is that a good thing? A useful thing?

Just what do we *mean* when we say *evil*? More importantly, what do *you* mean when *you* say *evil*?

This term, we'll be exploring all things evil. We'll wonder what it means to us, to others, and we'll end up taking a stand. We'll think critically. In order to think critically, you must be willing to search for hidden assumptions, notice the smallest aspects of things, pull threads until you find their sources, and evaluate all things. You must be willing to support your position while trying to see the other side. You must be willing to face objections to your beliefs. First, though, you'll need to know what your beliefs *are*.

Joan Didion, a famous and talented essayist, said once, "I write entirely to find out what I'm thinking." That's what I'm asking you to do now. Ask yourself, "What does evil mean to me?" Then, write. Find out what you think. Write whatever you wish, so long as you're thinking of evil when you write it. Respond to your Google search, or follow other threads. Don't be afraid to go off the beaten path, so long as the path you take is yours. Have some fun. Surprise yourself. If you hit a blank spot, just return to your question: *What does evil mean to me?* When you come back to class, I want you to have written at least three pages in your journal on this subject. You'll need a place to begin all the thinking and engagement you will do this term. This is the place.