

Department of English, Foreign Languages, Journalism

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

English ENG108-14

Course Syllabus – Spring 2010

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Office Hours: 12:30 – 2:00 MW; 11:30 - 12:30 TR; other times by appointment.

Class Meeting Time and Room: 2:00 – 3:20 TR, Eder Hall 210.

Acknowledgment: I am deeply indebted to my colleagues Tom Pankiewicz and Meredith Katchen for their inspiration and guidance on course delivery and the selection of texts and materials. Their varying pedagogies have greatly influenced my rethinking of this course's purpose and methodology. Although I will not cite precise examples below, I do wish to acknowledge that key ideas and much of the wording contained in this document closely parallel that of my colleagues.

Course Overview: One mark of an educated person is the ability to engage meaningfully in national and international dialogues on contemporary topics of relevance. That means we must read critically, comprehend what we read, research independently, and take positions that we defend using reliable sources. If we rely on television or the Internet alone, we limit our access to other views and valuable information. Also, because those media are usually “sound-bite” driven and sold by the second or by the hit to sponsors, it is seldom that a topic is covered in depth. Therefore, we cannot really comprehend the most relevant arguments of our time or of any time by accessing only electronic media. In this class, therefore, we are going to engage in relevant written dialogue with many sources, beginning with a recent nonfiction book (published no earlier than 2004) of your choice. From that book you will research one of its main ideas, the one that most interests, inspires, excites, and engages you. Those of you who excel will read your primary text repeatedly until you can nearly recite it. Then, as we move further from it and into scholarly articles on the topic you have chosen to research from that book, you will research and write with the confidence that you have become an authority on what your book says. As the semester progresses, our assignments will evolve from summarizing the primary text and secondary articles on that text into complicated arguments in which you ground yourself in the research you have gathered on a chosen debatable topic from your book. You will write summaries. You will build a detailed annotated bibliography. Our assignments will grow in complexity and length. Because I value creativity and the multi-genre approach to writing, you will have considerable latitude in choosing the form for your later projects. We will work, also, to develop our unique voices and styles as well as to become more competent editors.

Caveat: If you choose a book that is too difficult to read, that lacks reviews, that lacks debatable ideas, or that lacks a narrative arc, you will struggle to pass this course. Choosing your book is your number one priority. Your first writing assignment is a proposal in which you tell me which book you wish to read and offer your rationale for that choice.

Required texts and materials:

As a class, we will have only two shared texts:

They Say/I Say, by Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein. New York: W.W. Norton, 2006.

A Pocket Style Manual, by Diana Hacker. 5th Ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2008.

Individually, each of you must select a contemporary non-fiction book that I approve. That crucial book will drive your research from start to finish. Selecting your book will be your first research project, and your choice will largely determine how much you enjoy this course and how well you perform. We will dedicate our first two class meetings and our first evaluated writing assignment to the selection of our individual texts.

For your benefit, please bookmark the following web sites:

The OWL at Purdue: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>.

Re: Writing at Bedford/St. Martins: <http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/rewriting/>.

Students with Disabilities: Anyone who has a disability that prevents the fullest expression of her or his potential to succeed in this course must notify me in writing as soon as possible so we may discuss course requirements, options, and accommodations.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

For the specific course objectives, please visit the English Department website at <http://www.missouriwestern.edu/EFLJ/eng108.asp>

According to the English Department website (<http://www.missouriwestern.edu/EFLJ/eng108.asp>)

“ENG 108 students will complete three formal research based projects in addition to other graded and ungraded work. In these assignments, students will learn how to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate the thinking of others in order to discover, develop, and test their own points of view. Final drafts of all formal writing assignments must be word processed. All students are expected to be prepared for class and participate in class discussions related to reading and writing assignments. In addition, students will keep complete portfolios of all their writings.”

While I will adapt these objectives somewhat, this course will follow their spirit.

- Your writing and research will be based on a non-fiction book that you will select.
- The book you select must meet the following criteria.
 - ❖ It must be on a topic that will engage your interest for the semester.
 - ❖ It must be on a topic or question you believe relevant or perhaps even urgent.
 - ❖ It must be a work of non-fiction.
 - ❖ It must have multiple signed reviews of some depth, length, and breadth
 - ❖ It should include references, notes, and/or a bibliography.
 - ❖ It must be written and published between 2004 and now.
 - ❖ It must appear on at least one of the following lists:

New York Times Notable Books, 2004 – 2009

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/07/books/review/100Notable-t.html?em>

National Book Award Finalists, 2004 – 2009

National Book Critics Circle, 2004 – 2009

These lists may accessed at <http://www.amazon.com>. Click on Books. Click on Award Winners.

Pulitzer Prize Finalists, 2004 -2009

<http://www.pulitzer.org/bycat/General+Nonfiction>.

- You will need to purchase a copy of the book since most libraries have limited check out policies. Almost every book you select may be purchased from used book dealer via Amazon.com.

Part I: Select and Read a Non-Fiction Book

- Your writing and research will be based on a topic examined in depth by a non-fiction book that you will select.
- The book you select must meet criteria we will discuss on the first day of class.
- **A letter identifying and explaining your book selection will be due on Tuesday, January 26.**
- You will need to purchase a copy of the book since most libraries have limited check out policies.
- Have finished reading the book by **Tuesday, Feb. 16.**

Part II: What the Text Says

- Write a focused summary of the book. “Focused” means summarizing the key thread you intend to research, not the entire book. **Due Feb. 18.**
- Research critical reviews of the book. Read and print at least three substantial, signed reviews.
- Write your own review of the book, citing previous professional reviewers. **Due Feb. 23.**
- Write an argument, researching and presenting your position on a controversial topic from the book.

Part III: What the Text Means

- Explain a major concept—a Big Idea, a “Larger Conversation”—discussed in your book. Select a concept that you know your readers in the class must learn.
 - * Research how the author presents the concept.
 - * Research the concept beyond the book by examining three to five of the author’s references and/or by researching three to ten references.

- Complete an annotated bibliography of at least twenty sources you have consulted. Note: “consulted” does not mean “cited,” but “cited must first have been “consulted.” I will provide detailed instruction and practice for this assignment.
- Explain the concept to an audience of classmates in a documented essay.

Part IV: How the Text Inspires You

- “Showcase” your book and concept essay to the class.
- Or compose and present a “creative piece” that independently examines a theme or idea examined in your book.

Tentative Deadlines and Due Dates

- Jan. 26 – Book Selection Letter due.
- Feb. 16 – Deadline for reading your book.
- Feb. 18 – Focused Summary due.
- Mar. 2 – Review due.
- Mar. 9 – Annotated Bibliography (first ten entries) due.
- Mar. 23 – Concept (The Big Idea) Essay is due
- Mar. 30 – Annotated Bibliography (second ten entries) due
- April 15 – Argument Paper due.
- April 20 - 29 – Begin “Showcase” presentations of the book and research project or begin the “Creative” Response.
- April 29 – Complete, revised Portfolio with three-to-five page Reflective Cover Letter due at beginning of class.

Paper Format: We’ll use MLA style. All papers must be word-processed, double-spaced and use 12-point Times New Roman. Place your name, course, and date in the upper left hand corner. Center the title. Number the pages. Save all your papers in multiple places. Keep *everything*.

Conferences:

Just as you are entering a written dialogue with publishing writers and reviewers, I invite you to enter a spoken and written dialogue with me on your progress. You know that my goal is to create independent readers, writers, and thinkers. Being independent, however, does not preclude conversation and questions. Quite the opposite. I invite you to discuss your papers with me frequently in my office. While I find “grade talk” boring, I am passionate about discussing your writing, ideas, and learning. The best conversations are the ones driven by your questions. Please use my expertise. In my experience, good conferences are usually more productive and certainly more personalized than class. Class time is for the material we must all know. Conference time is for the individual challenges you are facing that may not be of interest or use to all.

Center for Academic Support: In addition to conferences and writer’s workshop sessions, you will find readers who will discuss your writing with you at the Center for Academic Support.

There is no cost to students for using these services. I encourage you to make use of these services throughout this course. The CAS is located in the Hearn Center, but you enter it directly from the outside sidewalk, not through the library proper. 271-4524.

Attendance Policy: In order to improve student learning and to achieve compliance with federal financial aid policies, Western has a mandatory attendance policy for all 100- and 200-level courses. By MWSU policy the maximum number of absences allowed through March 26 for this class is three (3). Thus, when you have four absences prior to that date you will be reported to the Registrar's Office, who will automatically withdraw you from this class and receive a grade of FA. The Financial Aid Office will reduce financial aid as appropriate. My personal attendance policy is as follows: **Regardless of when absences occur**, if you miss **five** class periods, you will receive an F in this class. A student will be given an excused absence only when acting as an official representative of the university, provided the student gives prior written verification from the faculty/staff supervisor of the event; however, there are **no other excused absences**, exceptions or "makeups" for this attendance requirement.

My Personal Attendance Policy: Because attendance is crucial to success, I offer the following encouragement and additional stipulations:

- * You may miss up to two class periods without penalty beyond missed work
- * Each absence thereafter may result in one-half letter grade reduction

Ordinarily, there are no exceptions and no make-ups for this attendance requirement. If you know of any circumstances likely to make this policy difficult for you this semester, you may wish to consult with your advisor to review your options. If you miss a class session, you are responsible for all material covered and assignments given during your absence. All out-of-class assignments are due at the beginning of the class period. No late assignments will be accepted unless you have received prior permission from me. There are no excused absences. **Anyone not present when I take roll at the beginning of class is officially absent.**

Academic Honesty: I trust that you will not cheat deliberately. Occasionally, however, students are not familiar and practiced with required methods of crediting sources. In many ways, this is the course in which you will practice attribution more than in any other. If I notice any oversights, I will ask you to correct the mistakes and submit a corrected version quickly. That said, I am required to post the following official statement of this university:

MWSU Academic Honesty Policy and Due Process: Academic honesty is required in all academic endeavors. Violations of academic honesty include any instance of plagiarism, cheating, seeking credit for another's work, falsifying documents or academic records, or any other fraudulent activity. Violations of academic honesty may result in a failing grade on the assignment, failure in the course, or expulsion from the University. When a student's grade has been affected, violations of academic honesty will be reported to the Provost or designated representative on the Academic Honesty Violation Report forms.

Please see the current MWSU *Student Handbook*, available online, for specific activities identified as violations of this policy and the student due process procedure.

Late and Make-up Work: Except in the case of extenuating circumstances, I will not accept late or make-up work.

Classroom behavior: In order to concentrate on learning, we must establish and maintain an upbeat environment free of distractions. Anything that interferes with your own or your classmates' learning is unacceptable. Sleeping, conducting private conversations, eating, drinking, misusing university property, and using vulgar or deliberately offensive language are some of the more common acts that can damage our learning environment. Likewise, *all telephones are to be silent and placed out of sight* during class time. No headphones may be worn, no music played, no text messages sent, no homework done for other classes. Furthermore, I do not allow use of laptop computers or tape recorders except by students who have a documented disability on file with our Disability Services Coordinator. Violations will result in your dismissal from class for that day, and I will record each dismissal as an absence. Sorry to seem so harsh, but in the age of so-called multi-tasking it grows ever more essential to specify acceptable behavior that allows us all to concentrate on course material. Let's establish a cordial and respectful atmosphere in which we can have fun while learning together.

Course Requirements and Grading Policy: Your semester grade will be determined by your major papers, reflective letters, and class participation. The components of your grade in the course are as follows:

Major papers (80%): You will complete multiple drafts all major writing tasks on specified deadlines, plus one self-reflective portfolio cover letter that will be evaluated. Throughout the semester I will read and return your papers with an evaluation informing you whether the work is ready for your portfolio or needs more revising or editing before it becomes passing work. Because I want you to strive continually for improvement and growth as a writer, I will assign neither points nor grades on your major papers until you submit your final portfolio. A student who does not complete all writing tasks in a timely manner will not pass the course even if the evaluations on the other writing tasks are satisfactory.

In-class cover letters for major papers: (10%). We will write these in class on due dates for major papers, according to prompts I provide that day. These letters cannot be revised.

Final Exam: (10%).

Midterm grades: Because the idea of the portfolio is to cause us to concentrate on writing and learning instead of on grades, I will not abandon it at midterm by awarding the full range of grades then. I do, however, have an obligation to let students know whether they are passing. Students who have not accrued excessive absences and whose papers are acceptable (or even exceptional) will receive a C at midterm. Students who have not accrued excessive absences and who have submitted work that shows promise but is not yet acceptable will receive a D at midterm. Students who have accrued excessive absences (three or more) by midterm *or* whose work shows little promise of becoming acceptable will receive an F at midterm. Students who receive a D will want to schedule a conference immediately to discuss the likelihood of their succeeding. Students who receive an F are strongly encouraged to withdraw and attempt the class later.

ENG 108 Course Portfolio: Thursday, April 29, your FINAL PORTFOLIO containing all major writing assignments along with copies of all drafts, all reflective letters, all peer evaluations, all my written responses to you, and your strongest work from WW at the end of the semester. I will assign a grade to the portfolio (70% of the course grade) based on the final quality of the work submitted. Since grades will **not** be assigned to individual writing assignments during the semester, portfolio assessment provides an opportunity for multiple revision and continued improvement. You will be informed throughout the semester if your drafts are unacceptable (i.e., would result in a failing portfolio and course grade). I will explain the resubmission process and requirements more in depth later. **Keep all of your drafts.**

Final Exam: Tuesday, May 11, 2:00 – 3:50, Eder Hall 210.