

Missouri Western State College
Department of English, Foreign Languages, & Journalism
English 108: College Writing and Research
Fall 2003

| | | | |
|-------------|--|---------------|--|
| Instructor: | Roger Kirschbaum | Class: | All of my classes |
| Office: | SS/C 222-M | Phone: | Office: 271-4316 or Home: 238-0682 MW 12 p.m. to 1 p.m. and |
| E-mail: | rkjpoet@aol.com | Office Hours: | TTh 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. |

Introduction:

"Meanings are not elements but relationships." – Ann Berthoff

This course is built on the assumption that a sophomore-level writing course is as much about intensive reading and intensive independent research as it is about intensive writing. Writing is always about something; and culturally aware, intellectually complex writing always responds to other people's ideas. The course is based on the theory that the process of written composition involves not only two-way conversations between theory and practice, between ways of thinking and ways of doing, but also a complex three-way relationship between and among the personal, the institutional, and the cultural. When we write by paying attention to cultural contexts, we position ourselves as individuals (which partly depends on how we understand what it means to be an individual, to have a shared ethnic, national, racial, regional, religious or other identity, to be a "global" citizen) and as participants in specific social organizations. Cultural contexts are, then, best understood in relation to, in conversation with, personal and social contexts; to write in response to these contexts involves a complex process of personal, professional, and cultural interpretation and critique.

You will spend much of your intellectual energy in this course positioning yourself in relation to other writers, other theorists, other researchers. As the semester goes on, you will be increasingly dependent on library and internet sources. During the course of the semester you will write three polished essays; each will involve deep reading and a protracted process of informal and formal writing, including at least one or two rough drafts. The essays ask you to mediate between and among texts in *Cultural Conversations*, as well as take into consideration material found through independent research.

Good, complex, interesting academic writing develops out of a protracted process of revision. No matter how specialized we become in a particular field and no matter how proficient we become in the forms and conventions of a particular discipline, personally engaged, context-appropriate, culturally sensitive prose is never automatic. Prose written in one sitting, no matter who writes it, is likely to be one-dimensional and shallow. **Prose**

that engages in thoughtful conversations, reflecting personal, often self-contradicting points of view while taking into account the views of others, gradually, but surely becomes complex, multi-dimensional, and, to put it crudely, worthy of a good grade in this class. You will do well in this course if your writing works according to an active process of discovery rather than a straight process of statement.

For the purposes of this class, an **essay** is a personally engaged, convention-appropriate form of cultural interpretation and critique: it is driven by your ideas and experiences (lived and read) and it responds directly and specifically to other people's ideas. Because cultural contexts always reflect historical and contemporary circumstances, your essays for this class will engage with historical and contemporary, as well as personal and scholarly material.

Attendance Policy:

Because class discussion, small group work, and in-class writing will be important components of our class, your regular attendance and participation are required in order for you to be successful in this class. You are allowed to miss a total of one week of class for any reason. Since you are in a TTh section of the course, that means you are allowed two absences. For every absence over two, your grade will be lowered; if you miss class five times, I will advise you to drop the course rather than receive a failing grade. Because work in class is an essential part of the course, there will be *no distinction made between explained and unexplained absences*. Missing more than a week of class work simply means that you have not completed course work. The course is intensively interactive, which means that an essential part of the work for the course takes place in class, and cannot be made up outside of class. If you are absent from class, you are responsible for finding out about the work you missed and for whatever assignments are due during the next class period.

With this said, I will allow two additional absences to be made up by visiting the Center for Academic Support. For every class period missed over two (absence three or four), one hour must be spent in the center working on a draft of one of the essays that is required for the course.

The Center is located on the east end of the library building. Contact Corla Dawson, the center's writing coordinator, to make an appointment. She can be reached in LRC 213 or at 271-4531.

Required Text and Course Materials:

- Stephen Dilks, Regina Hansen, & Matthew Parfitt, *Cultural Conversations: The Presence of the Past*, Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001.
- Spiral Notebook for responses.
- Photocopies of your essays upon request.

Tentative Due Dates for Formal Writing Assignments:

| | |
|--------------|--------------|
| Essay One: | September 30 |
| Essay Two: | November 4 |
| Essay Three: | December 4 |

Grading Requirements and Evaluations:

In order to receive credit for the course, all of the following must be completed. Failure to complete any one assignment will result in failure of the course.

| | |
|---|-----|
| <u>% of final grade per assignment:</u> | |
| Essay One paper: | 25% |
| Essay Two paper: | 25% |
| Essay Three paper: | 25% |
| Double-Entry Notebook Participation: | 10% |

Peer Response Workshops:

Early in the semester, we will form small groups whose primary responsibilities will be to read and respond to group members' writing. During the peer response session, you will be asked to respond carefully and conscientiously to each group member's draft. For each peer response workshop, you will be responsible for making notes about the feedback your peers offer to you and for keeping track of the feedback you offer to your peers. These written responses must be turned in with the final draft. **If you do not show up for the peer review or do not have a full-length draft of your paper with you, your class participation grade will suffer greatly.**

Plagiarism:

Intentionally using someone's words (or ideas) as your own, without explicit citation, is a serious offense in the university. The use of appropriate sources, citations and documentation will be important topics throughout the class. If you have questions about proper citation and documentation of any sources you are using, please see me. I will check for plagiarism with search engines, including a comprehensive plagiarism service.