

**Department of English, Foreign Languages, Journalism**

**Division of Liberal Arts and Sciences**

**English 104-55 - College Writing and Rhetoric**

**Course Syllabus - Fall 2004**

**Instructor: Bill Church**

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**Office Hours:** 1:00 - 2:30 MW, 9:30 - 10:30 TTh, and by appointment

**Class Meeting Time and Room:** 8:00 - 9:20 TTh, SS/C 210

**Required texts and materials:** *Critical Thinking, Thoughtful Writing*, by John Chaffee; *Tuesdays with Morrie*, by Mitch Albom; *Into the Wild*, by Jon Krakauer; *Nickel and Dimed*, by Barbara Ehrenreich; and *A Lesson Before Dying*, by Ernest Gaines. Please purchase a spacious journal that will endure heavy use. You will also be responsible for providing multiple copies of drafts on peer review days. All papers submitted for peer review or for my evaluation, other than those written in class, must be word processed.

**Recommended text:** A collegiate dictionary with at least 200,000 entries. Also, because *Bone Black* by bell hooks is the MWSC Common Reading and is required for all *Griffon Edge* students, we will refer to it occasionally, especially early in the semester.

**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 Description & Goals:** In short, my goal is that you learn to examine how rhetoric has affected your sense of self and then decide if who have been told you are is who you wish to be. Our readings, discussions, and papers will all engage that broad topic. For a more exhaustive and standard discussion of course goals, please refer to the following Internet site, which we will review periodically in class: <http://www.missouriwestern.edu/eflj/eng104.asp>

**Learning Community:** We are part of an exciting opportunity to form a true learning community in which we connect classes and ourselves. We will engage in occasional activities beyond the classroom and expect full participation from everyone at those activities and events. Also, I and other teachers in learning communities, who in most cases will also serve as advisors for their students, frequently and freely exchange information about assignments, attendance, and overall student performance.

**Academic Honesty:** Most cheating is accidental. If, however, I determine that a student is cheating deliberately or repeatedly, I will minimally award a failing grade for the project. I may submit a failing grade for the entire course if circumstances warrant. In addition, I will forward in writing the names and acts of all involved students to the chairperson of the English department chair and to the dean of students. In cases of suspected plagiarism, the burden of proof is on the student, so it is in your best interest to keep every piece of writing you generate for every assignment.

**Grading Method:** I use portfolio grading, which means that I assign neither a letter grade nor points to the four major writing assignments until the end of the semester. I respond to each major paper by informing students whether it is "PR," Portfolio Ready. Work I deem PR will convert to at least a "C" for that paper at semester's end. Further revision is completely at the student's discretion. Work not PR will be at best a "D" at semester's end and likely result in a

repetition of the course if not revised successfully. Other work, i.e., our frequent quizzes, cover letters, summaries, and in-class writing will be assigned points and not be eligible for revision.

### **Grading Criteria:**

\* Quality and completeness of your portfolio (80%) -- Your portfolio will consist of both your four major papers and abundant shorter works such as vocabulary-building and editing assignments, summaries, responses, letters, critical analyses, and other writings as assigned. No one will pass without completing all writing assignments, regardless of the quality of work submitted.

\* Quiz scores and impromptu in-class responses to reading assignments (15%) -- I will regularly reward careful reading because it is essential to the success of your major papers. As you have surely deduced from our required texts, we will be reading constantly.

\* Reflective letters (5%) -- you will write in-class reflective letters on the due dates of all major papers. Your letters will frequently provide more insight into your growth as a writer and thinker than the papers will.

\* Timeliness -- students who miss any deadlines on any major papers, including peer review, without documented extenuating circumstances are ineligible for course grades higher than C.

\* Attendance -- your constant presence is mandatory for your success (please see "Attendance Policy" below).

The highest grades will go to the students whose efforts and intellects allow them to produce the most complete, clear, correct, and insightful writing, much of it the result of careful and thorough reading. Portfolios from these students will contain multiple drafts of major assignments, thoughtful reflective letters with every submission of every draft, and thoughtful questions for me to answer about their writing. Likewise, students who receive the highest grades will have received the highest quiz scores, contributed meaningfully to class discussions, and met all deadlines for drafting and submitting all assignments, in addition to fulfilling the attendance requirements.

Missing excessive classes, deadlines, assignments, and quizzes will result in substantially lower grades, in many cases to the point of failure. Falling behind on or ignoring reading assignments will ensure failure. Also, superficial, off-topic or poorly edited papers, or an unwillingness or inability to contribute meaningfully to class discussions or to revise papers effectively, will result in low final grades.

**Midterm grades:** I submit a "C" for students whose work is complete and passing and whose absences are below the limit. I submit a "D" for students whose work is complete but not acceptable. I submit an "F" for students whose work is incomplete or grossly unacceptable and/or who have exceeded the absence limit.

### **Attendance:**

\* Anyone not present when I take roll at the beginning of class will be marked absent. While I may show leniency to those who arrive slightly late on rare occasions, I will enforce this policy strictly for repeatedly late students. Under no circumstances will I change an absent to a present for anyone who arrives more than fifteen minutes late.

\* Students may miss all or part of three classes (one week for us) without penalty beyond missed points.

\* Students who miss four times but fewer than six are ineligible for grades above "C."

\* Students who accrue seven absences fail. Students who are in absence trouble by midterm should withdraw to avoid the F on their transcript.

Although all of us will occasionally experience an emergency or illness that causes us to miss class or arrive late, students who succeed will minimize absences.

**Excused Absences:** Common sense and human decency will prevail. I will grant special consideration to students who

can document extenuating circumstances. Extenuating circumstances include, for example, auto wrecks, prolonged illnesses, blizzards, funerals, power failures, unforeseen medical emergencies involving loved ones, and mandated court appearances. Changing a work schedule, however, is not extenuating. Anyone who enrolls in a class with a clearly designated meeting time is obligated to keep that time open for class. I will also grant special consideration to students who are representing MWSC. I ask that those students notify me of planned outings in advance and turn in their work or take their quizzes before each absence. I may verify the absences of students representing the college by contacting the appropriate MWSC personnel.

**Make-up Work:** This course will seldom lend itself to make-up work. Class discussions cannot be recreated. Nor can in-class writings and group work be recreated later. And obviously I can't allow make-up quizzes after we've gone over the answers in class, which we will always do. Therefore, in most cases, missed work is permanently missed.

**Classroom behavior:** As stated in the *MWSC Student Handbook*, instructors "may establish additional classroom rules and expectations for conduct in the classroom. Behavior which disrupts the classroom environment or interferes with other students' ability to learn may be grounds or justification for dismissal from the classroom" (28). Sleeping, conducting private conversations, using computers for other than assigned purposes, eating, drinking, damaging property, and using vulgar or deliberately offensive language are some of the more common acts that can damage the learning environment. Likewise, all telephones are to be silent during class time. No headphones may be worn, no music listened to, no homework done for other classes. Let's establish a cordial and respectful atmosphere in which we can have fun while learning together.

**Final Exam:** Tuesday, Dec. 14, 8:30-10:20 a.m., SS/C 210