

ENGLISH 108
Fall 2008
College Writing and Research
Missouri Western State University
Department of English, Foreign Languages, and Journalism

Instructor: Craig Goad
Section 04: MWF 9:00-9:50 Eder Hall 210
Section 08: MWF 10:00-10:50 Murphy Hall 201
Office: Eder 213, and anywhere else around the EFLJ office complex that I can find a place to sit down with you
Office hours: 8:00-9:00 MWF and by appointment
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Required Text:

Writing from Sources, 7th edition. Brenda Spatt. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007.

Required Materials:

Computer discs, flash drives, or the like for saving and revising written work
Manila folders

Recommended Text:

A writing handbook or style guide of your choice (Note: Dozens of such books exist and can be found not only in the college bookstore but as well at amazon.com and all sorts of other places. It's in your interest to get a fairly new one, as older ones won't have nearly as much computer-composition information and the latest updates of MLA rules.)

Course Description:

This course, as its name suggests, asks you to do research and to use that research as the basis of written work. This means doing a substantial amount of two of the three traditional Rs—readin' and writin'. If you already have skills in these areas, you will sharpen and improve these skills; if you lack these skills—and many high school graduates do—you will develop them—or, of course, you will fail the course. In order to develop and demonstrate these skills, you will:

- *Read a large number of works by professional writers, not merely skimming through them but rather reading with care and doing things like underlining, commenting in the margins, highlighting, and the like.
- * Discuss in class these works, trying to find out what techniques are used by the writers, what things work and what things don't, what makes an effective argument, and the like.
- *Write summaries, précis, and outlines of the works, with the goal of being better able to manipulate the ideas of others.
- *Learn to incorporate the words and ideas of other writers into your own work.
- *Learn to give appropriate credit to the works from which you have used material.
- *Understand the ethics of researched writing and be able to avoid such academic problems as plagiarism.
- *Revise your work in order to make it more effective, readable, and persuasive.
- *Read the work of other writers in this course and help them to improve that work through discussion, workshops, and written comments.
- *Use the skills spoken of above to write, revise, and present in finished format a series of papers drawing on your own ideas, the works contained in your textbook, and materials gathered from libraries, the Internet, and other sources that you discover in a variety of places, sometimes surprising ones.

Policies:

Attendance and Class Preparation/Participation: 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. A

student will be given an excused absence when acting as an official representative of the university, provided the student gives prior written verification from the faculty/staff supervisor of the event. All other absences will be deemed unexcused. *The maximum number of absences allowed before the midterm report, October 15, for this class is five (5).* Thus, when you have six (6) you will be reported to the Registrar's Office, which will automatically withdraw you from this class. The Financial Aid Office will reduce financial aid as appropriate. If you know of any circumstances likely to make this policy difficult for you this semester, you may wish to consult with your advisor and 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; you will not be permitted to sit and finish an assignment while the class is going on, and if you miss class to work on a paper and turn it in late, you will have missed the class *and* the assignment's grade will be reduced by one grade level. The assignments for this course are not overwhelming unless you put off working on them until the last minute, and I mean to do everything possible to keep you from injuring yourself in this way.

Late work: The major papers you write for this course will not be turned in late. If you know within 24-hours of the due-date of a paper that you cannot possibly be finished with it, contact me and we will contract to excuse the lateness and specify when the paper will be turned in. You may elect this option once and once only in the course. If you select this option on the first paper and then discover that you will have to turn your second paper in late, just go to the Registrar's Office and drop the course; it will be evident that you are insufficiently committed to the course to do good work. If you try to turn in late work without contacting me about it in advance, I will refuse to accept/grade the work and you will be doomed to failure in the course, for you cannot pass the course unless all the major papers are completed, turned in, and graded. Some of the exercises, quizzes, and the like can be missed with only the loss of the grade; the four major papers are absolute requirements and the failure to do any one of them will mean you fail the course.

Academic Honesty Policy: 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 fraudulent classroom activity. You will receive a grade of F for any paper/assignment that shows evidence of cheating and/or plagiarism. You have the burden of proving that a paper showing evidence of cheating or plagiarism has in fact been written by you. You should keep thorough evidence of your writing process so that you can meet this burden of proof. In addition, you must submit all your research, including notes and copies of documents, with your completed papers. Violations of academic honesty will be reported to the Provost or the designated representative on the Academic Honesty Violation Report Form. Take careful note of the statement on plagiarism on the departmental website and refer to the 2007-2008 Student and calendar on page 21 for specific activities identified as violations of this policy and the student due process procedure. This handbook is also available online at <http://www.missouriwestern.edu/handbook/index.pdf>.

(Note: I will never accuse a student of plagiarism unless I have dead-solid evidence that he/she has plagiarized. If I return a paper with an F and the assertion that it is plagiarized, you're welcome to talk with me about the matter, but you will get only more information, not a change in grade. Once I have proved to my satisfaction that a paper is plagiarized, I will not change my belief.) (Further note: I have taught courses like this one for forty years, and I have never had a complaint of unfairness made against me. I do not take plagiarism lightly and do not accuse anyone of it without being certain that the case is undeniable.)

Students with Disabilities: Anyone who has a disability that prevents the fullest expression of his/her potential to succeed in this course must notify Michael Ritter, Special Needs Coordinator, or me as soon as possible so that we can discuss class requirements and accommodations.

Miscellaneous Rules and Threats: The major papers for this course must be word processed. The only time I should see your handwriting will be on notes you take for papers, in answers you write on quizzes, and in anonymous threats you send me. No one should fool him/herself into thinking that handwritten work is acceptable. Cell phone use and texting during class are forbidden, and I don't use that word lightly. If I observe you texting in class, I will ask you to leave and you will be counted absent for that class meeting. Similarly, you will be asked to leave the classroom if your cell phone rings during class and you answer it. It would be wise beyond the saying of it to switch off your phone before you walk through the classroom door. I'm not silly enough to say that no one may talk to his/her classmates

during class, but if your conversation becomes interesting enough to you that you want to pay more attention to it than to the activities of the class, I may ask you to continue the conversation elsewhere, with, again, the loss of credit for that day's class. If you sit here until a quarter to the hour, start jabbering, and lose credit for the whole day, that would, as young people like to say today, suck. And it's just what will happen if you can't wait until class ends to chat with classmates. I feel that I should not have to write the following, but I will write it just the same: No one should say anything in this classroom that constitutes a racial, ethnic, religious, or gender slur and expect to remain in the class. One of the central functions of a university education is to develop or reinforce a civilized attitude toward one's fellow human beings. Use the n-word to apply to a classmate or call one a fag or a ho and you're gone, not for the day but for the semester. I'm pretty sure the administration will back me up on this, especially as I would be cheerful about quitting if they didn't, and that would pose a real problem for all sorts of people. Do not try me on this matter. I'm a reasonable person in almost every way, but I'm stubborn beyond measure on the issue of civilized behavior in the classroom.

Assignments and Grades: You will be graded on four major writing assignments, each having a particular value. Assignment 1, the not-researched essay, will be worth 100 points and will come early in the term. The second assignment, the single-source essay, will be worth 200 points. Number 3, the factual, multiple-source essay, will be worth 400 points, as will the fourth assignment, the thesis-driven multiple-source essay. That adds up to a total of 1100 points. Another 400 points will come from daily assignments and quizzes. Finally (no pun intended), the final examination will be worth 100 points, for a semester total of 1600 points. As my grading scale is A=90-100, B=80-89, C=70-79, D=60-69, and F is 59% or below, you will need to gather 1440 points to earn an A, or, if you're a pessimist, 960 points to pass.

You'll start to earn those points on Wednesday, August 27, when you will be quizzed over your first reading assignment, which is pages 1-23 of Spatt's book. Then on the following Wednesday you'll get to earn some more points, for on that day (September 3) you'll turn in Essay #1, which I've already called the not-researched essay. It will be a piece of writing on a topic I will assign on Friday of this week. This is as far in advance as I want to make any assignments, as I have no idea what I'm dealing with here. You will in due time get a detailed assignment list, but I'm not going to put one out now and then have to revise it in light of what the first quiz and the first essay show. A little patience is useful here.

The Unifying Idea: Courses of this kind are supposed to have a central theme or idea to hold them together. The theme I've selected is "American Politics in 2008," which may be an incredibly bad idea. If it is, it won't be the first bad idea I've ever had. It just seems to me that we're in the middle of what may well be the most crucial presidential campaign since 1860; we have a textbook with numerous essays concerning politics, patriotism, and related topics; knowledge of one's political system matters, even if one doesn't want to admit it; this class offers a chance to get credit for using what will be all around us until the election is over, and then there'll be post-mortems and analysis until we're all sick of it. So plan to write about the politics of our time, whether you care anything about politics or not.

Last Thoughts: This is, like all your other courses, the most important course you will take in college. That sounds deliberately ridiculous, and it is, but only for the sake of making a point: every course you take at Missouri Western will matter, even if it only figures into your grade point average and helps decide whether you get a scholarship next year or a good job when you graduate. This course will count that way. But it will also matter because if you lack what this course teaches, you won't be able to do what you'll need to do in many other courses, or you'll do it much less well. This course teaches research, teaches using the words and ideas of others to support the arguments you want to make, teaches giving credit for the things you borrow from others in a way that will be both honest and effective. If you cannot do research, employ evidence, and document your work, you will not be a successful college student. If you plan ever to take other courses, graduate, and/or get a job, you'd better learn what's available here. You'll never have a better chance to develop skills that will pay off in the long run.

You need to understand that this course has a moral element and a practical one, and we can get the moral element out of the way very swiftly. Doing research right is a good thing, in the same way that giving to charity is a good thing or that being decent to the handicapped is a good thing. Something inside you makes you want to behave like a decent human being or it doesn't. If you don't care about those kinds of things, nothing I can do or say will change you.

Something's deeply wrong with you at a level no course can alter. But whether you care about good or truth or decency or any other of those abstractions, you need to care about being able to do the work your other courses ask of you. You will be rewarded if you do researched writing well, and you will be punished, perhaps in a career-destroying way, if you do it badly.

All that is a way of saying: **TAKE THIS COURSE SERIOUSLY.** I don't like using typographical tricks to make a point, but this is one time when doing so is justified. Learning to do researched writing is a little like learning to avoid getting AIDS. It's not very difficult to understand, but if you don't use what you learn, you can ruin your life. I've been teaching courses like this one for more than 40 years (Do you have any concept of how long that is? When some of your grandmothers were still in school, I was already doing this. When some of your parents weren't even born yet, I was doing this.) So I know how college students blow off courses that don't interest them, and much in this course isn't very interesting. But blow this course off, refuse to learn the not-as-hot-as-a-Paris-Hilton-sex-video material it contains, and the rest of your academic and career lives will be harmed. Don't like this kind of tedious stuff? Don't want to learn about paraphrasing and the MLA? Find another class to attend and drop this one, and while you're doing that, adjust downward your expectations about life after college, where your lack of such information will prove crippling.

Have a nice day.

Assignment List for English 108, Sections 4 and 8 Fall 2008

All the assignments for reading come from Brenda Spatt's *Writing from Sources*, seventh edition. All assignments should be done by the beginning of the class hour on the day the assignment is specified for, and any quizzes will be based on the assumption that you have read the assigned material before you come to class. (N.B.: I usually use the term *quiz* to refer to an *unannounced* set of questions; the fact that you were warned in advance of the probability of Quiz 1 does not mean that you will be similarly warned in the future; quizzes reward those who have done the reading and punish those who have not. So be it.) Using a text like Spatt's book requires actual study of the material, not merely skimming over it as you might read an issue of *Time* in thirty minutes. Some of the material isn't in any conventional sense interesting, but that doesn't mean it isn't important.

Dance like nobody was watching

Love like you'd never been hurt

Study like it mattered

September 3, Wednesday 34-55

September 5, Friday Essay # 1 due. **100 points**

September 8, Monday 57-65

September 10, Wednesday 65-74

September 12, Friday 74-95

September 15, Monday Essay summary due (more on this later)

September 17, Wednesday 96-107

September 19, Friday 108-124

September 22, Monday 125-134

September 24 , Wednesday 135-161

September 26, Friday 163-175

September 29, Monday 175-192

October 1, Wednesday 193-200

October 3, Friday 202-240

October 6, Monday In-class peer-review

October 8, Wednesday Single-source essay due **200 points**

October 10, Friday No class: Homecoming frolicking, apparently

October 13, Monday 241-273

October 15, Wednesday 274-282

October 17, Friday 282-300; 455-463

October 20, Monday 301-325; 464-480

October 22, Wednesday 325-358; 481-487

October 24, Friday 359-386

October 27, Monday 386-410

October 29, Wednesday 411-434

October 31, Friday 435-454 Multiple-source factual essay due **400 points**

November 3, Monday 580-587

November 5, Wednesday 587-597

November 7, Friday 597-611

November 10, Monday 611-622

November 12, Wednesday 622-627

November 14, Friday In-class peer-reviewing

November 17, Monday Last chance for questions, advice, and the like

November 19, Wednesday No meeting in classroom; use time to work on papers, confer, pray

November 21, Friday No meeting in classroom; see November 19 (above)

November 24, Monday Multiple-source, thesis-driven essay due **400 points**

November 26, Wednesday No class—Thanksgiving break

November 28, Friday No class—Thanksgiving break

December 1, Monday 571-579

December 3, Wednesday Essay questions for final exam due (more on this later)

December 5, Friday Last day of class, much happiness for all concerned

Final examination week: In-class essay exam on scheduled day at scheduled hour **100 points**