

Course Syllabus - Spring 2009

Department of English, Foreign Languages, Journalism

Division of Liberal Arts and Sciences

English 104-16 College Writing and Rhetoric

Instructor: Bill Church

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Office Hours: 12-1 MW; 11-12:30 TR, and by appointment

Class Meeting Time and Room: 2:00 – 3:20 TR, Murphy Hall 108

Required texts and materials: *Tuesdays with Morrie*, Mitch Albom; *Critical Thinking, Thoughtful Writing*, John Chaffee; *Savage Inequalities*, Jonathan Kozol. 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*. I will not award credit for handwritten out-of-class assignments, so please be aware of computer lab times.

Recommended text: Collegiate dictionary with at least 200,000 entries. Guide(s) of your choice for grammar and style.

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 contemporary cultural rhetoric has affected your sense of self and then decide if who have been told you are is who you wish to be. By considering "texts" in a broad sense, we will examine the "performance" aspect of our identity as individuals and as a culture. Our readings, discussions, and papers will all engage that broad topic. We will read extensively, summarize, and respond to texts on contemporary cultural topics. Our *four* major papers will vary in purpose, some being more subtle arguments or narrative, some being more overt, some relying heavier on research. 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.html>

University Mandatory Attendance Policy:

In order to improve student learning as well as to achieve compliance with federal financial aid policies, Western has a mandatory attendance policy for all 100-level courses. You will be given an excused absence when acting as an official representative of the university, provided you give prior written verification from the faculty/staff supervisor of the event. All other absences will be deemed unexcused. The maximum number of unexcused absences allowed for this class before March 18 is (3). Thus, when you have accrued three (3) unexcused absences you will be reported to the Registrar's Office, who will automatically withdraw you from this class. The Financial Aid Office will reduce financial aid as appropriate. You need to understand, too, that students who miss class for the fourth unexcused time *after* the date stated above will still fail the class. For those students, a grade of "FA" will be recorded, the "F" indicating failure and the "A" indicating violation of the attendance policy.

My Personalized Attendance Policy:

* 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. I will not change an absent to a present for anyone who arrives more than fifteen minutes late.

* Students may miss all or part of one class without penalty beyond missed points.

* Students who accrue three unexcused absences or who do not have the required number of complete drafts at the beginning of class on peer review days are ineligible for grades above "C."

* When a student has five unexcused absences, **regardless** of the time of the semester that the sixth absence occurs, I will record a grade of FA and the student will need to repeat the course. 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, severe illnesses, funerals, power failures, unforeseen medical emergencies involving selves or 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.

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 Student Handbook and Calendar on 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>

My Personalized Academic Honesty Policy: 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 other appropriate administrative personnel. 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 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.

Please note: Students must receive at least a "C" in ENG104 to enter ENG108.

Grading Criteria:

* Quality and completeness of your portfolio (80%) -- Your portfolio will consist of your *four* major papers and abundant shorter works that may include but not be limited to vocabulary-building and editing assignments, summaries, responses, letters, critical analyses, and other writings as assigned. No one will pass without completing all four major writing assignments, regardless of the quality of work submitted. Incomplete portfolios that lack shorter

works will have the letter grade reduced accordingly.

* 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 as established elsewhere in this syllabus.

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.

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 *MWSU 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" (22). Sleeping or appearing to sleep, text messaging, 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. The most common classroom disruption today involves phones being used for any number of purposes. Please silence your phones before class. I will ask anyone who is holding or in any way using a phone during class time to leave for the remainder of that day's session, and I will record an absence. If you are addicted to your phones, I recommend you drop this course immediately. We simply must stay on task to learn. Let's establish a cordial and respectful atmosphere in which we can have fun while learning together.

Final Exam: Tuesday, May 5, 2:00 – 3:50 p.m., Murphy 108.