

Missouri Western State University
Department of English
English 108, section 17: College Writing and Research
TU/TH 12:30-1:50 Murphy 108
Instructor: Kori Binette
Office: 213 Eder Hall
Office Hours: by appointment
Email: kbinette@missouriwestern.edu

Required Materials:

Class Matters, by the correspondents of *The New York Times*.

The Working Poor: Invisible in America, by David Shipler.

The Bedford Researcher (3rd edition), by Mike Palmquist.

They Say/I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing, by Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein.

A steady supply of paper and writing utensils, and access to a computer, printer, and stapler [\[1\]](#)
An open mind and willingness to be an active and engaged scholar

Recommended Materials:

A good style guide

A college dictionary

A jump/flash drive [\[2\]](#)

Course Description and Philosophy:

At the end of the 18th century, J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, a transplanted Frenchman newly arrived in America, marveled at how unique America was in comparison to the aristocracies of Europe. Here, he saw a level playing field, one in which opportunities were available to anyone who sought them. “It is not composed, as in Europe, of great lords who possess everything and of a herd of people who have nothing. The rich and the poor are not so far removed from each other as they are in Europe.” Crevecoeur believed that the people of America were completely different than the people of Europe because they were united in their hardworking nature and their unyielding optimism. Moreover, he pointed out, much of the new nation’s strength derived from its welcoming varied peoples to its shores: “Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labours and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world.” This was the beginning of American exceptionalism, the notion that America has a unique destiny of egalitarian promise.

The idea that America is a melting pot where the “American Dream” is within anyone’s reach is an old and well-established one, one that still brings new people to this country. “Rags-to-riches” stories capture our imaginations and seem to reinforce the notion that yes, indeed, an ordinary hardworking individual in America can make it big. In terms of families, we like to believe that the American Dream will provide for our children, ensuring them a better life than our own.

But is this true? Is American truly a class-less society, one in which hard work and determination matter more than family name or social status? Is it true that you can climb the social ladder? Moreover, what constitutes class—education, wealth, career, or something else entirely? Is it a major force in American life, or is it outdated, irrelevant? Naturally, these questions don’t have right or wrong answers, but are meant to provoke you into plumbing the depths of American society.

Through the reading we will do in this class, we will be exploring these kinds of questions in detail, and this will carry over to our research and writing. I am expecting that you embrace this as an opportunity to fully engage in inquiry, as the study of class in America can provide powerful insights into such related issues as poverty, race, politics, working conditions, global economics, social welfare, education, immigration, and family structure.

This course has as one of its basic premises that becoming a stronger writer demands stronger reading skills, and therefore much of the course will be focused on strengthening your critical thinking and reading skills, especially analysis. To this, you will bring your own opinions and experiences and begin the process of identifying a point (or

points) of particular interest to you. This will not be the research project of your past; you will not merely gather information from dusty books and regurgitate it back onto the paper. Instead, I'd like you to think of the work done for this class not as a means to an end, but as a form of critical engagement, a way for you to explore an issue *through* your writing.

The rest of the course is designed to expose you to different forms of writing, and to also assist you in breaking down the large research project into manageable pieces. You will explore and research your topic from various angles and perspectives, utilizing a variety of sources. Each of the smaller writings will help you refine and re-envision your final project, as well as helping you give it shape.

Revision is also a central tenet of this course. This means that your writing will go through stages, and you will review your work, revise it, and return to it again. That means you will produce several drafts of each assignment, with input from both me and your peers.

Grading:

Your grade will be determined based on the following components. Bear in mind that I grade holistically (with letters) and not with points. For each of the papers, including the final project, you will turn in a portfolio, containing drafts, generative writing, peer response, and any other relevant information. Therefore, you will be graded not only on the quality of your final product, but also the effort put forth into the revision process.

% of Grade	Description
10%	Leading the Discussion: In small groups, you will work with your peers to lead the class in discussing a reading assignment on an assigned day. As a group, you should plan out questions, handouts, activities, that will engage the class in an active and lively discussion.
15%	Participation/Community Membership: It's imperative that you do more than just show up to class. Being an active member of this community means that you ask helpful questions, volunteer answers and insights, contribute to group work and peer critiques, and come prepared having completed the homework and be ready with any required materials.
15%	Rhetorical Analysis paper: In this 2-3 page paper, you will choose a small selection from our reading to analyze, paying attention to such issues as audience, technique, bias, etc.
15%	Prospectus and Annotated Bibliography: In this 2-3 page assignment, you will outline your ideas for your final project, as well as present your current list of sources with your notes on them.
15%	Interview paper: In this 3-4 page paper, you will use an interview you conduct with a person, whose experience or knowledge you deem relevant to your project, to construct an essay. [3]
30%	Final Research Project: This 10-12 page final project will represent the culmination of the work you've done throughout the semester. The topic will be of your choosing, with my guidance. It will be turned in during the scheduled final exam. [4]

POLICIES AND MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

Attendance and Lateness:

In order to improve student learning and to achieve compliance with federal financial aid policies, Western has a mandatory attendance policy for all 100-level courses. If you miss 5 classes for the entire semester, you will receive an F in the class. 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; however, there are no other excused absences, exceptions, or “makeups” for this attendance requirement. Furthermore, the maximum number of absences allowed before the midterm report is 3. Thus, when you have 4 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. 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.

I expect that you will also be on time to class, and I reserve the right to count repeated lateness as absences. I will not count you as present if you show up more than 10 minutes late to class.

Late Work:

Work is due at the beginning of class on the day it’s due, without exception. Being absent does not excuse you from this requirement. However, I do understand that sometimes things come up, and you cannot make a deadline. Therefore, I’ll allow each student one late assignment. If you are going to use this option, you must speak with me to make a plan for turning the work in. I will not accept late work without it being discussed with me. I won’t accept a second late assignment, so please use this option only in the most extenuating of cases.

Cell Phones, etc:

Cell phones, Blackberries, and Ipods are wonderful inventions, and doubtless enhance our lives in numerous ways. However, while in class, I expect that you give me your undivided attention and silence or shut off your devices and stow them away. If you have pressing social concerns that require you to text message repeatedly, then please stay home and do not come to class. If I catch you using any of these things during class, I will ask you to leave and you will be counted absent. And, very likely I will think the worst of you, so please do not test me on this policy.

Student Disability Policy:

Any student in this course who has a disability that prevents the fullest expressions of abilities should contact Missouri Western's special needs coordinator, Michael Ritter, for possible certification of special needs and expert recommendations for assistance. You should also speak with me as soon as possible so that we can together work out accommodations.

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 other fraudulent classroom activity. Cheating and plagiarism are not acceptable. If your teacher finds evidence of cheating or plagiarism, you have the burden of showing that the paper has in fact been written by you. You should keep thorough evidence of your writing processes for all papers so that you can meet this burden of proof. You will receive a grade of F (0 points) for any paper/assignment/exam that shows evidence of cheating and/or plagiarism. You have the burden of proving that a paper/assignment/exam showing evidence of cheating and/or plagiarism has been in fact written by you. You should keep thorough evidence of your writing processes for all papers so that you can meet this burden of proof. If you plagiarize a paper, you forfeit the right to revise that paper; if you cheat on an exam, you will not be allowed to retake the exam. Violations of academic honesty will be reported to the Provost or the designated representative on the Academic Honesty Violation Report Forms. Please see the Student Handbook for specific activities identified as violations of this policy and the student due process procedure. This handbook is also available online at <http://missouriwestern.edu/handbook/index.pdf>.

Civility and Cooperation:

Missouri Western requires all students to help us maintain good conditions for teaching and learning. All students will treat their classmates, teachers, and student assistants with civility and respect, both inside and outside

the classroom. **Students who violate this policy may, among other penalties, be counted absent and asked to leave.** You should review your Missouri Western student handbook for further information. This handbook is available online at <http://missouriwestern.edu/handbook/index.pdf>.

[1] Blaming computers or printers for missing assignments will not work as an excuse. Save your work in several places. Complete your assignments with enough spare time to use your roommate's printer, or a printer on campus. Likewise, please staple your work before you come to class; investing in a stapler is one step on your road to academic success and will serve you well for years to come. Unstapled assignments suggest to me that you don't care very much about your work.

[2] See above note.

[3] Please note that while we will have in-class time devoted to some of this, much of the work in this class you will conduct on your own, outside of class. This is especially true for your interview. You will need to make sure you schedule it enough ahead of time.

[4] Again, we will have some time in class devoted to research, but you will need to be prepared to do a lot of the research on your own, the old-fashioned way.