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ENG 1091G-098: Composition and Language, Honors

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10916-098

SYLLABUS
English 1091G, Section 098, Fall 2009
Composition and Language, Honors
MWF 9:00 to 9:50pm, Coleman 3609, EIU

Professor: Dr. Letitia L. Moffitt
Office: Coleman Hall room 3861 (south corridor)
Office Hours: See separate handout
E-mail: llmoffitt@eiu.edu
(for questions only; do not e-mail assignments without my permission)

Objectives

In this course students will: 1) write expository and persuasive papers throughout the semester in which paragraphs, sentences, and words develop a central idea; 2) write purposeful, adequately developed paragraphs and sentences that are direct, economical, free of ambiguity, and structurally appropriate for the ideas expressed and for the audience to whom it is directed; 3) develop skills in critical reading and listening for understanding and evaluating culturally diverse course materials and for becoming more discerning readers; 4) develop research skills, including effective use of source materials and the principles of documentation; and 5) develop the ability to evaluate, criticize, and revise their own and their peers' writing.

Texts

Gibaldi, Joseph. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 7th edition. There will be a number of other readings assigned throughout the term; I will provide photocopies of these texts in class.

Grading Breakdown

Writing Assignments: Each grade includes assessment of any of the following that apply: preparatory/in-class writing, draft writing, final writing. It is important to understand that all of these writing assignments connect to each other in multiple ways (which we will discuss); as such, *you must complete and hand in every assignment to pass the class.*

WA-1: Abstract.....	10%
WA-2: Interview summary	10%
WA-3: Rhetorical analysis and comparison essay.....	10%
WA-4: Rhetorical analysis presentation and paper.....	10%
WA-5: Review with comparison and argumentation.....	10%
WA-6: Comparison and analysis of source coverage	10%
WA-7: Research synthesis paper	15%
WA-8: Class writing project	10%
Other Criteria: Quizzes and participation.....	15%

Writing assignments

You will receive detailed written and oral instructions for each of the eight (yes, *eight*) writing assignments. While these instructions will present clear information on the goal, focus, and basic requirements of each assignment, they cannot possibly spell out every last detail on how to write your papers—after all, *you* have to figure out how to write your papers. Moreover, I won't repeat anything I've already said; for example, I'm not going to say every single time that you must double-space, because I'm going to assume that you've learned that already.

Conferences: For each writing assignment, you will produce draft materials that you will bring to and discuss in a 20-minute conference with me; you must also hand in the draft material with your final written product. Draft material will vary by assignment (and will be specified in the instructions). *Conferences are mandatory.* I shouldn't even have to say this, because most astute students will jump at the chance to get feedback on their papers from the very person who will be grading them, and yet every semester a few students see this as a lot of unnecessary extra work. Regardless, if you miss your conference, you not only miss out on this opportunity, but your grade for that particular assignment will go down one step (that is, from A to A-, A- to B+, etc.). I will provide more details on conferences once we approach our first writing assignment.

Deadlines: Assignments are due at the *beginning* of class on the due date. Our class meets at one of the earliest times offered, which wasn't my decision; I like sleeping in as much as the next person. However, the class *does* begin at 9:00am, so you need to be in the room at that time, including and especially on days when assignments are due. If your assignment is late by one class (that is, if you turn it in any time after 9:00am on the due date, all the way up to 9:00am the following class), your grade will go down one *full* grade (that is, from A to B, A- to B-, etc.). If you don't hand in your paper at the beginning of the class following the due date, I won't accept it and your grade for that paper will be F.

I accept *no excuses* for late papers, and I grant *no* excused extensions—not even for “good” excuses (illness/athletic event/doctor's appointment/job interview/wedding/funeral). I am especially not interested in technological glitches (printer not working/computer ate my file). You have the class schedule in your hands right now, so you know when the assignments are due. If you can't make a due date's class, for whatever reason, get a friend to hand in your paper for you or make other arrangements with me—though if you just come up to me and simply announce, “I'm going to be absent the day the next assignment is due!” expect to be answered with puzzled silence, because, well, how am I supposed to respond to that? It is not my responsibility to get your work from you; it is *your* responsibility to get it to me.

On that, however, unless you have made arrangements with me beforehand, please do not e-mail me papers or put them in my mailbox or slide them under my office door or leave them in the classroom if I'm not there, because there is no guarantee that I'll get them on time via any of these methods. I can't grade a paper that you honestly tried to get to me but somehow got lost; I can only grade what actually exists, *in my hands*, by the deadline. I don't say all of this to be mean, but because we are on a very tight schedule and it is crucial that you do not fall behind. If you do, you may never catch up again. Besides, handing a paper in is easy; writing a paper is hard, so don't ace the hard part only to screw up the easy part.

Other criteria

Quizzes: That one got your attention, didn't it. Don't worry: this is *really easy*—if you do the reading. Each time you are assigned a reading, at the beginning of class I will give a very short quiz (usually only one or two questions) based on that reading. The questions will be extremely easy, such that anyone who has read the text *all the way through* should be able to answer them instantly—but anyone who hasn't read probably won't be able to guess. (There will also be discussion questions on the quizzes; you will freewrite briefly on these questions, but what you write here won't count as part of the quiz but rather toward your participation grade while also forming the basis for our classroom discussion of the text.) If you didn't do the reading, please don't insult my intelligence (and yours) by trying to fake answers. The point of all this, if you haven't figured it out already, is to ensure that you *do the reading*. It's not optional.

Participation: Participation means more than just saying whatever you want, relevant or otherwise. It is also more than a matter of raising your hand once a class and saying something, anything, just to ensure a decent participation grade. Students who come to class on time, listen to others, help and encourage others, ask or answer questions, contribute to discussions, focus on and engage in all classroom activities—these are students who are actively participating. It's a cliché, but one worth repeating at this point: the class is only as good as you make it.

Attendance

You may have noted that there is no “attendance grade.” This isn't high school; you don't get “credit” in college just for showing up and having a pulse. As such, I won't “call attendance” or have a “sign-in sheet.” Before you get excited and figure on having your afternoons free all semester, read on.

Every semester students come up to me and announce, “I was absent Wednesday!” or “I'm going to have to miss class Monday!” Then they stand there looking at me. I've been teaching for a while now, but I still have no idea what students are thinking when they do this. Am I supposed to applaud, or break into tears, or gasp in shock and horror? The next thing I get is a lengthy description of why they were or will be absent. Still this leaves me puzzled.

There seems to be a bit of a “disconnect” here: these students think the most important thing about absences is making sure the instructor knows the reason why they were absent. They seem to think that getting “excused” for absences is the primary goal. The truth is instructors often couldn't care less about this—nor should you. If you miss a doctor's appointment, do you give your doctor a lengthy explanation of why you missed it, because you're afraid the doctor will dislike you and give you a “bad grade” on your checkup if you don't have a good reason? Of course not; you reschedule the appointment.

The problem is, of course, that you can't simply “reschedule” a day of class that you missed unless you have a time machine. And this is precisely what concerns instructors: not whether you have a “good reason” for missing class, but the fact that you are now behind everyone else in class. That is also what should concern *you*, the student. This should go without saying, but I'll say it anyway: grades are not based on how I feel about you. Grades are based on the work you

do toward a class's objectives. If you miss class, you've missed work toward those objectives, and it doesn't matter why you missed class—it's exactly the same if you were at a funeral or at the movies. Moreover, you standing there trying very hard to make sure I know you had a good reason for missing class does absolutely *nothing* toward you actually gaining what you missed in class. It's just wasting time.

Therefore, whenever you are absent, instead of doing the "I was/will be absent!" announcement and then launching into a description of why, first consider the following questions:

- What day(s) were you absent or will you be absent?
- Check the syllabus: what does it say you missed or will miss on the day(s) you are absent?
- Based on this, what will you do about any assignments that are/were due? For example, if you know you'll be absent on the day a paper is due, check the syllabus: you'll see that I don't give extensions; therefore, in this case you will need to get a friend to hand in your paper for you or make other arrangements.
- Based on the syllabus, what other missed activities can you make up? How do you propose to make up this work, if that is possible? Think of a specific plan, noting what times and days you can make my office hours and how specifically you intend to make up the work. Note that your plan must schedule all make-up work within a reasonable time frame—to be specific, within one class period of the last day of absence, as any longer would constitute an extension (and you know my policy on that).
- What work *cannot* be made up—for example, because it involves in-class activities that cannot be reproduced, or because I don't give make-ups for that particular activity? (Read the syllabus carefully to see what work cannot be made up. Moreover, the laws of physics apply to me the same way they do everyone else: I cannot compress a 50-minute class into 20 words or fewer in answer to an off-the-cuff "what did I miss?")

These questions should give you an understanding of how much work you've missed because of a given absence. If you discover that you've already missed a lot of work that cannot be made up, you might want to be careful of your attendance in the future. You should be keeping track of your work throughout the semester, so you'll know if you've stayed on top of things.

Why am I going on and on about this? My point is not that you should slavishly drag yourself to class with a fever of 104. It is natural to expect that events may force you to miss class. My point is simply this: attend as many classes as you humanly can; if you miss class, for whatever reason, make sure you do what you need to do to keep up with the work, and expect there to be consequences that range from negligible (if absences are isolated incidents) to severe (if you make a habit of it). It is up to *you* to figure out what to do about your absences, not me. Do not expect me to propose solutions as to how you can get your assignments done. You're the one taking the class, so you need to do the work. People who understand this tend to do well in college. People who don't...don't. (And if you do miss a lot of classes, please don't bother coming to me on Week 14 and asking how you can make up for it. You should know the answer to that already: build a time machine. That's the only acceptable solution.)

Keep this in mind as well: attendance means substantially more than having a pulse, and the point of coming to class isn't just to "get credit" for being there. If you show up to class but then fall asleep, send text messages, work on assignments for other courses, etc., you might as well have stayed home, because you aren't really "attending." (Look it up in Webster's: the first definition for "attend" is "to pay attention," not "to be present.")

Plagiarism warning

Plagiarism means word-for-word unacknowledged copying of another writer's work *or* unacknowledged paraphrasing of another writer's ideas. This can range from something as small as copying a sentence from a website without properly acknowledging the source, all the way up to turning in someone else's paper as your own. The minimum penalty is a grade of "F" on the assignment. In addition, you may fail the course, be placed on probation, or even be expelled.

Most students would never consider turning in someone else's paper as their own. But this is not the only way plagiarism occurs. Understand that plagiarism is based not just on intent but on deed. This means that it is not acceptable to say, for instance, "I didn't mean to plagiarize; it just so happens that what I wrote sounds very similar to this website. I went to the site to get some ideas for my paper, and what I read must have influenced me without me realizing it." Even if this sounds like something nearly everyone has done at one time or another, guess what: it's still considered plagiarism, because you paraphrased someone else's ideas without citing the source.

Luckily, this is easy to avoid. If you ever look at an outside source during the writing process, even if it's "just" a website, be aware of how influential that source may be. If you think the source may make its way into your paper, whether word-for-word or as a paraphrase, *cite the source* using proper MLA format (we'll go over this in class). That way, the worst you can be accused of is not following directions (if you weren't supposed to use outside sources) or using an inappropriate source (if you use, say, Wikipedia—more on this later), and you aren't likely to get an "F" for that alone, whereas you will definitely get an F if you don't cite the source.

A few last words

This is probably not the most exciting thing you've ever had to read, but please: *keep this syllabus*; do not let it somehow fly out of your hands the second you leave the room. A good half of the questions that are asked during a semester have already been answered here. At the same time, ask questions, and use common sense. I can't write everything into a syllabus, or it would be even longer than it already is. Remember, *you* are responsible for doing what needs to be done; it is not an acceptable excuse to say, "I didn't understand what you meant, so I couldn't do the work." If you don't understand, find out. That's why you're here, after all.

Finally, though it may not seem like it from this antiseptic and decidedly humorless syllabus, I am *very* excited to be working with you this semester on this course. Let's make it a good one!

Grading Criteria for Papers

Purpose:

“A” range: The essay has a clearly focused purpose and is sufficiently narrowed for a short essay.

“B” range: The essay has a fairly clear purpose and, but the writer doesn’t always consistently craft the essay toward that purpose.

“C” range: The essay has a purpose, but that purpose may be too broad.

“D” range: The essay has little clear sense of purpose; instead of focusing on a single topic, the essay jumps from one topic to another and makes no clear point.

Reasoning and Supporting Evidence:

“A” range: The writer provides specific, clear supporting details, offering enough evidence to make a point convincingly. The reasoning is valid, and there are no irrelevant details.

“B” range: Reasoning and evidence are fairly clear and appropriate but not always vivid and convincing.

“C” range: The writer’s evidence may be too general to fulfill the essay’s purpose effectively. The essay may offer a few specific details but not enough to be convincing. There may be a few irrelevant details or flaws in reasoning.

“D” range: Evidence or supporting details are few and possibly irrelevant, and there may be several flaws in reasoning.

Organization:

“A” range: The arrangement of ideas in the essay is appropriate for the writer’s subject and purpose. The introduction is engaging; the conclusion is satisfying. Transitions are effective, clear and varied. The reader can easily understand the direction of the essay.

“B” range: The essay is usually easy to follow, though introduction, conclusion, transitions and/or overall arrangement of ideas may be less than completely effective.

“C” range: Some thought has been given to the arrangement of ideas, but supporting points may not be in their best order. Introduction and/or conclusion are present but not well thought out. Lack of transitions may make the essay hard to follow.

“D” range: Organization is confusing. The reader may have great difficulty following the essay.

Writing Style:

“A” range: Writing is under the writer’s control. Wording is thoughtful, varied, and precise. The writer has obviously edited and proofread, and there are few if any grammatical, punctuation, spelling or typographical errors.

“B” range: Writing is competent, perhaps not varied and accurate enough for the “A” range, but effort is there.

“C” range: Wording is generally correct but “bland,” or perhaps the essay contains exaggerated language, wordy structures, or clichés. The essay also likely contains errors of grammar, punctuation, and/or spelling.

“D” range: Essay bears the clear markings of something the author dashed off without giving sufficient thought (typos, grammatical mistakes, redundancies).

F papers: An “F” assignment either doesn’t exist (meaning that the writer didn’t turn it in on time as specified), or did not meet any of the minimum requirements of the assignment, or was plagiarized (in part or in whole).

Note #1: An “A” grade is the top grade that can be achieved and does not simply reflect good effort; it reflects a combination of strong effort and superlative results. There are no “easy A” grades; moreover, grades you’ve gotten in other classes are irrelevant to your grades in this class. It doesn’t matter if you’ve “always gotten A grades” on your writing before; you’re being graded on your work for *this* class.

Note #2: All grades are final. I do not negotiate grades.

General Schedule (subject to change as necessary)

<i>Date</i>	<i>What we'll do in class</i>	<i>What you'll do for next class</i>
Mon., Aug. 24	Introductions; syllabus	Read Gladwell article
Wed., Aug. 26	Discuss Gladwell; abstracts	Draft of Gladwell abstract; read Kirsch
Fri., Aug. 28	Discuss Kirsch; abstracts	Work on abstracts
Mon., Aug. 31	<i>Conferences; no class</i>	
Wed., Sept. 2	WA-1 due ; interviews	Read Hersey excerpt; interview
Fri., Sept. 4	<i>No class</i>	
Mon., Sept. 7	<i>Labor Day; no class</i>	
Wed., Sept. 9	Discuss Hersey; interviews	Write summary of interview
Fri., Sept. 11	<i>Conferences; no class</i>	Finish summary of interview
Mon., Sept. 14	WA-2 due ; appeals & fallacies	Read Koch article
Wed., Sept. 16	Discuss Koch article	Read Quindlen article
Fri., Sept. 18	Discuss Quindlen article	Read James article
Mon., Sept. 21	Discuss James article	Read Moore article
Wed., Sept. 23	Discuss Moore article	Select and read article for paper
Fri., Sept. 25	Writing workshop	Work on rhetorical analysis
Mon., Sept. 28	<i>Conferences; no class</i>	Finish rhetorical analysis
Wed., Sept. 30	WA-3 due ; rhetorical analysis	Read Lutz article
Fri., Oct. 2	Discuss Lutz article	Work on presentation/WA-4
Mon., Oct. 5	Presentations	Work on presentation/WA-4
Wed., Oct 7	Presentations	Work on presentation/WA-4
Fri., Oct 9	<i>Mid-term break; no class</i>	
Mon., Oct. 12	Presentations	Finish WA-4
Wed., Oct. 14	WA-4 due ; review	Read Acocella article
Fri., Oct. 16	Discuss Acocella article; reviews	Read Bloom article
Mon., Oct. 19	Discuss Bloom article; reviews	Pick topic
Wed., Oct. 21	Writing workshop	Work on review comparison
Fri., Oct. 23	<i>Conferences; no class</i>	Finish review comparison
Mon., Oct. 26	WA-5 due ; WA-6&7	Read handout
Wed., Oct. 28	Discuss source comparison	Research
Fri., Oct. 30	Research day	Work on source comparison
Mon., Nov. 2	Writing workshop	Work on source comparison
Wed., Nov. 4	<i>Conferences; no class</i>	Finish source comparison
Fri., Nov. 6	WA-6 due ; group activities	[Complete schedule to come]
Mon., Nov. 9		
to Wed., Dec. 9	Work on WA-7 and WA-8	
Fri., Dec. 11	WA-7 and WA-8 due	

There is no final exam for this class (yay).