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ENG 3001-005: Advanced Composition

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English 3001: Advanced Composition **(Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 1:00 to 1:50)**

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Office hours: MWF, 2:00 to 3:00, and by appointment

Website: <http://www.ux1.eiu.edu/~cftde>

Class listserv: 3001sprg@eiu.edu

Textbooks:

The Blair Handbook, Fulwiler

Online! A Reference Guide to Using Internet Sources, Harnack, Kleppinger

Essays in Course Packet (available at Copy Express in the student union):

"Confronting Class in the Classroom," bell hooks

"The Reciprocal Relationship of Workplace Culture and Review," Susan Kleimann

"White Privilege and Male Privilege: Coming to See Correspondences through Work in Women's Studies," Peggy McIntosh

COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

**(read the following carefully; these words constitute our contract,
and I will request your written agreement to them)**

Goals: This "Writing in the Wild" course will enhance your understanding of academic and professional writing and give you practice in producing both. Our subject matter is the world of work, and the place of writing and ideas in the modern workplace.

Because this is an advanced composition course, we will focus on honing your writing and editorial expertise, from initiating and designing a research project to an oral presentation of your initial findings to a polished formal report. Also, because we have the privilege of spending half of our class time in a computer lab, you will learn how to use your own EIU web page, and you will publish all of your work in this course on the Internet by linking it to this page. As you do so, you will also learn some of the basic techniques of web design, thereby acquiring an increasingly valuable set of skills.

More specifically, our goals include the refinement of skills in the following areas:

1. Constructing arguments: improve your ability to construct your own arguments. This skill depends on your mastery of critical reading. The better reader you are, the better writer you can be. Again, one of our aims is to learn to distinguish between "opinion" and a "reasoned argument" based on carefully constructed texts, evidence,

and so on.

2. Critical reading: improve your ability to read critically, to question, and to evaluate what you read. In order to be a more critical reader, you have to participate in what you are reading, actively deciphering the argument in all its parts, rather than passively receiving strings of words. Active participation in this course will help to improve your ability to summarize what you read and then to evaluate the claims and assumptions on which the argument is based. Although you will be given the chance to express your own opinions frequently in this class, the process of data collection and analysis we are going to be learning is very different from simply “saying what you think” or even “presenting the facts.” Writing of all kinds is less about opinions and facts per se and more about “reasoned arguments.” Knowing the difference between these two forms of discourse is key to success in our class, and in professional life.

3. Bibliographic research: improve your knowledge of how online library resources work and how to use them. In addition to extensive on-site workplace research, including but not limited to interviews and observations, you will familiarize yourself with library resources (online catalogues and periodical indexes, electronic databases, and librarians) and other online information. Reasoned arguments are dependent upon knowing how to find, evaluate, and then use good information. In addition to learning how to find appropriate information, you will improve your skills in using such sources. You cannot make use of an article or essay if you cannot summarize its basic argument and identify how it is constructed. Therefore, using research means finding useful materials, and knowing how to read them and incorporate them into your own writing. (Incorporating research materials also includes knowledge of appropriate documentation styles. There are several of these standardized documentation styles; we will be using APA, the widely preferred format for business reports--more on this documentation style later.)

4. Collaborative learning: improve your ability to learn from and to teach others about your own thinking and about writing. As in most professional spheres, much of your success in this course will depend on the process of drafting and peer critiques. You will practice forming honest, thorough, and constructive critiques of your own writing as well as your peers' writing, and how to make use of what you have learned from your own self-critique and that of others.

5. Clean, smart prose: improve your ability to write clear and meaningful sentences, to compose organized and developed paragraphs, and to identify and address recurring grammatical or mechanical problems specific to your own writing (these vary from writer to writer). We will spend time talking about why so-called grammatical prose is so important to your success in college and in professional life.

6. Professional life: by finding a working professional and studying that person's writing and work habits throughout the semester, and by reading and hearing periodic progress reports from your classmates on research with their writers, you will deepen your understanding of what life is like in the worlds beyond college. We will study extensively the typical writing practices of professional life, as well as significant factors that influence professional writing processes, including matters of race, class, and

gender, and various forms of workplace interaction.

7. Internet publishing: although this is a writing course, an additional benefit at semester's end will be your mastery of basic web-publishing skills. This aspect of the course will be difficult at first for some of you, but I will be available for any questions or help you might need. I promise that ALL of those who stick with it will learn how to quickly publish and manipulate online documents, and how to perform various forms of format enhancement and image retrieval, manipulation, and placement (more on what all that means later). When you finally graduate from EIU, you'll be able to add a line to your professional resume asserting your skills in this area--skills that are increasingly appreciated by employers. As Jo Allen points out in her book *Writing in the Workplace*, "Web pages have become an important way to present information to the public. Businesses use Web pages for advertisements and sales. Governments at all levels publish announcements, reports, research results, and much-used forms on Web pages. Educational and health institutions use Web pages to relay course work, report data needed by various departments, and provide access to research facilities. With the expanding use of the web, you are likely to be involved in designing Web pages as part of your job assignment." Again, publishing your work on the Web will give some of you headaches at first, but I promise that it'll become second nature for all of you well before the semester is over.

Major Writing Assignments:

The course assignments will be divided into three major sections:

A. The Writing in the Wild Research Project includes:

- A formal letter confirming the arrangement at your research site
- A formal one-page proposal for your research project
- An informal, two-page written report on your preliminary research findings
- A formal, analytical report (2,500 to 3,000 words) on your research findings
- A formal letter of thanks to your writer in the wild

B. Peer Critiques (300-500 words each):

- On a proposal draft
- On two oral presentations
- On a formal report draft

C. Self-Commentaries (300-500 words each):

- On formal letter and proposal writing
- On the oral presentation
- On the semester as a whole

Your final analytical report will be based on ten to twenty hours of observation of professional writing "in the wild"; on interviews with your contact, and with other

participants in the writing process; and on a critical analysis of your findings based on your own research. The finished report will be 2,500 to 3,000 words long, and it will incorporate at least two of our in-class readings and include as well three cited sources that we have not discussed in class.

You will be asked to read about and do research into several key issues relevant to writing in the contemporary workplace. You will be introduced to these issues through reading assignments and class discussions. Again, your oral presentation will explore the preliminary findings of your on-going research; this will also be a chance to receive further input and advice on your project from your peers.

Grades:

Your final grade will be determined as follows:

A formal letter confirming the arrangement at your research site 5%

A formal one-page proposal for your research project 10%

An informal, two-page written report on the preliminary findings of your research 10%

A formal oral report on your preliminary research findings 20%

A formal, analytical report (2,500 to 3,000 words) on your research findings 25%

Average of three peer-critiques 10%

Average of three self-commentaries 10%

Miscellaneous writing assignments and class participation (including attendance) 10%

Other matters:

E-Mail Activity: Enrollment in this class requires an "EIU" e-mail account, and you must check it frequently, preferably every day, for messages pertaining to the course. I will subscribe you to our class listserv (also known as a "discussion list") with your EIU e-dress, so even if you've been using another e-mail service, you must use your EIU account for this course. You can use this account via telnet, or on the Internet, at www.eiu.edu/mymail. You will also use your EIU e-mail account to publish writings for this class on your own web site (as you'll discover, you already have one, courtesy of EIU). E-mail is the quickest, easiest way to reach me if I am not in my office; I welcome any and all questions and comments. Again, using an e-mail account frequently is crucial for this course—if you do not send me an e-mail message at the above address by the beginning of class on Friday, January 11, I will assume that you have chosen against fully participating in the course, and I will therefore drop you. In your message, 1) describe yourself in whatever way you choose, including your career aspirations; 2) list at least two types of "writers in the wild" whose writing you might like to research during this semester—are these people you already know? if not, how might you find and contact such professional writers?; and 3) write a statement to the effect that you have read and agree with these course policies and procedures.

Regarding the Writing Center: Tutoring services at the English Department's Writing Center are free and students may drop in or schedule appointments during working hours. If you have had problems with grammar, punctuation, spelling, etc., I strongly

recommend that you make use of this service.

Classroom Environment: In class, I expect all of you to participate in discussions (class participation will be figured into your final grade), and to attend regularly. The best way to demonstrate that you are an active, engaged, and interested reader and writer is by contributing regularly to class discussions, and by paying close, respectful attention to what everyone else has to say. If you have questions, no matter how simple or complicated, go ahead and ask me, either in class or via e-mail—chances are that other people have the same question. I do not plan to lecture in this class; I want us to contribute together to a positive, challenging, interesting learning environment. Finally, you must also be willing to give and receive constructive, insightful, frank criticism! I'm sure that all of you will work very hard on your projects, but try not to let criticism of your work hurt your feelings, and don't hold back from offering helpful advice because you think it might hurt someone else's feelings. Also, please do not chew gum or eat food during class, activities which are too distracting to others--drinking beverages is okay. Finally, no caps, please, but if you want to wear one, turn it backwards so I can see your eyes.

Attendance Policy: I will take attendance, and I expect you to attend class every day, on time, and prepared to discuss the material listed for that day on the "daily schedule." **If you have more than four absences this semester, your course grade will drop a full letter grade for each absence beyond four.** Also, missing a scheduled conference meeting without your prior notification will result in the automatic lowering of your grade for the current assignment by ten points. Call or write to me via e-mail if you have to miss a conference; I will do the same if I have to reschedule. **Regarding tardiness:** this is a small class, so late arrivals are disruptive—if for some bizarre reason you wish to get on my bad side, you can easily do so by developing the habit of arriving late for class. **If you will not be able to arrive for this class on time because of other commitments, drop it and take another section.** Finally, you are responsible for all assignments, whether you attend class or not. Get the telephone number of one or two other students in class so you can find out about missed assignments before you come to class.

Academic Honesty: I expect you to act honestly and do your own work in this class, and so does Eastern Illinois University. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the English Department's policy on plagiarism: "Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—"The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's original work" (Random House Dictionary of the English Language)—has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office."