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ENG 3001-001: Advanced Composition

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ENG. 3001: ADVANCED COMPOSITION

Dr. Christopher Hanlon
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 Office hours: Tu Th 9:30-11 & by appointment

Spring 2007
 Phone: 581.6302

Required Texts:

Anthony Bourdain, *Kitchen Confidential*
 Michael Pollan, *The Botany of Desire*
 Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma*
 Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation*

Additional assigned readings available through Booth Library e-reserve system.

Before long, each of you will embark on your career as a professional writer. I don't mean that you're necessarily going to make a living writing novels, poems, or essays, though you may. I certainly don't mean that you're going to make a living writing essays *about* novels, poems, or essays (though if you follow a path like mine, you may do that as well). What I mean is that each of you is going to conduct your day-to-day life through various modes of written expression, and in many cases you'll do this more than you'll do anything else. You're going to write e-mails, memoranda, progress reports, grants, press releases, proposals, affidavits, web sites, op/eds, notes to the principle, letters to parents, letters to the editor, letters to your boss. And since you'll do this so much, the esteem with which others view you, as well as the level of professional success you enjoy, will have much to do with your powers of written expression.

And so this is a course intended to help you grow as a writer and a thinker. We're going to do a lot of writing together, and in order to keep us all on the same approximate page, we will at first situate our writing around a common topic to which we can all relate in some way: food. Reading the work of professional writers who describe themselves as journalists, sociologists, intellectual historians, ethicists, and nutritionists, we will meditate over, discuss, and (most often and most importantly) write about such subjects as: the effects of mass-production, mass-consumption, and mass-marketing on the food chain; the system of labor put into effect with our consumption of particular food items; the aesthetic rewards of the eclectic palette; the environmental costs and consequences of agricultural monocultures such as the cornfields of Illinois; what we feed schoolchildren and why; and let's not forget, of course, the ethics of eating animals.

In order to head off some of the criticism courses like this sometimes provoke, I'll tell you right now that I eat meat, and that sometimes I order that meat with special sauce, lettuce, cheese, pickles, and onions on a sesame-seed bun. Believe me, I have no interest in altering your eating habits. The point of this course is to provide you the opportunity to delve deeply into something complex, something interesting, something of concern to everyone, and to bear witness to the ways in which professional writers carry out sustained and rewarding research and writing projects. The idea is that you will then be able to take the skills you have gleaned to subjects of more immediate professional and personal interest to you.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

In addition to keeping apace with the assigned readings, writing exercises, and writing projects, students should come to class prepared to participate. This means that you should come to class with questions to ask each other, ideas to present, examples to present, texts to read aloud, and observations to make, and it also means that you should be courteous to every other member of the class as they offer their own ideas and questions. In short, I expect everyone to engage in this course as a strong class citizen. I will become annoyed with students who never offer anything or who seem feckless. By now you have enough university experience to know that a course such as this can be unappealing if "discussion" is conducted mainly between the professor and a small nucleus of students; for this reason, I place a significant portion of final grades under the category of "Participation." Observe that in the grading formula printed below, for instance, a student who does not participate (but who nevertheless fulfills all other areas in a virtually flawless manner) cannot earn a final average higher than 90.

While much of our activity in this course will involve reading and then trading ideas concerning those readings, our primary activity this semester will be writing. Outside of class, you will be asked to complete research and to write drafts of your essay projects for other class members to read and then (constructively) critique, and our time in class will often be conducted as writing workshops. I will never – or only very rarely and as succinctly as possible – lecture, though I will often promote discussion. This is because as a professional writer, I believe that writers develop their craft by writing. The more time we commit to actually writing, and the more time we commit to discussing that writing with other writers, the more we will develop and hone our individual talents and perspectives.

Two major writing and research assignments will determine the bulk of your grade this semester. The due dates for the final drafts of these two assignments appear on the course syllabus, as do the due dates for preliminary drafts you will make available for your peers to review. In addition to these written assignments, each member of this class will complete a series of research assignments I will bring to our meetings from time to time.

During the last third of the semester, most of our interaction will take place through individual conferences in my office. During this segment of the course, students will be pursuing their own research and writing assignments, projects you will devise yourself and that may or may not have anything to do with food. Conference times will be determined prior to Spring Break, and then re-scheduled during those times when we convene as a group.

Grading Formula:

Participation	10%
Essay #1	30%
Essay #2	30%
Research Assignments.....	20%
Workshop Assignments.....	<u>10%</u>
	100%

COURSE POLICIES:

Participation in discussion: I expect students to model strong class citizenship in this course, working hard to make our discussion run well. To make the discussion run well: (1) you should read, and as

you read you should form ideas, draw connections, raise problems, and take notes; (2) you should plan on participating—at least making a comments or asking a question—every day; (3) you should be careful not to dominate discussion (i.e., those of you who are not shy should give other students an opening to participate), and you should participate with tact and civility (take other people's remarks and questions seriously, don't interrupt, respond courteously, etc.). The grade for participation will depend upon meeting all these criteria. I will tend to lavish encouragement on students who engage as strong class citizens. I will tend to become annoyed with students who never have anything to offer or who seem feckless.

One last note on participation: Participating well doesn't simply mean talking a lot—it means frequently making comments, and responses to the comments of others, showing that you are engaged in a process of careful, close reading. *Idle talk—the kind that simply does not indicate close engagement with the materials we'll be studying—does not help move the conversation forward, and hence does not qualify as participation.*

I want to be utterly clear about this: Good participation does *not* require you to come to class knowing all the “answers,” but it *does* require you to understand certain things about the texts under discussion. For instance, one cannot participate competently if one does not understand the events that make up the plot of a work of fiction, the gist of a poem, or the literal argument of an essay. Many of the readings we will take on this semester will difficult, and on some occasions you won't know quite what to make of what you've read. That's perfectly acceptable. But I *will* expect you to come to class after having *fought* to understand as much as possible. The key to success in this class will lie in your refusal to become frustrated when faced with difficult concepts—instead, become challenged.

If given, occasional reading quizzes will be brief, designed to encourage everyone to keep up with the reading, and will also help me to determine participation grades.

Attendance will be taken for each class. With three absences, students will be considered overcut. Overcutting may result in the reduction of the final course grade by a grade or more, depending upon frequency. In the case of an excused absence (as defined by EIU university-wide policy), your excuse must be made in writing, accompanied by the appropriate documentation, and given to me no later than the first class meeting following the absence. In no case may a student accumulate more than five absences, either excused or unexcused, and still pass the course – if illness or other extenuating circumstances cause you to miss more than five classes, you should petition for a withdrawal.

One last word related to attendance: I ask that students who have not read the text on the day it is to be discussed not bother coming. Such students cannot contribute anything valuable to the discussion, and in any case it is dishonest for them to benefit from the efforts of others by listening in on their conversations. Always read the assigned materials carefully, but if for some reason you have not, don't bother showing up.

Students who habitually show up for class a few minutes after it's started should find a professor who's into that and take their course instead. This professor is irritated by it and reacts badly.

Late assignments will be penalized for their lateness. If they are very late, they may not be accepted at all. I am not unbending in this policy in the case of extreme circumstances, but in order to be granted an extension, students must contact me, with a compelling case to make, at least two days before the paper's due date.

Academic honesty: Students are of course responsible for knowing Eastern Illinois University regulations and policies regarding academic honesty. Plagiarism, even if unknowing or accidental, can result in your failing the course and in further action by the university. Please note the English Department's statement 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 own 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 assignments, of a grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office.

If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, feel free to ask me to clarify. Also, please make a point of noting the following: I will not tolerate any form of academic dishonesty in this course. If I come to suspect misconduct of any kind, I will become dogged about rooting it out, and if my suspicions are confirmed, I will dispense appropriate penalties.

Students are responsible for reading all of the material on this syllabus on the date assigned whether or not the work is actually discussed on that date. Students are cautioned that many of the readings are lengthy. I urge you to begin these readings as soon as possible. Occasionally, I will pass out brief, photocopied materials not represented on the syllabus; these are to be read by the next class.

Lastly, you are not welcome to e-mail me while you are a student in this course. When you have a question, problem, or concern, I want to sit down with you and talk for as long as you need. That's why I keep office hours. I also want to talk with you about interesting ideas you have this semester, just as I want to talk with you—personally—about the readings we take on. But too many students these days use e-mail as a way to avoid their professors, a practice I resist obstinately. When you need to communicate with me, attend my office hours, make an appointment for an alternative time, call me at my office (581.6302), or if it's very important and the other avenues have not worked, call me at home (348.6144). We'll talk.

READING SCHEDULE

Week 1

Class meets in Coleman 3130

- Tuesday 1/9: Introductions, course outline
Thursday 1/11: Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation*, chaps. 1, 2

Week 2

Class meets in Coleman 3120

- Tuesday 1/16: Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation*, chaps. 3, 7
Thursday 1/18: Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation*, chaps 8, 9, epilogue

Week 3

Class meets in Coleman 3130

- Tuesday 1/23: Michael Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma* pp. 1-84
Thursday 1/25: Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, pp. 85-184

Week 4

Class meets in Coleman 3120

- Tuesday 1/30: Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, pp. 185-276
Thursday 2/1: Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, pp. 277-411

Week 5

Class meets in Coleman 3130

- Tuesday 2/6: Mark Singer, from *Animal Liberation* (e-reserves)
Thursday 2/8: Howard Lyman, from *Mad Cowboy* (e-reserves)

Week 6

Class meets in Coleman 3120

- Tuesday 2/13: Anthony Bourdain, *Kitchen Confidential*, pp. TBA
Thursday 2/15: Bourdain, *Kitchen Confidential*, pp. TBA

Week 7

Class meets in Coleman 3130

Tuesday 2/20: Michael Pollan, *The Botany of Desire*, pp. 1-58

Thursday 2/22: Pollan, *The Botany of Desire*, pp. 113-79

Week 8

Class meets in Coleman 3120

Tuesday 2/27: Bring draft of Essay #1 to class, in-class workshop

Thursday 3/1: In-class workshop

Week 9

Class meets in Coleman 3130

Tuesday 3/6: In-class workshop

Thursday 3/8: Essay #1 due, beginning of class

SPRING BREAK—NO CLASS MEETINGS

Week 10

Tuesday 3/20: Conferences in my office

Thursday 3/22: Conferences in my office

Week 11

Tuesday 3/29: Conferences in my office

Thursday 3/31: Conferences in my office

Week 12

Tuesday 4/5: Conferences in my office

Thursday 4/7: Conferences in my office

Week 13

Tuesday 4/12: Conferences in my office

Thursday 4/14: Conferences in my office

Week 14

Class meets in Coleman 3120

Tuesday 4/19: Bring draft of Essay #2; in-class workshop

Thursday 4/21: In-class workshop

Week 15

Class meets in Coleman 3130

Tuesday 4/26: In-class workshop

Thursday 4/28: Final versions of Paper #2 due