Fall 8-15-2012

ENG 1001G-045: Language, Writing, and You

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ENG 1001G: Language, Writing, and You
Coleman Hall 3170  T/Th 5:00 - 6:15

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Mon 2:00 - 3:00
T/Th 11:00 - noon
Other times by appointment

Texts and Resources
The Contemporary Reader
They Say, I Say
The Little, Brown Handbook
EIU Writing Center @ Coleman 3110
http://www.eiu.edu/~writing/
Purdue Online Writing Lab
http://owl.english.purdue.edu

Course Objectives:
By the end of this course you will all be expert deep-sea fisherman, able to leap tall buildings in a single bound, and recite the alphabet backwards while balancing an umbrella on your nose. Okay, perhaps that is a bit of an exaggeration. And by exaggeration, I mean complete falsehood.

As will come as no surprise, this is a writing course. The primary objective is fairly straightforward -- understanding the basic elements of effective composition. These include the ability to manipulate the following elements to achieve the desired goal of your writing: critical grammar, emphasis, audience, voice, and format. We'll examine effective ways to dig up information and analyze it, as well as the different techniques for portraying this information to an audience. Most importantly, we'll address the questions of relevancy. Why is composition a required course for all college graduates? Why should writing should matter to me?

Attendance
Unless you've mastered the Zen art of astral projection, you'll need to come to class. I'm aware that this is an evening class, and as such the temptation to skip will call to you. Resist the Dark Side, young padawan. We will be doing frequent in-class activities to sharpen your own understanding of writing, all of which have been designed to be as painless as possible. Any student who maintains perfect attendance throughout the semester and obtains no more than three tardies will enjoy an additional 3% added to their final grade.

On the other side of that coin, excessive absences will not be tolerated. I understand that emergencies do happen, and as such, properly documented medical and legal absences will not impact your final grade. In addition to this, each student has two absences that they may use for any reason. Be very careful with these. If you decide to take two Thursdays off to party and come
down with a nasty cold the next week, do not expect leeway. These are not designed as “free days.” They are intended to give you wiggle room for unexpected absences that are not severe enough to constitute documentation (i.e. mild illness, vehicular trouble, attacked by robot sharks, etc.) It is still your responsibility to find out what happened in class. Also, please understand you must be awake to receive credit for your attendance. Sleeping in class may result in an absence, unrelenting mockery, and/or smiley faces drawn on your face in Sharpie.

Each unexcused absence following your two “freebies” will result in a one-step drop in your final grade. An “A” would become an “A-” and a “C-” would become a “D+”. If you miss more than 6 days of class, you will receive a “No Credit” for the course.

**Participation**

This class is designed to be interactive. Learning isn’t about me standing in front of the class cramming knowledge into your heads. Learning is an active experience that involves both parties -- teacher and student. If you come prepared to discuss the articles we’ve read (or anything else relevant to the current assignments) and engage the in-class writing activities, the experience will be infinitely more enjoyable for you. Trust me; you don’t want me to waggle my jaw for an hour and fifteen minutes. Of course, there will be portions where I lecture, but it is my goal to keep that to a minimum.

As adults, I expect you to be respectful -- and not just to me. Respect yourself. Respect one another. Blatant disrespect and rudeness will not be tolerated. There may be times where you disagree with one another. Debate and discussion are encouraged, but please do so in a civil manner. If you become excessively rude, belligerent, or aggressive I will ask you to leave the classroom.

**Reading Selections**

I expect you to read the segments assigned for each class. Discussion is a heck of a lot more interesting than lecture, but it’s impossible to discuss if you don’t know what we’re discussing. The readings are not long, nor are they incredibly difficult. Towards the beginning of each class, there will be a very short quiz regarding the assigned material. However, if at any time during the semester 80% of the class scores 80% or higher on these quizzes, they will end. Poof. Vamoose. Gone. No more.

This is as much your class as it is mine, and I firmly believe students should have input into what they learn. We will occasionally spend some time looking through the contents of *The Contemporary Reader* and decide as a class which articles look the most interesting. As the course continues, reading assignments will become less frequent, and we will spend more time focusing on your writing.

**Electronics Policy**

Laptops are marvelous tools. I personally prefer a laptop to notebooks for note-writing. However, if you take notes on a laptop, you must show them to me at the end of the class. I expect students with laptops to be productive, not Facebooking. Your FarmVille crops will survive the hour.
Texting in class will not be tolerated. I understand an hour and fifteen minutes can feel like an eternity, but I promise you will not shrivel up into a dry husk without your Tweets and texts. Your final grade will immediately be lowered by 1% each time you text in class. Make it easy on yourself -- silence your phones. If you are expecting an emergency phone call, please come speak with me before we begin. I am not a heartless meanie-face. Let me know what the situation is beforehand and you may excuse yourself without penalty if your phone call arrives.

Late Assignments
The final grade on any late assignment will be reduced by one step for every day it is late. This includes the weekend. I will frequently remind you of long-term assignments in class, but it is up to you to ensure they are brought in on the day they are due.

Revision
Writing is learning, experimenting, figuring out how to best portray your ideas to an audience. We don't always get it right the first time. You will have the opportunity to revise any and all long-term writing assignments, provided the original paper was completed and turned in on time. These revisions will be due one week after the original is returned to you. I will grade the revision as a completely new document.

Conferences
Each writing assignment will have two conferences attached to it. The first conference will be early on in the writing process. This will allow us to discuss your ideas and get you on the right track. The second conference will be towards the end of the assignment, which will allow us to ensure you've stayed on that track. Conferences are mandatory, and it is critical that you bring your drafts along. The points you receive for conferencing are not hard to earn. Show up, discuss, and think. Not difficult.

E-mail
Please do not e-mail me assignments. There are far too many possibilities for error, and you should all be responsible enough to have assignments printed out in time for class. “But I e-mailed you” is not a valid reason for not bringing an assignment to class when it is due. E-mail is intended for informing me of emergencies, or asking questions about assignments.

Mastering Meaning
As this is a writing class, we will be exploring the various rules of writing. That means grammar. Please hold the applause ... I know that excites you beyond words. To make the process less painful, I’ve designed these grammar workshops around two main ideas:

1. This is your writing, and as such you should have a say in what we learn. As a class, you will be able to decide which elements of grammar and syntax to explore. Half of the MM workshops will be chosen by you. The other will be chosen by me after I have had a chance to review your writing. This ensures that the workshops will be practical and helpful to you in the here and now.

2. Grammar has a purpose -- it affects meaning. These workshops will show you how grammar changes your sentences. These are designed to be practical, to show you why these rules matter. Contrary to popular belief, grammar wasn’t designed as a series of torture devices to drive first-year students crazy. Wild, right? Again, as you may have
noticed with the Reading Selections, these are blank. We will fill these out as the semester progresses and we determine what particular elements we’ll be discussing.

**Scribbles**

At the beginning of each class period, there will be a prompt written on the board. We will spend the first five minutes of class writing about this prompt. They will be collected and graded at the end of the day. But never fear, brave students. Scribbles are designed to help you get your thoughts onto paper. I do not grade them for syntax, grammar, “wordiness,” or any of those other things that teachers love to jump on. If it is clear that you have put serious thought into answering the question, you will receive full credit. The only way you will lose points is if you fail to turn it in, write something that does not reflect any conscious effort, or do nothing but draw pictures of machine guns and dinosaurs (while both of those are awesome, they do not belong in Scribbles ... despite the deceptive name).

**GoogleDocs**

The syllabus, assignment sheets, and handouts I give in class will be available electronically through GoogleDocs. Instead of asking all of you to create an e-mail you’ll never use, I’ve created a Google account for the class where you can view these shared files in the event they are lost, eaten by a dog, or lit on fire in a furious rage. To access these files, simply go to docs.google.com and enter the following log-in information.

*Username:* eiucomp1001@gmail.com  
*Password:* Pens&Swords123

Please refrain from uploading your own files into the account. Documents relevant to the class will be easily viewable as “Shared” files, and excessive shenanigans will result in closure of the account. Truth be told, I don’t want to do that. So no midget porn, okay?

**Large(r) Writing Assignments**

For the larger essays, you will be given a handout with specific instructions. Please hold on to them as they will be referenced in our conferences. On them I will provide the requirements for the assignment, alternative options for those of you who desire a little more freedom, a rubric for determining your grade, and a suggested timetable for keeping you on schedule. These handouts will be available on the class GoogleDocs account.

**Daily Check-In**

At the end of each class period, we will reserve some time to talk about current long-term assignments, problems that have arisen, questions you might have, and ways to tackle common problems that may arise. If enough people share a common problem, we can devise an in-class exercise to help. If you have a question, chances are six other people are thinking the same thing. Do yourself a favor and ask.

**Peer Inquiry**

From time to time you will be working with your fellow classmates to help them get a better sense of where they need to be with their project. Unlike most “Peer Review” projects, Peer Inquiry is very specific. I don’t want you poking through grammar or syntax. I don’t want you marking every
tiny nit-picky detail. Few people enjoy “playing professor” with someone else’s paper, and Peer Inquiry strives to move away from that, focusing instead on asking questions about content and structure. This isn’t the time to “grade” someone else’s work – it’s a chance to ask questions that will help them sharpen their focus and understanding. There will be a handout regarding specifics when the time comes.

**Assignments and Grading**
Unlike some teachers you may have had in the past, when I grade a paper I do not start at 100% and work my way down as you make mistakes. The paper is evaluated in several different areas (see the rubric for more details), and the points are earned as you demonstrate your ability to master each concept. I use the standard 10 point system (100 - 90% = A; 89 - 80 = B; etc.), and the breakdown of your various assignments is listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation/Attendance</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conferences</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative Essay</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Essay</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-Class Writing</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persuasive Essay</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Project</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Presentation</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As you can see, there is no “final” in this course. Each project is weighed approximately the same as any other.

**Plagiarism**
Just don’t do it. Here’s the official blurb about plagiarism, straight from the EIU handbook:

*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 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. Respect for the work of others should encompass all formats, including print, electronic, and oral sources.*

We will go over this extensively in class so you are prepared to avoid this. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to the following: quoting without quotation marks or parenthetical notations, paraphrasing without informing the reader that you are doing so, incorrect citations, etc. If you are unsure of something, please ask me. It is better to err on the side of caution than receive an F for the course.

**Student Disability Services**
In conjunction with the overall mission of Eastern Illinois University, the Office of Disability Services (ODS) is committed to facilitating the provision of equal access and opportunity to all campus programs and services for students with disabilities. Through collaboration and support of the entire campus community, ODS promotes universally accessible design principles, so that everyone has access to university life. If you have a documented disability, come speak with me so I may best accommodate your needs.