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ENG 1002G-050: Composition and Literature

Leitia L. Moffitt
Eastern Illinois University

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SYLLABUS

English 1002G Section 050, Spring 2008
Composition and Literature
MW 3:00-4:15, Coleman 3160, EIU

Professor: Dr. Letitia L. Moffitt
Office: Coleman Hall room 3821
Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 2:00 to 3:00pm, Wednesdays and Fridays noon to 1:00pm
E-mail: lmoffitt@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 in which paragraphs, sentences, and words develop a central idea that corresponds to the reading of literary works; 2) write focused, 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) read poetry, fiction, and drama expressing a wide range of cultural perspectives and think critically and write analytically about them; 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


Grading Breakdown

Paper 1, Fiction
Draft ................................................................. 5%
Final ............................................................... 15%

Paper 2, Poetry
Draft ................................................................. 5%
Final ............................................................... 15%

Paper 3, Drama
Draft ................................................................. 5%
Final ............................................................... 15%

Final exam ........................................................... 20%
Reading quizzes and response papers ................................ 10%
Participation in class activities ........................................ 10%
Papers

Drafts: For each of your three papers, you will write a complete draft that you will turn in at a 20-minute conference with me. We will discuss the draft; I will return the draft to you, and you must attach this copy with your final paper (don’t forget!). If you miss your conference, your draft won’t count and your draft grade will be “F.” Each draft counts for 5% of your total grade.

Format: All drafts and final papers must be typed and printed from a word processor in readable font (12 pt. Times New Roman or equivalent), normal margins (1” top and bottom, 1.25” left and right), double-spaced, your name on each page, all pages numbered and fastened together with a staple (don’t do that corner-fold-over thing and expect the pages to stay together). Don’t get cute with margins or font size in order to stretch, say, three pages into four. If you are required to write three full pages, and the third page has any amount of white space, or if the paper fills three pages with a lot of repetition and “fluff,” that won’t be considered three full pages. If you run out of things to say well before three pages, you need to do a lot more than just fill up the empty space; you probably need to go back and put more thought into your paper as a whole.

Final papers also must be free of hand-written corrections or blobs of correction fluid (this does not apply to drafts). It is important that you proofread your final paper thoroughly before you print the final version that you hand in. What this means is that you need to give yourself enough time to look for and correct any typing, spelling, grammar and punctuation errors, rather than dashing off the paper at the last minute. If you have a brilliant paper that is unreadable because of these kinds of minor errors, no one will ever realize its brilliance.

I will provide detailed instruction sheets for each paper, but I won’t repeat anything I’ve already said—that is, I’m not going to tell you every time that you have to double-space your papers; I’m going to assume that you should have learned that already!

Deadlines: Papers are due at the beginning of class on the due date. If your paper is late by one day (that is, if you turn it in during the middle or end of the due date’s class, after class, or at the beginning of the following class), its grade will go down one full grade level (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. Do not e-mail me papers without my permission, 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 I might not get them this way unless you have made arrangements with me beforehand. 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.

Important note: I accept no excuses for late papers, and I grant no excused extensions—not even for “good” excuses (sick/doctor’s appointment/job interview/wedding/funeral). I am especially not interested in technological glitches (printer not working/computer not working/document lost to cyberspace). You have the class schedule in your hands right now, so you know when the papers are due. If you must miss a due date’s class, for whatever reason, get a friend to hand in your paper or make other arrangements with me.
Remember, it is not my responsibility to get your work from you; it is your responsibility to get it to me. Therefore, do not simply announce, “I can’t be here the day the paper is due!” or “My computer crashed and I lost my paper!” and expect me to come up with a solution. It’s your paper, not mine, and you are the one being graded on it; therefore, it is in your best interest to figure out how to make the deadline. I don’t make say all of this to be mean, but simply because we are on a tight schedule and it is crucial that you don’t fall behind. If you do, you may never catch up again! Besides, handing the paper in is the easy part; writing it is the hard part. Don’t ace the hard part only to blow the easy part.

Attendance

Because we will have reading quizzes or response papers due every day, I will track your “attendance” through these. As such, I won’t take formal attendance and there is no “attendance grade” per se. If you got excited when you read that because you figured this means you can skip class, keep reading. In every class, we will do something that counts toward your grade, and most of these activities cannot be made up if you are absent. I will not give make-ups for reading quizzes or accept late response papers, for example, and unless you have a time machine, you can’t possibly make up in-class activities such as group discussions. Just because I don’t pass around a sign-in sheet or do a “role call” doesn’t mean that your absences won’t matter.

I maintain this policy for one key reason: The point of coming to class isn’t so that you can “get credit” for being in class. Attendance means substantially more than having a pulse. If you show up to class but then take a nap, IM your friends, work on assignments for other courses, talk about things that have no relevance to the class, etc.—or, just as bad, if you come to class without having done the reading—you might as well have stayed home because you aren’t really “attending,” and in fact are wasting everyone’s time. (Look it up in Webster’s: the first definition given for “attend” is “to pay attention,” not “to be present.”)

Sometimes students want to make it clear that they really, sincerely meant to attend class but couldn’t because of circumstances beyond their control. I understand this—yet the truth is, the reason you were absent doesn’t matter, even if you have a “good” excuse with written documentation, because it doesn’t change the fact that you still missed what happened in class. This is not high school; I don’t want to see “notes” from doctors, parents, or anyone else. Understand this: You don’t need an “excuse” if you are absent; you need to keep up with the work. If you come up to me and announce “I was sick!” and stick a doctor’s note under my nose, all I can say is, “Sorry; hope you feel better,” because I can’t realistically say “That’s OK, it won’t affect your grade,” given that it could very well affect your grade—not because I’m mad at you for missing class, but because you are now one class behind everyone else.

Related to this, if you are absent, do not simply ask me “what did I miss?” and expect me to tell you in 10 words or less; I can’t condense a 75-minute class into one sentence. Again, the point is not that you should slavishly drag yourself to class when you have 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 (and come prepared); if you miss class, for whatever reason, make sure you keep up with the work, and expect there to be consequences that range from negligible (if the absences are isolated incidents) to severe (if you make a habit of it).
Reading Assignments

You will have reading assignments every day. *Always complete the readings!* I cannot emphasize this enough. Reading is *not* an optional activity in a literature course, even though many students somehow get the idea that if you don’t have to turn something in, it isn’t a requirement—after all, how will the prof know if you’ve done it or not? Trust me, I’ll know, because it will show in the quality of everything you do. If you don’t read, you can’t pass the class, plain and simple. I have chosen works that I think are a little more interesting and accessible than many of the other texts in our books, and many of these are quite short (especially, of course, the poetry), but even if you find the readings incomprehensible or boring, you still need to do them. Moreover, read carefully; don’t just skim. Your efforts will be rewarded because you’ll actually be able to get something out of class instead of wasting your time. Finally, *bring the appropriate book to class every day.* Yes, they’re heavy, but how could you possibly expect to understand a text if you aren’t looking at it?

Reading Quizzes

That got your attention, didn’t it. Don’t worry: this is *really* easy—if you do the reading. For the Fiction Unit and the Drama Unit, each time you are assigned a reading, at the beginning of class I will give a very short quiz 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; your answers to them won’t count as part of the quiz grade, but will form the basis for our discussion of the text and may help your participation grade.)

Response Papers

For the Poetry Unit, instead of reading quizzes you will be required to type a short response to the two poems you are assigned to read for each class. I will provide more details on this when we get to this unit.

Participation

Participation means more than just saying whatever you feel like saying. It is also more than a matter of raising your hand and saying something, anything, just to “get it over with” in order to “fulfill” your participation requirement. 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 classroom activities—these are all students who are actively participating in class.

Final Exam

The final exam will be cumulative (meaning it will cover all of the material covered in the entire semester) and will take place on the last day of regular class, rather than during the exam period. I will provide more information on this as we get closer to the exam date.
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 using 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 even think of turning in someone else’s paper as their own. But this is not the only way plagiarism occurs. It is important to understand that plagiarism is based not just on intent but on deed. This means that it is not acceptable to say, for example, “I didn’t mean to plagiarize; it just so happens that what I wrote sounds very similar to this source I read. I went to this website to get ideas for my paper, and what I read must have influenced me without me realizing it.” Does that sound familiar? Well, guess what: that’s still considered plagiarism, because you paraphrased someone else’s ideas without citing the source.

It is very easy to avoid this problem. If you look at any source during your writing process, be aware of how influential that source may be. If you think that the source may make its way into your paper in any way, whether word-for-word or as a paraphrase of a general idea, cite the source using proper MLA citation format. If you don’t know how to use MLA format, ask me for help (and we will go over this in class as well). That way, the worst you can be accused of is using an inappropriate source (if, for example, you used Wikipedia or a blog)—and you aren’t likely to get an “F” for that, whereas you will definitely get an “F” if you don’t cite the source.

The bottom line: absolutely do not consider plagiarizing any part of any assignment, in any way. It’s simply not worth it. If you are having trouble writing an assignment or meeting a deadline, or if you aren’t sure what might be considered plagiarism, please come and talk to me about it.

Extra Credit

There is none—don’t even bother asking. Every semester around Week 14 or so, a few panicky students will realize that they are in danger of failing and will frantically ask, “What can I do to get my grade up?” My advice is that you ask yourself that question now; don’t wait until Week 14, because…well, duh, obviously it will be too late by then. The semester starts today, so your work begins today, not the last two weeks of class. And what exactly can you do to get your grade up? The answer, I’m afraid, is another “duh”: do the reading, come to class, pay attention, participate, put care and effort into your papers and turn them in on time.

Final Word

This is probably not the most exciting document you’ve ever had to read in your life, but please: Keep this syllabus! Refer to it whenever you have any questions about the class, because I guarantee you that a good half of the questions that are asked during the course of a semester have already been answered here. In particular, look at the syllabus every day for reading assignments and every time you have to write a paper. Do not let this document somehow fly out of your hands the second you leave the room; it contains important information. Also, if you ever have questions about anything in this document (or, really, anything at all related to the class), ask them. You are responsible for doing what needs to be done in this class: it is not an acceptable excuse for you 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 what you’re here for, after all!
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.
Note #2: All grades are final. I do not negotiate grades.
General Schedule

Notes: Other assignments and activities will be announced in class as well; this is simply a general overview. Detailed schedules for the poetry and drama units will be forthcoming. Schedule may be subject to change as necessary, but do not ever assume any changes until they are officially announced. Students are also responsible for keeping to the most current schedule—I will not accept “but I wasn’t sure if the schedule was right” or “I didn’t know which schedule was the current one” as an excuse for missing deadlines or not doing the reading.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>What we’ll do in this class</th>
<th>What you’ll do at home for next class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mon., Jan. 7</td>
<td>Introduction; begin Fiction Unit. ...</td>
<td>Read Beattie, “Janus,” Fiction 100*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed., Jan 9</td>
<td>Discuss “Janus”</td>
<td>Read Gilman, “The Yellow Wallpaper”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon., Jan 14</td>
<td>Discuss “Yellow Wallpaper”</td>
<td>Read De Maupassant, “The Necklace”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed., Jan 16</td>
<td>Discuss “Necklace”</td>
<td>Read O’Brien, “The Things They Carried”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon., Jan. 21</td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed., Jan. 23</td>
<td>Discuss “Things They Carried”</td>
<td>Read O’Connor, “Good Man Is Hard To Find”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon., Jan. 28</td>
<td>Discuss “Good Man”</td>
<td>Read Jackson, “The Lottery”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed., Jan 30</td>
<td>Discuss “Lottery”</td>
<td>Read Carver, “Cathedral”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon., Feb. 4</td>
<td>Discuss “Cathedral”</td>
<td>Read Hemingway, “Hills Like White Elephants”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed., Feb. 6</td>
<td>Discuss “Elephants”</td>
<td>Write draft for Paper 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon., Feb. 11</td>
<td>NO CLASS; CONFERENCES</td>
<td>Finish Paper 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed., Feb. 13</td>
<td>Paper 1 due</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon., Jan 18</td>
<td>to Mon., Mar 17</td>
<td>Poetry Unit (detailed schedule forthcoming)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed., Mar. 19</td>
<td>Paper 2 due</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon., Mar. 24</td>
<td>to Mon., Apr. 14</td>
<td>Drama Unit (detailed schedule forthcoming)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed., Apr. 16</td>
<td>Paper 3 due</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon., April 21</td>
<td>Prepare for Final Exam</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed., April 23</td>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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*Use this text for all of the readings in the Fiction Unit; we will switch to the other texts appropriately when we cover the Poetry and Drama Units. Fiction 100’s table of contents lists the authors alphabetically by last name, so you can find the page number for each story using this table of contents (which is why I didn’t include them here); I won’t accept “I couldn’t find the story” as an excuse for not reading, either. In short, no excuses!