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ENG 3001-007: Advanced Composition: Writing, Race, Class, and Gender in the Professional Workplace

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English 3001: Advanced Composition
“Writing, Race, Class, and Gender in the Professional Workplace”
5:00 – 6:15, Coleman 3160

Instructor: Tim Engles
Office: CH 3831
Course listserv: 3001s2@lists.eiu.edu
Instructor’s e-mail: tdengles@eiu.edu
Office hours: 3:30 – 4:30, Tues & Thurs, and by appointment

Textbooks:
Professional and Public Writing (Coleman & Funk)
Line by Line: How to Edit Your Own Writing (Cook)
Limbo: Blue-Collar Roots, White-Collar Dreams (Lubrano)
Working while Black: The Black Person’s Guide to Success in the White Workplace (Johnson)

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

Description and Goals: The primary goal of this course is to help you improve your writing skills as you gather your forces toward a job in the sort of environment in which most of you will work after graduation—that is, a professional, “white-collar” environment. A writing course is more useful and interesting if it has a central focus; our focus will be the effects of gender, race and social class in the professional workplace, and on your own lives.

In addition to getting your writing skills up to speed for a professional audience, this course will help you anticipate and deal with some of the key features of your future workplace. Because we have a smaller group than those in most EIU courses, your individual writing problems (and you all have them!) will receive close attention, both from me and from your peers.

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

- **Clean, smart prose:** improve your ability to write clear, concise, and meaningful sentences, to compose organized, well-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 a grammatically correct, clear, efficient style is so important to your success in college and in professional life.

- **Constructing arguments:** improve your ability to construct substantive, well-written arguments. One of our aims is to learn to distinguish between mere “opinion” and a “reasoned argument” that is based on carefully constructed points, evidence, and so on. You will also be encouraged to push yourself toward new realizations while writing—good writing is not so much having something to say as it is discovering new thoughts and insights that you would not have had if you had not started to write them down.

- **Critical reading:** improve your ability to read critically by questioning and evaluating what you read. Understanding the distinction between “opinion” and “reasoned
argument” depends on your mastery of critical reading skills, which will enable you to discern and emulate the successful argumentative strategies of other writers. The better reader you are, the better writer you can be. In order to be a better 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.

- **Minding your p’s and q’s:** misused words, missing commas, lack of subject/verb agreement, missing quotation marks, poorly incorporated quotations and inaccurate citations, misused semicolons . . . remember those bugaboos? Students sometimes complain that such “minor” mistakes in their papers are graded too heavily. Sorry, they’ll also be graded heavily in this course. However, there’s a good reason. Again, this course is meant to get your writing skills up to speed for professional life. *All of you are sure to write regularly during your careers,* and errors that students often consider “minor” actually stand out in professional life—they look sloppy and careless, and even worse, they make the *writer* look sloppy and careless. Thus, I will work with you to find and eliminate your own habitual errors, and we will conduct in-class workshops on many of the most common errors in advanced student writing.

- **Bibliographic research:** improve your knowledge of how online library resources work and how to use them. Later in the semester, you will familiarize (or for some of you, re-familiarize) yourself with library resources, including online catalogues and periodical indexes, electronic databases, and actual, living librarians (they really are anxious to help you). Solid, well-reasoned writing is 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 effective use of an article or essay if you cannot summarize its basic argument and identify how it is constructed. Therefore, effective research means finding useful materials, and knowing how to read them and incorporate them into your own writing. Finally, incorporating research materials also includes knowledge of appropriate documentation styles. As you probably know, there are several of these standardized documentation styles (MLA and APA are the most common); you can use whichever style is used in your major, provided you do so accurately.

- **Collaborative learning:** improve your ability to learn from others and to teach them about your own thinking, as well as what you know about writing. As in most professional settings, much of your success in this course will depend on the combined processes of producing several drafts of your writing and working with others, via peer critiques. You will also practice forming honest, thorough, and constructive commentary on your peers’ writing, a process that will in turn improve your own writing skills.

- **Professional life:** learn about some of the more subtle aspects of how people interact and collaborate in the professional workplace. We will study significant factors that influence success in professional life, including such matters as race, class, and gender.

- **Touchiness:** practice consideration and discussion of issues that many of us prefer to sweep under the rug. You will need to approach this course and its material with an open mind and a willingness to seriously consider viewpoints expressed from different perspectives. Be respectful of your classmates during discussions of these issues, and try to respond to the opinions and ideas that arise, rather than to the person raising them.
Heated discussions may arise as the beliefs of you or some of your classmates will be challenged by our course materials, and you may be asked to think outside of your own “comfort zone.” Just keep in mind that we’re all here to learn (even your instructor), and so it’s all for a larger good.

Grades: Your final grade will be determined as follows—

Two shorter essays (4-5 pages) 10% and 15%
Three peer-critiques 15%
A formal one-page proposal for final research paper 5%
Longer research essay (10-12 pages) 25%
Quizzes, other writings, class participation (including attendance) 20%
Grammar, commas, and passive/active voice exam 10%

E-mail Activity: Enrollment in this class requires use of your EIU e-mail account, and you must check it frequently for messages pertaining to the course (that is, several times per week, at least). We will use our course listserv (or “e-mail discussion list”) for announcements and assignments. E-mail is also the quickest, easiest way to reach me if I am not in my office; I welcome any and all e-mailed questions and comments.

Using e-mail is crucial for this course—if you do not send me an introductory e-mail message (tdengles@eiu.edu) by Friday, January 13 at 3:00 p.m., I will assume that you have chosen against fully participating in the course, and I will therefore drop you. In that message, (1) tell me which course you’re in (English 3001); (2) describe yourself in whatever way you choose, including your major and career aspirations; (3) write a statement to the effect that you have read and agree with (or perhaps in part disagree with, which is fine, if you explain why) these course policies and requirements; and (4) as with all emails you send to instructors, “sign” it by adding your name at the end of the message.

Sending me this message will also constitute your “signature” of our course contract, that is, these policies and procedures that you are reading. I will then use your email address to subscribe you to the class listserv (you don’t have to subscribe to it yourself).

Regarding the Writing Center: Tutoring services are free at the English Department’s Writing Center, and students may drop in or schedule appointments during working hours (Room 3110 of Coleman Hall, http://www.eiu.edu/~writing). If you are aware of chronic problems with your writing, I strongly recommend that you make use of this service. While I will pay close attention to each student’s particular writing problems, I may advise some students to seek additional help at the Writing Center.

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. Again, sensitive
issues sometimes arise within a course of this sort, so we must respect the opinions of others; it
will help if we try to respond to ideas, rather than to the particular person stating them. I do not
plan to lecture in this class. I want us to contribute together to a positive, challenging, interesting
learning environment.

In the interests of keeping everyone in class undistracted and focused, please do not read outside
materials, chew gum, or eat food in class (drinking beverages is okay), and do not use a
computer in class. Also, if you have a cell phone, be sure to silence it ahead of time, and do not
check or write text messages during class. If you happen to be expecting an important or
emergency call or text, be sure to let me know before class begins. Finally, please refrain from
"packing up" during the last few minutes of class; I will signal when the discussion is finished,
and I promise to end by the time the period is over.

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 three absences this semester, your course grade will drop a full letter grade for
each absence beyond three. Also, missing a scheduled individual conference without giving
me prior notification will result in the automatic lowering of your grade for the final essay by ten
points. If you have to reschedule your conference, call or write to me via e-mail in advance; I
will do the same if I have to reschedule.

Regarding tardiness and late papers: 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 on time for this class because
of other commitments, drop it and take another section. You are responsible for all
assignments, whether you attend class or not. Consider getting the phone number or email of one
or two other students in class so that if you must be absent, you can find out about missed
assignments before you come to class. Papers and the final project will be graded on a 100-point
scale, and late papers will be penalized fifteen points for each day they are late, beginning one
hour after the time of day at which they are due. You will be submitting your papers in both
printed versions and as email attachments, so make sure that you've actually attached your
paper. You should double-check by looking in your Sent folder at the message you sent for the
attached paper. Sending an email message with no paper attached will result in the above
late penalties.

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."
English 3001 Daily Schedule
Spring, 2012

This schedule may be subject to change; BE SURE to bring the appropriate book or books to class if a reading assignment is listed for that day; students who show up without a copy of the day’s reading assignment may be marked absent.

T JAN 10  Introduction to the course and to each other

• Discussion: “Writing Effective Email Messages in the Workplace” (handout)

R JAN 12  Read before class, and also bring the book to class: Professional and Public Writing, Chapter 1, pages 1-11

F JAN 13  3 p.m. Deadline for sending Dr. Engles (tdengles@eiu.edu) an email, as described above (on page 3)

T JAN 17  Professional and Public Writing, Second half of Chapter 1

R JAN 19  Professional and Public Writing, Chapter 2

M JAN 23  Email Assignment due by 5 p.m.

T JAN 24  Professional and Public Writing, Chapter 3, 41-63; also, discussion of Paper 1 Guidelines – Writing and Your Future Career

R JAN 26  Writing Workshop – The Key Elements of a Solid Essay

T JAN 31  In-class peer review of Paper 1: bring a printed rough draft of your paper to class

R FEB 2  Writing Workshop: Five Simple Rules for Achieving Comma Glory

T FEB 7  Paper 1 due via email to tdengles@eiu.edu, and turned in as a printed copy by the beginning of class; reading for today TBA

[A completed Daily Schedule is coming soon!]