ENG 3001-003: Race, Class, and Gender in the Professional Workplace

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Race, Class, and Gender in the Professional Workplace
English 3001: Advanced Composition
Fall, 2009
Tuesday/Thursday, 12:30 – 1:45

Instructor: Tim Engles
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Office hours: 1:45 – 2:45 Tuesday and Thursday, and by appointment
Course listserv e-dress: 3001f2009@lists.eiu.edu

Textbooks:
    Working while Black, Michelle T. Johnson
    Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom, bell hooks
    The Blair Handbook (fifth edition), Fulwiler

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: In my experience, a writing course is more useful and interesting if it has a central focus. Our focus will be the world of work, or more specifically, the effects of gender, race and social class in the “professional” workplace. This is the sort of environment where most of you will work after graduation; in addition to getting your writing skills up to speed for a professional audience, this course will also help you anticipate and deal with some of the key – and sometimes awkward – 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 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 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 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 the most common errors in advanced student writing.

- Bibliographic research: improve your knowledge of how online library resources work and how to use them. You will familiarize—or for some of you, re-familiarize—you 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 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 practice forming honest, thorough, and constructive commentary on your peers' writing, a process that will also 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 at such times that we’re all here to learn (even me), and so it’s all for a larger good.

**Grades:** Your final grade will be determined as follows—

- Two shorter essays (4-5 pages) 30%
- Two peer-critiques 20%
- A formal one-page proposal for your final research project 10%
- A formal analytical report (10-12 pages) on your research findings 25%
- Miscellaneous writings, quizzes, and class participation (including attendance) 15%

**E-Mail Activity:** Enrollment in this class requires an e-mail account, and you must check it frequently, preferably every day, for messages pertaining to the course. I will use this e-mail to subscribe you to our class listserv/discussion list; you will use our listserv to read and perhaps respond to messages, and also to send drafts of your essays as attachments to Dr. Engles and to your peer review partners. You can use your EIU account or another one, though I recommend that you not use free accounts, such as Yahoo or Hotmail. E-mail is the quickest, easiest way to reach me if I am not in my office; I welcome any questions and comments. Again, using an e-mail account frequently is crucial for this course, as it probably will be in your professional life—thus, if you do not send me an e-mail message (tdengles@eiu.edu) by 5 p.m. on Friday, August, I will assume that you have chosen against fully participating in the course, and I will therefore drop you. See the first day listed on the Daily Schedule below for instructions regarding what to include in this email.

**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. 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.

Also, in the interests of keeping everyone in class undistracted and focused, please do not read outside materials 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 write text messages during class.
Finally, in regards to writing, you must be willing to share your work with classmates (on an individual basis), and to give and receive constructive, insightful, frank criticism. I’m sure that all of you will work hard on your projects, but try not to let criticism of your own work hurt your feelings. Also, don’t hold back from offering helpful writing advice because you think it might hurt someone else’s feelings.

**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.” Note that attendance is part of your final grade. 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 miss 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. 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. Papers and the final project will be graded on a 100-point scale, and late papers will be penalized ten points for each day they are late, beginning one hour after the time of day at which they are due.

**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  
Fall, 2009

This schedule may be subject to change; BE SURE to bring the appropriate materials 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.

COMPUTER LAB (CH 3130)

T AUG 25  Introduction to the course

- Send Dr. Engles (tdengles@eiu.edu) an email message:
  - identify which course you’re in (English 3001)
  - describe yourself in whatever ways you like, including your career aspirations
  - After reading the above “course policies and procedures” carefully, write a statement in this e-mail saying that you have read and agree with them (also, if you disagree with any of them, feel free to describe those)
  - as with all e-mail messages to your teachers, type your name at the end of it, as you would in a letter
  - finally, watch your email inbox for a message from me – I will respond individually to each student’s message

GENDER IN THE PROFESSIONAL WORKPLACE

R AUG 27  Discussion of handouts from Tuesday (be prepared for a quiz on these readings):

F AUG 28, 5:00 p.m.  Deadline for sending the e-mail introductory and contractual email described above if you were absent on Tuesday

CLASSROOM (CH 3120)

T SEP 1  Reading for today: “Language, Sex, and Power: Women and Men in the Workplace” (an interview with author Deborah Tannen by Richard Koonce [1997]) (sent to your email account as an attachment, along with further instructions in the e-mail message)

- Begin in-class film-screening: In the Company of Men, written and directed by Neil LaBute (1997)

R SEP 3  Continue In the Company of Men