Spring 1-15-2004

ENG 4760-001: Professional Writing

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English 4760 Section 01: Professional Writing Fall 2004

Instructor: Dr Ray Watkins
Coleman Hall, Computer Room 3210(CR), and 3140, Lecture Room (LR)

Note: This means that we will meet in the CR (3210) for the first week of class, and then switch to the LR (3140) for the second week; the third week we then go back to the CR, the fourth to the LR, and so on, alternating back and forth one week at a time all semester.

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Textbooks:
Blair Handbook
Writing in the Workplace

Materials and Essays
Chart: Differences Between Literary and Business English, Tom McKeown

On Booth Library E-reserves:
"Confronting Class in the Classroom," bell hooks
"The Reciprocal Relationship of Workplace Culture and Review," Susan Kleimann
"White Privilege and Male Privilege: Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women's Studies," Peggy McIntosh
"The Softening of Business Communication," Hunter
Writing Scholarly Papers as a Team," Ruth Davidhizar and Steven Dowd
"Fieldwork in Common Places," Mary Louise Pratt
"The Forms of Capital," Pierre Bourdieu

Go to Booth Library's E-Reserve System page here:
http://www.library.eiu.edu/ereserves/ereserves.asp

Course Policies and Procedures

English 4760 is an advanced composition course in intellectual investigation, analysis, and argumentation that will enhance your understanding of academic and professional writing and give you practice in producing both. Our subject matter is the world of work, and the place of writing and ideas in the modern workplace. As an advanced course in writing, we will necessarily focus on honing your editorial and copy-editing expertise, from initiating and designing a fieldwork based research project to an oral presentation of your findings to a finished report. Each stage of your work will be collected in an online portfolio, available to me and to your peers and your research contact.

Our goals include the refinement of skills in the following areas:

1. Using bibliographic and field research -- refine your knowledge of how libraries work and how to use them; refine your knowledge of how to go out into the world and collect information relevant to your interests as a researcher. In addition to extensive on-site workplace research, including but not limited to interviews and observations, you will utilize library resources (reference materials, on-line catalogues, periodical indexes, electronic databases, etc.) and online information as needed. Reasoned, sophisticated arguments are dependent upon
knowing how to find, evaluate, and then use good information. In addition to learning more sophisticated methods of finding information, you want to improve your skills in using that information. You cannot make use of an article or essay if you cannot summarize its basic argument and identify how it is constructed. Whatever you find in your field research must be compiled, organized, and written up in a coherent manner. Therefore, using research means finding materials, and knowing how to understand them and incorporate them into your own writing. Incorporating research materials includes knowledge of appropriate documentation styles, as well. There are several of these standardized documentation styles; we will be using MLA, but if you have a strong preference for another style (APA, for example) you are welcome to use that.

2. Critical reading -- improve your ability to read critically, to question, and to evaluate what you read. In order to be a more critical 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. Although you will be given the chance to express your own opinions frequently in this class, the process of data collection and analysis we are going to be learning is very different from simply "saying what you think" or even "presenting the facts." Writing of all kinds is less about opinions and facts per se and more about reasoned arguments. Knowing the difference between these two forms of discourse—in other words, knowing how to recognize and produce persuasive discourse—is key to success in our class, in college, and beyond.

3. Constructing arguments -- improve your ability to construct your own arguments. This skill depends on your mastery of critical reading. The better reader you are, the better writer you can be. Again, one of our aims is to learn to distinguish between an opinion and a reasoned argument based on carefully constructed texts, evidence, and so on. A major challenge of this course lies in learning to weave together disparate sorts of information and data, gathered from the field as well as from texts. Arguments that consist of evidence of more than one kind, I believe, are the most persuasive kind.

4. Collaborative learning -- improve your ability to learn from and to teach others about your own thinking and about writing. Much of your success in this course will depend on the process of drafting and peer critiques. You will practice forming honest, thorough, and constructive critiques of your writing as well as your peers' writing, and how to make use of what you have learned from your own self-critique and that of others.

5. Clean, smart prose -- improve your ability to write clear 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 a lot of time talking about why so-called grammatical prose is so important to your success in college and in life. Finally, prose writing has become much more technologically sophisticated in recent years, and you will be expected to learn and fully utilize a wide range of software now routine in professional writing. Primarily, this will center on the creation of an online portfolio of your writing, built step by step as you proceed through your fieldwork. Also important will be electronic mail, as well as word processing software.

Major Writing Assignments:

A. The primary writing task of our course is called the Writing in the Wild research project: This project includes a series of writing assignments centered on information and texts gathered during your field research, including but not limited to:

- A Research Log and Six Reading Charts
- An Institutional and Biographical Portrait / Research Proposal
- Preliminary Research Questions
- An Interview with your Writer/Research Subject
- An Annotated Research Bibliography
- A Final Report

B. Peer Critiques: You will produce the following helpful, effective, 500 to 600 word critiques:

- On an Institutional and Biographical Portrait / Research Proposal
- On a Draft Final Report

C. Self-Commentaries: You will produce the following informative and insightful 500 to 600 word self-commentaries:

- Introduction to the Writer-Researcher
- Mid Term Writer-Researcher Check
- The Writer-Researcher: On the Semester as a Whole
You final report must be based on fifteen to twenty five hours of fieldwork, including observation of your writer/research subject "in the wild", interviews with your writer/research subject (this can be conducted via email and or in person) and with at least two other participants in the writing and/or writing process of your writer/research subject; and on a critical analysis of your findings based in your own research (see your Table of Contents for a complete list of major writing assignments). The finished report will be between 3500 and 4000 words, and include four cited sources that we have not discussed in class.

You will be asked to do research into several key issues relevant to writing in the workplace in contemporary society, including but not limited to collaborative and individual writing processes, the ways that class, race, and gender shape writing and writers, and the contrast between so-called business and literary styles of writing. You will be introduced to these issues through reading assignments and class discussions. Your oral presentation will explore the preliminary findings of your ongoing research.

Grades: You final grade will be determined as follows:

- Research Log / Reading Charts: 10%
- An Institutional and Biographical Portrait / Research Proposal: 10%
- An Interview with your Writer/Research Subject: 10%
- A Discussion of Preliminary Research Questions/ Annotated Research Bibliography: 10%
- An Oral Report Outline and Oral Report: 10%
- A Final Report: 20%
- Average of Three Self Commentaries: 10%
- Average of Two Peer Critiques: 10%
- Course Participation, E-mail Exercises, Website, Misc.: 10%

My grading system focuses on the step-by-step accumulation of assignments and credit over the course of the semester, rather than on one final assignment. This means that you must keep up you work at a steady pace; there is simply no way to put fieldwork off until the last moment and then "pull an allighter." This requires a certain amount of discipline, but it also more closely approximates the processes of professional writing "in the wild."

Other matters:

E-Mail Activity: Enrollment in this class requires an EIU e-mail account, and you must check it frequently, preferably every day, for messages pertaining to the course. You will also use this account to set up and use your own course web site (the web portfolio). E-mail is the quickest, easiest way to reach me if I am not in my office; I welcome any and all questions and comments.

Regarding the Writing Center: Collaborative services at the EIU Writing Center are free and students may drop in or schedule appointments during working hours. I would strongly recommend that you make use of this service. Collaboration, as we shall see over and over again, is key to success in any research or writing project.

Classroom Environment: In class, I expect all of you to participate in discussions 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. I do not plan to lecture in this class; I want us to contribute together to a positive, challenging, interesting learning environment. Finally, you must also be willing to give and receive constructive, insightful, frank criticism! I'm sure that all of you will work very hard on your projects, but try not to let criticism of your work hurt your feelings, and don't hold back from offering helpful advice because you think it might hurt someone else's feelings. (Also, please do not chew gum or eat food during class, activities which are too distracting to others--drinking beverages is okay. Finally, no caps, please, but if you want to wear one, turn it backwards so I can see your eyes.)

Attendance Policy: 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 four absences this semester, your course grade will drop a full letter grade for each absence beyond four. Also, missing a scheduled conference meeting without prior notification will result in the automatic lowering of your grade for the current project by ten points. Call or write to me via e-mail if you have to miss a conference; I will do the same if I have to reschedule. Regarding tardiness: 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 for this class on time because of other commitments, drop it and take another section. Finally, 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.
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.
Week One, Computer Room (Coleman 3120): January 12–16

M Introduction to the Course and to Each Other; WIW Research Contact Checklist Handout; Grade Release for Email

Note: Bring a floppy disc, and your E.I.U. email address and password to class on Wednesday; send required introductory e-mail message to the course discussion list before the weekend; carefully review all course materials available on the website. If you don’t have your EIU account up and running, and your password/user name by Friday, there is no reason to come to class. Please note that the central task of this course is a semester-long, ethnographic on-site research project. Consequently, you must identify a primary research contact/subject by Friday, January 23 in order to complete the research for the first draft of your portrait proposal, due on Wednesday, January 28. Review your Writing in the Wild research contact checklist very carefully to make sure that you have made the kind of choice that leads to a successful project. On Friday, January 23 you will be asked to turn in a one-paragraph informal planning document, outlining who you wish to study and why. Begin thinking about and locating your research contact/subject today, you have less than two weeks to complete your arrangements, and we have next Monday off for the MLK holiday. Additionally, periodically you will be asked to turn in a Research Log in which you list the times you have conducted on-site research, as well as your future plans, etc. As you investigate and decide on a research subject/worksite, keep notes so that you can make them your first research log entries.

Reading for next class: *Blair*, Chapter 2b.

W Introduction to the Research Project; Introduction to the Technology; Reading Charts (Pratt), Critical Reading and Note Taking.

Reading for next class: *Blair*, Chapter 3.

F Research planning and writing; basics of Writing for the Web, File Transfer Protocol (FTP) and Microsoft Word/ Hyper Text Mark-up Language (HTML/HTM).

Reading for next class: "Fieldwork in Common Places," Mary Louise Pratt (from reserves); *Blair*,
Chapter 14

Week Two Lecture Room (Coleman 3130): January 19–23

M   MLK Holiday No Class

W   Writing Workshop: Fieldwork, Portraits and Proposals; Planning Document

Reading for next class: "Fieldwork in Common Places," Mary Louise Pratt

F   Writing Workshop: Fieldwork, Portraits and Proposals

Reading for next class: Blair, Chapter 4

Planning Document Due

Week Three, CR: January 26–30

M   Technology Workshop; The Research Log as a Journal.

Reading for next class: Blair, Chapter 20

W   Technology Workshop; Responding to Writing through Peer Critiques

Reading for next class: Blair, Chapter 22

Draft One, Portrait/Proposal Due

F   Technology Workshop; the editing process.

Peer Critique, Portrait/Proposal Due

Reading for next class: "The Softening of Business Communication," Hunter (reserves); chart, Business v. Literary English (go here for the chart); Blair, Chapter 10
Week Four, LR: February 2–6

M Discussion: Understanding Style in Professional Writing

Reading for next class: “Growing up Digital...” (available through reserves, or here on the web.)
Blair, Chapter 7

Final Draft, Portrait/Proposal Due

W Discussion: Writing and New Technology

Reading for next class: “Beyond the Monkey House...” Writing in the Workplace.

F Discussion: Audiences and Professional Writing

First Self-Commentary Due

No reading for next week; work on your websites and research.
English 4760 Syllabus Weeks Five to Eleven:
Research in the Field and in the Library

No reading for this week; work on your websites and research.

Week Five, CR: February 9–13

M    Open Technology Day

W    Open Technology Day; Preparing Interview Questions, Interviews, the Interview Format

F    Lincoln Holiday No Class

Reading for next class: "Writing Scholarly Papers as a Team" (reserves)

Research Log, Charts, Check One

Week Six, LR: February 16–20

M    Discussion: Collaboration and Professional Writing

Reading for next class: “Situational Exigence...” Writing in the Workplace

Prepared Interview Questions Due February 20

W    Discussion: The Composing Process and Professional Writing

Reading, “The Reciprocal Relationship of Workplace Culture and Review” Writing in the Workplace (also in reserves).

F    Discussion: Review and Revision, Observing and asking questions about culture

Prepared Interview Questions Due

Reading for next class: Blair, Chapter 6

Week Seven, CR: February 23–27

M    Discussion: Rhetorical Stances and Writing Up Interviews

Reading for next class: Blair, Chapter 6
W Discussion: Invention and Preliminary Research Questions

F Open Technology Day

Reading for next class: “Confronting Class in the Classroom” (reserves)

Week Eight, LR: March 1–5 (Midterm, March 4)

M Discussion: Race, Class, Gender and Professional Writing

Reading for next class: “White Privilege and Male Privilege...” (reserves)

Interview due March 1

W Discussion: Race, Class, Gender and Professional Writing

Reading for next class: “The Forms of Capital” (reserves)

F: Discussion: Race, Class, Gender and Professional Writing

Reading for next class: Blair, Chapters 13 and 15

Week Nine, CR: March 8–12

M Discussion: Research on and off the Net; Annotated Bibliography

Preliminary Research Questions due March 8

Reading for next class: Blair, Chapter 16

W Discussion: Using Sources

F Open Technology Day

Second Self-commentary due March 12

Reading for next class: Blair, Chapter 53

Week Ten: Spring Break, March 15–19

Week Eleven, LR, March 22–26

M Discussion: Oral Reports, the Oral Report Outline, signing up for conferences.
Reading for next class: *Blair*, Chapters 8 and 9

**W** Discussion: Reports, Explaining and Making an Argument

Annotated Research Bibliography due March 24

Reading for next class: *Blair*, Chapter 21

**F** Discussion: Creative Nonfiction, Final Reports

No reading for next class: *Open Technology Days / Conferences All Next Week*
English 4760 Syllabus Weeks Twelve to Sixteen:
Oral and Written Reports

Week Twelve, CR: March 29–April 2

M Open Technology Day/Conferences by Appointment; Oral Report Outline due in Conference; Review Blair Handout for Writing Issues; continue work on Final Report
W Open Technology Day/Conferences by Appointment; Oral Report Outline due in Conference; Review Blair Handout for Writing Issues; continue work on Final Report
F Open Technology Day/Conferences by Appointment; Oral Report Outline due in Conference; Review Blair Handout for Writing Issues; continue work on Final Report

Week Thirteen, LR: April 5–9

M Oral Reports
W Oral Reports
F Oral Reports

Week Fourteen, CR: April 12–15

M Oral Reports
W Oral Reports
F Open Technology Day; Finalization of Writing Issues for Concluding Writing Workshops

Week Fifteen, LR: April 19–23

M Concluding Writing Workshop: Peer Critiques

Final Report, Draft One Due April 19

W Concluding Writing Workshop
F Concluding Writing Workshop
Week Sixteen, CR: April 26–30

M       Concluding Writing Workshop

Peer Critique on Final Report Due April 26

W       Concluding Writing Workshop: Third Self Commentary
F       No Class

Note: Final Draft of your Final Report, Third Self-Commentary, and your Website Portfolio are due next Wednesday, May 5 by 9AM, on the Internet. There will be no final for this course.