

English 151

Composing Reality: Writing, Texts, and Life

Section 02 (MWF 9:00-9:50am) & Section 04 (MWF 10:00-10:50am)

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Office hours: Mon. and Wed. 11:00am-12:00noon & by appt.

Course

In this section, we will study how our lives intersect with texts and will work to understand how we gauge what is "crafted" and what is "real" in our world(s). By critically reflecting on our own choices as writers, we will consider how we differentiate between acts of composition and other events, experiences, and artifacts that we value and use every day. Not only will we ask, "How do we make meaning out of the texts we encounter?" but also, "How do we recognize those texts and distinguish them from other endeavors in our lives?"

As a writing community, we will examine our own experiences with literacy, explore how social and cultural artifacts/events can be read as living texts, and investigate how the broad array of media and genres we interact with daily complicate our understanding of composition, life, and the relationship between them. Be prepared to consider and reconsider how you compose reality based on your unique integration of writing, texts, and life.

Course

The guiding principle in this seminar is that writing is a skill that is best enhanced through practice and feedback rather than lecture and examination. Your ideas and expression of those ideas will be at the heart of every activity and product. Our classes, readings, and assignments will introduce you to a variety of writing styles and approaches that you will attempt to master using all stages of the recursive writing process: invention, drafting, critiquing, researching, revising, editing, and proofreading.

This is a process-oriented seminar: the expectation is that students explore writing as a process of discovery. During workshops and conferences, you will be offered both written and verbal feedback to guide the process of revision. The formal texts you write during the semester will not be considered final until you hand in your

portfolio at the end of the semester. Every class session will be participatory and collaborative. I may lecture to explain concepts related to effective writing practices, but more typically my role will be to provide you with methods to practice, to coordinate exploratory discussions, and to guide the interactions among you and your peers. Many of our classes will involve reading and discussing your own work, the work of fellow students, and the work of professional writers who can provide inspiration.

Course Texts

Gibaldi, Joseph. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 6th ed. New York: MLA, 2003.

O'Connor, Patricia T. *Woe Is I: The Grammarphobe's Guide to English in Plain English*. 2nd ed. New York: Riverhead Books, 2003.

Rhodes College, *A Guide to Effective Paper Writing*, 2nd edition.

Moodle postings: Most of the readings for the course will be posted on Moodle (viewable/printable in Adobe PDF). I will provide additional materials in class as needed.

Course

I respect each of you as an adult and developing academic, and as such I will hold you to a high standard of behavior and performance during this class. Respect other people's time and effort by attending class, by meeting your participation requirements, and by minimizing distractions. (Silence/turn-off cell phones during class, use laptops for coursework only, and limit food/drink.) Any student needing special accommodations in this class should make an appointment to meet with me privately as soon as possible.

Attendance

Your physical and mental presence is critical to the work we do. Plan to attend class regularly and to participate actively in all course happenings, including meetings/events away from the regularly scheduled classes. Come to class prepared and on time. If you are routinely late to class or more than 10 min. late, then you will be considered absent.

You are permitted 3 absences with no explanation needed. Use these permitted absences to plan for travel, inevitable sick days, and other obligations that may keep you from class. I will deduct 1/3 of a letter grade per additional absence (e.g., 4 absences lower a B- to a C+). If you miss 6 or more classes, you will fail the course. (Missing a required conference = a zero for the week's process credit and at least 1 absence.) I will consider and deal with extraordinary circumstances on an individual basis, so please talk to or email me when you anticipate missing class or deadlines.

Process Work
(=20%)

- Consistent and attentive reading, writing, and discussion practices are essential to passing (and certainly *excelling in*) this course.
 - **Oral:** Your thoughtful participation in class discussions, activities, and group/partner work is expected and will be assessed for daily credit. Comments and questions should reflect application/critical thinking with regard to course materials, methods, and themes.
 - **Written:** Purchase a notebook for use in this class only; everything you write in and for this course will become part of this notebook. You should always write the date at the top of new entries. **DO NOT THROW AWAY OR DELETE ANYTHING YOU WRITE FOR THIS CLASS.** Entries may be assigned for or during class and reviewed for credit.
 - **Conferences:** You are required to attend several 15min.-1hr. conferences with me, our writing fellow, and/or your peers throughout the semester to talk about specific drafts and revision, your experiences with unit texts/topics, and any upcoming drafts/events of note. You will sign-up for a day/time on Moodle the week before conferences will happen. You cannot opt out of a conference or make-up a missed conference. The week of conferences, we will not meet during one or more of our regular class times (see tentative course schedule/Moodle).

Draft Credit
(=20%)

- **Drafts/Papers:** You will compose four original papers in this class; you will write multiple versions of those papers (i.e., drafts) throughout the semester=12 drafts total. You will choose several of your best to finalize to submit in your final portfolio.
 - Unit A: Literacy Narrative (4-5 pages) sequence
 - Unit B: Interpreting a "Text" (5-7 pages) sequence
 - Unit C: Research Project (8-10 pages)
 - Learning Letters>> Portfolio Cover Letter (3-5 pages) Unless otherwise specified on the assignment:
 - All drafts must be typed: 12-pt Times New Roman, double-spaced, 1-inch margins. Page counts are based on FULL pages of writing (e.g., 3.25, 3.5, 3.75 pgs. ≠ 4-5 pgs.).
 - Drafts are due at the beginning of class—printed. (Always bring one printed copy to class on the day it is due; I may ask you to bring more than one copy of certain drafts.)
 - **YOU CAN ONLY EARN DRAFT CREDIT BY COMPLETING YOUR ASSIGNMENTS ON TIME.** I will not give credit for

papers that do not meet the minimum page requirement, do not fulfill all components of the assignment, or are late. Although you cannot earn process credit on late drafts, I will read them and respond as time permits.

Product
(=60%)

A portfolio is composed of writing that you select and present in order to demonstrate to me your best composition skills. The midterm and final portfolios are not optional. These are the products of the process work you do throughout the semester. I will provide you with more details on the portfolios throughout the semester, including instructions on what must be included and examples of how to compile your materials.

- **The midterm portfolio** (=20%) will be evaluated on the quality of revision shown in the work you submit. I will provide you with a rubric ahead of time that will indicate how the midterm portfolio will be evaluated.
- **The final portfolio** (=40%) will be evaluated on the quality of the final drafts you choose to submit. These final drafts are evaluated comprehensively—I will consider all aspects of the writing, from your organizing ideas and forms to your use of grammar and documentation standards. Except under extraordinary conditions, **THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A LATE FINAL PORTFOLIO. IF YOU DO NOT TURN IN A COMPLETE FINAL PORTFOLIO BY THE DATE/TIME IT IS DUE OR AT ALL, YOU WILL FAIL THE COURSE.**

The Writing Center The Writing Center (Barret 122) is an excellent resource for all writers at Rhodes. A trained staff member will work with you one-on-one and provide assistance with style, organization, content, voice, grammar, and documentation standards. In addition to your draft and/or any pre-writing notes, bring your assignment to your session. For more information, visit www.rhodes.edu/writingcenter or call 843-3393.

Writing Fellow We are lucky enough to have a Writing Fellow from The Writing Center working with our section this semester. The fellow will be involved in our classes, conferences, and will assist with draft feedback and guidance. Please respect the fellow's time and efforts by always planning meetings in advance and fulfilling your role as the writer when you seek feedback and assistance.

Course Assessment Credit & Grading

One of the teaching principles that I hold most dear is that my assessment of your work should be as clear and up-to-date as possible. I am willing to schedule an appointment with you at anytime during the semester to discuss (not negotiate about) my comments and evaluation of your work.

- Process work: Unsatisfactory(- or √-)/Satisfactory(√ or √+)
- Either you contribute to each class/activity in a meaningful way, or you do not. Satisfactory participation means that you are actively involved in whole-class, small group, and individual activities. I expect you to speak, write, and share ideas/work in every class.
- When you arrive late to class, do not adequately prepare (readings, assignments) for class activities, or are not invested fully in the day's work, your process work will be assessed as unsatisfactory.
- In-class (or conference) activities that occur when you are not present or late CANNOT be made-up for credit.
- Draft Credit: No Credit (-) / Credit (+)
- There is no gray area with draft credit—either your draft is complete and on-time, or it is not. You do not earn any draft credit for partially completing a draft or turning it in late.
- Product Evaluation: I provide rubrics for graded assignments and will always respond to your portfolios with holistic comments. Revision is integral to this course; you will have opportunities to revise every draft sequence prior to submitting a final version for graded evaluation.
- The grade equivalences for this course are:

%range	letter	scale/pt. value
94-100	A	12
90-93	A-	11
87-89	B+	10
84-86	B	9
80-83	B-	8
77-79	C+	7
74-76	C	6
70-73	C-	5
67-69	D+	4
64-66	D	3
60-63	D-	2
1-59	F	1
0	NO WORK	0

Academic Integrity

You are expected to follow the Rhodes Honor Code for all work that you do for this course. Everything that you submit for the course (including formal and informal assignments), must be your original work created for this course only.

All suspected violations of the Rhodes Honor Code, including cases of plagiarism, will be handled in accordance with this code. Plagiarism and other Code violations carry severe penalties, such as failing the course. *You should feel confident that I am most interested in your ideas and your unique expression of them.*

Department of English

Expectations and Policies

A college course is more than simply a set of assignments; it is an intellectual process, one which requires active engagement from beginning to end in order to achieve its intended results. With this in mind, the Department of English has formulated a number of expectations and the policies that support them. If you have questions about how these policies relate to the syllabus for a particular course, you should address them to the instructor.

Attendance: The success of a course depends to a significant extent upon the presence of students alert and prepared to address the subject under discussion. Unavoidable absences should be discussed with the instructor, ideally before they occur. Excessive absences will result in a lowering of grade, in some cases to an F.

Deadlines: Writing assignments, tests, etc., are carefully scheduled as stages toward the fulfillment of the course's goals and cannot be indefinitely deferred without frustrating those goals. Brief extensions for good reasons may be permissible with the instructor's prior approval; otherwise, late assignments will be penalized and may result in their not being accepted for credit.

Submission of all work: All major assignments are integral to the goals of the course. Failure to complete any major assignment will result in a grade of F for the course.

Intellectual honesty: All work is assumed to be the student's own and produced exclusively for the course in which it is submitted. Papers written for one course, even if revised, are not to be submitted in another without the instructor's prior approval. Borrowing of ideas or language from other sources (including published material, other student papers, the internet or other electronic resources, etc.) must be carefully documented. Students are advised against posting their work on the internet since doing so may lead to suspicion of plagiarism. Students are advised to maintain drafts of their work to verify its originality. Cases of suspected plagiarism will be referred to the Honor Council, and the student if convicted will receive a grade of F in the course in addition to sanctions assigned by the Council. Carelessness in documenting sources, even if not technically plagiarism will be penalized as the instructor deems appropriate. If you are uncertain about how or whether to document sources, consult your teacher.

Course Schedule is subject to change to accommodate our learning pace and needs. Expect short additional readings at times and daily process work assignments. I will announce additions/changes in class & on Moodle. Bring your readings (with annotations and/or additional writing) to class on the day they will be used.

Unit A: Texts from Our Lives

Wk 1 W 1/13 Introductions and syllabus

F 1/15 What is good writing?

- Bring your example of good writing to class (+response)

Wk 2 **Good reading and good writing**

M 1/18 Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday / No class

W 1/20 What is good reading? What is a text?

- "Good Readers and Good Writers," Nabokov
- Learning Letter #1 due

F 1/22 What is process writing? / Invention and prewriting

- "Shitty First Drafts," Lamott

- *Woe Is I* (Introduction, xiii-xvi and Chapter 1, 1-18)

Wk 3 **Feedback and re-vision**

M 1/25 Expanding ideas

- Draft A1 (Timeline) due/class workshop

W 1/27 What is voice?

F 1/29 Peer feedback and critique

- Draft A2 (Collage) due to group with cover sheet
- *Woe Is I* (Chapters 2 & 3, 19-47)

Wk 4 **Idea development and form**

M 2/1 Group conferences on Draft Sequence A /No class at regular time

W 2/3 What is literacy?

- "Superman & Me," Alexie; "Discovering the Power of Language," Malcolm X

F 2/5 Showing v. telling

- "Me Talk Pretty One Day," Sedaris; "Mother Tongue," Tan
- Titles of works: *MLA Hndbk* (3.6.1-3.6.3); *Woe Is I* (155-7)

Unit B: Crafting Texts...Living Texts

Wk 5 **The Rhetorical situation**

M 2/8 The rhetorical situation I: Purpose, audience, and form

- Draft A3 (Narrative) due with cover sheet

W 2/10 The rhetorical situation II

- "American Gothic," 2 paintings

- "Inserting a Meaning," Milosz

F 2/12 Building an argument I

- "The Transformation of Silence into Lang. & Action," Lorde

Wk 6 **Reading argument...and writing argument**

M 2/15 Building an argument II

- "Cool Like Me," Alexander

W 2/17 Building an argument III

- "Two Ways of Seeing a River," Twain; "Metaphors, Plath

- *Woe Is I* (Chapter 6, 133-157)

F 2/19 What is my argument?

- Draft B1 due / class workshop

Wk 7 **Reflection, revision, and portfolios**

M 2/22 What shapes my rhetorical situation?

- Draft B2 due /class workshop

W 2/24 Portfolios: Revision v. Editing (v. Proofreading)

- *Woe Is I* (Chapter 7, 159-166)

F 2/26 Midterm conferences/No class at regular time

Wk 8 M 3/1 Midterm conferences/No class at regular time

W 3/3 Terms and Themes: What is real? (Or not?)

- MIDTERM PORTFOLIO DUE (w/ Learning Letter #2)

- "The Ugly Truth," Peyser

F 3/5 Terms and Themes continued

- "How to Tell a True War Story," O'Brien

- "The Fine Art of Making Money; How Painter J.S.G. Boggs

- Is Bucking the System," Roberts

Unit C: Our Lives as Texts?

Wk 9

Adding research to our writing

- M 3/8 Developing topics/preparing to research
- *MLA Handbook* (Sections 1.1-1.3.3)
 - "Using Your Preexisting Knowledge During Research," Zemliansky
- W 3/10 Research Day I: meet in Barrett (Rm TBA)
- *MLA Handbook* (Section 1.4); *RC Guide* (5-9)
- F 3/12 Research Day II: meet in Barrett (Rm TBA)
- *MLA Handbook* (Section 1.4); *RC Guide* (5-9)

3/15, 3/17, 3/19 Spring Break

- "Finding the Voices of Others without Losing Your Own," Moore

Wk 10

Using sources to guide our writing

- M 3/22 Draft C1 (Proposal) due
- "From Topics to Questions," from *The Craft of Research*
 - *MLA Handbook* (Section 1.5)
- W 3/24 What is a credible source?
- "Know It All," Schiff
 - *MLA Handbook* (Section 1.6-1.7)
- F 3/26 What is MLA? / Documentation and beyond...
- *RC Guide* (26-30 [MLA Citation] & 35-40 [Intellectual Honesty])
 - *MLA Handbook* (Sections 2.1-2.8; 6.1-6.3)

Wk 11

- M 3/29 Refine a claim, choose a role, focus on purpose
- Draft C2.1 (Annotated Bibliography) due
- W 3/31 From a claim to a thesis
- Draft C2.2 (Exploratory Writing/Outline) due
 - *MLA Handbook* (Section 1.8.2) & *RC Guide* (12-14)
- F 4/2 Easter Recess / No Class

Wk 12

Shaping our texts: organization and transition

- M 4/5 Organization I (Argument)
- "Television: The Plug-In Drug," Winn
 - *MLA Handbook* (Sections 1.8.3)
- W 4/7 Organization II (Paragraphs)
- *RC Guide* (15-19)
- F 4/9 Organization III (Transitions; Intros and Conclusions)
- "In Praise of the Humble Comma," Iyer
- M 4/12 The final portfolio: assignment and expectations
- Draft C3 due with cover sheet
 - Revisiting Narrative/Expository skills (Unit A)
 - Revisiting Analytic/Interpretive skills (Unit B)
 - Revisiting Research/Argument skills (Unit C)
- W 4/14 Group Conferences on Research Project
- F 4/16 Group Conferences on Research Project

Wk 13

Wk 14

From process to product...

- M 4/19 Editing and proofing standards
- "Make Me Sound Like I Don't Suck," Gabriel
 - *Woe Is I* (Chapter 10, 195-204); *RC Guide* (41-5)
- W 4/21 Terms and Themes: Intersections of Writing, Texts, and Life
- F 4/23 What is good writing? What is my process?
- Bring learning letters #1 and #2 to class

Wk 15

The texts of our lives...

- M 4/26 Final questions, issues, and in-class work on drafts
- (MLA formatting and Works Cited details)
- W 4/28 Final questions, issues, and in-class work on drafts
- (Writing effective titles)
- F 4/30 Last day of class: Final Portfolio due

*There is no final exam in this course.

Graded final portfolios will be available for pick-up before final grades are due.