

English 151
Critical Reading, Thinking, and Writing: Self and Culture

COURSE INFORMATION

Professor Meyer-Lee
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Office: Palmer 308A
Office Hours: Tu 9:30 - 12:30
Th 11:30 - 1:30

The aims

1) To enhance your ability both to write persuasive written arguments in a variety of genres and to read critically the arguments of others.

The key words here (besides “write” and “read”) are “persuasive,” “arguments,” “genres,” and “critically.” An *argumentative* essay is public thought process, in which the writer guides the reader to the position which he or she holds. A *persuasive* essay is one which deploys the conventions of written prose and leverages evidence such that the writer’s position seems to be the right position. The kind of conventions the writer follows and the manner in which he or she presents evidence are not the same for all types of essays: writers choose to compose within specific *genres*, each of which may have a different set of readerly expectations. Among the premises of this course is the belief that critical readings of others’ arguments are the best resource for learning how to compose your own arguments.

2) To broaden and complicate your understanding of the nature of selfhood, culture, and the relationship between them.

This course is *content-driven*, which is another way of saying that this second aim serves as a means for accomplishing the first. Although we will be paying significant attention to the form of the essays we will read (and you will write), we will spend most of class time thinking about and discussing the issues the essays raise in respect to the overall theme of the course. Several of the essays are secondary studies—resources for us to help think about self and culture. But the majority may be considered primary sources—accounts of a particular individual’s engagement with some aspect of culture. You will be writing both kinds of essays.

The organization

The course is divided into a number of different units, with each unit devoted to a different aspect of the relationship between self and culture and/or to a different genre of argument. You will write five essays, one of which will be a research paper. For all but one essay you will be required to turn in some intermediate stage of writing (e.g., a draft), on which your peers and I will give you feedback. In addition, you will complete a number of other, smaller writing assignments.

Texts

- *The Norton Reader*, 10th edition, ed. Linda Peterson et al
- *A Pocket Style Manual*, 3rd edition, by Diana Hacker
- *The Craft of Research*, by Wayne Booth et al.
- *Course Pack*

Requirements

- *Attendance*: this course moves very quickly; in almost every class period something will be presented that you will need to know or have later. Hence, attendance is mandatory. You may request to miss a class for illness, family emergency, or Rhodes athletic commitments, but let me know in advance so that we can work out an alternative schedule.
- *Readings* must be read prior to the class on the date specified.
- *Discussion*: you must be ready to participate actively in discussion, which forms part of your grade.
- *Reading responses* and *ruminations* must be turned in to me in the manner specified in the syllabus: either e-mailed by the specified time or brought to class.
- *Essay drafts* or other intermediate stages of composition will be turned in to me. Sometimes I will request that multiple copies of drafts be brought to class.
- *Final revisions* of the essays must be brought to class on the date specified along with the intermediate stage you turned in, my comments on that, and any other intermediate stages you would like to show me (e.g., pre-writing, outlines, etc).
- *Quizzes*: see the syllabus for the scheduled quizzes.
- *Journal*: you will record in a journal your experiences of reading and commenting on your peers' writing, as well as of having your writing read and commented on. You will turn this in at the end of the course.

Essay format and lengths

- Essays must be typed, double-spaced, with 1 inch margins on all sides, and with page numbers.
- If using a word processor, use Times Roman 12 pt font.
- Use of sources must be documented in either the MLA or University of Chicago format (for both of which, see *A Pocket Style Manual*).
- The 1st essay must be 3-4 pages.
- The 2nd essay must be 4-5 pages.
- The 3rd essay must be 4-5 pages.
- The 4th essay must be 3-4 pages.
- The 5th essay must be 6-8 pages.
- I will supply more specific detail for all assignments as needed.

Grading

- Essay 1: 10%
- Essay 2: 15%
- Essay 3: 15%
- Essay 4: 10%
- Essay 5: 25%
- Reading responses, one-page ruminations, and quizzes: 15%
- Class participation: 10%

Penalties for late or missed work

- Unexcused absence: one-fourth of your participation grade
- Reading responses or one page ruminations: no credit
- Quizzes: no credit
- Required drafts, outlines, etc: no feedback from me
- Final revisions of essays: an immediate 1/3 letter grade deduction, an additional 1/3 letter grade for each subsequent 24 hour period
- N.B.: The specific times listed in the syllabus for when things are due are absolute. In other words, if the syllabus says an essay is due “at the beginning of class,” turning it in 10 minutes into the class counts as late

Writing help

Time constraints limit my ability to give you detailed, one-on-one feedback on your writing. I therefore highly encourage you to make use of the Rhodes College Writing Center, especially for help with drafts. At your first opportunity, you should look over their web site to see what they offer: <http://www.rhodes.edu/kamhi/center/index.html>.

Honor code

I expect all written work to be original to you unless otherwise documented. If you have questions about how this applies to peer editing, ask me. All written work must also be original to this course, unless I have given you explicit permission to build on something you have already written.

Disabilities

If you have a documented disability, please see the Office of Disability Services as soon as possible to ensure that you receive the needed assistance.