

English 151.02/ Composing Reality: Writing, Texts, and Life

MWF 9:00-9:50am / Palmer 211

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Office hours: Wed. 11:00am-1:00pm & Fri. by appt.

Course Description

In this section of English 151, we will study how our lives intersect with *texts* and will work to better 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 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. *Throughout this semester, you will be asked to consider and reconsider how you compose reality based on your unique integration of writing, texts, and life.*

Course Approach

This course is designed to introduce you to writing and interpreting at the college level. It will give you experience in all stages of the recursive writing process: invention, drafting, critiquing, researching, revising, editing, and proofreading. We will practice a variety of writing styles so that you will be able to develop your composition skills in a way that will be most useful and rewarding to you throughout college and in your life.

This is a process-oriented seminar: our classes will consist of reading, discussion, lecture, in-class writing, student presentations, collaborative workshops, conferences, journaling, and writing and research assignments. Your ideas and how you express those ideas are the basis for these activities and products. Each member of the class will compose four original texts (in multiple drafts) throughout the semester and will submit a final portfolio of polished, proficient writing.

Course Texts

Elbow, Peter and Pat Belanoff. *Being A Writer: A Community of Writers Revisited*. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2003.

Gibaldi, Joseph. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 6th ed. New York: MLA, 2003.
Reserve Readings are available in Barret Library, and I will provide additional materials in class or on our course Moodle site as needed.

Course Requirements

The Basics

This course cannot function without a genuine investment from each member of our writing community. I absolutely respect each of you as an adult and developing academic, and as such I will hold you to a high standard of behavior during this class. Respect other people’s time and effort by attending class and meeting your participation requirements. (Cell phones must be turned off during class.) I will always consider extraordinary circumstances if they arise, so please talk to or email me when you anticipate missing class or deadlines. Any student needing special accommodations in this class should make an appointment to meet with me privately as soon as possible.

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Attendance Your physical and mental presence is critical to the work we do. You should plan to attend class regularly and to actively participate in all course happenings, including meetings/appointments away from the regularly scheduled classes. Come to class prepared and on time. If you are routinely late to class or more than 15 min. late, then you will be considered absent.
You are permitted 3 absences with no explanation needed; it is up to you to 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 would lower a B- to a C+). Missing 6 or more classes will result in automatic failure of the course. Missing a required conference with the instructor results in a zero for that week's process credit and an absence. I will consider and deal with extraordinary circumstances on an individual basis.
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Process Credit
(=40%)

- **Participation:** Consistent and attentive reading and writing practices are essential to passing (and certainly *excelling in*) this course. Your thoughtful participation in class discussions, group/partner work, and conferences is an important component to this class and will be assessed for daily credit.
- **Writer's Notebook:** At the beginning of this course, plan on purchasing a notebook for use in this class only; everything you write in and for this course will become part of your Writer's Notebook. Entries may be assigned for or during class and reviewed for credit. This notebook is the place to keep readings, class notes, vocabulary lists, grammar/mechanics investigations, drafts, journal entries, etc.; selections may be included in your final portfolio as artifacts from your writing process. You should always write the date at the top of new entries.
DO NOT THROW AWAY ANYTHING YOU WRITE FOR THIS CLASS.
- **Conferences:** You are required to attend several 15-30 minute conferences with me and/or your peers throughout the semester to talk about specific drafts and revision, your experiences with texts and in-class discussion, and any upcoming drafts/events of note. You will sign-up for a conference day/time on Moodle the week before conferences will happen. Being absent the week of sign-ups without prior notice does not excuse you from a conference. You cannot make-up a missed conference. The week that conferences take place, we will not meet during one or more of our regular class times (see tentative course schedule and see Moodle for week-by-week information).
- **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. You will choose several of your best to finalize to submit in your final portfolio (see below).
 - Paper A: Literacy Narrative (4-5 pages)
 - Paper B: Interpreting a "Text" (5-7 pages)
 - Paper C: Research Project (8-10 pages)
 - Learning Letters>> Portfolio Cover Letter (3-5 pages)Unless otherwise specified by me ahead of time, the following parameters apply:
 - All drafts must be typed in 10 or 12-pt font (double-spaced).
 - Drafts will only be accepted in class. (Always bring one printed copy to class on the day it is due; I may ask you to bring more than one copy for certain workshops.)
 - 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.).....

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- 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 all of the process work you will 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.
- Midterm Portfolio (20%)** The midterm portfolio 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 exactly how the midterm portfolio will be evaluated.
- Final Portfolio (40%)** The final portfolio 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.

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- Assessment Credit & Grading** One of the teaching principles that I hold most dear is the idea 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. Revision is integral to this course; you will have opportunities to revise every draft sequence prior to submitting a final version for graded evaluation.
- **Process Credit: Full Credit/Satisfactory or No Credit/Unsatisfactory**
 - There is no gray area with process credit—either your work (including early drafts) is complete and on-time, or it is not. Either you contribute to class in a meaningful way, or you do not.
 - If you arrive late to class or do not have assignments ready for class activities, you will not receive process credit for that day’s work. In-class activities that occur when you are not present or late CANNOT be made-up for credit.
 - **Product Evaluation:** I will provide rubrics/grading scales for graded assignments and will always respond to your portfolios with holistic comments.
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Academic Integrity You are expected to follow the Rhodes Honor Code for all the work that you do for this course. All cases of plagiarism will be handled in accordance with this code. Plagiarism carries 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.*

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.

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.