

English 151
First Year Writing Seminar: Culture Wars
Course Syllabus, Spring 2007

Instructor: J Edward Mallot
Office Location: 304 Palmer
Office Hours: 10:00-12:00 Mondays;
2:00-3:00 Tuesdays and Thursdays
(also available by appointment)
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Required Texts

Colapinto, John. As Nature Made Him: The Boy Who Was Raised as a Girl
Fishman, Charles. The Wal-Mart Effect
Johnson, Steven. Everything Bad is Good for You
Stewart, Jon. America (The Book)
Williams, Joseph M. Style: The Basics of Clarity and Grace (2nd edition)

Most of these are already available at Rhodes Bookstore; The Wal-Mart Effect will arrive later. Do NOT buy Fast Food Nation, as I've decided against that text this term.

Other required texts will be available in a Reserve Packet in the library, listed under my name. You will be responsible for finding this packet and making your own photocopies.

In addition, I will ask you to attend three film screenings this term; screenings are indicated on the reading schedule. The library's Media Reserve Services has ordered copies of these films (once they arrive, the copies will stay on reserve). If you are unable to attend screenings, you must watch the film(s) on your own before the relevant class.

Course Description

True to its title, the primary aim of this course is to improve student writing. More broadly, however, our goals also stress a greater understanding of different kinds of rhetoric, including both successful and unsuccessful strategies and examples. We'll explore how to organize arguments, how to find and evaluate evidence, and how to use research to persuade. Toward this end, our particular section will be reading a number of texts that all deal with the theme "culture wars." This includes a variety of contemporary debates, from gay marriage to capital punishment, from Wal-Mart to reality television. We'll work our way through three major units: "Bodies and Body Politics," "Images and Realities" and "Commodities and Consumption." In this way, I hope our time together becomes more than a "writing seminar," including lively and provocative discussion of some of our age's most pressing issues. Welcome to English 151.

Tentative Reading Schedule

(I reserve the right to change this schedule, depending on what happens during the term.
All readings below are from the Course Packet, on reserve at Barret Library, with the exception of our other major texts.)

11 Jan Introduction/Syllabus

Unit One: Bodies and Body Politics

16 Jan John Colapinto, As Nature Made Him (Part I)

18 Jan Colapinto (Part II)

23 Jan Workshopping Paper One (Draft Due)

25 Jan Library Tour with Darlene Brooks

Paper One Due (beginning of class—bring to library)

30 Jan *Gun Control*:

Robert Goldwin, "Gun Control is Constitutional"

Daniel Polsby, "The False Promise of Gun Control"

Assignment: Style Lesson 3 (Worksheet Due)

01 Feb *Capital Punishment*:

George Orwell, "A Hanging"

Edward I. Koch, "Death and Justice"

Jacob Weisberg, "This is Your Death"

05 Feb (Monday) Film Screening: *An Inconvenient Truth* (7 pm, 205 Palmer)

06 Feb Discussion of Film

Assignment: Style Lesson 4 (Worksheet Due)

08 Feb *Gay Marriage*:

Andrew Sullivan, "Here Comes the Groom"

Hadley Arkes, "The Closet Straight"

Peter J. Gomes, "Homophobic? Read Your Bible"

Assignment: Style Lesson 5 (Worksheet Due)

Unit Two: Images and Realities

13 Feb *Body Image*:

Gaby Wood, "Meet Marnie"

Alan Farnham, "You're So Vain"

Waddie Mitchell, "The Cowboy Who Got His Face Lifted"

Paper Two Draft Due

15 Feb Workshopping Paper Two

19 Feb (Monday) **Paper Two Due, Noon**

20 Feb *Oprah Winfrey*:

Kathryn Lofton, "Practicing Oprah"

R. Mark Hall, "The 'Oprahfication' of Literacy"

The Onion: "Oprah Viewers Patiently Awaiting Instructions"

Allison Samuels, "Oprah Goes to School"

22 Feb *Reality Television*:

Heather Havrilesky, "Three Cheers for Reality TV"

Emily Eakin, "Greeting Big Brother with Open Arms"

Assignment: Style Lesson 6 (Worksheet Due)

26 Feb (Monday) Film Screening: *Capturing the Friedmans* (7 pm, 205 Palmer)

27 Feb Discussion of Film

Assignment: Style Lesson 7 (Worksheet Due)

01 Mar *Advertising Culture*:

Dan Cook, "Lunchbox Hegemony?"

Jennifer Pozner, "Triumph of the Shill"

Damien Cave, "The Tyranny of 'Abercrappie'"

Assignment: Style Lesson 8 (Worksheet Due)

06 Mar *Pop Culture Wars*:

Steven Johnson, Everything Bad is Good for You (Introduction, Part One)

08 Mar Johnson (Part Two and Afterword)

Spring Break

Unit Three: Commodities and Consumption

20 Mar *Pornography and the Meat Industry*:

excerpts from Carol J. Adams' The Pornography of Meat

Paper Three Draft Due

22 Mar Workshopping Paper Three

26 Mar (Monday) **Paper Three Due, Noon**

Film Screening: *The Corporation* (7 pm, 205 Palmer)

27 Mar Discussion of Film

29 Mar *Wal-Mart*:

Charles Fishman, The Wal-Mart Effect (Chapters 1 and 4)

03 Apr Fishman (Chapters 6-9)

Easter Break

10 Apr *Contemporary Slavery*:

excerpts from Kevin Bales's Disposable People

12 Apr *Higher Education*:

John Searle, "The Case for a Traditional Liberal Arts Education"

Garry Trudeau, "Doonesbury" Cartoon

Alex Wright, "From the Ivory Tower to Academic Sweatshop"

David Goldberg, "What Your Classes Aren't Telling You"

Concluding Unit

17 Apr *Satire as Rhetoric*:

Jonathan Swift, "A Modest Proposal"

Jon Stewart, America (The Book) (selections TBA)

Paper Four (First) Draft Due

19 Apr Workshopping Paper Four, Round One

24 Apr Stewart (selections TBA)

Paper Four (Second) Draft Due

26 Apr Workshopping Paper Four, Round Two

Final Draft of Paper Four Due: 4 May, 5:30 pm

Course Requirements

Grade Breakdown:

Paper One	20 points
Paper Two	70 points
Paper Three	90 points
Paper Four	90 Points
Workshopping	30 Points
Participation	100 Points
Quizzes	50 Points
Style Exercises	50 Points

Total Points Possible: 500

There is no final exam for this course.

The Four Papers: You should note that the papers have different point values; will have different specific requirements. Details about those requirements will be made available as relevant deadlines approach. Generally, though, each will ask you to construct a persuasive argument—the primary goal of the course in terms of writing. For all papers, workshopping and revising will be emphasized.

Workshopping: You'll note on the reading schedule that multiple days have been reserved for workshopping papers. I will divide our class of fifteen into five groups of three; on the dates indicated you will be working in groups (most likely the groups will change for each paper). There will be specific forms for you to fill out during the workshopping process; I will collect these forms and grade them. I will also base part of this grade on the kinds of comments you offer the others in your group. More details about this process will be made available as the semester progresses, but the thing you should know now is that when "drafts" are due you'll need to print four copies of your paper: one for yourself, one for each of the other members of your group and one for me. (My copy allows me to see how workshopping and revising changed your paper).

Participation: This is often the most overlooked aspect of grading policy, and yet is usually the best indicator of students' success in a course. One hundred points of your grade come from participation, and in this aspect I am not a particularly easy grader: if you show up every day, ace all written assignments and yet don't offer something productive and unsolicited in class, you will receive a zero for this component of the course. Indeed, as this is such a small class you'll need to be prepared to contribute MULTIPLE questions/comments EACH CLASS PERIOD. I will also demand that you keep up with the (usually easy) reading schedule.

A word about attendance: you'll notice on the grade breakdown that I haven't set aside any points for attendance. Again, this means that simply showing up is not enough to succeed in this course. Having said that, if you miss more than three class periods I will lower your overall grade. I don't distinguish between excused and unexcused absences, so you'll need to contact me if an emergency situation arises that will affect your ability to attend for more than a single class period (notice the verb tense here: "that will affect" means to contact me beforehand).

Quizzes: To help get class underway, several of our sessions will begin with quizzes about the reading due for that particular day; quizzes will be worth either five or ten points. I will not announce these in advance, but you should have little reason to fear them, if you're keeping up with the schedule and reading attentively. I will not allow you to "make-up" a quiz based on absence, but will instead drop the lowest score for the term.

Style Exercises: Some of our class sessions will feature some time devoted to the writing guide Style. I will require you to complete a number of exercises based on these readings; each will be graded.

Other Important Information

Office Hours: I am available outside of class to discuss ideas you have or problems that may arise. If my office hours are inconvenient for you we can easily set up a time to meet. I encourage all of you to come and talk about what's on your mind or simply chat. If at any time you are upset or concerned about something said in class, by me or anyone else, please come see me about it. I want everyone to feel comfortable coming to class and sharing their ideas.

Students with Disabilities: If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services at extension 3994 as soon as possible. Arrangements need to take place well in advance, and this process can take time. I am more than willing to try to accommodate reasonable requests, but you'll need to get underway with the process of documentation now.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is literary theft. It occurs when you use someone else's ideas as your own, without proper citation. Plagiarism is committed if you copy someone's words without documentation—whether the original source was published or not (this includes “borrowing” someone else's term paper, or copying something you've found on the Internet). Plagiarism is committed when you closely paraphrase another source without proper acknowledgement. Students who commit plagiarism at Rhodes College are referred to the Honor Council for disciplinary action. This is a crime both easy to commit and easy to avoid, and not one you should take lightly. If you have any questions about plagiarism, or want to speak to me about how to avoid plagiarism in your own papers, please come to me before handing in an assignment.

According to English Department policy, 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. 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. Finally, all work for this course will be subject to the Rhodes College Honor Code. For each paper and the final exam, you will be asked to copy this code *in full* and sign your pledge.