

Professor Leslie Petty
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English 151: Thinking and Writing Critically

Practically speaking, the goal of this class is to prepare you to write on a college level. However, the class also shares one of the broader goals of a liberal arts education – to prepare students to be good citizens. I believe one of the most important characteristics of a good citizen is to be able to think critically about one's society and the events that shape it daily. To help you hone this skill, we will read several timely, diverse essays that have been chosen as the best essays published in American magazines in the past year. We will consider the form as well as the content of these essays; while they are provocative windows into the nation's current intellectual climate, they are also exemplars of articulate, persuasive writing. Good citizens, however, must do more than just consider questions of contemporary and philosophical importance; they must be able to formulate their own positions on these questions and communicate them effectively. Therefore, we'll cultivate critical thinking, reading and writing as mutually dependent, essential skills. By the end of the course, I hope that you will not only have a better sense of the central debates about one's role as a citizen, but that you will also be prepared and eager to participate in these discussions.

Required Texts

Ramage, John D., et. al. *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing: Brief Edition*. 4th Ed. New York: Pearson Longman Press, 2005.
Carter, Graydon, ed. *The Best American Magazine Writing, 2006*. New York: Columbia UP, 2006.

*You may have assignments from the internet and on reserve in the library. These will be identified clearly on your syllabus or announced in class and are considered required texts.

Assignments

Essay #1: Rhetorical Analysis (1000-1500 words)	15%
Essay #2: Exploratory Essay (1000-1500 words)	20%
Essay #3: Research Essay and Presentation (4000-5000 words)	35%
Written Essay	30%
Presentation	5%
Essay #4: TBA	15%
Unit Writing Assignments/In-Class Quizzes	10%
Participation	5%

PLEASE NOTE: You cannot receive a passing grade for this course unless you submit all major assignments.

Attendance Policy

You are expected to be in class every day. Being “present” doesn’t just mean physically being in the room; you are to be alert and prepared. Anyone not alert (i.e. sleeping, reading the paper, working a crossword, etc.) will be counted absent, as will anyone clearly not prepared to participate. If you must miss class, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed and what, if anything, you need to make up. In-class writings may NOT be made up. **After 3 absences your course grade will be lowered by 1/3 letter grade per absence.** Chronic tardiness will count towards your absence total. Excessive absences (more than 6 absences) will result in an “F” for the course. If you may have trouble meeting these requirements for any reason, please discuss your situation with me early in the semester.

Assignment Submission Policy

Essays are due at the beginning of class unless otherwise noted. Essays turned in late (for whatever reason) will be penalized a letter grade per day, including weekends. If the essay is one week late, it will be given an “F.” Presentations and in-class quizzes / writing assignments cannot be made up. If you believe you have a legitimate reason for missing a due date, talk to me beforehand to make alternative arrangements. **Please note: You will be required to submit the rough draft and the unit’s daily writing assignments along with each essay.**

All essays must (be):

- 1) Typed, double-spaced with 1-inch margins and 12 pt. Times New Roman font
- 2) Include your name, date and which assignment you’re submitting in the upper left-hand corner, also double-spaced
- 3) Follow MLA style documentation
- 4) Proofread carefully for grammatical errors and typos

Unit Reading and Writing Assignments

I will distribute reading assignments in “units” before each essay is due. Doing so gives me the flexibility to respond to the particular interests and needs of the class. Note that you have short writing assignments on most days. These are to be completed on the day assigned and brought to class. At the end of the unit, you will submit them in a packet along with your rough and final drafts of the essay.

Rough Drafts and Peer Review

An integral part of your essay assignment is participation in peer review. Therefore, you must bring a complete rough draft with you to class on peer review day, which I will initial at the beginning of class. Failure to submit the rough draft that I have initialed along with your final essay will result in a 10-point deduction (1 full letter grade) from your final essay grade. We will discuss this policy further as the semester progresses.

Grammar

This course is not designed to teach you grammar. I assume that you already have a solid understanding of grammatical rules, so significant errors in this area will lower your essay grades significantly. Of course, you probably do have some grammar weaknesses, and I am happy to meet with you personally to help you improve them. If I see that there is a problem that the majority of the class is having, I might address it in lecture. Furthermore, it is possible that I will return an essay and insist on your making grammar corrections before I will accept it for a grade. These cases will be handled individually as the need arises.

Academic Honesty

The following is the English Department's policy on 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.