Overton: Memphis and the History of Urban Parks
(First Year Writing Seminar 151-11)
Rhodes College, Department of English
Professor Newstok

WRITING FELLOW: Jeremy Culver <culjc@rhodes.edu>

Spring 2012         newstok@rhodes.edu
TuTh 9:30am   Office: Palmer 306
Palmer 203   Office hours: Th 11am-2pm, or by appointment (please email)

Course description
Just across the street from the Rhodes College campus is a major urban park. Why is it here? What historical, political, and cultural forces have intersected in this place over the last century? How has the park itself been shaped by the power of rhetoric? This section of the writing course explores the idea of the urban park, from its European origins to its 21st-century controversies. We will explore four major components of this park—old growth forest; zoo; golf course; and cultural venues—as sometimes complimentary, sometimes competing entities. Is the park intended to be a respite or retreat; a place of recreation or research; a site for revenue or rejuvenation? We will commence the term with a cultural history of urban parks before turning to the more recent plans and proposals for this area. Primary texts will be drawn from a wide range of genres: literary reflections; philosophical treatises; legal and economic documents; letters; and journalism, as well as personal experience. Finally, students will be expected to visit Overton Park on a regular basis—it will be our “laboratory” for the practice of writing in our “back yard.”

In common with all other 151 classes, the course has three broad aims:

• to enable you to read critically,
• to encourage you to think independently, and
• to help you produce accurate and compelling prose in support of a thesis.

Course requirements will include three essays, one longer research paper, and brief writing (and revising) assignments for every class session.

Required Texts
For ease of reference, the following editions are required; they are inexpensive and available at the Rhodes Bookstore:
• Overton Park, William Bearden (Arcadia, 2004)
• Public Parks, Alexander Garvin (Norton, 2010)
• How to Write, Alastair Fowler (Oxford, 2006)
• Rhodes College Guide to Effective Paper Writing, Rebecca Finlayson (Rhodes, 2011)

Additional course materials will be distributed throughout the semester. Have the texts read before our discussions each session. Ideally, you will read them once over the weekend, and then re-read them during the week—good reading always entails re-reading. Read aloud; read slowly; take notes. You should plan on at least four hours of preparation for every hour of class—even more earlier in the term. If it becomes clear that not all of the class is keeping up with the reading, quizzes will be given. Bring the assigned reading to each class.

You will often be encouraged to refer to the The Oxford English Dictionary, a multi-volume historical dictionary of the language (online: http://dictionary.oed.com/); hard copy in Barret Reference.
Schedule—subject to revision, per student interest and instructor's discretion

Introduction
Week 1 Th. Jan. 12 Introductions; OED

The Idea of the Urban Park
Week 2 Tu. Jan. 17 Garvin 1 ("The Emergence of Public Parks"); Fowler 1 (Pen and Computer)
Th. Jan. 19 Olmsted "Public Parks"; Fowler 2 (Material Reading)
Week 3 Tu. Jan 24 Garvin 6 ("Design Influences"); Fowler 3 (Beginning)
Th. Jan. 26 Kessler; Fowler 4 (Drafts)
Fri., Jan 27 PAPER #1 DRAFT DUE
Week 4 Tu. Jan. 31 Bearden "Overton Park"; Fowler 5 (Outlines)
Th. Feb. 2 Interstate 40 controversy; Fowler 6 (Paragraphs)
Fri., Feb. 3 REVISED PAPER #1 DUE

Old Forest Arboretum (1901)
Week 5 Tu. Feb. 7 Garvin 9 ("Stewardship"); Fowler 7 (Paragraph Types)
Th. Feb. 9 Garvin 3 ("Key Roles"); Fowler 8 (Arguments)
Week 8 Tu. Feb. 14 Garvin 12 ("Sustainability"); Fowler 13 (Quotation)
Th. Feb. 16 Peter Taylor "The Old Forest"; Fowler 14 (Originality)

Zoo (1906)
Week 5 Tu. Feb. 21 Kising; Fowler 9 (Signposts)
Th. Feb. 23 Rothfels; Fowler 10 (Sentences)
Fri., Feb. 24 PAPER #2 DUE
Week 6 Tu. Feb. 28 Hanson; Fowler 11 (Word Order)
Th. Mar. 1 Hancock; Fowler 12 (Punctuation)
Th. Mar. 1, 7:30PM CRANE LECTURE (HARDIE AUDITORIUM)

Brooks Art Museum (1916) & Memphis College of Art (1936)
Week 9 Tu. Mar. 6 Duncan; Fowler 15 (Readers)
Th. Mar. 8 Macdonald; Fowler 16 (Words)
Week 10 [Mar. 10–18—SPRING RECESS—NO CLASS]

Golf Course (1926)
Week 11 Tu. Mar. 20 Hansen; Fowler 17 (Metaphors)
Th. Mar. 22 Jenkins or Wheeler; Fowler 18 (Performance)

Levitt Shell (1936)
Week 12 Tu. Mar. 27 Fischer; Fowler 19 (Revising)
Th. Mar. 29 Final Paper proposals; Fowler 20 (Correctness)
Fri., Mar. 30 PAPER #3 DUE

Final Project research
Week 13 Tu. Apr. 3 Peer roundtable; Fowler 21 (Reducing)
[Apr. 5–8—EASTER BREAK—NO CLASS]
Week 14 Tu. Apr. 10 Memphis Public Library; Fowler 22 (Research)
Th. Apr. 12 Memphis Public Library; Fowler 23 (Reference)

Week 15 Tu. Apr. 17 Garvin 8 ("Parkways"); Fowler 24 (Practicalities)
Th. Apr. 19 Garvin 11 ("The Role of the Public"); Fowler 25 (Recapitulation)

Retrospect
Week 16 Tu. Apr. 24 Final presentations
Th. Apr. 26 Final presentations
Fri., April 27 PAPER #4 DUE

Week 17 Apr. 30–May 1 Office sessions with Professor Neustok
Fri., May 4 PORTFOLIO DUE with REVISED PAPERS
Requirements
*Engagement* (30%) is mandatory, broadly conceived to include active *participation* (listening and responding to your peers as well as the professor), consistent *preparation* of course readings, *enthusiasm* for assignments, *collaboration* with your peers, and *respect* for the course—a mature level of decorum when engaging with the professor, writing fellow, or peers.

*Portfolio* (70%) involves all of your writing throughout the semester. Keep all of your preliminary essays, drafts, and revisions in a *folder*, which will provide the basis for your grade at the end of the semester. Your individual papers will be graded throughout the term in order to give you a rough idea of your progress in the course. Drafts or other exercises will be given a “check,” “check-minus,” or “check-plus” to indicate a general, non-binding evaluation.

*Preparation*: Expect to prepare *four hours* outside of class for every hour inside class. Have the assignments read *before* our discussions each week; ideally, you will read assignments once (and poems *multiple times*) over the weekend, and then re-read them during the week; good reading always entails *re-reading*.

**Drafts**: Writing drafts will invariably improve your final papers. You will be required to discuss your first draft with our Writing Fellow Jeremy Culver, and you will be encouraged to consult with him regularly thereafter. Make an appointment with the *Rhodes College Writing Center* at least once. We will schedule regular *draft conferences* to discuss work-in-progress; you will be responsible for responding thoughtfully to at least two drafts by your peers for each essay.

**Essays**: These are due by *4pm* on the Friday assigned.

- The first essay explores *the rhetoric of public parks* in the 1871 speech by Frederic Law Olmsted; this assignment is limited in length (*750 words*) and scope to require concentrated rhetorical analysis.
- The second essay entails an *experiential account* of personal forays in the Old Forest, in conjunction with historical contextualization (*1000 words*).
- The third essay (*1500 words*) entails a *close, cultural analysis* of an institution in the park, engaging with its foundational primary texts as well as secondary critical texts.
- Many Rhodes courses assign open topics, which require much more initiative and imagination than simply choosing from a list of suggested themes. The final longer research project (*2500 words*) will examine *tensions in the notion of an urban park*, based on some angle of approach, which you will select independently with the professor’s consultation and approval.

**Rhodes ‘citizenship’**: You are expected to attend and thoughtfully report on your experience of at least one *lecture* on campus this semester not otherwise assigned for your classes.

**Deadlines**: Deadlines are firm; I do not accept late work or grant extensions. Late work causes problems for both students and teachers, particularly in a workshop; it frequently results in inferior writing and evaluation. **Expect to submit writing for this course every time you attend class.**

**Email**: Essays may not be submitted via email; I need copies placed in my mailbox instead. I expect you to check your email regularly (at least once per day), as I will often detail or revise assignments in between classes. I am happy to receive queries by email regarding your writing, but I may not be able to reply immediately—and it’s generally preferable to discuss writing in person. I’m flexible and glad to meet with you outside of my normal office hours.
Moodle: We will occasionally have assignments and drafts posted to Moodle (often on Sundays); these are to be composed as formally as your printed assignments. You will also need to engage with your peers’ work via Moodle; this is considered part of your participation as well.

Grading: ‘C’ (70–79%) represents satisfactory work; a ‘B’ (80–86%) represents good work; a ‘B+’ (87–89%) represents very good work; an ‘A–’ (90–93%) represents excellent work; and the infrequent ‘A’ (94% and above) represents extraordinary achievement. This holds true for your overall engagement, your short essays, your critical surveys, and your final projects.

Policies: As always, please observe Rhodes guidelines regarding the Honor Code; academic dishonesty will not be tolerated, and an Honor Code violation (including plagiarism) will be grounds for failure in the course. For further English Departmental policies, see the last page.

Decorum: Respect the integrity of the course: please turn off cell phones and remove hats before entering the classroom. Eating in class and leaving to go to the bathroom are both disruptive to our conversations; please plan accordingly so that you won’t have to do either. Treat email exchanges with one another and with the professor as formally composed correspondence.

Format: Please follow these simple guidelines to make grading papers more uniform:

- put your last name on each page in the top right corner, followed by the page number
- use Garamond 12-point font
- single-space the text of your essay (to save paper)
- staple all pages together
- margins should be an inch on top, bottom, and sides
- put the following information, single-spaced, in the top left corner of the first page:
  
  Your Name
  ENG-151: Overton Park
  Professor Newstok
  Month Day, Year

- your tantalizing title follows this heading, centered on the next line

Daily writing—guidelines

These are brief (around 250 words) compositions designed to familiarize you with a number of different kinds of approaches to analyzing texts—from examining very minute details to considering larger issues across multiple texts. As the semester progresses, you will be able to incorporate the ‘tools’ from earlier essays into your increasingly nuanced compositions. They are also intended to give you some expertise on a particular topic for discussion that week, and serve as preparation for our meetings; it is often only through writing that we come to recognize what we have to say. Hard copies (not email attachments) are due in every class.