

Professor Leslie Petty  
Office Hours: Tuesday, 11:15-12:15; W 10-12; Thursday 2-3  
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### **English 151: Thinking, Reading and Writing Critically**

In this course, we will read several selections from *The Best American Science and Nature Writing 2008*. We will consider the form as well as the content of these essays; while they provide provocative perspectives on science and nature, they are also exemplars of articulate, persuasive writing. By the end of the course, you will not only have a better sense of the current national discourse about science and nature, but you will also be prepared to comment persuasively on this discourse through argumentative writing.

Our main focus will be on the *process* of good writing, and perhaps the most essential skill for being a good writer is to be a good reader. Therefore, we will talk about the elements of persuasive analysis not only as training for you to be better writers, but also to give you a vocabulary to discuss and analyze essays and books. By the end of the course, you will have:

- 1) Learned to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments and points of view
- 2) Developed skills in expressing yourself both in writing and orally
- 3) Learned how to find, evaluate and use resources for answering research questions

### **Required Texts**

Ramage, John D., et. al. *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing: Concise Edition*. 5th Ed. New York: Pearson Longman Press, 2009.  
Groopman, Jerome. ed. *The Best American Science and Nature Writing, 2008*. New York: Columbia UP, 2008.

\*You may have assignments on my Public Folder. 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)	15%
Essay #3: Research Essay and Presentation (4000-5000 words)	35%
Written Essay	30%
Presentation	5%
Essay #4: Argumentative Essay	20%
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.