

English 151.01

Composing Reality: Writing, Texts, and Life

MWF 8:00-8:50am / Buckman 204

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

Course Description

In this section, we will study how our lives intersect with *texts* and will work to 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 artifacts/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. Be prepared to consider and reconsider how you compose reality based on your unique integration of writing, texts, and life.

Course Approach

The guiding principle in this seminar is that writing is a skill that is best enhanced through practice and feedback rather than lecture and examination. Your ideas and expression of those ideas will be at the heart of every activity and product. Our classes, readings, and assignments will introduce you to a variety of writing styles and approaches that you will attempt to master using all stages of the recursive writing process: invention, drafting, critiquing, researching, revising, editing, and proofreading.

This is a process-oriented seminar: the expectation is that students explore writing as a process of discovery. During workshops and conferences, you will be offered both written and verbal feedback to guide the process of revision. The formal texts you write during the semester will not be considered final until you hand in your

portfolio at the end of the semester. Every class session will be participatory and collaborative. I may lecture to explain concepts related to effective writing practices, but more typically my role will be to provide you with methods to practice, to coordinate exploratory discussions, and to guide the interactions among you and your peers. Many of our classes will involve reading and discussing your own work, the work of fellow students, and the work of professional writers who can provide inspiration.

Course Texts

Gibaldi, Joseph. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 6th ed. New York: MLA, 2003.
O’Conner, Patricia T. *Woe Is I: The Grammarphobe’s Guide to English in Plain English*. 2nd ed. New York: Riverhead Books, 2003.
Rhodes College, *A Guide to Effective Paper Writing*, 2nd edition.
Moodle postings: Most of the readings for the course will be posted on Moodle (viewable/printable in Adobe PDF). I will provide additional materials in class as needed.

Course Requirements The Basics

I respect each of you as an adult and developing academic, and as such I will hold you to a high standard of behavior and performance during this class. Respect other people’s time and effort by attending class, by meeting your participation requirements, and by minimizing distractions. (Silence/turn-off cell phones during class, use laptops for coursework only, and limit food/drink.) Any student needing special accommodations in this class should make an appointment to meet with me privately as soon as possible.

Attendance

Your physical and mental presence is critical to the work we do. Plan to attend class regularly and to participate actively in all course happenings, including meetings/events away from the regularly scheduled classes. Come to class prepared and on time; initial the attendance sheet when you enter. If you are routinely late to class or more than 10 min. late, then you will be considered absent.

You are permitted 3 absences with no explanation needed. 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 lower a B- to a C+). If you miss 6 or more classes, you will fail the course. (Missing a required conference = a zero for the week’s process credit and at least 1 absence.) I will consider and deal with extraordinary circumstances on an individual basis, so please talk to or email me when you anticipate missing class or deadlines.

Process
Work
(=40%)

- **Participation:** Consistent and attentive reading, writing, and discussion practices are essential to passing (and certainly *excelling in*) this course. Your thoughtful participation in class discussions, group/partner work, Moodle activities, and conferences is expected and will be assessed for daily credit.
 - **Writer's Notebook:** Purchase 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. Selections may be included in your portfolios as artifacts from your writing process. You should always write the date at the top of new entries. **DO NOT THROW AWAY OR DELETE ANYTHING YOU WRITE FOR THIS CLASS.**
 - **Conferences:** You are required to attend several 15min.-1hr. conferences with me, our writing fellow, and/or your peers throughout the semester to talk about specific drafts and revision, your experiences with unit texts/topics, and any upcoming drafts/events of note. You will sign-up for a day/time on Moodle the week before conferences will happen. You cannot opt out of a conference or make-up a missed conference. The week of conferences, we will not meet during one or more of our regular class times (see tentative course schedule/Moodle).
 - **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 "Product" 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:
- All drafts must be typed in 10 or 12-pt font (dbl-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.

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.

- **The midterm portfolio (20%)** 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 how the midterm portfolio will be evaluated.
- **The final portfolio (40%)** 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.**

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.

Writing Fellow We are lucky enough to have a Writing Fellow from The Writing Center working with our section this semester. The fellow will be involved in our classes, conferences, and will assist with draft feedback and guidance. Please respect the fellow's time and efforts by always planning meetings in advance and fulfilling your role as *the writer* when you seek feedback and assistance.

**Course
Assessment
Credit &
Grading**

One of the teaching principles that I hold most dear is 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 each class in a meaningful way, or you do not. Satisfactory participation means that you are actively involved in whole-class, small group, and individual activities. I expect you to speak, write, and share ideas/work in every class.
 - If you arrive late to class, do not have assignments ready for class activities, or are not invested fully in the day's activities, you will not receive process credit for that day's work.
 - In-class (or conference) activities that occur when you are not present or late CANNOT be made-up for credit.
- Product Evaluation=I will provide rubrics for graded assignments and will always respond to your portfolios with holistic comments.

- The grade equivalences for this course are:

<u>% range</u>	<u>letter</u>	<u>scale/pt. value</u>
94-100	A	12
90-93	A-	11
87-89	B+	10
84-86	B	9
80-83	B-	8
77-79	C+	7
74-76	C	6
70-73	C-	5
67-69	D+	4
64-66	D	3
60-63	D-	2
1-59	F	1
0	NO WORK	0

**Academic
Integrity**

You are expected to follow the Rhodes Honor Code for all work that you do for this course. Everything that you submit for the course (including formal and informal assignments), must be your original work created for this course only.

All suspected violations of the Rhodes Honor Code, including cases of plagiarism, will be handled in accordance with this code. Plagiarism and other Code violations carry 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.*

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.

Course Schedule is subject to change to accommodate our learning pace and needs. Expect short additional readings from *Woe Is I* and *The Rhodes College Guide to Effective Paper Writing* throughout the semester. I will announce additions and changes in class and on Moodle.

1st half of semester

Wk 1 W 8/26 Introductions and syllabus
F 8/28 What is *process writing*?

Wk 2 Good reading and good writing

M 8/31 What is *good writing*?

- Bring your example of good writing to class (+response)

W 9/2 What is *good reading*?

- “Good Readers and Good Writers,” Nabokov

F 9/4 Invention and prewriting

- Learning Letter (#1) due to Lindner
- “Shitty First Drafts,” Lamott

Wk 3 Feedback, critique, and revision

M 9/7 Labor Day : no class

W 9/9 Draft A1 (Timeline) due

- Class workshop

F 9/11 What is *voice*?

- Draft A2 (Collage) due to group (+Lindner w/cover sheet)

Wk 4 Idea development and form

M 9/14 Group conferences on Draft Sequence A

- No class at regular scheduled time

W 9/16 What is *literacy*?

- Group conference self-evaluation sheets due + sentence-level work posted on Moodle
- “Superman & Me,” Alexie; “Discovering the Power of Language,” Malcolm X; “Me Talk Pretty One Day,” Sedaris; “Mother Tongue,” Tan

F 9/18 Showing v. telling / adding detail in narrative

- “Ode to an Orange,” Woivode

Wk 5 The Rhetorical situation

M 9/21 The rhetorical situation I

- Draft A3 (Narrative: choice form) due w/cover sheet to Lindner
- “Inserting a Meaning,” Milosz

W 9/23 The rhetorical situation II

- “Show and Tell,” from *Understanding Comics* (Chpt. 6), McCloud

F 9/25 Building an Argument I

- “Two Ways of Seeing a River,” Twain; “The Transformation of Silence into Language & Action,” Lorde

Wk 6 Reading argument...and writing argument

M 9/28 Building an Argument II

- “Cool Like Me,” Alexander

W 9/30 Building an Argument III

- “Make Me Sound Like I Don’t Suck,” Gabriel; “In Praise of the Humble Comma,” Iyer

F 10/2 What is *my argument*? / elements of a claim

- Draft B1 due
- Class workshop

Wk 7 Reflection, revision, and portfolios

M 10/5 Building an Argument IV: Introductions

W 10/7 What is a *portfolio*?

- Draft B2 due

F 10/9 Revision v. Editing (v. Proofreading)

- Class workshop (editing/polishing)

Wk 8 M 10/12 MIDTERM PORTFOLIO DUE (w/ Learning Letter #2)

W 10/14 & F 10/16 Midterm conferences/No class at reg. time

- 7-week grade cut-off
- Over fall break: “The Ugly Truth,” Peyser + choice article; “Television: The Plug-In Drug,” Winn

Wk 9 **The intersection of texts and reality**
M 10/19 Fall break: no class/midterm grades posted
W 10/21 When is real...not real (and vice versa)?
 • "The Ugly Truth," Peyser + choice article;
 "Television: The Plug-In Drug," Winn
F 10/23 Discussion/topic development continued
 • Zemliansky, "Using Your Preexisting Knowledge
 During Research"
 • (Introduction to online searching at Rhodes)

Wk 10 **From topics to questions**
M 10/26 Research Day I: meet in Barrett 128
W 10/28 Research Day II: meet in Barrett 128
 • "From Topics to Questions," from *The Craft of
 Research*
F 10/30 Class workshop
 • Draft C1 (Proposal) due

Wk 11 **Using Sources to guide our writing**
M 11/2 What is a credible source?
 • "Know It All," Schiff
W 11/4 What is MLA? / documentation and beyond...
F 11/6 **Refine a claim, choose a role, focus on purpose**
 • Draft C2 (Annotated Bibliography + Exploratory
 Writing) due to Lindner

Wk 12 **Shaping Our Texts: Organization and Transition**
M 11/9 Transitions/body organization I
W 11/11 Transitions/body organization II
F 11/13 Conclusions
 • Draft C3 due (+cover sheet)
 by 5pm by email to Lindner

Wk 13 M 11/16 Group Conferences on Research Project
 W 11/18 Group Conferences on Research Project
 F 11/20 Class workshop
 • Bring your plans for revision (including any new
 sources, if needed)

Wk 14 M 11/23 The final portfolio: assignment and expectations
 W 11/25 & F 11/27 Thanksgiving Break

Wk 15 **The Texts of Our Lives**
M 11/30 Revisiting Narrative/Expository skills
W 12/2 Revisiting Analytic/Interpretive skills
F 12/4 Reflecting on reflecting: moving from learning letters
to a final cover letter

Wk 16 M 12/7 Final questions, issues, and in-class work on drafts
 W 12/9 Last day of class: Final Portfolio Due

***There is no final exam in this course.**
Graded final portfolios will be available for pick-up before final grades are due.