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ENGL 151-03, Critical Thinking and Writing, Fall 2002

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Authors	Gates, Daniel
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English 151, section 6
Fall 2002
MWF 11:30-12:30
Palmer 203

Daniel Gates
Office: Palmer 310, x3141
gatesd@rhodes.edu
Office hrs: MW 3-5 & by appt

Critical Thinking and Writing

This course offers an education in reading critically and communicating your ideas in speech and writing. The primary goals of the course include strengthening your skills as a reader, improving your ability to write clearly and persuasively, and teaching you to approach writing as a process in which you rethink your arguments and revise your work. Always in this class we will work from the assumption that clear thinking will reveal itself in clear writing--if you can't write about a topic clearly, your thinking about it may be more muddled than you realize. On the other hand, you may also learn in this class that thinking through a topic by writing about it can actually lead to ideas you didn't even know you had.

In this course, we will read several essays and make them objects for critical reflection. These essays are challenging and it will be necessary to read them more than once in order to understand their implications. You will probably not like or agree with everything you read in this class, nor should you, perhaps. After all, the point of these readings is not to find ideas to adopt, but to learn how to understand what another person is trying to say while at the same time examining his or her argument critically. Many of the readings involve questions of intercultural contact, interpreting other cultures and our own, and the act of "reading" this interpretation implies. While I hope you will find some of these ideas provocative, the course is ultimately a practicum in the expression of your own ideas. The course aims most of all to incite you to respond independently to some ideas and to develop new skills for expressing yourself in writing.

Required texts: Ways of Reading, 6th ed.
A Pocket Style Manual, 3rd ed.

Course requirements:

Writing assignments: Your papers should be typed and double-spaced, without errors of spelling or grammar. There are three kinds of papers in this class:

1. Short reading responses. These are informal, 300-word minimum responses to the course readings. They will usually be due on the first day we take up a new essay. The point of these short papers is to help you to grapple with the readings and find something that might matter to you in them. Ideally, they will also be useful as a preliminary stage in the development of your papers. They are ungraded, but your completion of these shorter assignments will be noted.

2. Drafts of essays. These are formal papers in which you will communicate a single clear thesis. Some of them will come from the assignment sequences in Ways of Reading and others I will hand out myself. In many of them, you will be responding to an essay we have read together, and you will be asked to speak directly to the essay and to support your own ideas on the topic. In others, you may be writing a personal essay about your own experiences, but even in these papers you must express a clear, unified idea. These drafts are ungraded; they are part of the writing process that will lead to the final drafts of your papers. If I find that you are not putting enough effort in the initial stages of the process, however, your participation grade will suffer.

3. Revisions of essays. You will produce final drafts of five of the rough drafts you will write in this class. Most of these papers will be about four or five pages long; the research paper will be somewhat longer. The revised drafts must represent a genuine attempt to rethink the problems posed in the initial rough draft; simply fixing the spelling and calling it a day will not suffice. When you hand in your revisions, include with them all previous drafts. Your grade on the revision will reflect the evidence that you have actually attempted to think through the paper again after writing the rough draft.

Workshops: A major part of your participation grade will come in the workshops we will do in class. These workshops will generally follow the completion of a rough draft. The format will vary, but usually we will discuss as a class one or two of your classmates' papers. These papers will be presented anonymously, but the author will be in the room, so it is obviously vital that these workshops be conducted in a professional and respectful manner. Everyone will have a draft read by the class at least once. The emphasis will be on criticism that is genuine, but also productive and aimed toward the creation of a stronger revision.

Presentations: At least once during the semester you will be responsible for presenting the day's reading to the class and guiding the discussion. Usually you will carry out this assignment with one other classmate.

Conferences: At least two times during the semester, I will require you to schedule a 15-minute meeting with me. The focus of these meetings will be working on a draft you're developing. Usually I will cancel a class to make up for a conference day.

Late work: Final revisions must be turned in on time. Late papers will lose one-third of the grade for each day they are late. That is, a B becomes a B-, and so forth. One or two rough drafts and reading responses, which are ungraded, will not hurt your grade, but more than two late ungraded assignments may affect your final grade adversely.

Attendance: You may miss three classes during the semester without penalty or excuse. Missing more than three classes is grounds for failing the course. Persistently arriving late may damage your participation grade as well.

Final grades:

Revision of Essay 1 (week 4)	10%
Revision of Essay 2 (week 7)	15%
Revision of Essay 3 (week 12)	25%
Revision of Essay 4 (week 14)	15%
Revision of Essay 5 (week 16)	20%
Participation (including reading responses, drafts, and presentations)	15%

Schedule of Assignments: Unit One

Wed	8-28	Introductions
Fri	8-30	Introduction to <u>Ways of Reading</u>
Mon	9-2	No class (Labor Day)
Wed	9-4	Pratt (reading response due)
Fri	9-6	Pratt, 2nd reading
Mon	9-9	Draft of Essay 1 due
Wed	9-11	Workshop
Fri	9-13	Class cancelled (conferences)
Mon	9-16	Jacobs (reading response due)
Wed	9-18	Jacobs, 2nd reading; revision of Essay 1 due
Fri	9-20	Anzaldua (reading response due)
Mon	9-23	Draft of Essay 2 due.
Wed	9-25	Workshop
Fri	9-27	Workshop
Mon	9-30	Percy (reading response due)
Wed	10-2	Percy, 2nd reading
Fri	10-4	Workshop
Mon	10-7	Revision of Essay 2 due

Unit Two: Independent Readings and Research

During weeks seven through eleven of the course, you will pursue an independent research topic and write a paper presenting your findings. You will write a series of shorter papers about your reading that will help lay the foundation for the longer final draft, which will be due in the middle of November. I will give you a detailed schedule of assignments for this project next month.

Unit Three: Reading, Rereading, and Revising

In the final unit, weeks twelve through sixteen, you will write and revise two more papers. We will return to the essays in Ways of Reading, rereading some essays to see how they look from the vantage point of the end of the semester, and also applying what we will have learned to some new essays.

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Unit Two (Researching a Topic)

- Mon 10-7 Finding a topic to research
Wed 10-9 Library visit; revision of Essay 2 due
Fri 10-11 Using textual evidence in a debate
- Mon 10-14 Topic, tentative thesis, list of 7 sources due
Wed 10-16 Library research day
Fri 10-18 Limerick; journal entry due
- Mon 10-21 No class (Fall recess)
Wed 10-23 Workshop (constructing paragraphs)
Fri 10-25 Limerick, 2nd reading; 5 pp. of draft of Essay 3 due
- Mon 10-28 Whole draft of Essay 3 due
Wed 10-30 Workshop
Fri 11-1 Class cancelled (conferences)
- Mon 11-4 Rodriguez
Wed 11-6 Rodriguez, 2nd reading
Fri 11-8 Revision of Essay 3 due

Unit Three: (Home and Other Mysterious Places)

- Mon 11-11 Mitchell; journal entry due
Wed 11-13 Mitchell, 2nd reading
Fri 11-15 Munro; journal entry due
- Mon 11-18 Munro, 2nd reading; draft of Essay 4 due
Wed 11-20 Workshop
Fri 11-22 Workshop
- Mon 11-25 Screening of Lone Star; revision of Essay 4 due
Wed 11-27 No class (Thanksgiving)
Fri 11-29 No class
- Mon 12-2 Workshop
Wed 12-4 Workshop; draft of Essay 5 due
Fri 12-6 Wideman
- Mon 12-9 Wideman, 2nd reading
Wed 12-11 Last day of class; revision of Essay 5 due