

ENGL 151-07, Fakes, Frauds, and Forgeries, Fall 2008

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Authors	Lauterbach, Elise
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Fakes, Frauds, and Forgeries

Professor Elise Lauterbach

lauterbache@rhodes.edu

(w) 843-3141 (only available during office hours)

(h) 725-6579 (no calls after 8 pm).

Office hours: TTH 10:45-11:45 am in Palmer 309A, and by appointment at Otherlands Coffee Shop at 641 S. Cooper.

When we read a novel or watch a movie, we recognize that no matter how "real" the story seems, it's a manmade work of fiction. But how do we interpret fictions presented as fact? This introduction to college writing and argument explores a variety of fakes, frauds, and forgeries, including con artists, circus sideshows, photographs of fairies, blackface minstrels, and writers working under assumed identities. Some of our subjects—like counterfeit money—have joined the real world without being seen, while others—like artists who adopt alternate personas—raise questions about the very nature of "the real." Our course material, which spans some three-hundred years of history, won't provide us with a comprehensive history of fakers, but it will help us investigate issues of authenticity, identity, authorship, performance, and that trusty old standby, reality. In addition to a final research project, you will write three shorter essays related to the course material and work closely on improving your own rhetoric and style. In your prose, you'll practice that smooth presentation that helps you take down your mark. Successful academic argument shares some of the skills of the confidence man.

This course emphasizes:

- **Argument construction** (Each essay must have a clear claim, supported by strong sub-claims and analysis of evidence, with cited quotations and paraphrases of evidence)
- **Style** (transitions, word choice, tone, figurative language, sentence structure)
- Learning to **analyze** and **critically evaluate** ideas, arguments, and points of view
- **Asking questions** of texts and objects
- **Applying** course material to solve new problems you frame yourself
- **Finding and using resources** to solve answer questions and to solve problems
- **Thoroughness** (All work will be carefully conceived, cited, and proofread)

TEXTS

Joseph Williams' *Style* (978-0205605354), John F. Kasson's *Amusing the Million* (978-0809001330), Caryl Phillips's *Dancing in the Dark* (978-1400079834), James Weldon Johnson's *Autobiography of an Ex-colored Man* (978-0809000326), and essays and short stories on reserve in Barrett Library

ASSIGNMENTS

Your final grade is comprised of the following assignments:

ESSAYS - 70%

QUIZZES AND ASSIGNMENTS - 20%

- **Quizzes:** Many class periods will open with a brief quiz designed to determine if you are prepared to discuss the reading assigned for that day. Success in quizzes requires reading well—not skimming—and taking notes.
- **Homework:** You will complete occasional homework assignments, many reviewing on William's *Style*. Other assignments will require preparation of discussion questions of handouts based on reading assignments. Some homework assignments will simply be an emailed response to the professor.
- **Research Assignment:** This exercise requires thorough exploration of the library's resources in preparation for your final research paper.

CLASS PARTICIPATION – 10%

The final 10% of your grade depends upon my evaluation of your class participation and investment in this course. You will not automatically receive these points—you must earn them. I expect you to carefully complete homework assignments thoroughly prepare to discuss each reading assignments, and for you to actively and frequently participate in class discussion.

MEETING WITH THE PROFESSOR

At some point in the semester, everyone is required to meet with me about an essay other than the one work-shopped in class. It's important to me that I spend work with each of you individually during the semester. Please make use of my office hours to discuss essay drafts or simply to brainstorm for ideas and approaches. Failure to meet this requirement will result in a failing participation grade.

ABSENCES

The nature of skills course like ENG151 (unlike a content course) requires that you be in class, where you will see and practice those skills. In our class, I grant you two "free/excused" absences regardless of cause. Please use these skips wisely: plan ahead. For every day you are late, your final grade for the course will suffer .1 point. Any student who falls asleep in class will be counted as absent for that class. If you miss class on the day a paper is due, please leave it outside my office door no later than 11 am that day, otherwise it will be considered late. If you physically miss more than six classes, you will fail the course. These policies are consistent with most other English courses.

Note: you are responsible for finding out from a classmate what happened in class the day you were absent or late; please do not ask me. Each day it will be your responsibility to sign the attendance notebook. If your signature is not there for a particular day, you will be counted absent. If you are late, you will need to find the notebook, sign it, and document your tardiness.

Attendance Policy from the Rhodes College Catalog

Any student who fails to attend the first day of a class without providing prior notice of his or her absence to the instructor of the course or the chairperson of the department may be removed from the course upon request of the instructor to the Registrar. The student is responsible for dropping the class officially upon notification that such action has been taken.

Specific attendance policies are set by individual instructors, who state them in the course syllabi and during the first class sessions. Students are responsible for knowing the attendance policy in each of their courses, for obtaining and mastering material covered during an absence, and for determining, in consultation with the instructor, whether and under what conditions make-up work will be permitted. **Student's should understand if undertaking college-sanctioned activities (e.g., varsity athletics, internships, and off-campus competitions connected with courses) that their participation in such activities may come at the cost of absences from other courses or even forfeiting credit on certain assignments when making them up is not feasible. It is the student's responsibility to address the issues related to missing a class whatever the reason for the absence.**

If, in accordance with the course policies, the instructor determines that excessive absences are jeopardizing a student's ability to obtain a passing grade in the course, the instructor may make written request to the Dean of the College that the student be removed from the course with a grade of F. If a student is removed from two or more courses in the same semester for this reason, the student may be asked to withdraw from the College.

EMAIL POLICY

Emailing a professor is like emailing your boss. Take the opportunity and impress her. As an English professor, I do not appreciate emails without a salutation. Emails with egregious typos, grammatical and punctuation mistakes, and no capital letters appear disrespectful are not worth my time to read. Simply put, I will not respond to sloppy emails. Write accordingly.

ESSAY GUIDELINES

In formal essays, I deduct 0.1 points from your final grade for each grammatical error (including typos, punctuation, and citation). Proofread carefully.

Essays may be no shorter than 50 words under the required word count. Students will lose 1/3 a letter grade for each 50 words an essay runs under. Essays may run over the word count without penalty.

Essay 1:	10% (1500 words)
Essay 2:	15% (1500 words)
Essay 3:	20% (2000 words)
Essay 4:	25% (2500 words)

- Each essay should be typed with approximately 300 words per page (i.e. Times Roman 12; 1" margins), double-spaced, pledged in full, and **must include a word count, page numbers, your name, my name, and a thoughtful title.**
- All other paper formatting, including spacing, quoting, etc, also should also follow MLA style, which can be found in your text *The MLA Handbook*.
- For the most part, your first three papers will not include any sources beyond those read in class. You may use outside sources with my approval. Your first three papers will critically synthesize/examine/critique and/or expand on class readings. Your final essay will critically examine a fake, fraud, or forgery of your choice.
- Each paper must include multiple sources. Papers which cite fewer than 3 sources will be penalized. These texts must be cited in your essay in MLA format.
- Submit *only* hard copies of final drafts and *always* keep a spare hard copy of your paper. Computer problems are not a legitimate excuse for lateness.
- All papers are due on the day stipulated on the syllabus. Any unexcused late paper will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade for every day late (A becomes A-, B+ becomes B). I will grant extensions in special circumstances, but you must contact me at least one day before the paper is due. No exceptions.
- Per English department policy, failure to complete any of the four major papers for this class will result in failure of the class.

WORKSHOPS

Each student will submit the draft of one essay to be work-shopped by the class. We will workshop approximately 4 drafts in the class period before a final paper draft is due. If it is your turn, you will submit an electronic copy of your paper draft to me via email no later than 9 am the day preceding the workshop. **If your draft is not in at that time, your final paper grade for that draft will suffer a full letter grade.** There are no formal "extensions" for drafts due to the nature of the assignment/workshop; however, you may switch with someone if you are unable to write your draft for the workshop for which you have signed up. Just keep me informed about any changes.

After submissions are in, a packet with anonymous drafts for workshop will be emailed to the class for you to download. The file will be in PDF format; be sure you have Adobe Reader (free from www.adobe.com) to access the file. If you are having difficulty, contact ITS Helpdesk. Each student, including draft writers, must print, read, and comment on the packet for the workshop. The packet will include a sheet on instruction as its first page. During workshop, the writers will receive comments suggesting ways to revise both from peers and me. When you turn in your revised, final paper that has been work-shopped, you must also submit the following: the workshop draft with my comments, your peers' "review" sheets (though not the drafts that accompanied them), and a statement of revision (what you focused on as you revised). **Your final grade will suffer if you do not substantially revise your draft.**

GRADING CRITERIA FOR WRITTEN WORK: ENGL 151

A / 4.0 Excellent work.

The essay states a clear claim or objective. Ideas are logically developed. The essay is organized as a whole and on the paragraph level. Contains close reading that displays an impressive insight and interpretative sophistication. Each quotation is accompanied by an appropriate level of analysis that allows the essay to transition fully and without contradiction to the next point. Completely fulfills/ goes beyond the objectives outlined in the assignment. Demonstrates a good command of tone and word choice. Free of serious errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, or mechanics.

A- /3.7 Very fine work.

Shares many qualities with "A" work but lacks the sophistication and polish of the latter.

B+ /3.3 Very good work.

Very Promising. Contains a clearly stated thesis that is logically developed. Fulfills all the objectives of the assignment. Engages relevant course materials and demonstrates an adequate command of tone and word choice. Contains quotations and close reading but sometimes ideas are not developed or analyzed fully. May contain some awkward expressions. Arguments may need some further work in ironing out contradictions or in matters of focus or realization. Style shows competence if not polish. No serious errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, or mechanics.

B /3.0 Good work.

Pleasing. Fulfills the assignment requirements. Demonstrates the writer has read the course materials and listened attentively in class. Contains interesting arguments, relevant quotation and some analysis, though may need a more complex or extended analysis in places. Well-organized overall but may lack the smooth transitions of papers receiving higher grades. Free of serious, chronic errors but may need improvement in grammar and style.

B- /2.7 Fair work.

Shares most of the qualities of "B" paper but may contain a few mechanical errors, awkward expressions, or flaws in logical development. Sometimes arguments or close readings are underdeveloped, thereby hindering the obvious insights in the paper from being communicated.

C +/2.3 Satisfactory work.

Fulfills the basic objectives of the assignment but needs marked improvement in organization, logical development, and style. Draws on relevant texts but does not engage in appropriate close reading, or at the level of sophistication demonstrated in an "A" or "B" paper. May contain some errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, or mechanics but still demonstrates that the writer made some effort at revision and proofreading.

C/2.0 Average work.

Shares many qualities of a "C+" paper but may show more flaws in organization, style, and logical development. Contains errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, or mechanics but cannot be characterized as "sloppy."

C-/1.7 Below average work.

Fulfills the most obvious conditions of the assignment but may lack a complete understanding of relevant course materials. Thesis is fairly clear but may lack adequate supporting evidence or thorough logical development. Contains errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, or mechanics.

D/1.0 Poor work.

Demonstrates an attempt to fulfill the conditions of the assignment but shows confusion or is incomplete. May be badly organized or lack adequate evidence to support its major points. Errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, or mechanics descend to the level of sloppiness.

F / 0 Unsatisfactory work. Shows a significant misunderstanding of or willful departure from

the requirements of the assignment. Argument and quotations are poorly stated or non-existent, and the overall paper lacks coherent organization and development. Rife with errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, or mechanics.