Course Description: As you probably know very well, writing and reading at the college level is demanding. You may encounter more open-ended questions than you did in high school; you may also be asked to be very precise in your discussion and interpretation. You are often asked to present your own point of view and to argue for it carefully, and other times it will be important for you to demonstrate that you comprehend another’s point of view. And, in some sense, college work demands that you try to enter conversations that have been going on for years – it asks you to take on the voice of an educated participant in an on-going discussion. This course intends to help you be aware of what is required for such participation and will introduce you to many of the skills and concepts you’ll need to do so (drafting, revising, research, interpretation, analysis, the notion of discourse and more).

The aim of this course is to help give you the tools you’ll need to write for lots of different purposes and contexts. You will delve into your writing process, expand your research skills, learn how to be a careful and critical reader of your own and other’s work, and explore how language shifts and changes across genres, purposes, and disciplines. We will work as a community of writers, discussing readings and ideas, sharing our work, asking questions, helping each other along. The assignments will challenge you at the same time that they involve you in modes of writing and research that will be useful for your life at Oberlin and beyond college.

What to expect: This class may be unlike other classes you’ve taken at Oberlin because it’s not focused on covering a certain topic per se: instead, it’s focused on you as a writer: What do you need to know about process to work more productively? What kinds of writing are valued in different contexts, and how can you figure this out? How can you learn to bring vague ideas through a process of composing, revising, and editing, and how can you make best use of the resources available to help you do so? Because what we do in the class depends very much on your needs, you will need to be flexible, check the developing schedule (“Syllabus” on Bb) often, and maintain an open inquisitive mind.

By the same token, it’s important that you understand me (the professor) and our two writing associates as facilitators and not so much as experts. Your “work” in the course is not just to interact with us and hear from us, but to also recognize and make use of the vast resources that your classmates bring to the table. For this reason, a large part of our class will be devoted to reading and commenting on each other’s drafts. As we work with each other, our first aim will be to listen closely to hear what you are trying to say, and then, as you develop your thinking, to help you work on the structures, organization, mechanics, and style issues that will help your readers understand what you’re trying to say.

The goals for the course are:
  • to increase your awareness of your writing process – the skills, habits, and techniques that help you do your best work
  • to further develop your ability to think critically
  • to help you develop confidence in your writing, and increase your awareness of the larger “conversations” around you and participate in them effectively
  • to develop your rhetorical flexibility and ability to analyze language and contexts
  • to develop your research skills and understanding of information; to help you document your work properly for different contexts
**Textbooks, Supplies Needed:** In this class our primary texts will be the writing that you produce, which will be posted on Bb. Occasionally I may also assign other readings posted on Blackboard. Please be sure to bring whatever readings you have been assigned to class on the day(s) that we discuss them. You will need a folder to keep any handwritten work or hard copies of work you do. **Do not throw away anything you create for this course!**

To buy: *They Say/I Say*, by Graff and Birkenstein

*Style*, 11th ed, by Williams

**Appointments.** Every week, you will have a required appointment with your WA in order to discuss your writing one-on-one. Occasionally I may ask you to visit the Rhetoric and Composition Department’s Writing Associates in the Writing Center in Mudd, which will open about two weeks into the semester. Our WAs will make hours available to you for this work – please rely on them! I will also have office hours on Friday afternoons that you can sign up for; I may be available by appointment at other times.

**Assignments:** By semester’s end, you will have completed five to six major assignments, taking them through multiple versions and revisions. You will also complete a number of more informal assignments along the way.

**Expectations:**

- In order to receive credit for the course, you must complete ALL writing and reading assignments in a timely and acceptable fashion. Please: no late papers or assignments.
- I expect you not to miss class unless you are quite ill or have an emergency. Please contact me if you are going to miss class, explaining your reasons. If you miss more than three unexcused classes, this will affect your grade.
- I expect you to arrive at class on time. Really.
- Please shut your **cellphones** OFF. If you must use your laptop for readings or other work, then shut off the Wifi. I’m serious. If I find you reading email or Twitter, etc, it won’t be good.
- **Email.** I often use email to communicate with you about assignments, questions, changes, etc. Please be sure to check your email at least once a day.
- When you post things on Bb, please do so by both copying your work into the message and by attaching your doc as .doc and .docx. Otherwise, no one will be able to read them.
- **About participation:** In a class such as this, you must contribute helpfully and daily. Certainly, when we have discussions, workshops, or do small group work, you should speak up and contribute. You can also participate by being present, awake, alert, and looking engaged; sometimes this engagement even leads you to ask questions, offer a comment, or respond to my queries or to those of your peers. **Attendance** is integrally tied to participation.

**Grades:** We will use a contract-grading method for this course. That means that I will not grade individual pieces; if you complete all assignments in a timely and satisfactory way, you can be assured of a B. “Satisfactory” work involves you taking your work seriously, seeking out support and advice, and pushing yourself. If you honor the contract and go a step further to show exceptional commitment to your work, you will move into the A range. If you don’t meet the contract (due to absences or late arrival, lack of preparation, and lackluster performance on assignments) your grade will lower.

I will give you a midterm report and grade and another final grade. I will take into consideration your effort/engagement in process, your participation in class, and your final results. I may at times decide to mark things plus, check, or minus so you have a sense of how I’m seeing your efforts.

**Writing Associates:** We are very lucky to have two writing associates in our course: Poon Wangpaiboonkit and Zoë Glaser. You will be working with one of these WAs all through the semester. I trust them completely, and I
want you to recognize the valuable help they can give you. (Please note that missing a scheduled meeting with them = an absence.) They will set the terms of rescheduling and notification.

**Honor Code** Many generations of students at Oberlin College before you have worked long and hard to craft a tradition of honor in doing one’s own work, and negotiating with the faculties of their eras to obtain their trust that they (the students) will carry out their promises. Sometimes, however, the way we work on assignments for this course will be highly collaborative, which may make it confusing for you to interpret how to apply the honor code. I will try to explicitly state what is and is not permissible in the instructions for assignments to help you, but feel free to ask about what you’re doing if you’re uncertain about how the code applies. One requirement for all assignments is that you write the Honor Code at the beginning of every assignment and sign it. Please do not forget to do so; I and the WAs will not read and respond to a piece of writing until they see that. For the purposes of submitting assignments electronically, we will accept your typing your name after the Code statement as an electronic signature. Here’s the Honor code statement: “I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment.”

**Expectations for How Assignments Should Appear:** All assignments should be in 12-point font with 1” margins, double space. Formal or revised work should always have a title. Include your name, the course, and the date in the upper left hand corner. Place page numbers in the upper right hand corner. The first page should not have a page number.

**Are you a person with physical or learning differences that may affect your work in this class?** Talk to me about them as soon as possible and remember that the office of Jane Boomer, Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities (Peters G27-28; x5-5588) can provide lots of help in addressing them.

**Due Dates for Major Assignments/ Revisions (subject to adjustment)**

February 18
February 27
March 21
April 10
May 1
May 15 (Final project due during final exam period: Thursday, May 15, 2 – 4 p.m)