RHET 103 – College Writing: Motives & Methods
Oberlin College * Spring 2016
MWF 11:00 * King 325

NANCY BOUTILIER   nboutili@oberlin.edu   Office: King 139

OFFICE HOURS: W 1:30-3:00 / TH 11:00-noon / & by appointment

ASSIGNMENT DEADLINES
Friday, March 4:   ASSIGNMENT 2: Entering the Conversation
Friday, March 18:   ASSIGNMENT 3: Interpretive Argument
Wed., April 13:   ASSIGNMENT 4: From Artifact to Argument
*Thursday, May 12 ASSIGNMENT 5: Putting It All Together
*Due during Exam Period

WEEK 1 / Great Expectations
M 2/1: Introductions and Annotations
W 2/3: What is good writing, anyway?
☐ Write one page (250-300 words) about a piece of writing you value
   Bring the original, or at least a selection of the original, to share.
F 2/5: Literacy Narratives: Stories that shape us:
☐ Read “The Joy of Reading and Writing: Superman and Me” (50 Essays 15)
☐ Write 3 scenes from memory, rich with detail, that carry clues to your relationship
   with reading, writing, or both.

WEEK 2 / How To...Reflect
M 2/8: Hook, Story, Point
☐ Read Adair Lara “How I Write About Myself” (Blackboard)
☐ & Amy Tan’s “Mother Tongue” (50 Essays, 417)

W 2/10: Thinking in Patterns
☐ Read Jonathan Lethem’s “13, 1977, 21” (50 Essays, 245) / Fractal Exercise
☐ Write using the prompt #4 on page 253 or #4 on page 423 to get you going. You do
   not have to stick to those specifics, but use the general notion of reflecting on
   a “confession” or reflecting on the different Englishes you use.

F 2/12: A1 Workshop Day—☐ Bring 2 hard copies of A1 Draft

W3 / Entering the Conversation
M 2/15: Con-template-tion / Zombie Nominalizations

W 2/17: The Trimble Way
☐ Read Trimble (Writing With Style) Chapter 2: “Getting Launched”

☐ Wed. 2/17:   A1 Due as hard copy in class;
Also post to Bb as pdf or MSWord file
by the end of the day.

F 2/19: 3-2-1-Blast Off: Launching
☐ Choose your focus; Read at least 2 of 50 Essays.
☐ Start Stockpiling and Formulating Questions a la Trimble.
W4 / The Trimble Way
M 2/22: Slouching Toward a Thesis
❒ In addition to your own reading for your essay
❒ Bring your “provisional organizing principle” and “Zero Draft” to class.
W 2/24: Open(ings) Sesame!
❒ Read Alan Burdick’s “The Truth About Invasive Species” (*50 Essays*)
❒ Read Trimble Ch. 3 “Openings”
F 2/26: Templates in Action
❒ Read Kolbert (Blackboard)

W5 / Field Notes from Elizabeth Kolbert
W 3/2: A Bit of So(u)rcery or “Harry Potter’s Got Nothing on Us”
❒ Read Trimble Ch. 4 “Middles”
❒ Bring to class a typed draft of your Works Cited page (formatted in accordance with MLA standards: alphabetical by author’s surname, properly indented and punctuated)

❒ REQUIRED: Wednesday, March 2:
❒ Attend 7:30 p.m. Attend Elizabeth Kolbert Convocation at Finney Chapel

F 3/4: Final Touches
❒ Read Trimble Ch. 5 “Closers”
❒ Bring 50 Essays to class

❒ Friday, 3/4: A2 Due on Blackboard at 11:59 p.m.;
Upload as pdf or MSWord file by the end of the day.

W6 / From Observation to Analysis
M 3/7: The Whole vs. The Sum of the Parts
❒ Explication vs. Analysis
W 3/9: Three’s Company
❒ Read Poetry Packet. Read each poem 3 times.
❒ Formulate 3 questions and 3 observations for 3 different poems in the packet.
F 3/11: From Thesis to Interpretive Argument
❒ Read Trimble, Chapter 6 “Diction”

W7 / Claims to Evidence Ratio or How to Use a Highlighter
M 3/14: Workshop A3: Part I
❒ Bring 2 typed hard copies of your completed A3 Draft to class
W 3/16: Workshop A3: Part II
❒ Read Trimble, Ch. 7: “Readability”
F 3/18: Form and Function
❒ Mid-Term Reflection Due
❒ Outside Session Form Due

❒ Friday, 3/18: A3 Due on Blackboard at 11:59 p.m.;
Upload as pdf or MSWord file by the end of the day.

* * * * * MID-TERM BREAK * * * * *
COURSE OVERVIEW
As the title suggests, this course invites you to think about both the motives and methods of writing—in your writing and in the writing of others. To do this, you will read, write, and think critically in your exploration of rhetorical structures and literary forms. As you experiment with your own writing process, I will ask you to reflect on your own experience in order to help learn more about what works best for you.

I have designed assignments that will involve you in the kinds of reading, writing, and researching you will need in the Oberlin College classroom—and beyond. Though writing can, at times, be a solitary venture, you will not be alone. Along with your classmates, we will form a writing community for the semester, and together we will discuss essays and writing strategies. You will share your written work with one another, give and receive feedback, and improve your writing in a collaborative atmosphere.

REQUIRED TEXTS
please attend to the proper editions
❑ Writing with Style, (third edition) by John Trimble.
❑ 3-ring binder with lined paper or spiral notebook that comes to class every day.

COURSE GOALS
This course is designed to help you
• improve your writing skills for college academic work;
• learn conventions of academic, literary, and popular writing;
• develop research and documentation practices;
• strengthen your critical thinking skills, as a reader and a writer;
• recognize the importance of audience;
• understand the ways that form and function interact in a text;
• evaluate and revise your own work and the work of others;
• participate in constructive discussions about writing;
• appreciate and enjoy the writing process.

What goals do you have for the course?
**PRINCIPLES AND METHODS: Practice, Feedback, and Revision**

**A) PRACTICE**
Like athletes, musicians, and visual artists, writers develop skills through trial, error, feedback, and close attention to what does—and does not—work. Proper practice leads to progress and confidence. In this course, you will write often and in a variety of ways. You will learn to identify elements of writing, and you will be asked to try out a number of writing strategies and modes. You will also be reading and discussing essays as a way of observing rhetorical methods and techniques at work in published writing. By sharpening your critical thinking skills and attending to language as a reader, you will hone your writing strengths and build your skill set.

**B) FEEDBACK**
The workshop component of the course requires you to share your writing with others. You will give and receive various kinds of feedback. Discussion of your work—with classmates, Writing Associates, and me—will help you assess how effectively your writing conveys your intentions and ideas.

You will be asked to engage thoughtfully in response to the work of your classmates. While you may wonder if you are properly qualified to comment on someone else’s paper, consider this: you are already a remarkably experienced reader and writer. So, use that experience to be as helpful as you can.

I will often provide Peer Response Worksheets to guide your feedback. However, those guides should not limit what you have to say to a writer. Try to be both honest and encouraging when giving feedback. To maximize a workshop’s usefulness, you will all have to develop ways to express your ideas respectfully and constructively. You may be surprised by how much you learn about writing from offering feedback to classmates. Additionally, you will have to develop ways to hear feedback and make good use of it.

**KEY CONCEPT: Making “good use” of feedback does not mean taking all suggestions.**

Reflect:

**C) REVISION**
After typing the last few words of your draft, you may leap in jubilation and dance about the room shouting, “Yes! Yes! I’m finished.”

Unfortunately, in writing, one draft is rarely enough. While the completion of a first draft is certainly worth celebrating, it does not mark the end of the writing process. In fact, it generously allows a new beginning, a re-vision that can now shape the piece or writing with a sense of an integrated entirety. One of the skills writers develop is the skill of reading their own drafts looking for ways to improve them. Some writers even talk of “listening to the text” and letting the draft “tell them” what “it needs.” That may sound mystical now, but it’s like stepping back from a painting canvas to see how balanced the colors are, or defined the lines, and deciding what area to keep working on.

Once that first draft is “complete,” be prepared to go back to the proverbial drawing board. And don’t for a second think that starting over indicates a wasted first effort. On the contrary, a flawed first draft is the start of a new and improved essay.
COURSE POLICIES & PROCEDURES

THE SYLLABUS reflects the day assignments are due.

   W 2/3: What is good writing, anyway?
   ☐ Write one page (250-300 words) about a piece of writing you value
       Bring the original, or at least a selection of the original, to share.

In the above example, on Wednesday, February 3rd, we will be discussing what makes writing “good” in class. So, you should arrive in class on Wednesday with a typed page complete with heading and honor assertion signed and ready to submit. Since we are likely to discuss homework in class, turn it in as you depart class—whether I specifically remember to ask or not. If we happen to both forget, drop it in my door box later that day. If you want credit for that day’s assignment, turn it in when you leave class.

DAILY CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS:
* respectful interactions, even when we disagree, so we can learn from one another;

* You will bring your 3-ring binder and a writing device to every class meeting;
* You will bring your textbook/handout to class on days reading is due;
* You will use digital devices only to take notes or read assigned texts.

Complete this sentence:
If, during class time, a professor sees a student using social media or gaming or checking email or shopping or texting or streaming or involved in any computer activity not specifically for our class activity, s/he should...

* Because we will be practicing active reading, looking for patterns, and addressing the structure in writing, you will have to annotate all assigned texts.

Active Reading?
Structure?
Annotate?

Annotation Methodology: As part of class preparation, you are expected to annotate and/or produce notes for all readings. The traditional way to do that is to print the article and write on the hard copy. So, any articles posted on Blackboard should be printed and annotated. If you opt for digital annotations, come see me in the first week of class to discuss digital alternatives such as iAnnotate.

* If any of these requirements provide a hardship for you, please let me know the first week of class so that we can remove any obstacles to your success in meeting these requirements.
ESSAY PREPARATION: On designated “Workshop” dates, please note how many copies of your essay are required—generally, at least two hard copies. Workshop drafts do not have to conform to all MLA formatting requirements, but if you want feedback on formatting, you’d better prepare it that way. More importantly, even drafts should have sources cited in some format.

Final drafts of essays must be carefully revised, typed, and formatted according to MLA formatting standards (double-spaced on 8.5” x 11” white paper in 11 or 12-point font with 1” margins and parenthetical citations). The most polished/recent draft should always be on TOP of earlier drafts. When submitting on Blackboard, only pdf and MS Word documents are acceptable.

NOTE: For your own writing habit, use “Save As” to rename various drafts as you go along so that a) you have an electronic trail of your progress, and b) you don’t lose cuts you later wish to reclaim.

REVISIONS: Essays will generally receive feedback from class members, before a grade is assigned. You may revise once after a letter grade has been assigned on some assignments.

For reassessment (new grade), REVISIONS must be accompanied by:
1) the first graded draft, including teacher comments and grade.
2) a clear and specific notation of significant improvements to the essay
   (you may use highlighters or handwritten margin notes, but it must be clear how you have improved the essay.)
3) a completed “Revision Cover Page”—available on Blackboard

** KEY CONCEPT: a corrected draft is NOT a revision. **

CLASS PARTICIPATION: A portion of your grade will be based on your preparation for class and participation in course activities. In order to receive an A or a B in these areas, you must
1) Attend class with all proper materials: books, pens, binder, etc.
2) Demonstrate that you have been keeping up with the readings, by:
   a. completing written homework assignments;
   b. taking notes on class discussions;
   c. verbally contributing to small group discussions;
   d. verbally contributing to class discussions;
   e. engaging in other activities that define preparation and participation;
   f. peer editing with attentiveness;
   g. others?

ATTENDANCE IS REQUIRED
You are expected to attend all class meetings and individually scheduled appointments. If you do miss class—for any reason—it is your responsibility to make up the work missed and turn in any work due at the time of your absence. In general, I expect students to turn in the work due during an absence within a week of the absence. I also expect students to check in with classmates about activities for the day missed. CONSEQUENCES of missed class are noted in the GRADING section below.

** KEY CONCEPT: Making up all missed classroom learning, activities, and work is your responsibility. **
TIPS FOR GOOD ACADEMIC ETIQUETTE

1) In the case of foreseeable absences—games, Model UN, family weddings, etc.—it is good form to communicate directly with professor as early as possible about the general reason for absence;

2) For unexpected absences—illness, family emergencies—email when possible with a general reason for absence. No need to detail your symptoms!

3) Outline your make-up plan for material covered in class and work due. In general, as noted, work should come in within a week of the absence;

4) It is not a good idea to ask any professor, “Did I miss anything important?”

Reflect on #4:

5) One of the lessons of this class is to “Know thy audience.” Emails to professors should be relatively formal. Here’s one for your consideration:

Example A:

Hey, dude,
I’m not feeling up for class this a.m. Late night last night what with my Improv Exco and Ultimate Frisbee practice. Then I spent some time jamming out on my cello.

Sorry to bag. But I’m stressing and really need sleep.

Carry on without me…

later,

Sleepy

Example B:

Now you try it, and see if you can do better than Sleepy:
Example C:

Dear Professor,
I woke this morning feeling awful and realizing that I’m too sick to attend class. I have completed the reading and attached a digital photo of my completed homework. I will turn it in at our next class meeting. Also, I will check in with my classmate Xun, who is in my dorm, to find out what I missed in class. Are there any handouts I should pick up on from your office door?
Sincerely…

LATE WORK…is better than no work.
On workshop days, if you fail to bring a draft, you will be participating in only HALF of the course requirement for the day, which will be reflected in your preparation grade.

EXTENSION PROCEDURE: With the exception of the final Assignment, which is due during Exam Week without any room for deadline extensions, you may request that an individual Assignment be adjusted ONCE during the semester without penalty. After that you may be penalized for late work.

It is best, if you do feel the need to request an extension, that you demonstrate your own good planning and ask for a specific extension deadline. For instance, “I have a quartet rehearsal that runs 1-5 on Thursday, so it will be hard for me to meet the 4:00 deadline. May I have a deadline extension until 9:00 p.m. Thursday night? I could e-mail you a final draft by then, and drop my hard copy and drafts in your mailbox by 9:00 a.m. on Friday morning.”

OFFICE HOURS:
My weekly Office Hours are “drop-in” style, and held in King 139 unless otherwise noted. You are required to meet with me least twice during semester, once prior to mid-semester Break. For this requirement, you may attend office hours or initiate the meeting by making an appointment. You are welcome to meet with me more, but you must meet at least twice and the responsibility is yours to make it happen.

OUTSIDE SESSIONS (OS) REQUIREMENT:
In addition to attending class meetings and individual meetings with me, you are required to attend five outside sessions—events outside of the classroom that enhance or complement your classroom writing instruction and activities. The key to what can constitute an OS has to do with your ability to connect the event to your own writing experience or education in your short (paragraph-long) reflection on the “Outside Session Report” that gets turned in twice during the semester (form is on the back page of this Course Description).

Outside Sessions include, but are not limited to:
  a) meetings with Writing Associates;
  b) visits to The Writing Center in Mudd;
  c) Anti-Procrastination Night or other Write-a-Thon sessions;
  d) talks by visiting writers or scholars;
  e) appointments with college librarians;
  f) campus literary readings, like OSlam, Soul Sessions, etc.;
  g) campus presentation related to writing.
  h) other….
**GRADING**

**ASSIGNMENT AVERAGES** are calculated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Average</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignments 1</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignments 2</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignments 3</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignments 4</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignments 5</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prep/Homework</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**ASSIGNMENT AVERAGE** 100%

**FINAL COURSE GRADES** are determined by both your “Assignment Average” and “Attendance Percentage.” As long as you attend 90% (or more) of required class meetings and outside sessions, you will get the full 100% of your Assignment Average as your final grade. There is a 10-pt grace built into this formula, so if you attend 82% of those meetings, your ASSIGNMENT AVERAGE will be scored as 92% (your 82% attendance + grace 10% will give you a 92% in the formula). **Assignment Average × Attendance = Course Grade**

**EXAMPLES:** if a student earns an 88% Assignment Average and attends 92% classes and outside sessions, their final course grade will be the full 88%, or B+. However, a classmate has an 88% Assignment Average and attends only 75% of classes/OS, then their 88% will be multiplied by 85% (75% attendance + grace 10%), which becomes a 74.8%, or a C.

In practice, this means that with every absence over your fourth, your grade will be increasingly harmed. Eight or more absences—for any reason—puts students in danger of failing the course. Extenuating circumstances permitting negotiation of attendance, such as serious illness or family emergency, must be corroborated by a Dean; I am not in the business of “excusing” absences. If you have questions about this formula, feel free to inquire—sooner rather than later.

**Graduation Requirements**

* **College of Arts & Sciences students:** For graduation purposes, this is a Writing Intensive (W-Int) course.

* **Conservatory of Music students**

  Earning a “P” grade in this course satisfies the Conservatory Writing Requirement. Questions or personal concerns about writing requirement credit through this course should be brought to my attention early in the semester.

**Special Needs/Accommodations:** I am eager to accommodate the special needs of all of my students. If you have a documented disability and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please let me know as soon as possible.

**The Honor Code Matters:** Oberlin College’s student-created Honor Code is vital to the integrity of the work that all of us do in the institution. Acknowledging the influence of others (giving credit where credit is due) and understanding the academic customs and conventions of documenting one’s sources are fundamental writing skills for college and beyond. I expect you to read the Oberlin College Honor Code carefully. We will discuss how the code applies particular kinds of assignments. And, students should feel free to ask about individual assignments or issues.

**The full Honor Code is online at:** [http://www.oberlin.edu/studentpolicies/honorcode/](http://www.oberlin.edu/studentpolicies/honorcode/)
One element of the Honor Code is the requirement that you write and sign the following statement on your essays before turning them in:

*I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment.*

-Nancy Boutilier

If turning in a hard copy of work, then you write across top of first or end of final page.

If you are turning in work on Blackboard, you can type the statement into the “Notes” box.

If you are submitting work by email, be sure to:
1) type the honor statement in the email to which the assignment is attached;
2) send from your official oberlin.edu account, (which presumably only you have access to);
3) double check that you have put a proper heading on your actual document;
4) put assignment title and name in your email subject: Boutilier A1 draft or Boutilier MLK homework or Boutilier Sept 3 annotations.

No essay will be assigned a grade until it has this signed affirmation that the work is your own and that you have fully credited all sources.

Notes:

**COURSE GOALS: The Practice**

**How to Build an Owl**

by Kathleen Lynch

1. Decide you must.

2. Develop deep respect
   for feather, bone, claw.

3. Place your trembling thumb
   where the heart will be:
   for one hundred hours watch
   so you will know
   where to put the first feather.

4. Stay awake forever.
   When the bird takes shape
   gently pry open its beak
   and whisper into it: mouse.

5. Let it go.

“How to Build an Owl,” by Kathleen Lynch from TIMES TEN: An Anthology of Northern California Poets
(http://www.timestenpoets.org/lynch/owl.htm)
RHET 103 / OUTSIDE SESSION REPORT
TURN IN AT MID-TERM & AGAIN ON LAST DAY OF CLASS

Instructions: In order to get credit for Outside Sessions, you must reflect thoughtfully in a complete and focused paragraph—thesis claim and all—that highlights an aspect of writing the session revealed or reinforced. Describe what you learned about research, writing, language, imagery, or some other element of the course, or make a connection between the event and your own experience writing or thoughts about writing. There’s flexibility in content, but an expectation of depth of thought and clarity of writing. FEEL FREE TO USE THE BACK SIDE OF THIS PAGE →

STUDENT NAME _______________________________ SEMESTER: ____________________

First Meeting with Nancy (prior to Fall Break) Date: ________________
Second Meeting with Nancy (no report needed) Date: ________________

1. Writing Associate (WA) Meeting Date: ______

2. Writing Associate (WA) Meeting Date: ______

3. Writing Center (WC) Visit with ________________ ______ Date: ______
   (staffer’s name)

4. WRITER’S CHOICE: ____________________________ Date: ______
   Describe event and write paragraph about how it was instructional about research or writing

5. WRITER’S CHOICE: ____________________________ Date: ______
   Describe event and write paragraph about how it was instructional about research or writing