

Portland Community College (Sylvania)
PO Box 19000 Portland, OR 97280
Writing 123, Section 40442, 47876
TTh 11:00-12:20, Room HT 121
TTH 12:20-2:00, Room HT 315

Fall 2006
English Composition, 3 credits
Bryan Hull, Instructor
Office: CT 124; Tel: 977-4836

Finding Your Way In the Raging Debates: Research & Writing

Background and Goals

When I was a student and had a few minutes to kill in the school's library, I frequently went to the art section to peruse the art books. There I looked to see what I thought painters were saying about life, about the people or places pictured. Was the artist making fun of the people and their lives? Did the artist have compassion for his or her subjects? Reverence?

Sometimes I read the observations by the art book's editors. Oftentimes, they had their own observations about what they thought the paintings were about. I was amazed at how self-assured these editors sounded in their comments. I was also aware of how off-base I felt they were a great deal of the time. I thought, "They missed the point entirely," or "I can't see how they got that from this painting."

Our main text for this course, Jackie Spinner's *Tell Them I Didn't Cry*, reports on what life is like being a journalist during the Iraq war. (Obviously, her account is only one of many. Consequently, as you read his book, think about the ways in which her own biases shape or distort her account of events.) Since the impact of this war on our lives and the world's safety is immense, I would argue that it is both extremely relevant and important that you, as both students and citizens, be able to think and speak intelligently on Iraq, the Middle East, Islam as well as the myriad of other related topics. Thus, your research projects will focus on some aspect of this historical period we find ourselves in. As you read Spinner's book, think about what subtopic you would like to research in depth. It may be that you want to explore Israel's lessons in fighting Hezoballah this past summer; or the relationship of the Kurds to the various nation states they live in. This class attempts to offer you some degree of freedom, while at the same time restricting you enough so that you do not hang yourself with too much choice.

One of the goals of this course is to develop ways of researching a topic (it doesn't really matter what it is), and to compare our own thoughts about the subject with the writings of people who have published articles or books. We will practice developing arguments which show both what people have said about a topic in the past, as well as indicate where we agree or disagree with their perceptions. In short, we will add our own voices to the raging debates on the Middle East.

Prerequisite

Grade of "C" or better in WR122.

Office Hours

Tuesday 1:00-2:00 ... Wednesday 11:00-12:00 ... Thursday 10:00-11:00 ... and by appointment.

Textbooks

Our main textbook will be:

Tell Them I Didn't Cry by Jackie Spinner, Scribner, \$23.00. If you want to save a couple dollars, you may be able to find this book used at Powell's or online.

Make sure that you have access to some version of the following text:

MLA Handbook. This information is contained within the *LB Brief*, which I ordered as an optional book for this course.

Requirements and Grades

1) *Journal and Quiz Assignments* (10% of your final grade)

You will be graded on the depth and completeness of your journal entries. If you aren't doing as well on your journals as you might like, take a look at someone's entries who is scoring high, comparing and contrasting yours with their work. Usually, if you spend time thinking and writing **while** you are reading, that will help your entries immensely.

2) *Your research* (20%)

For this section, I will grade you on the thoroughness and depth of your research. As well, I will evaluate your process. Do you have a method to sort through your research? If you only grab the first books or articles you can locate to submit for your research, no matter how superficial and unhelpful, just to turn something in, don't expect to do well for this assignment. The process you are developing for this project, you probably won't use in its entirety for the rest of your life. This work is just practice for the future. The idea is that you try it out, and learn from it for future research projects. If you fake the process, in order to just get through it, you'll learn very little.

3) *First, second parts of your final paper* (10% each)

These two sections will be incorporated into your final research paper. (This is one way to learn how to write a long paper: learn to do it in stages.) These represent two of the most difficult sections of your research paper, and by turning in these preliminary papers before the final paper is due you have the opportunity to make revisions before including it as part of the final paper.

3) *Final Research Paper* (40% of your final grade)

- a) introduction of the paper (which includes a statement of your limitations, assumptions, thesis and method statement.)
- b) first section
- c) second section
- d) third section
- e) fourth section and conclusion
- f) bibliography (revised from the bibliographic entries of your first paper)

4) *Class Participation* (10% of your grade)

Participating is about more than simply talking a great deal during class discussions. You could be a quiet or shy student and still be actively engaged in the class. You could talk a great deal, but dominate discussions to such an extent that people got tired of hearing your voice. If you are a confident speaker you could encourage others to speak or elaborate on their ideas.

As part of your class participation grade, I will look at your attendance and promptness. As well, I take into consideration if you attended both of your conferences. If you foresee any

potential problems in attending class regularly or on time please meet with me as soon as possible to discuss what other options you have.

Rules of the Game

- 1) *Give me your questions.* What you don't understand is more important than what you are sure that you know.
- 2) *Disrespect isn't cool.* If you are talking or whispering to someone next to you, I literally can't think or hear what someone else is trying to say. I have weird teaching hearing disease. Unexpectedly, I will quickly get frustrated and throw whatever is within my grasp.
- 3) *If you have a disability* and wish accommodations, please make arrangements to meet with me outside of class to discuss your specific needs. A request for accommodation may require that documentation of disability be reviewed by the office for students with disabilities.
- 4) *Wait for the right moment.* As I am about to begin class, do not try to ask me about what you have missed or what you will miss if you leave class early. At that point, my priorities are on the people who are there and what we are about to do.
- 5) *Feel free to get up* to go to the bathroom or get a drink when you need to.
- 6) *Be on time.*
- 7) *Hand in your work in a timely manner.* If, on the other hand, your computer ate your conclusion and you don't have your work, come to class anyway. Missing class and also not turning in your paper will not help you be successful in the class. Yet, I reserve the right to refuse a late paper from anyone. (For example, I might refuse it when it gets to the end of the term, and you try to turn in a paper from week six. At that point, I will have mountains of papers to grade.) Also, remember that if you don't turn in a paper, you will receive an "F" or zero for an assignment..
- 8) *If you are annoyed with a grade,* wait a couple days to see if the bad feelings linger. Be open to the possibility, for whatever reason, that you may not be the best final judge of your work's quality. However, if you are still just as annoyed a week later, set up a time to speak with me. Smoldering resentment will not help our working relationship. In the same way, don't be a grade-monger. Usually the people who earn an "A" don't need to pester me about how they are doing in the class.
- 9) *I don't accept attachments for either final or working drafts.* Get the paper to my box, my office or to my hands. It is part of your responsibility to print your paper and deliver it to me.
- 10) *Have fun and take risks.* Years from now, what grade you received in this class will probably matter very little to you. Yet, the people you meet here and the discussions you have in this room might make a lasting difference in your life.

Dates to Remember

- Sep 26 — Introduction to the course. **Homework for Thursday:** Read up to page 52 in Spinner's *Tell Them I Didn't Cry*. In class read and discuss *The Oregonian* news article entitled, "Poll finds deep divide in views of Muslims, Westerners".
- Sep 28 — Reading quiz on up to page 52 in Spinner's book. **Homework for Tuesday:** Read pages 53-115 in *TTIDC*. Answer journal questions and be ready to turn them in on Tuesday. In class read and discuss *The Oregonian* article entitled, "Hezbollah chief straddles line between terrorism, politics".
- Oct 3 — Turn in your journal assignment. **Homework for Thursday:** Read pages 117-162 in *TTIDC*. In class read and discuss *The Oregonian* entitled, "Suicide bomber assassinates provincial Afghan governor".
- Oct 5 — **Homework for Tuesday:** Read pages 163-204 in *TTIDC*. In class read and discuss Rami Khouri's opinion piece on the Middle East in the July 23rd, 2006 *Sunday Oregonian*.
- Oct 10 — **Homework for Thursday:** Read pages 205-262 in *TTIDC*. In class read and discuss a piece on the Kurds in the Middle East.
- Oct 12 — **One of today's topic:** choosing a topic for your research paper. In class read and discuss a section on the 1990's sanctions against Iraq, out of Marc Lynch's book entitled *Voices of the New Arab Public*. **Homework for Tuesday:** choose two or three topics that you are thinking about researching. Be prepared to turn in your topic to me on Tuesday.
- Oct 17 — Hand in your research topic. **Today's topic:** starting your research. Meet in Library Room 112. **Homework for Tuesday:** Read the excerpt from Marc Lynch's *Voices of the New Arab Public*.
- Oct 19 — Your topics handed back with my suggestions. Continue your research. Meet in classroom, and then we'll migrate to Library Room 225.
- Oct 24 — No day classes. Teachers come to school. Students do their research elsewhere.
- Oct 26 — Hand-in a **clear copy** of your working research sheets. No originals, please! These will be graded, so spend some time demonstrating you have been doing your research. If you're having problems with your research, set up a time to see me for a conference. In my experience, most students freak out too soon, and switch topics needlessly.
- Oct 31 — Your research sheets are handed back. **Homework:** begin to write the first section of your paper, that is the history section after the introduction. **Today's topic:** that first section!

- Nov 2 — **Today's topic:** the introduction of your paper. Homework: finish that first section.

- Nov 7 — **First section of your research paper due today! Today's topic:** the second section! Homework: write the section part of your paper.

- Nov 9 — Bryan's at a LA conference with other PCC teachers.

- Nov 14 — First section of your paper returned today. Homework: finish up the second "proving it's a problem" section of your research paper.

- Nov 21 — **Second section of your research paper due today.** Homework: Write the third section of your research paper.

- Nov 23 — **Thanksgiving vacation. No classes!**

- Nov 28 — Second section of your research paper returned graded today. We work on the third section.

- Nov 30 — We work on the remaining sections of your paper, including bibliography, footnotes and introduction.

- Dec 5 — Last minute questions answered on any sections of your paper.

- Dec 7 — Final papers due at start of class. No late papers accepted. Include a self-addressed stamped envelope if you want your papers back from me and you don't plan to pick them up.

Note: *Class calendar may change as the quarter unwinds. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to check with me or another student to see if we made any in-class changes to the above schedule.*