

# WRITING 121: English Composition

**Winter Quarter 2009**

**CRN: 44124**

**Classroom:** Tabor 145

**Time:** MW, 3:00-4:50pm

**Instructor: Jessica Lamb**

**E-mail:** *Jessica.lamb@pcc.edu*

**Phone:** 503-421-9201 (until 9pm)

**Office Hour:** after class and by appt.

*A word after a word  
after a word is power  
~Margaret Atwood*

## **Required Texts**

*The Seagull Reader: Essays.* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Ed. Joseph Kelly. Norton, 2008.  
*LB Brief.* Jane Aaron. Pearson/Prentice Hall.

## **Course Description and Objectives**

Welcome to Writing 121, a 4-credit course to develop your skills in writing, analytical reading, and critical thinking. Writing, reading, sharing, and responding are the foundation of this class. The overall aim of the course is to help you stretch as a writer and bring more of your individual personality and thinking into your writing. I hope you'll come out of this class feeling more in charge of the page and excited about the territory you're discovering as a writer. I'll do my part to foster an animated, mind-stretching, and supportive group learning experience. We'll practice careful listening and productive responding, leaning on each other as resources in the writing process. Upon successful completion of this course, you'll be able to express yourself more capably and confidently in writing and perform independent research drawing from a variety of sources. Through the essay assignments you'll gain experience writing personal narratives and crafting persuasive arguments. Shorter writings are due on a weekly basis, and two portfolios (gathering several pieces of your writing, with a reflective letter on your learning process), one at the middle of the term and one at the end of the course.

**Prerequisites:** Placed into WR 121 on test or passed WR 115 with a "C" or better.

## **Attendance and Participation**

Everyone here is a writer and a member of a community of writers, whatever your previous experience. Everyone here has a unique voice. Here are my three requests of you, as members of this classroom community:

**First:** show up, both physically and mentally: *be here*. **To stay enrolled, you must attend the first two consecutive classes.** This is a hands-on writing class with little lecturing; you should always come with plenty of paper and pens, since we will often take time to write and share in class. I will take roll at the beginning of class; **if you arrive late to class more than twice during the semester, you will be marked absent on your third tardy and any tardy thereafter. The absence policy is similar: you may have two absences without an effect on your grade; missing more may reduce your final grade.** **If you have the flu, stay home, and call me to receive assignments! Your absence will be excused. Please keep in mind, however, that if you miss more than 2 weeks of class for *any reason*, excused or unexcused, you may fail the course, per PCC policy.** The reason for these policies is

simple: we don't have much time, we cover a lot of material, and we'll all do better work as members of a consistent and supportive community. If you have to miss a class or expect to be late, it's best if you can inform me ahead of time. Giving me a heads up does not mean that I will disregard your absence, but it gives me the chance to fill you in on anything you might miss.

**Second:** Take part in the sharing of writing and the discussions of readings. We'll share our weekly writing in groups of two or three at the beginning of every session. The on-the-spot writing that we do in class we'll sometimes share with partners and sometimes in the full group. The purpose of sharing and responding is to assist writers in hearing their own work more clearly, so they can continue developing it. I will distribute a handout on ways of responding, and we will adhere to high standards for thoughtful feedback, respecting each writing's integrity and intentions. If sharing comes easily for you, you might need to hold back some; if sharing is hard, as it is for many people, you may need to challenge yourself to keep taking the plunge. It will get easier as the term progresses! *You will never be forced, only invited, to share.* If you've written something really raw and personal, you always have the right to decline reading it aloud. Know where your boundaries are, but be willing to take risks—that's what I ask.

**Third:** Support each other writer's work. We're all responsible for helping each other keep the words coming, by making sure that our feedback is supportive and our contributions sensitive to the unique make-up of this particular group.

### Assignments

**Writing.** We're writing for practice in this class. The idea is to learn through doing. I consider most assignments (with the exception of the portfolio) to be rough drafts, and I don't expect perfection; I expect effort. You'll turn in writing every week; assignments are listed on the course calendar, and I will give you handouts about each of these as they arise. They range from brief, one-page reflections to a more substantial "I-Search" paper on a question or issue that matters to you. Everything you turn in should be typed, double-spaced in 12-point font with 1-inch margins. **It is very important that you keep ALL of your writing for this course, including in class scribbles and marked-up drafts of essays. Throw nothing away!** You will need samples of your writing for the portfolio. Please also keep careful track of all handouts.

**Reading and reflecting.** Weekly essay readings totaling roughly 20 pages will be assigned from *The Seagull Reader*. The main purpose of the readings is to get us thinking, asking questions, and noticing what we find persuasive. Time will not allow for a thorough discussion of everything we read; you are however expected to complete all readings on the date due. You'll be meeting in class on four occasions with reading discussion groups. For these groups, you'll take turns coming up with an opening question related to the reading.

Each week you will do some writing taking off from the assigned essays. I refer to these writings as "reflections," and invite you to simply spend a page considering questions that were raised for you in the reading. You'll begin with a quote from the week's reading that you find interesting, provoking, confusing, or surprising, and respond to it with a page of writing. These responses should be typed, but they do not have to be formal or polished. Come to class prepared to share these reflections. **Also be advised that without advance notice I may assign an in-class writing related to one of the readings.** Students who do not keep up with the reading will be asked to drop.

**Conferences.** I will meet twice with each of you individually to discuss your writing. These conferences are required. Missing a conference without warning may count as an absence.

**Portfolio.** The portfolio is intended to represent your evolution as a writer throughout the course. You'll be invited to choose among your writings from the class—including informal writing—to include in the portfolio, and compose a cover letter with your thoughts about your development as a writer over the term. At least one piece you include in your portfolio must have been substantially revised. We will decide on the specifics of what it should include later; for now, all you need to know is: **don't throw anything away.**

### **Communication**

I value clear communication with my students. Please don't hesitate to talk to me if you have any questions or concerns about the class; remember, I can best help you (and likewise, you can help me, in cases where adjustments in my teaching strategies might be in order) when you communicate openly with me. I am readily available by email or phone and for the hour or so after class. I will post assignments, deadlines, and any important updates weekly on our course website, which you can access through MyPCC. **Please check this website weekly. I also expect you to check your pcc.edu email account daily, since I often send course announcements via email.**

### **Dropping the Class**

The deadline to withdraw and receive your money back is Oct. 2<sup>nd</sup>. The deadline to withdraw and not get a "W" on your transcript is October 16<sup>th</sup>. If you withdraw after Nov. 13<sup>th</sup>, you will receive an F.

I appreciate you letting me know if you decide to drop the class.

### **Lateness policy**

You may have one extension on an assignment, *if you contact me in advance of the due date.* If you do not, missing work gets a zero. I-Search paper and portfolio must be turned in on time.

### **Tutoring**

The Tutoring Center is an invaluable resource—I can't emphasize enough how much it can help you! Appointments are not required; the center is in Mt. Tabor room 123. Chris O' Shea is there all day on weekdays; other tutors are available evenings. PCC also offers free online tutoring in many subjects including writing. This service is available at [www.pcc.edu/tutoring](http://www.pcc.edu/tutoring).

### **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is using the ideas or words of another person and passing them off as your own without giving proper credit. Students who plagiarize may fail the assignment and be reported to the college for appropriate action. Make sure that all your written work is your own; credit any sources properly using MLA formatting. We'll cover citation form in class; if you are ever in doubt of the correct practices, please don't hesitate to talk to me.

### **Note about Disabilities**

PCC encourages students who have disabilities to contact Disability Services for assistance in requesting classroom accommodations. At the Southeast Center, the counselor is Bret Westwood; he's in Tabor Hall

152, 503-977-4341 or TTY: 503-246-4072. Please share any accommodations requests with me by the end of the second week of class at the latest, so I can do my best to assist you.

## **About Grading**

Because I want students to focus more on their writing and less on grades, I give no letter grades for any assignments. Instead, I read assignments carefully and offer comments. If you turn in all your work satisfactorily and on time and meet other course expectations you will receive at least a B (an honor grade) in the class. If you complete these expectations AND turn in a very strong portfolio, you will most likely get an A. If you turn in a paper that needs work, I'll indicate this in my comments and give you a week to re-do the assignment for full credit. Should you choose not to re-do the assignment, you'll receive a "minus;" depending on the number and relative weight of minuses, your final grade will decline accordingly.

### **In general, assignments are considered satisfactory:**

- if they show significant effort and consideration
- if, in the case of the portfolio, there are sufficient signs of substantive revision
- if they are complete (i.e. meet minimum page requirements and, in the case of the I-Search paper, have supporting materials attached; we'll cover this in more detail later)
- if there is careful attention to proofreading and presentation
- if all writing is your own (i.e. not plagiarized).

### **So, you are guaranteed at least a B for your final grade if:**

- you meet course requirements on attendance and lateness (no more than two unexcused absences, or the equivalent combination of absences and latenesses)
- you complete all assignments including weekly readings and reflections and have no more than one late assignment
- you turn in revisions for any minuses you receive on an assignment
- you give full and thoughtful responses to others on their writing and show respect for the classroom community
- your portfolios are strong

### **Although I do not use points in calculating your final grade, I do give relative weight to course requirements as follows:**

- Portfolio: 30%
- Other coursework: 40% (weekly homework, in-class writing, conferences)
- I-Search paper: 20%
- Class participation: 10%

What these percentages reflect is that there's more work involved in writing your I-Search paper than in writing a single weekly reflection. Doing a slap-dash job on a "weightier" assignment is more likely to affect your grade.

*I realize that this grading system may be unfamiliar to many of you and that you may find you have concerns about your standing. Don't let those worries fester! Come talk to me any time.*

## **Service Learning Option**

Service Learning is a way to incorporate “real-world” experience into the research and writing you’ll do for the class. If you choose to participate you will be assigned to one of three local nonprofit agencies where you will spend 8 hours volunteering. At the end of the term, you will write an I-Search paper on a social issue related to your service. Your volunteer experience will count as research for the paper; you will only be required to use one outside source (from a book, magazine, or newspaper), while students not doing service are expected to use at least three outside sources. Choosing the service option gives you the opportunity to ground your writing for the class in real situations that people in our community are struggling with on a daily basis. Service learning also helps you appreciate cultural differences, allows you to make an impact on the lives of people in our city, and enhances your resume and scholarship potential.

### **The Agencies:**

**Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization** ([www.irco.org](http://www.irco.org)). Each year roughly 1000 refugees arrive in Portland from countries around the globe. IRCO’s mission is to create opportunities for new refugees and immigrants, empowering them to become self-sufficient, supporting their youth and families and community with employment, economic development, and translation services. Service with IRCO could involve writing for the monthly newsletter or presenting a cultural program for other volunteers. Their main office is located at 10301 NE Glisan, but they also have several SE locations.

**Impact NW** ([www.impactnw.org](http://www.impactnw.org)) is an extensive local agency offering a wide range of services for homeless and low-income families. Their mission is “to help people achieve and maintain self-sufficiency and to prevent and alleviate the effects of poverty.” Service could include filling and distributing food baskets, volunteering at a senior center, or working with SUN school students. Impact NW’s main office is at 10055 E. Burnside Street, but they also have several SE locations.

**Southeast Works** ([www.seworks.org](http://www.seworks.org)) is a neighborhood-based, grassroots organization that began in 1995, in response to the need for workforce development in southeast Portland. They offer a wide array of resources tailored to our diverse community, including ESL and GED classes. Service at SE Works would most likely involve one-on-one tutoring. Their office is located at 6927 SE Foster Rd.

If you would like to participate in Service Learning, **you must let me know by the second week of class** so that I can make arrangements with the agencies. We will have a 15-minute informational meeting right after class on Wednesday, 9/23. If you cannot attend, we’ll make an alternative time. You must begin your service by the fourth week of class. Your 8 hours of community service time must be completed by the 9th week of the term.

***NOTE: THE CHOICE TO PARTICIPATE IN SERVICE-LEARNING MUST BE CLEARED WITH ME BY THE SECOND WEEK OF THE TERM.***







