

WRITING 122: English Composition

Fall Quarter 2009

CRN: 40493

Classroom: Tabor 143

Time: MW, 1:00-2:50 pm

Instructor: Jessica Lamb

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

Office Hour: by appt., MW before class

"The essayist is an explorer...and a course in essay writing is most importantly a course in living." Paul Connolly

Course Description and Objectives

Welcome to WR 122, the second of a two-part sequence of required college writing classes. Writing, reading, sharing, and responding are the foundation of this course. We will practice all the various stages of writing this term—from tentative scribbles to more extended essays. The aim of the class is to exercise our thinking and writing muscles while we delve into issues and questions that matter to us, as individuals and as citizens of our rapidly-changing society. I'll do my part to foster an animated, mind-stretching, and supportive group learning experience in the classroom.

One of the themes that will provide a focus for the term is *personal and social change*. We're going to consider how change happens, on an individual as well as a societal level. What changes do **we** want to see in our communities, and how can writing help to make these changes happen? These questions are central to the reading and writing assignments and to a "Writing-in-Action" group you will participate in to address some problem you and your peers identify as a concern in your communities.

Upon successful completion of this course, you should be able to express your convictions more capably and confidently in writing, perform independent research drawing from a variety of sources, create well-reasoned persuasive arguments, and reflect on your thinking process. You'll develop awareness of audience and learn to recognize bias and fallacies of argument. You'll engage in careful listening and productive responding. Most of all, what I hope you gain in this course is a greater appreciation for the power of words to change your world.

Prerequisites

Completion of Writing 121 with a "C" or better.

Required Texts

LB Brief. Jane Aaron. Pearson/Prentice Hall.

Beginning the second week of class, you will also be choosing one of the following three books:

Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*

Greg Mortensen and David Oliver Relin, *Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Promote Peace...One School at a Time*.

Barack Obama, *Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*

You do NOT need to bring your choice of book to class the first week. I will be giving you a selection from each of these titles, to help you make your decision.

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 two portfolios) 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 social problem 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 portfolios. Please also keep careful track of all handouts.

Reading and reflecting. Reading is the backbone of all the writing we'll be doing this term. The main purpose of the readings is to get us thinking, asking questions, and noticing what we find convincing. **In addition to the book you choose, you'll be reading *The Oregonian* on weekdays, in the electronic**

or paper edition. I expect you to spend about 20 minutes a day reading the newspaper, with an emphasis on the front section, the Metro section, and the editorials. You may choose to read whatever articles are of interest to you, just make sure you get beyond the Sports page. You'll also be reading a variety of essays and articles that I'll either hand out to you or ask you to read online. These are not all listed on the schedule. Time will not allow for a thorough discussion of everything we read; you are however expected to complete all readings on the date due (I'll hand out a separate assignment sheet with these dates listed for the book you choose). You'll be meeting in class on four occasions with book discussion groups.

Each week you will do some writing taking off from the book you have chosen to read. 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 book 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 or a significant current event covered in the news.** Students who do not keep up with the reading will be asked to drop.

Writing-in-Action Group. Beginning the third week of class, you will be meeting in small groups to identify a problem that you'd like to focus on changing in your communities. Together, you'll create an action plan, dividing up tasks and taking first steps toward addressing the issue. Your plan will be targeted and small-scale—you won't fix homelessness in 8 weeks, but you might organize a food drive, or bring attention to the need for a safe crosswalk in your neighborhood. This group will meet four times in class (more as needed) and will involve work outside of class.

Conferences. I will meet twice with each of you individually to discuss your writing. These conferences are required, but not painful! Missing a conference without notice may count as an absence.

Portfolios. The portfolios are intended to represent your evolution as a writer throughout the course. You'll be invited to choose several pieces—including informal writing—to include in the portfolio, and compose a cover letter with your thoughts about your development as a writer. At least one piece you include must have been substantially revised. We'll go over the specifics of what the portfolios should include later; for now, just remember: **don't throw anything away.**

Communication

I value 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. I will post assignments, deadlines, and any important updates weekly on our course website, which you can access through MyPCC. **Please check this website at least once a week. I also expect you to check your pcc.edu email account daily, since I often send course announcements via email.**

Tutoring

The Tutoring Center is an invaluable resource! 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 for many subject including writing. This service is available at 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.

Dropping the Class

The deadline to withdraw and receive your money back is Oct. 2nd. The deadline to withdraw and not get a "W" on your transcript is October 16th. If you withdraw after Nov. 13th, 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 portfolios must be turned in on time.

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 very strong portfolios, 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 portfolios, 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:

Portfolios: 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.

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TENTATIVE OUTLINE OF ASSIGNMENTS

It is the nature of outlines to change! Come to class and check MyPCC for assignments and updates. Additional or alternative readings may be assigned.

WEEK ONE	Mon, Sept 21	Course introduction
	Wed, Sept 23	“Where I’m Coming From, Where I’m Going” due. Please also read over course outline carefully
WEEK TWO	Mon, Sept 28	Reading due: selections from class books (handouts) Bring your choice of book to class
	Wed, Sept 30	R/R due: why you chose this book.
WEEK THREE	Mon, Oct 5	Interview write-up due (2 pgs)
	Wed, Oct 7	R/R due. Writing-in-Action groups in class
WEEK FOUR	Mon, Oct 12	Credo due (2 pages). First book group discussion.
	Wed, Oct 14	R/R due. Writing-in-Action groups in class
WEEK FIVE	Mon, Oct 19	Writing-in-Action assignments due.
	Wed, Oct 21	Library session. I-Search question due R/R due
WEEK SIX	Mon, Oct 26.	I-Search interview subject due. Book group discussion in class
	Wed, Oct 28	R/R due. Writing-in-Action groups in class
WEEK SEVEN	Mon, Nov 2	Midterm reflection letter and first portfolio due
	Wed, Nov 4	R/R due (extra reading handout). Writing-in-Action groups
WEEK EIGHT	Mon, Nov 9	I-Search interview write-up due (2-3 pgs) Book group discussion in class
	Wed, Nov 11	NO CLASS: Veterans’ Day
WEEK NINE	Mon, Nov 16	Rough draft, I-Search paper due (6-8 pgs). 2 copies.
	Wed, Nov 18	R/R due.
WEEK TEN	Mon, Nov 23	Peer response due (2 pgs). Bring 2 copies. Final book group discussion in class
	Wed, Nov 25	No R/R due.
WEEK ELEVEN	Mon, Nov 30	End of term reflection letter and portfolios due (Option 1)
	Wed, Dec 2	Final R/R due. Class in computer lab.
WEEK TWELVE	Mon, Dec 7	Last day. Reflection letter and portfolios due (Option 2)

