

ENGL 0900: Critical Reading and Writing I: The Academic Essay - Fall 2016

Instructor: Christopher Yates

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Office: English Department Building (70 Brown Street), Room 414

Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 1-3 p.m.

Course Contract:

Meetings: MWF 12 p.m.-12:50 p.m. in Rockefeller Library 206

Course Description: Writing is an essential skill in every academic field. This course will help students to develop the skills, strategies, and practices necessary to ensure successful writing, not only in coursework here at Brown, but also for applications, internships, and employment after Brown. We will examine writing samples across different genres, paying attention both to the features that define strong writing across the disciplines as well as the specific characteristics that define them.

Classroom and Learning Goals:

- Develop essay-writing skills that will lead to future academic success
- Gain understanding of multiple perspectives and approaches to writing
- Maintain active, lively and supportive discussion in classroom
- Produce three heavily-revised pieces of academic writing that reflect what students have learned from readings and class discussion

Required Texts: All required readings – ranging from essays to articles to writing samples – will be uploaded to Canvas in packets assigned for each class.

Required Work and time Commitments:

Our class will meet three times a week for 14 weeks, with some exceptions for holidays and breaks, all of which are noted on the schedule. Altogether we will meet as a class for a combined total of 34 hours, 6 of which will consist of in-class essay-workshopping, with the remaining 28 meetings dedicated to discussion and in-class exercises. Additionally, students are expected to meet with me 3 times throughout the course of the semester for thirty-minute long individual conferences. Completion of three essays, including multiple rounds of revision, will require around 75 hours of work throughout the semester. Readings and homework, assigned as packages and uploaded to Canvas before each of our 28 non-workshopping class meetings, will require around 70 hours of work from students in total. Altogether, the expected time-commitment from students for this course will be 180.5 hours. Assignments and expectations are described in greater detail below:

- **Homework:** Students will be assigned weekly writing activities, ranging from response papers to writing exercises. Homework will be assigned in class - if you miss a class for any reason, please contact me in order to discuss assignments, missed materials, etc.
- **Portfolio:** Please keep all of your graded homework assignments, writing drafts, and finished papers in a folder to be submitted at the end of the semester. These portfolios will track our progress as we move through the term.
- **Papers:** Students will be asked to complete three academic essay assignments throughout the course of the semester. Each of these assignments will go through two to three rounds of drafting and editing. At the end of the semester, each student will have three completed and thoroughly revised samples of their own academic writing that reflects the best of their abilities, and in which they can take pride. Essay assignments will include an “issues” paper, an analytical paper focused on one source, and a multi-source academic research paper.

- **Individual Conferences:** All students will be required to meet with me three times during the semester to discuss the course, progress, and revision process for the essay assignments. Students are encouraged to meet with me at any point in the semester - in addition to the three required meetings - to discuss any concerns they may have, or for additional help and support.

Classroom Behavior:

- Cell phones and laptops are not to be used during class unless a student has special permission from SEAS (Student and Employee Accessibility Services.) Please check the SEAS page online if you believe that you qualify or have any questions about these services: (<https://www.brown.edu/campus-life/support/accessibility-services/>). I am happy to accommodate any SEAS-related needs; please speak with me if you have any questions about this.
- One of the great opportunities of being a university student is to be exposed to a diverse array of perspectives and outlooks that differ from your own. It is inevitable that we will all have different ideas and understandings of the issues that arise through the course of our readings. To treat your fellow students with respect is a policy that you should bring with you to every classroom you enter at Brown University. The success of this course depends on a lively and supportive environment in the classroom.

Attendance: The Nonfiction Writing Program policy stipulates that any student with three-or more absences without serious or medical reasons cannot earn credit for this course. If you know that you will be missing a class, please email me in advance. If you know in advance that you will need to miss two or more classes for any reason, please contact me early in the semester so that we can discuss this.

Plagiarism: Failing to properly attribute the writing, research and ideas of others can have serious consequences in college. Though some examples of plagiarism are clear-cut, other forms may not be instinctively obvious. Please consult the Brown University Academic Code in order to understand Brown's policies regarding plagiarism and academic dishonesty, and please feel more than free to speak with me if you have any questions or concerns.

(For more information, see: <http://www.brown.edu/academics/college/degree/policies/academic-code/>)

Additional Assistance:

- **The Writing Center** is an important resource for members of the Brown community, and its services are free of charge. Any student can schedule an appointment with a Writing Center associate, who can provide support for all stages of the writing process, from outlining an essay and editing to revising your final draft. The Writing Center is located in the J. Walter Wilson building. If you intend to take a paper to the Writing Center, please schedule an appointment in advance, as they are often over-booked.

(<http://www.brown.edu/academics/college/support/writing-center/>)

- If English is not your first language, please inform me if you feel that you might need additional support. You may speak with me after class or during office hours. For more information about **language support services**, contact Rachel Toncelli, the English Language Learning (ELL) Director, at 401-863-5148 or esl_writing_brown@brown.edu, or check the ELL Resources page on the Writing Center website:

(<http://www.brown.edu/academics/college/support/writing-center/english-second-language/english-language-learners/ell-resources>)

"We are all apprentices in a craft where no one ever becomes a master." - Ernest Hemingway

Schedule:

Module 1: The Essay Dissected - Organization, Citation, Revision – The Response Paper

Week 1 - The College Essay

9/7 - High School and College Writing

Readings: Packet 1 – Guidelines for College Writing and Essay Samples

9/9 - The Essay as a Form

Readings: Packet 2 including “Politics and the English Language” by George Orwell

Week 2 - The Essay in Parts

9/12 - Dissecting the Essay

Readings: Packet 3 – Breaking Down Successful Writing

9/14 - Models of Organization

Readings: Packet 4 including “What the f***” by Steve Pinker

9/16 - Focus: *Does This Support My Argument?*

Readings: Packet 5 – Guidelines for Clarity and Focus

Week 3 - Sources, Evidence and Citations

9/19 - Finding and Evaluating Sources

Readings: Packet 6 – Tips for Assessing Sources

9/21 - Incorporating Evidence

Readings: Packet 7, including “Consider the Lobster” by David Foster Wallace

9/23 - **Student Conferences for Paper 1**

Week 4 - Proofreading

9/26 - Strategies of Revision

Readings: Packet 8 – Revising for Success

9/28 – Workshopping

Due: Paper 1 - Response Paper Draft 1 (5 pages)

9/30 - Workshopping

Module 2: Genres and Modes of Writing - The Analytical Essay

Week 5 - Genres of Writing

10/3 - The Personal Essay

Readings: Packet 9 including “Shame and Survival” by Monica Lewinsky and “A Few Words About Breasts” by Nora Ephron

10/5 - Narrative Nonfiction

Readings: Packet 10 including “The Fourth State of Matter” by Jo Ann Beard

10/7 - Persuasive Writing

Readings: Packet 11 including “A Modest Proposal” by Jonathan Swift

Week 6- Writing in the Disciplines

10/10 - Indigenous Peoples' Day. No University exercises today.

10/12 - Writing in the Humanities

Readings: Packet 12 including “Notes on Camp” by Susan Sontag

10/14 - Expository Writing

Readings: Packet 13 including “The State of the Species” by Charles Mann

Due: Paper 1 Draft 2

Week 7 - Evaluative and Analytical Writing

10/17 - The Review

Readings: Packet 14 – Review Samples

10/19 - Summary and Analysis

Readings: Packet 15 – Analytical Moves: Going Beyond Summary

10/21 - **Student Conferences for Paper 2**

Week 8 - Drafting and Revising for Paper 2

10/24 - The Critical Review

Readings: Packet 16: Critical Review Samples

10/26 – Workshopping

Due: Paper 2 Draft 1

10/28 - Workshopping

Module 3: Research and Argument - The Research Essay

Week 9 - Sources

10/31 - Incorporating Multiple Sources

Readings: Packet 17 including “The Ecstasy of Influence” by Jonathan Lethern

11/2 - Evaluating Sources - Bias and Context

Readings: Packet 18 – Identifying the Sides of an Argument

11/4 - Purpose and Motivation

Readings: Packet 19 including “Reflections on Gandhi” by George Orwell

Week 10 - Theses

11/7 - Identifying and Crafting Theses

Readings: Packet 20 – Guidelines for Crafting a College-Level Thesis and Samples

11/9 - Focus and Clarity - *Is this Relevant?*

Readings: Packet 21 – Trimming the Fat: Guidelines for Writing a Lean Paper

11/11 - Taking a Stance - *What’s at Stake?*

Readings: Packet 22 including “The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Appreciating Carly Rae Jepsen for Dummies Maybe” by Trent Wolbe

Due: Paper 2 Draft 2

Week 11 - Research

11/14 - Using the Library Effectively – Library Research Tutorial

Readings: Packet 23: Academic Student Resources at Brown

11/16 - Research Online

Readings: Packet 24: Guidelines for Using Online Resources

11/18 - Organizing Information

Readings: Packet 25: Suggestions for Organization and Essay Samples

Week 12 - The Research Essay

11/21 - Moving Beyond Summary of Sources and Entering the Fray

Readings: Packet 26: Taking a Critical Position

11/23—Thanksgiving Break

11/25—Thanksgiving Break

Week 13 - Final Paper

11/28- **Student Conferences for Paper 3**

11/30 - Conflicting Ideas and Counter-Argument

Readings: Packet 27: Establishing Your Position in a Critical Debate

12/2 - Critical Context - Overview and Analysis

Readings: Packet 28 including “The Worst Mistake in the History of the Human Race” by Jared Diamond

Week 14: Workshopping Final Paper

12/5 – Workshopping

Due: Paper 3 Draft 1

12/7 - Workshopping

12/9 - Reflecting - *Where Are We Now?*

Paper 3 Draft 2 and Final Portfolio due on December 18th