

ENGLISH 306/406 WRITING FOR TEACHERS Sp. 2007 Professor Celia Easton
CRN 54049/54050 Welles 134 Tuesdays 4-6:30 p.m.

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Office Hours: T, Th 9:00 am to 11:00 am; Th 3:45 pm to 4:45 pm. And all day Friday by appointment.

Writing for Teachers is a relatively new course at Geneseo. It was taught once before in Spring 2004. The intended audience for this course is anyone who wants to develop as a writer—and think about teaching *anything*. Our student roster includes people interested in elementary, secondary, and higher education, as well as folks who think they might like to go into law or business. As all the pre-semester descriptions have emphasized, this is not a pedagogy course, but it is a course that should give you confidence to write and to teach, whether or not that teaching includes instruction in writing. These are the intended learning outcomes I wrote for the course for its approval as a new course:

1. Students will understand theories of writing instruction.
2. Students will understand conventions of written Standard English well enough to teach them.
3. Students will understand the difference between descriptive and prescriptive grammar.
4. Students will write competent essays reflecting comprehension of academic forms and the conventions of written Standard English.

In addition to these, I'd add another, much less easy to assess:

Students will stop thinking of themselves as "students" and begin to think of themselves as "writers."

We will do some academic writing in this course, as well as non-academic writing. We will read some books about writing and read and respond to each other's work. To do this successfully, we need to work on being a community—which means responding to each other honestly but respectfully, showing up for each other and with our own work, and treating assignments and deadlines professionally.

Required books (ordered through Sun Dance Books):

Good, C. Edward. *A Grammar Book for You and I... oops, Me!*

Lamott, Anne. *Bird By Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*

EXPECT some costs for printing essays for workshops.

You should also own or borrow at least one WRITING HANDBOOK (e.g., *A Writer's Reference*, *The Allyn and Bacon Handbook*, etc.).

| Grading ENGL 306 | |
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| Participation | 15% |
| Researched essay | 25% |
| Oral review | 10% |
| Resume | 5% |
| Memoir & two persuasive essays | 45% |

| Grading ENGL 406 | |
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| Participation | 15% |
| Researched essay and presentation to class | 30% |
| Oral review | 10% |
| Resume | 5% |
| Memoir & two persuasive essays | 40% |

Approximate series of readings and assignments.

| Date | Reading/topic | Workshop? | Anything due? |
|------|--|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1/16 | Introduction to the course. How do we say who we are? Resume writing presentation by Mr. Gerald Wrubel, Director of Career Planning and Placement. Before you write your resume, read Good, Chapter 18 (286-297). Bring Good to class whenever you are assigned chapters to read. | | Your polished resume is due next week, 1/23. |
| 1/23 | Part one of class: introducing each other through resumes. Part two of class: Memoir Writing: Why we don't care about your grandmother (and why my colleagues don't understand this assignment). Read Lamott from "Introduction" through "Perfectionism" (xi-32). Bring Good (you read ch. 18). | Yes—you'll receive one essay by email | Resume (1) |
| 1/30 | Read Lamott, "School Lunches" through "Dialogue" (33-73) Read Good, 299-315. | Yes—five memoirs (2) | |
| 2/6 | Read Lamott, "Set Design" through "Radio Station KFKD" (74-121). Read Good, 316-360. | Yes—five memoirs (2) | Your MEMOIR (2) is due if not workshopped |
| 2/13 | Read Lamott "Jealousy" through "Someone to Read Your Drafts" (122-171). Read Good, 361-387. | Yes—five persuasive essays (3) | Workshopped MEMOIRS (2) due |
| 2/20 | Read Lamott, "Letters" through "The Last Class" (172-237). Read Good, 388-413. | Yes—five persuasive essays (3) | Your PERSUASIVE ESSAY (3) is due if not workshopped |
| 2/27 | Dr. Easton's excessively long and occasionally amusing PowerPoint presentation on "grammar" and why your mother was right—but only sometimes. Read Good, 414-419. | Yes—five+ indignant essays (4) | Workshopped PERSUASIVE ESSAYS (3) due |
| 3/6 | Library Session: Research and PowerPoint Design. | AT MILNE LIBRARY | |
| 3/13 | <i>Spring break, no classes</i> | | |
| 3/20 | Do you really "need [grammar] to succeed in life"? Why the heck are we reading this book? Read Good Intro through Ch. 2 (xi-76) | | Your INDIGNANT ESSAY (4) is due if not workshopped |
| 3/27 | Read Good Ch. 3-4 (77-113) | Six Oral Reviews (5) | Workshopped INDIGNANT ESSAYS (4) due |
| 4/3 | This is the second night of Passover. Read Good Ch. 5-8 (114-175) | Six Oral Reviews (5) | |
| 4/10 | This is the Tuesday after Easter. Read Good Ch. 9-12 (177-225) | Seven Oral Reviews (5) | |

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| 4/17 | UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH DAY. No classes held. Please attend the research presentations throughout the day. | | |
| 4/24 | Read Good Ch. 13-18 (226-297) You've already read chapter 18. Look at it again. | Seven Oral Reviews (5) | |
| 5/1 | Be here. | Graduate presentations | Researched essays due (all) (6) |
| 5/4 (FRIDAY) 3:30-6:30 pm Final Exam period. See me now about any conflicts. We will not have a final exam in this class, but we will hold a scheduled class meeting in which there will be some more graduate presentations, discussion, a bit of language review, the return of your researched essays (this may be optimistic, but I'll try), and an early dinner (how does pizza sound?). By this time in the semester you should be groaning at the wordiness of that sentence, too. We will probably re-schedule our meeting room. | | | |

Final thoughts:

- You cannot do this course as a correspondence course—too many absences will seriously affect your success in this course. Please inform me if you will miss class due to a religious holiday (does not "count" as absence, but we need to agree on alternative due dates, if applicable).
- Plagiarism is intolerable. Any act of academic dishonesty will result in a failing or zero grade for the assignment and notification of the Dean of Students.
- You should keep a back-up of everything you hand in.
- If your paper is scheduled to be workshopped, do not send it out late. This is disrespectful to the rest of the class—we all need to schedule our writing AND reading time.
- If you fall behind, TALK TO ME. Don't disappear. I'm not assigning late penalties, but don't take advantage of that.
- Comments on each other's writing should be phrased positively, but remain honest. If our readers fail to share their criticism, they subject us to future embarrassment before less kind critics. Let's watch out for each other by reading well everything submitted to this class.

ASSIGNMENTS. This is the overview. We'll discuss the details in class.

1. RESUME (1-2 pages). Pay attention to the presentation on resumes on the first day of class—your resume is due the following week! One purpose of this early assignment is to give you a chance to introduce yourselves to each other—you'll pair off and report back to the rest of the class. But resume writing also involves sophisticated EDITING skills. MAKE SURE YOU KNOW WHAT PARALLEL CONSTRUCTION IS—or you'll be shocked by my grading pen! I'm also going to be looking for precision (no repetition, no padding), clarity, and logic.
THE CHALLENGE: Cut the excess, cut, cut, cut—and be distinctive.
2. MEMOIR (3-5 pages). In fact, your resume DOESN'T tell us who you are. Memoir will tell us a little. I'm going to put myself on the line before you write your memoirs and let you read some of my personal writing (we'll workshop it). You need to think hard about what details to include or exclude and how to organize your presentation. Memoirs can include dialogue. Memoirs do not have to be "strictly factual." While you shouldn't be writing sheer fantasy ("It wasn't easy growing up knowing I was the long-lost grandchild of the last Czar..."), you shouldn't feel obligated to include

information simply because it is "true." Instead, your job is to write a strong, clear, specific, well-organized essay. Anne Lamott is particularly helpful for something like this—read the chapter on "School Lunches."

ASSIGNMENT: Write a personal, reflective essay triggered by a concrete memory. A "concrete" memory includes relevant descriptions of objects, places, or people.

THE CHALLENGE: Make us care about "your grandmother." (Here, "grandmother" is a metonym suggesting anything or anyone personally important to you about whom most of us will not immediate care, unless you make us.)

3. PERSUASIVE ESSAY (3 pages). Read a brief editorial/opinion in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Washington Times*, or *The National Review* (all available online) and write a response that DISAGREES with it. Take a look at all four publications—they represent different political points of view. Make reference to the editorial in your essay but create an argument by setting up counter evidence. You may agree in part (concede some points), but you should persuade your audience that your point of view is superior. "To disagree" doesn't necessarily make you diametrically opposed to a point of view; you might simply have a different take on the issue. For example, if an opinion writer calls for universities to stop using the SATs as college admissions criteria, you don't have to completely defend the SATs to disagree with that position. When you hand in your persuasive essay, please print out the essay to which you are responding. For workshopped papers, include the editorial link or copy and paste the editorial to the end of your argument.
THE CHALLENGE: Make this real, not just a school exercise.
4. PERSUASIVE ESSAY OF RIGHTEOUS INDIGNATION (3 pages). Choose a topic that you care passionately about. Don't choose a clichéd topic unless it has particular significance for you. Examples of clichéd topics are "the death penalty" and "abortion." But if you actively think about those issues, if you've been involved in groups like Amnesty International, Planned Parenthood, or Right-to-Life, then these are not clichéd issues. If you haven't been righteously indignant lately, do enough research to inform yourself on an issue and start to care about it. This is not a research paper, and you don't have to include citations for general information, but identify sources within your prose when you include factual information that is not common knowledge.
THE CHALLENGE: Be indignant, but stay cool and logical.
5. ORAL REVIEW (oral presentation including visuals). I want you to review a scholarly article that addresses something that you'll study further in your researched essay. It should address a writing topic, but the focus is up to you. Think about topics like writing anxieties, pedagogical strategies, creativity, what people mean by "grammar," etc. As the syllabus indicates, we'll do about six of these per class after mid-term. Your oral presentation must be accompanied by well-designed PowerPoint slides. We will have class instruction on PowerPoint; I have particularly requested that the instruction address more than the basics, encouraging effective communication through PPT rather than playing with bells and whistles.
THE CHALLENGE: Keep it to five or six minutes.
6. RESEARCHED ESSAY (7-8 pages). Expand on the topic you began with your oral review. Develop your own thinking on this topic, but engage with at least three published authors (you may continue with scholarly articles or also include book chapters). Use caution when using Internet sources—don't cite a personal essay or website. You may use articles from the Internet if they are edited or juried (or from an on-line journal). Ask me if you have any questions.

THE CHALLENGE: Keep the voice you worked on in your memoir, the organization you worked on in your first persuasive essay, and the passion you developed in your essay of righteous indignation. Ah! Joy! The course fits together!

DIRECTIONS FOR WORKSHOP DAYS

At least 48 hours before your paper is workshopped, you need to send a copy of your paper to the class distribution list. I will give you the email address of that list on the first day of class.

When you receive the email(s) with the attached papers, print them out. Everyone in the class must bring hard copies of the papers to be workshopped to class with them. If you have technology problems, make friends with others in the class who can print out extra copies for you.

DURING THE WORKSHOP

Before coming to class, read and mark the papers to be workshopped. If you want to mark something that you think could be better expressed, underline it and write a brief comment in the margin. Mark mechanics and grammar as you go along. At the end of the essay, write several "high level" comments, i.e., not on mechanical or grammatical matters but on voice, style, concreteness, organization, originality, and accuracy.

During class, the writer will remain silent during the discussion. Don't ask the writer to explain anything while you make comments. I'm going to assign one student for each paper to begin the discussion (you'll each have a chance), but I expect everyone to offer comments. After the paper has been workshopped, the writer can ask questions of the rest of the class.

I am going to check to make sure that you have read the workshopped paper, but you'll turn all your copies over to the writer.

This is not as easy as it sounds. Don't worry. We'll keep amending the process as needed.