

Instructor: Maggie O'Leary

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Office: Neuberger Hall 378

Office hours: Monday 11:00-1:00

Class information:

Meeting place: Cramer Hall, Room 359

Section: 03

Meeting time: 2:00-3:50 MW

Required texts:

- The Norton Sampler: Short Essays for Composition, 8th ed. Ed. Thomas Cooley (ISBN 0393919463)
- Ways of Writing: A Guide to College Composition, 3rd ed. PSU Writing Center (ISBN 9780982510100)
- Any number of handouts and online readings

Both longer texts are available for purchase through the PSU Bookstore. I will provide access to others.

Summary of course:

Writing 121 is an introductory, required course for PSU undergraduates that attempts to impart students with a more developed and sophisticated awareness of their abilities as writers and as thinkers. The course seeks to expand students' abilities to think about and engage critically with a number of overlapping and distinct texts. As such, students will be expected to participate in class, and demonstrate their understanding of course material in group and individual activities, and in other assigned writings.

We will approach writing as a manageable beast, rather than viewing it as an impossible or inaccessible "thing" that will always come more naturally and easily to everyone else. To that effect, the course will be largely devoted to examining and practicing writing as a process—one that will require extensive generative work, drafting, revision, and flexibility on the part of each student. Students will share their work with me and with their peers, and will attend conferences and participate in group workshops as necessary aspects of this process. There will be three essays, culminating in a portfolio that will be a full representation of the major work you complete throughout the term.



Learning Objectives:

1. We will, as a class, examine and practice writing as a process and as an experience—it involves you intellectually and as a person, and it is necessary to understand how writing as a process may be conducted in order to advance further successes as students and professionals.
2. We will think about the way in which we do not think about writing, and in the ways we do; we will also explore how we perceive ourselves as writers and as individuals with potential to produce a social, living piece of writing.
3. We will learn about the importance of engaging with a text, what this may look like, and how many different forms a text may take.
4. We will learn to critically analyze the material we encounter, what we read, and what we already know.
5. We will practice and test our abilities as writers in a number of different contexts and assignments—these will include in-class responses, short homework assignments, group writing, longer revised essays, and a cumulative portfolio that will serve as a possible beginning of your intellectual timeline.
6. We will learn how to write ethically and with respect to the minds and ideas of others, avoiding plagiarism and other forms of intellectual and academic dishonesty.
7. We will attempt to develop our own unique voices as writers, and use that voice to articulate the many rich ideas that result from our different perspectives and experiences.

Course Requirements:

In order to pass this class to your and my satisfaction, your efforts must reflect a willingness to engage with class material and requirements at a level consistent with your own educational goals. In other words, you are your grade, and I evaluate your work. To break this down so you know what you may expect from me:

B-level work will include a final portfolio of satisfactory quality, including participation, depth, and thoroughness in your contributions to your workshop group and the class as a whole. You attended all workshops and conferences and enthusiastically participated in all aspects of the writing process, from invention to preliminary drafts culminating in thoroughly revised, well-developed final drafts that have been submitted in accordance to set deadlines. You have met my expectations for this class with a B.

A-level work will include all of the elements and specifications required of a B-level portfolio, but with a pronounced excellence in quality. There will be evidence of a deep and thorough engagement with assignments and subject matter throughout the term. You have exceeded my expectations for this class with an A.

C-level work will include a mix of satisfactory and unsatisfactory quality in the final portfolio and throughout the writing process, including first and final drafts of each individual essay. You have met the minimum requirements for this class with a C.

D-level work (or below) will include a final portfolio of unsatisfactory quality, a marked lack of participation, and an unsatisfactory engagement or a failure to engage with the writing process. You will have failed to meet minimum requirements for the course with a D or below.

In short: A = insanely good; A- = really quite good; B = pretty good; B- = good; C = average-ish; C- = not even average-ish; D or below = pretty bad, actually

Attendance and Participation (20% of your final grade):

You cannot expect to succeed in this class without attending regularly and participating in class (either individually or in groups). To that effect, I will allow you two absences, no explanations necessary, as I recognize that life is messy and unpredictable. Absences in excess of this number will lower your final grade—more than four will result in failure of the class. If you miss more than three class meetings, it will lower your grade significantly. You must attend conferences—failure to do so will qualify as two absences. Participation will be assessed based on your contributions to in-class discussions and group work in addition to your preparedness for class—including coming to class with all assigned work finished and all reading completed. If you arrive to class more than fifteen minutes late, you will be considered absent and lose points for that day. If you must miss class due to participation in a university-sponsored athletic event, religious observances, or an emergency, you will need to contact me in advance to be certain of my requirements for make-up work. Make-up work will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Reading responses (10% of your final grade):

These shorter responses (1 page) will accompany the assigned reading in class and will be due the class after we meet for discussion. (So, if there is reading due on a Monday, we will discuss the reading that day and your response will be due at the beginning of class the following Wednesday.) They are generative in nature; that is, they are assigned with the intention of providing a very basic architecture upon which to begin developing larger ideas for the longer essays you will be required to write. You will be asked a guided question and will respond in turn—this may have to do with a particular theme or idea addressed in the day's reading. It goes without saying, then, that the successful completion of these responses is contingent upon students finishing all assigned reading.

Essay 1: Descriptive Essay (15% of your final grade):

A full draft and final essay 3-4 pages in length. Draft due January 13th, final due January 20th.

Essay 2: Critical/Analytical Essay (15% of your final grade):

A full draft and final essay 4-6 pages in length. Draft due February 1st, final due February 10th.

Essay 3: Persuasive/Argumentative Essay (15% of your final grade):

A full draft and final essay 4-6 pages in length. Draft due

Final Portfolio (25% of your final grade):

Your final portfolio will include all of the written work you produce throughout the term, including your initial rough drafts and any draft work you completed in addition to your final essays. To that effect: keep all peer workshop sheets, first drafts, and final drafts of your work, as they are all required aspects of your portfolio. The portfolio is meant to help students visualize and organize their progress as a writer and as a thinker, and a successful portfolio serves as a testament to your hard work and dedication to the

process and to a polished, intellectual product. A short (2-3 pages) reflective essay will be a required aspect of this final project.

My Philosophy:

I believe that writing is a process no single individual has ever (and will never) fully master, and as such recognize that it is not an easy thing to do. I do not believe in assigning work without purpose and I avoid assigning “busy work”—any assignment you complete for my class will have its place in the broader narrative of the course goals and objectives.

As a teacher and as a writer, I value the freedom to pursue my own ideas and cherish the right to develop those ideas to the fullest extent possible. As such, I wish for my classroom to remain a space where ideas are respected and treated as expressions of students’ intellectual engagement with course material and class discussion. That said, I will not tolerate behavior I deem fundamentally disruptive or inappropriate. **I reserve the right to make such distinctions at my own discretion.** We will not be avoiding some controversy in this class, and I have chosen reading to challenge you. This will be a space for students to grow intellectually and creatively, and that growth will not be impeded upon by others in the classroom. Writing well, writing critically, may also require delving into personal experience for some. Throughout workshopping, peer discussions, and discussions in class, you may be privy to the inner lives of your classmates in a very apparent, real manner, and any discussion of these elements in or outside of class must be approached delicately and, most importantly, constructively. In other words: Don’t be a jackass with regards to your classmates’ experiences, though wildly different from yours they may be. I want this to be a productive, valuable experience for you and for me. Ask me questions, don’t avoid office hours if you need them, don’t hesitate to ask for assistance where needed.

The Basics:

Papers: You will be assigned three longer essays throughout the term culminating in a portfolio project at the end of term. Essays must be typed, formatted, and documented according to MLA standards for written work, which we will address briefly in class. Due dates are made explicit in the syllabus and on assignment sheets. Failure to turn in any of the three essays (draft and final versions) or the written portion of your final portfolio will result in failure of the course.

Workshops: You will be required to workshop your rough drafts with your peers. Workshops will take place the day drafts are due and are a required aspect of the drafting process. As such, workshopping will figure into your final grade for an essay.

Office hours and contacting me: My office hours are Monday afternoons from 12 to 2 PM and are held in Neuberger Hall, room 378. I am also open to making appointments with students who have scheduling conflicts with my posted hours. My email address is oleary2@pdx.edu. This is the best way to get ahold of me, as I check it frequently and will respond to queries from students as quickly as I can. As a rule, however, I do not check my email after ten in the evenings during the weekday, and do so less frequently over the weekend. It would behoove you to avoid saving work until the last minute, as I am less

inclined to answer emails at two in the morning before an assignment is due. On that note...

Late work: All work should be completed by the due dates made explicit in this syllabus. As a rule, I do not accept late work in the absence of extenuating circumstances. It is your responsibility to have all materials ready for each class meeting—this includes having all written work finished and printed before class. For example, short responses are graded full, half, and no credit—late responses will receive no credit. Papers or drafts turned in after the due date (meaning the class meeting) will be deducted a full letter grade for every day it is late—not for every class day. So, if you have a draft due Monday and hand it in Wednesday, an A draft will have been reduced to a D: One letter for Monday, one for Tuesday, and another for that Wednesday. Every paper must be accompanied by a draft that has gone through a workshop. ***I will not grade final essays that did not go through the drafting process, and I will not grade final essays if you did not turn in a first draft.*** If you are ill or need to miss class the day any written work is scheduled to be turned in, you must email the work to me before the class meets. If you miss a workshop, you will be required to schedule an appointment in the Writing Center immediately in order to work with a consultant and have your work stamped. In the event of something significant (e.g. prolonged or sudden family illness, emergencies, etc), contact me and we will proceed appropriately.

A note on incompletes:

It is only on very rare occasions that I will grant a request for an incomplete. You must finish all required work for the course in order to pass.

A note on plagiarism:

I expect all work turned in to be the original work of each student. Do not submit work that is not your own in both conception and execution. Do not submit work that was completed for another class. Plagiarism in this class is grounds for immediate failure, and if it becomes a problem also grounds for expulsion from the university. If you have questions about proper documentation and citation methods, please see me or set up an appointment with a consultant in the Writing Center.

Technology policy:

While this is a writing class, phone, tablet, and laptop use during this time does not qualify as course-related inquiry. To that effect, I am a bit draconian about their use in my class—if I see it, I will personally make sure I never do again. If you feel taking notes on your laptop or tablet is an absolutely necessary extension of your leaning process, I will expect you to email me a full set of notes at the end of each class period. No exceptions.

Disability statement:

If you have a documented disability, it is your responsibility to register with the Disability Resource Center (drc@pdx.edu) at PSU. Please see me during the first week of class if you have a documented disability and I will be happy to make accommodations. Students who believe they are eligible for accommodations but who have not yet obtained approval through the Disability Resource Center should contact the DRC immediately. PSU's statement is as follows:

“Accommodations are collaborative efforts between students, faculty and the Disability Resource Center (DRC). Students with accommodations approved through the DRC are responsible for contacting the faculty member in charge of the course prior to or during the first week of the term to discuss accommodations. Students who believe they are eligible for accommodations but who have not yet obtained approval through the DRC should contact the DRC immediately at 503-725-4150.”

I reserve the right to alter this syllabus in accordance with the progression of the class—this includes but is not limited to revisiting due dates, homework assignments, and the course schedule.

Course Schedule

Source abbreviations:

WoW = Ways of Writing
NS = Norton Sampler
OL = Online (through D2L)

PART I: DESCRIPTION

- **Week One (1/4 & 1/6):**

Monday—

- 1) Introductions
- 2) Syllabus review
- 3) Activity: Is writing easy, what makes writing difficult?
- 4) In-class: Writing diagnostic—your writing biography

For Wednesday: Vonnegut, “How to Write with Style” (OL);
Didion, “On Keeping a Notebook” (OL); Gallop, “The Ethics of Reading” (OL); Douglass, “Learning to Read” (OL)

Wednesday—

- 1) Discussion of reading
- 2) Watch “The Clues to a Great Story”
- 3) What makes writing good/ what makes writing bad?
- 4) Discuss: Why write? (What’s at stake?)

For Monday: Read NS 59-78 “Description” and annotated example;
Wallace, “Shipping Out” (OL); Smith, “The Divine Ms. H” (OL);
WoW 86-88 “Writing about Experience”; short response to reading for 1/6

- **Week Two (1/11 & 1/13):**

Monday—Due: Short response #1

- 1) Writing as a process: generating ideas, drafting, revising
- 2) Writing an essay: organization, writing a descriptive essay
- 3) “5 Paragraphs” exercise
- 4) Personal experiences and ideas

For Wednesday—Read NS 24-36 “Planning” through “Visuals”;
WoW 50-52 “Peer response”; short response to reading for 1/11;
descriptive draft due

Wednesday—Due: Descriptive essay draft
1) Peer workshops

- **Week Three (1/18 & 1/20):**

Monday—No class (MLK Day)

Wednesday—No class, CONFERENCES

For Monday: Read NS 292-304 “Process Analysis” and annotated
example; Katz, “How Boys Become Men” NS 316-319

PART II: ANALYSIS

- **Week Four (1/25 & 1/28):**

Monday—Due: Descriptive Essay final

1) In-class analysis: Bring an advertisement to class

2) In-class reading: “Girl,” Jamaica Kincaid

For Wednesday: Read