

ENGLISH 127 – Research Writing for the Social Sciences

Theme: Understanding Social Change

Green River Community College

Spring 2010

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Course Description

We are bombarded on a daily basis by information and viewpoints relating to society, the world, and even ourselves. Not only can it be overwhelming to sort through, digest, assess, make use of, discard or resist this vast outpouring of material, we can also end up as the passive recipients of information and opinions masquerading as truth, rather than as active seekers and creators of knowledge who are entitled to participate in ongoing social conversations that can have wide-ranging effects. While this is NOT a social science course, English 127 nevertheless asks us to take seriously the premise and promise of the social sciences that we can produce—through careful research, evaluation of evidence, critical thinking, and effective writing—reliable, useful, and dynamic knowledge about human experiences and societies. The social sciences include a number of disciplines, such as History, Sociology, Political Science, Anthropology, and Psychology, among several others. While we cannot cover readings and issues from all of the social science disciplines in equal depth, we will address a range of questions, methods, interpretive frameworks, and organizational strategies common to most of them.

Students will read, research and evaluate social science articles and other materials—covering social, historical and political issues and debates relating to the broad topic area of Social Change—in order to understand their claims and conclusions, research questions, research methods and use of evidence, and strategies of interpretation (theories). Students will conduct extensive secondary research on a topic of their choice related to Social Change (with instructor approval) using the library, electronic databases and the World Wide Web. The course requires three major essays, all of which will include secondary sources documented in the APA style: the Background Essay (4-5 pages), Literature Review (5-6 pages), and the Final Research Article (12-15 pages). Additional assignments include informal journal entries, blog entries on the course NING, partial drafts, critical analyses of readings, annotated bibliographies, peer reviews, classroom presentations, and a self-assessment.

English 127, a second-level college composition course, continues to emphasize key skills taught in English 101 but also presumes student proficiency in them. This course further presumes that students have a college-level mastery of the mechanics of writing, including punctuation, grammar and basic paragraph development; therefore, the course will not actually provide instruction in these areas. Students—by referring to a writing handbook, visiting a tutor at the GRCC Writing Center (RLC 174), and/or consulting the instructor—are responsible for ensuring that their writing does not have significant errors, and for learning to correct mechanical errors as they are pointed out.

Prerequisite: English 101. English 127 is a 5-credit course and satisfies the basic skills requirement for the AA, AB and AM degrees; see advisor for AS. Students must also register for LIB 110 LCA, item #5553.

Required Texts and Materials

- Booth, W. C., Colomb, G. G., & Williams, J. M. (2008). *The craft of research* (3rd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Writing handbook (any of the handbooks from English 100 or 110 will be acceptable, e.g., *A Writer's Reference*, *The Bedford Handbook*, *The Longman Handbook for Writers*, etc.)
- Standard, college-level dictionary.
- Weekly course packets with schedules, assignments and readings (to be distributed by instructor).
- Notebook or binder with blank pages for note taking, pre-writing, reading responses, in-class writing, preparatory notes, and journal writing.
- Binder or folder with pockets for keeping and organizing handouts, drafts and other course material.

Assignments

Major Assignments

- Background Essay (4-5 pages)	15 %
- Literature Review (5-6 pages)	20 %
- Final Research Article (11-15 pages)	25 %
Peer Reviews	10 %
Journal Entries, NING Blogs, Quizzes	15 %
Panel Presentations	10 %
Self-Assessment (Reflective Essay)	5 %

Note: Each of the three “Major Assignments” (essays) requires a first and final draft for which you will be paired with a peer partner. **There are no optional units, so you must complete first and final drafts for each of the three major assignments listed above in order to get any credit for this course; otherwise you will receive a 0.0.**

You are expected to choose a single narrowed topic for the quarter, which will be the topic that you investigate for each of the three major essays. The first two essays, in substantially revised form, will become significant sections in your Final Research Article. Your topic and your narrowing of it may go through many changes in the quarter, and in some instances students may wish to change their topics altogether. Notwithstanding the level of change that your topic undergoes, the Final Research Article is expected to be a coherent whole with relevant background and literature review sections.

Although you may not always receive individual comments from me on your preparatory work and first drafts, you will receive comments and a grade on the final drafts of the first two major essays. In revising your assignments from the preparatory to the final draft stage, it is your obligation to incorporate feedback from your peer review partners along with my general comments and suggestions to the class; you are also encouraged to seek clarification from me at any stage of the process and/or consult a tutor at the GRCC Writing Center (RLC 174).

Learning Objectives

Students exiting English 127 should have acquired the skills, attitudes, and abilities listed below, which they will need in order to be successful writers in college and beyond. These will be demonstrated by the assignments listed above. Students completing English 127 should be able

1. to read and evaluate substantial print sources and view relevant non-print sources with critical awareness in order to understand the questions, research methods, and interpretive frameworks commonly found in the social sciences; to explore and engage with the personal, social, political and historical relevance of ideas, issues, methods and debates presented in course and research materials;
2. to practice writing as a recursive process that includes prewriting, planning, drafting, revising and editing; to revise and edit first and/or subsequent drafts in order to produce professional quality writing and to improve tone, style, and organization for specific writing contexts and audiences;
3. to work collaboratively in pairs or groups to engage in conversation and debate, offer critical feedback on the writing and thinking of others (peer reviews), develop shared analysis, undertake joint projects with equitable distribution of labor, and facilitate the fruitful participation of all;
4. to follow, and adapt as necessary, a series of steps towards producing the Final Research Article, including topic selection, preliminary research and brainstorming, the Background Essay, annotated bibliographies, the Literature Review, drafting, revision, among others;
5. to fulfill the conventions of producing academic arguments (engaging in scholarly conversations), including a carefully chosen and narrowed topic, a well-formulated research question that is contested and of interest to readers in the field, a clear thesis statement (hypothesis) that responds to that question, support for the hypothesis with critical reasoning and reliable, relevant, and substantial evidence, acknowledgment and responses to various views, and an awareness of the assumptions (warrants) that may need development or terms that may need definition;
6. to gain information literacy, which means learning how to choose appropriate research tools, including library resources, electronic databases, and the World Wide Web, to access, select, evaluate and incorporate a range of secondary sources, as well as primary sources and other data and evidence when suitable, in order to produce a scholarly paper with documentation of incorporated sources in the APA style (American Psychological Association);
7. to examine diversity by recognizing one's social position and geopolitical location; by investigating power relations as well as economic, political, and social inequalities and their effects on communities; and by collaborating and interacting effectively, equitably and respectfully within the classroom.
8. to demonstrate responsibility by attending class regularly and punctually; being prepared for class discussions; submitting assignments in a timely fashion; collaborating with others respectfully and effectively; knowing and following the policies and procedures with regard to academic and classroom expectations both in this Syllabus and the GRCC Student Handbook; understanding and avoiding plagiarism; and being aware and taking advantage of the resources available through the instructor and on campus;
9. to understand social change by exploring theories and frameworks for analyzing social problems; identifying community needs; investigating strategies, barriers and opportunities for change; and studying relevant organizations and agencies.

Participation and Preparation

While this is a writing course, a good deal of reading is required both from our texts and from your adventures in the library, electronic article databases, and the World Wide Web. Therefore, make sure you schedule enough hours in the week to give yourself time to read, digest, reflect on, and re-read material as necessary. You must do all the reading *prior* to the date for which it is assigned to be discussed in class. **Identify at least one passage/quotation and formulate at least one discussion question for each assigned reading.** Come prepared to present your passage and question, share your views, engage in dialogue with classmates, participate in group discussions, write thoughtfully in class, and enhance your and others' perspectives and interpretations through this process.

NING Blogs and Responses

Students will join and create a profile on the NING social network for this course (at ning.com). There will be one or more NING postings due (in the form of blogs) on most weeks, as well as required responses to your fellow students. Required NING postings will count under the Journal Entries portion of your grade.

Panel Presentations

Students will join groups (based on topic choice) and will present individual and joint research to the class. Panel presentations will require advance preparation and meetings, as well as a follow-up written report assessing the panel.

Grading

Green River uses a 4 point decimal grading system; letter grade equivalents are listed below (see the GRCC catalog). I assign letter grades for major assignments, which can be translated as the middle range of the corresponding letter (except an A, which gets calculated as a 4.0, and a D, which gets translated as a 1.0). For example, a B+ will be calculated as a 3.3. Journal entries, in-class writing, and group activities will receive a ✓, a ✓- or a 0. A ✓ means you received full credit for the assignment, a ✓- means you received half-credit (either because of incompleteness or lateness (up to two calendar days), and a 0 means you received no credit. Since these more informal assignments count for 10% of your overall course grade, and since you are ensured full credit simply for doing them adequately and on time, I highly recommend that you do not miss *any* of them.

4.0-3.9 = A	2.1-1.9 = C
3.8-3.5 = A-	1.8-1.5 = C-
3.4-3.2 = B+	1.4-1.2 = D+
3.1-2.9 = B	1.1-1.0 = D (1.0 is the lowest passing grade)
2.8-2.5 = B-	0.9-0.0 = F (failure or unofficial withdrawal)
2.4-2.2 = C+	

While specific assignments will have their own requirements, the following is a general guide to the grading criteria for what is considered A, B, C, D, and F levels of work.

A	“A” work is exceptional. It goes above and beyond the stated requirements of the assignment in terms of the creativity, ambition or complexity of ideas; or the clarity, organization, or presentation of the content. Mechanical errors (grammar, punctuation, spelling, formatting, etc.) are rare.
B	“B” work is above average. It goes beyond the minimum requirements of the assignment but not to an “A” level; “B” work may excel in some, but not the majority of aspects of the

	assignment. There may be a few mechanical errors, but these do not distract the reader substantially.
C	“C” work is average. It meets the expectations of the assignment and shows competency, but it does not go above and beyond the assignment in any significant way, nor does it demonstrate creative engagement with the relevant course material or assignment objectives. Mechanical errors may be more noticeable.
D	“D” work is below average. It fails to meet one or more of the assignment’s requirements but does meet some of them. There may be frequent mechanical errors or evidence of significant carelessness in conception, composition or presentation.
F	“F” work is failing level. It fails to meet one or more of the assignment’s requirements, including the most significant one(s).

Late Policy

All papers and assignments are due at the beginning of the class period for which they are scheduled. The Background Essay, Literature Review, and Final Research Article also require typed first drafts. For each day either the first or final draft of any graded assignment is late, your grade for that unit will be lowered by 1/3 a grade (so a B would turn into a B-, a B- into a C+, etc.). Journal entries, in-class writing & group activity scores will go from a ✓ to a ✓- if they are late (by no more than two calendar days). Since you are required to work with fellow classmates on many of your assignments through peer reviews or group activities, a late or missed assignment will also mean that you get a zero for the peer review or the related in-class activity. *Note:* Since none of the major assignments (see “Assignments” section) in the course are optional, you must complete them even if they are late in order to pass the course. Contact me as far in *advance* of a due date as possible if you have extenuating circumstances or feel that you have a legitimate exception to this policy.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory and will be recorded. Failure to attend at least one of the first week’s classes will result in a 0.0 for the course. During the quarter, more than three absences will lower your final grade by a 1/3 of a letter grade, with an additional 1/3 letter grade reduction for each subsequent absence. I make no distinctions between excused and unexcused absences (except in very rare cases), so save your quota for illnesses and other mishaps. Because much of class time will be spent in group work, which includes exploratory discussions and peer review workshops, attendance is crucial for fulfilling your obligations to others. You must bring a draft of your own paper and be present on the days when the first drafts of the three major papers are due in order to be assigned a peer partner. In-class writing exercises may not be made up. Late arrivals and early departures will count as absences. **If you are absent, it is your responsibility to keep up with the reading and writing assignments as listed on the weekly schedules, to request handouts, to make up any missed work if possible, to get notes from a classmate, and to arrange to see me if necessary. Do not expect me to seek you out or to keep track of what you may have missed.**

Scholastic Dishonesty

You are bound by the Student Code of Conduct in the GRCC *Student Handbook*. Scholastic Dishonesty includes having others do work for you, doing work for others, and plagiarism. Plagiarism is when you copy or use an outside source without properly referencing it, which includes using others’ ideas without attribution, inappropriate paraphrasing, and the outright reproduction of others’ passages or entire text. Save all materials, including first drafts, short assignments, preparatory notes, secondary sources, and final versions; you may be required to submit these upon

request. Students suspected of scholastic dishonesty on a particular assignment will be asked to meet with me and produce evidence of their writing process; those found guilty will receive a failing grade for the assignment or for the entire course, and will be referred to the Dean of Academic Education for further action. Those who plagiarize any portion of the Final Research Article will automatically fail the entire course.

In this course you will be working in groups and by yourself. While you will get feedback from your classmates on early drafts, the final work must be your own. Do not have anyone else edit your work either for its style and language use or for mechanical errors. The only authorized sources of outside help are "The Writing Center" (RLC 174) and "The Tutoring and Resource Center" (2nd floor, Holman Library). Keep a record of each visit and any drafts on which you have received comments and assistance. It is also possible to plagiarize yourself! If you submit work already completed for one course as original work for another, you are plagiarizing. However, if you wish to substantially revise or re-think a piece of writing you have already done, discuss your intentions and goals with me *beforehand*.

Diversity

We are all responsible for establishing a lively, vibrant and safe community of learners, readers and writers. Respect for the diversity of perspectives, histories, experiences and identities that exists in any community is crucial for its productive functioning. This class, to varying degrees, will be examining and producing writing relating to issues of gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class, all of which can be controversial and generate impassioned and even confrontational positions. Since you are taking this course during a time of war, with numerous conflicts and tensions that remain unresolved, it is also important that you are thoughtful and circumspect rather than disrespectful and hateful in discussions of Iraqis, Afghans, Muslims, Arabs, immigrants, and soldiers as various issues arise.

In seeking to understand and engage in dialogue on any topic, we are interested in comprehensively and critically surveying the range of views available. In an academic environment (and hopefully elsewhere), our own engagement with these issues must not include demeaning remarks and insults, stereotypes, careless generalizations, or the refusal to allow people opportunities to present and develop their ideas publicly. Any environment that claims to encourage dialogue, as opposed to confrontation, is relatively fragile. The danger is not only that some participants may be offended or hurt, but also that they may be silenced.

Any student engaging in sexual or racial harassment, deliberately creating a hostile environment, or who does not alter his or her participation after a concern has been explained will be reported to the Dean of Academic Education. If you encounter a problem and do not feel comfortable talking to the instructor, you may wish to contact Diversity & Multicultural Affairs, Women's Programs, Counseling Services, International Programs, or Disability Support Services.

Special Needs

If you need course adaptations or special accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information, or if you have special accommodations that need to be shared with me in the event that the building needs to be evacuated, please contact me. If you use an alternate medium for communicating please let me know as soon as possible so that appropriate accommodations can be made. Disability Support Services may be contacted at: (253) 833-9111, x 2631 or TDD at (253) 288-3359.