

Reading 094: Reading Improvement

Spring 2011

Item: 7655

Class Times: Daily 9:00-9:50 A.M. in RLC 132

Instructor: Chris Janus
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Office: KC 277

Office Hours: By appointment

REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS

- *Mirror on America: Essays and Images from Popular Culture*. Fourth Edition. Eds. Mims & Nollen
- Access to Angel, a Green River email account, package of highlighters or different colored pens.
- A folder to store class notes, handouts, and short writing assignments.

COURSE SUMMARY

Reading 094 is designed to present you with a set of tools, strategies, and practices that will make you a more effective and conscious reader and thinker. By developing these skills, you will be more prepared to thrive when you encounter difficult readings in the college environment and in the workplace. As a side effect, I hope that these skills will also help you appreciate the power of reading for pleasure.

To develop these reading strategies, emphasis will be placed on skills such as reading previewing and annotating; identification of main ideas, sub ideas, and overall organizational patterns; basic reading comprehension and development of reading rate and vocabulary; and examining how you personally relate to the text you are reading. Reading is a skill that needs to be practiced daily to improve—just like learning a musical instrument or becoming better at a sport, reading and writing skills can best be improved by performing more acts of reading and thinking critically about those practices. So, we will be practicing these skills on a daily basis.

In this course, we will be primarily be reading academic essays that focus on popular culture. Many of the topics relate around themes of personal identity, diversity, technology, and advertising. However, we will also be doing other small sub-topics that range from poetry and fiction to more scientific texts, so that we can develop a well rounded reading experience.

COURSE GOALS

Specific assignments, texts, approaches, and emphases will vary based on instructor. Reading 094 has four primary goals:

1. To improve student comprehension when reading a variety materials.
2. To provide students with study reading strategies and techniques.
3. To increase student reading speed and accuracy.
4. To increase student enjoyment of reading.

Students will achieve these goals by developing the following skills:

- Previewing, skimming, and scanning of reading material.
- Relating reading rate to purpose and text difficulty.
- Using a variety of techniques to determine word meaning.
- Identifying main ideas and supporting details.
- Recognizing implied main ideas and the central points.
- Understanding relationships that involve addition and time.
- Understanding relationships that involve examples, comparison or contrast, and cause and effect.
- Distinguishing between fact and opinions.
- Making inferences.
- Understanding purpose and tone.

Student will demonstrate mastery of the skills listed above by:

- Successful achievement on quizzes and tests.
- Successful achievement on reading drills and exercises.
- Answering written and oral comprehension questions.
- Cooperating in small and large group activities in an active and collaborative manner.
- Active and meaningful participation in class discussion and lecture.

Prerequisite = 2.0 or higher in Reading 84 or appropriate COMPASS score.

Campus Goals

At Green River Community College, four campus-wide learning outcomes have been identified and endorsed by the college community as a whole. In addition to basic course content, every course must include learning objectives to address at least one of the four campus-wide outcomes:

1. Critical Thinking
2. Quantitative Thinking
3. Responsibility
4. Written Communication

This course will include elements of critical thinking, written communication, and responsibility through its various activities and assignments.

RECURRING COURSE PRACTICES:

All the work in Reading 094 is organized around the interdependent acts of reading, writing, and discussion. The goals of this course culminate in you becoming a better, more conscious reader, so what we do in 094 is designed to be completely inter-connected. Discussion and

Discussions & Active Participation— Every class meeting will require your involvement in either class discussions, group work, or individual work. In all cases you are expected to be engaged and make an effort to participate. Active participation requires more than just coming to class, but it requires that you did the homework and come ready and prepared to work. Falling asleep, texting, not paying attention, and other such behaviors will be noted.

During these discussions, we will be touching on controversial world and life issues. It is quite likely that during these discussions someone will reveal vulnerable and private information about their own life and personality. In instances like this, it will be necessary to show respect and confidentiality toward your classmates as responsible members of an academic circle.

Vocabulary and Responses— For each reading, you will choose two quotes and five words that move you, make you wonder, and/or stump you. For each vocabulary word, you will write a definition in **your own words**. For each quote, you will select a passage, copy it, and write a small paragraph (at least 5 or 6 well developed sentences)

describing how you (personally or intellectually) relate to the words and ideas. For example, you may come across a passage that describes how people use avatars in video games as a means of self-expression. For your response, you could write about how you have used avatars before, or if you know anyone who does and what your opinion of that action is. The major idea here is to develop a deeper engagement with the essays by thinking more critically about how we related to the subjects being discussed. This assignment will be collected the day the reading assignment is due. Readings for the quizzes are exempt from this assignment.

Longer Responses—The longer responses are meant to be informal, low stakes explorations of the topics we have covered in the readings. I will assign these occasionally throughout the quarter in response to the essays we read, and they will be approximately 1/2 page to a page in length. The purpose here is to start thinking critically about the readings and engage with them on a higher, more sustained level. There will be four of these due throughout the quarter.

Quizzes – There will be almost weekly quizzes, held during our class on Fridays. They will cover aspects of what we have done in class that week. The quizzes are a substantial portion of your grade, but they reflect many features of the course that require you to do your homework, think while you read, participate, and apply the skills and techniques we have covered so far.

I use the term “quiz” very lightly here. You will not be required to memorize facts or vocabulary words, nor will be “testing” you on your ability to recall facts. Instead, these quizzes will be performance based, focusing on the skills that have been developed in class. They will be opportunities to perform the work we have been doing in class but with higher stakes involved.

Book Report + Presentation – As one of the course goals is to foster a greater reading appreciation, these book reports and presentations, will provide you a way to reading something aside from the academic essays we will read in class. For this project, I will ask you to select a book to read outside of class: a novel (fiction, historical, sci-fi, etc.), a biography, or a collection of short stories or poetry. Around week 6/7 we will be devoting our class time to short presentations about the book, covering aspects of what the book is about and why it is should be read (what sort of value it has for readers). There will be also a short 1-2 page essay that you will turn in that provides a brief summary and evaluation of the book. More explicit instructions will be given at a later date.

Final Project—This will be a short written assignment (2-3 pages) that will capitalize on many of the skills we have worked on over the course of the quarter, such as finding connections between readings, finding connections between the readings and your life, and how the readings reflect and influence the world around you. We will go over this much more substantially in class, but in short, here is a general overview of the project: Since we won’t have time to read all of the essays in our textbook, you will select 3 essays we have not covered in class, and write about a common theme that runs through all three of them.

OFFICE HOURS

Either in response to your progress in class, your reading, your writing, or for anything about the class in general, please utilize my office hours to come talk to me. These slots (other times can also be arranged) are developed specifically for *you*, the students. So, please do come and talk with me. I love having discussions with students about writing and life, and I can usually see an improvement in the quality of the student’s work as a result of visiting office hours.

ATTENDANCE:

Each time we meet, we build upon the skills that we worked on in the previous day and classes. In this sense, attendance is absolutely vital—if you’re not in class, you’re not learning. Since this is a university course, I expect that you’ll come prepared each day, ready to contribute to class, and willing to engage in the work we do together. I assume you are up to the task.

Please talk to me if you feel like you are having trouble keeping up with the work, carrying your share of the burden, or have other extenuating circumstances. I'm generally a nice guy, so keep me in the loop and let me know of any issues. If I don't hear from you, there is nothing I can do. Should you miss class, it is your responsibility to make up all the work done that day as well as get the notes for that class period from a peer in the class. I do appreciate an email letting me know of your absence so I know that you okay, and if anything is due on that day, you should email it to me as soon as possible. However, do not expect me to seek you out and tell you what you missed.

This is a performance-based course where you practice what you learn and learn when you practice, so you need to be present and working each time we meet. Because emergencies arise, I will allow five (5) absences with no effect on your grade. Your attendance directly reflects your overall performance in the course. As such, the following is how your attendance/participation grade will be determined: 0-5 days missed = A. 6 days missed = B range. 7 days missed = C. 8 days = D. 9+ days missed = F. If you miss more than **ten (10)** days, you are advised to withdraw from the course since you will fail the course. Developmentally, you have missed so much that it is unlikely you will be able to pass.

Warning: If you are absent, you are still responsible for the work that is due during that day. Missing a class, or missing all 5 of the allowed missed classes, is something that may affect your performance in class. For example, if you miss half of the week where we are learning the material for a quiz, the chances that you will do good on that quiz will decrease, so do be aware of what days and when you are missing. Chances are that I will not be able to quickly describe to you in an email what you missed, because you would have missed a lot.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

The grade you earn in this class should reflect your learning. However, out of fear or ignorance, students sometimes submit other people's work as their own. This act of plagiarism, either intentional or not, is not acceptable within the walls of academia. Plagiarism is typically viewed as an act of intentional deception that is not only dishonest, but it also robs you of the most important part of education—the actual learning. Should I suspect that you have plagiarized, I will talk with you one-on-one and ask you to prove that the work in question is your own. If you are found guilty of academic dishonesty, you will automatically fail that assignment. If you are caught plagiarizing again in the same quarter, you will fail this class.

ACCOMMODATIONS:

If you believe you qualify for course adaptations or special accommodations under the Americans With Disabilities Act, it is your responsibility to contact the Disability Support Services Coordinator in the LSC and provide the appropriate documentation. If you have already documented a disability or other condition through the GRCC Disability Support Services Office, which would qualify you for special accommodations, or if you have emergency medical information or special needs I should know about, please notify me during the first week of class. You can reach me best over email, or you can schedule an office appointment to meet me in the HS Office Building during my posted office hours or at another mutually determined time. If this location is not convenient for you, we will schedule an alternative place for the meeting. If you use an alternative medium for communicating, let me know well in advance of the meeting (at least one week) so that appropriate accommodations can be arranged.

EVALUATION:

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| Homework—Vocab/quotes & Reading responses | 25% |
| Final Project | 20% |
| Book Report + Presentation | 15% |
| Quizzes | 30% |
| Participation/Attendance/Preparation | 10% |

****** You MUST earn a 2.0 to pass this course******

Grading Scale

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|-----------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| 99-100 = 4.0 | 83 = 2.8 | 71 = 1.6 |
| 97-98 = 3.9 A | 82 = 2.7 B- | 70 = 1.5 |
| 95-96 = 3.8 | 81 = 2.6 | 69 = 1.4 |
| 93-94 = 3.7 | 80 = 2.5 | 68 = 1.3 D+ |
| 91-92 = 3.6 A- | 79 = 2.4 | 67 = 1.2 |
| 90 = 3.5 | 78 = 2.3 C+ | 66 = 1.1 |
| 89 = 3.4 | 77 = 2.2 | 65 = 1.0 D |
| 88 = 3.3 B+ | 76 = 2.1 | 64 = .9 |
| 87 = 3.2 | 75 = 2.0 C | 63 = .8 |
| 86 = 3.1 | 74 = 1.9 | 62 = .7 D- |
| 85 = 3.0 B | 73 = 1.8 | 61 and below = failing |
| 84 = 2.9 | 72 = 1.7 C- | |

What Constitutes an “A”?

While specific grading criteria will be shared for the major assignments, the following is a general guide for what is expected at each grade level:

- “A” work excels in the expectations for the assignment. It goes above and beyond in clarity, content, organization, and presentation.
- “B+” work is above average. It goes beyond meeting the assignment, but doesn’t go as far as “A” level work.
- “B” work may excel in some areas, but not in the majority of areas designated by the assignment.
- “C” work meets the expectations of the assignment. It shows competency, but does not go above and beyond the assignment in any significant way.
- Below passing means that the work failed to meet the assignment’s requirements, or it does not reflect an appropriate amount of progress or development.