

ENG 126: Writing: Humanities

Spring 2011

Item: 3547 Section: KCU

Class Times: TR: 4:00-6:20 PM in KC 0286

Instructor: Chris Janus
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Office: KC 277

Office Hours: TR 3:15-3:50 PM
By appointment

REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS

- Literature: Reading, Reacting, Writing. Compact 7th edition. Editors: Kirszner & Mandell.
- A Writer's Reference. 6th Edition by Diana Hacker. (or some other writer's reference) *Strongly Recommended*.
- Access to Angel, a Green River email account, a USB drive, or reliable email to send yourself drafts.
- A folder to store class notes, handouts, and short writing assignments.
- A spiral notebook, composition book, or folder with rings for your reading journal.

COURSE SUMMARY

English 126 is a composition (writing) course designed to teach research writing in the humanities, specifically in the discipline of English literature. We will explore and experience how writing and reading, both formal and informal, can be a vital tool for making sense of, delving deeper into, and discovering the world around us. Many people read literature to learn and attempt to understand the human condition—we can learn about other peoples and our own psychological standing, culture, political and economic situation, gender and race relations, as well as many other aspects of humanity through reading. English is a multi-faceted field, where its scholars dabble into just about every academic discipline to interpret a text, but they typically locate their entryway into these issues through a literary text: a poem, a story, a film, etc.

In this course, we will work toward developing key reading skills for interpreting literature (poetry and fiction), while focusing on learning the lingo that scholars and academics use to talk about literature. We are starting with an emphasis on close reading because at the heart of every great piece of literary criticism is a close reading and interpretation of a text. During this process we will be engaging in critical thinking skills, such as in-depth analysis, interpretation, and evaluation. Then, we will move into the research component of the course, where you will be selecting a text, researching what has been written about it, and writing a research paper where you will engage with and apply a theoretical lens and reading of the text.

As a class, we will examine how other writers, as well as yourselves as junior scholars navigate an expansive field of literary analysis and criticism. In all likelihood, much has been said about what you'll be writing on, so we will place an emphasis of how you can contribute to and make your voice heard amongst this existing pool of criticism. Over the course of the quarter, I hope that each of you will begin to investigate and think deeply about the following "essential" questions of the course:

- What is my relationship to these literary texts? How can I more quickly and easily navigate challenging literature?
- How can I craft literary arguments and contribute to existing pools of scholarship?
- How can I better understand and improve my writing process?

I hope English 126 will help you understand and explore some of the elements that make writing rhetorically effective, intellectually stimulating, and satisfying. I invite you to challenge, complicate, and push your ways of thinking about writing (and your practice of it) in new and interesting ways!

COURSE GOALS

English 126 provides students with techniques and tools for effective written communication, which include critical thinking and reading; writing processes; and knowledge of conventions. We also place a heavy emphasis on general reading and reading appreciation skills. Specific assignments, texts, approaches, and emphases will vary based on instructor. English 126 will emphasize:

- **Critical reading:** Read and evaluate a range of sources in the disciplines of the humanities which may include the study of literature, painting, music, film, etc. at the discretion of the individual instructor; situate sources in their historical, social, political, economic and/or cultural contexts.
- **Interpretive Strategies:** Gain familiarity with and practice using a variety of interpretive approaches, such as attention to aesthetics, textual analysis, and literary and cultural criticism that are integral to the study of humanities texts.
- **Writing process:** Practice writing as a recursive process that includes topic selection and narrowing, prewriting, research, planning, drafting, revising and editing, and use tone, style, organization, content, and argument to meet the needs and expectations of specific writing contexts and audiences to produce writing that is professional in format and appearance
- **Academic arguments:** Identify, evaluate, and be able to develop the conventional components of an academic argument, which may include research questions, issue and/or claim (thesis or hypothesis); support (evidence and explanation); warrant (assumptions, values, beliefs, etc.); and engagement with multiple points of view. Respectfully consider and engage the diverse perspectives and intellectual contributions of others within the classroom.
- **Research tools and methodology:** Gain familiarity with a range of research tools and resources, including library materials, electronic databases, the World Wide Web, etc.; choose appropriate tools to find a wide and diverse range of secondary sources, including scholarly articles, and to evaluate critically those sources.
- **Research writing and source integration:** Learn and apply the conventions of various common forms of research writing, which may include annotated bibliography, research proposal, and argument informed by research, among others. Accurately and effectively incorporate and comment upon references to a variety of sources; recognize the differences among summary, paraphrase and direct quotation and when to use each; cite sources according to documentation style guides appropriate to specific disciplines within the range of the humanities (MLA or CMS); understand and avoid plagiarism.
- **Diversity:** Develop awareness of how social position and geopolitical location can affect identity, perspective, expression, and/or action. Evaluate how social, economic, and/or political situation can affect the way ideas are produced, distributed, and received.

To demonstrate proficiency in these course content outcomes, students will:

- Produce a scholarly research paper (approximately 2000 words) that puts forth an academic argument supported by reasoning and evidence based on research from primary and secondary source materials
- Write other formal and informal writing assignments totaling at least ten pages (2500-3000 words); these may include shorter literary analysis essays, in-class (timed) essay exams, annotated bibliographies, reading responses, research progress reports, peer reviews, reflective essays, self-assessments, etc.

Prerequisite = English 101

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 English 126 is organized around the interdependent acts of reading, writing, and discussion. The goals of this course culminate in you becoming a better, more conscious language user, so what we do in 126 is designed to be completely inter-connected. At the heart of the class are a series of recurring course practices that are designed to develop your thinking about issues, convey them via written form, and reflect and think critically about the writing and learning processes you have been working through.

Discussions and active participation — Every class meeting will require your involvement in class discussion. Our discussions will be formatted in a *Seminar* style of discussion. This means that our conversations about texts will be focused on you, the students. I can certainly stand up there and ramble on about a poem, but I am more interested in what you have to say about it. Our discussions will act as practice and models of the kind of literary analysis that I hope will show up in your papers. Sometimes our discussions will be about the ideas in the texts we read, sometimes they'll be about rhetorical choices writers make, and often they'll be discussions about our own writing. In all cases you are expected to be engaged and make an effort to participate. Though keeping a discussion going is everyone's responsibility, I may assign you to lead us now and then. During these discussions, we will most likely 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.

Reading Journal – I am going to ask you to keep a reading journal for this course. This will be a free zone for you to put down your thought and ideas, and where you can begin to interpret and make claims about the readings. Over the course of the quarter, I will ask that you contribute at least 12 total entries, with a minimum length of half a single spaced page if typed or a full page if hand written. I will collect the journal twice during the quarter to grade (cumulatively). The mid-quarter check in is to make sure that you are engaging with and thinking critically about the texts in some manner. Some of the entries will be given to you in and outside of the class, while others will be up to you to create.

Group Presentations – Since this is a research based course, we need to learn how critics analyze texts and become literate with the information technology we have available to us (doing academic research through the internet and library). Throughout the course, we will be devoting a period of our class time to small group presentations. More information will be given about this soon, but your task will be to research an assigned theoretical lens that literary critics typically use, learn what this theory is about, who the major voices are, and then your group will provide a short presentation (around 20 to 30 minutes) where you will teach the class about this theoretical lens and lead us through a brief class discussion.

Draft Review Workshops — Writers need readers. All writers, even those who are highly published, have a pool of colleagues to read, critique, and provide suggestions for improvement. So, one recurring feature of this course will be the use of draft review workshops to get feedback on ideas and content. Because I expect you to read your class members papers with the same care you would take with published writers, I will monitor and suggest ways you can become a better collaborator.

Writing Projects -- The formal writing assignments in 126 are sequenced to teach you how to generate and develop ideas from literary readings, how to focus and shape those ideas into cohesive and organized papers, and how to write in a style appropriate for the humanities discipline. There will be a number of smaller writing projects that lead up to your larger research paper that will be due on the last day of class.

The first two papers that you will write are a close reading assignment on poetry and then on short fiction. Here, you will be making a claim about the text and supporting it purely with some of the formal features or existing cultural knowledge you know about the text without doing any additional research. The emphasis on these first two papers (2-3 pages each) is to develop strong reading analysis skills that are demonstrated through a shorter written essay. The second paper will up the stakes a bit by requiring you to do outside research and to bring one voice into your argument. Then, we will move onto working on the research paper (7-10 pages long), where you will go

through the process of writing a paper proposal, annotated bibliography, and drafting process of the paper. These three sequences of the paper are typical of the kind of assignments that will be asked of you in the humanities, and they are vital ways of developing and refining your ideas and the direction of the paper.

CONFERENCES AND OFFICE HOURS

With the limitations of a composition course's class time, we will be able to extensively talk about the writing process, writing moves, and writing in generalities. However, writing is an individual act, and what works for one person doesn't work for another; and often what works in one paper won't work exactly the same way in another. Because there is no "formula" for writing an excellent paper, most of our class discussion will talk about writing in abstract terms, meaning they may not be specific to the current needs of the exact paper you are writing. For these reasons, there will be one mandatory individual conference during the quarter.

However, along the course of the quarter, you will be getting verbal and written feedback on your writing from your peers and some written feedback from me. Either in response to your writing, or anything about the class in general, please use my office hours to come talk to me. These slots (other times are also arrangeable) are developed specifically for you, the students. So, please do come and utilize them. I love having discussions with students about writing and life, and I can usually see an improvement in the quality of the student's writing as a result of visiting office hours.

ATTENDANCE:

Since this is a university course, I expect that you'll come each day prepared, 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. 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 two (2) absences with no effect on your grade. Your attendance directly reflects your participation and preparation for the course. As such, the following is how your attendance/participation grade will be determined: 0-2 days missed = A. 3 days missed = B range. 4 days missed = C. 5 days = D. 6+ days missed = F. If you miss more than **seven (7)** 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.

THE WRITING CENTER

The writing center is an excellent resource that you can utilize at Green River (it is even one that you have already paid for!). Individual, one on one conferences with either student tutors or adjunct faculty members can be arranged here to help you with your writing. They can help any stage of writing, from the initial brainstorming of the paper to more global concerns of organization and idea development. I would strongly urge each of you to make a visit to the writing center at least once during this class, even if it is just to see if it would be helpful. Special Note: using the writing center does not mean that you are a bad writer or student, but it is meant to help each one of you improve and become better writers. The writing center is open from 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM daily, and they allow online submissions for feedback, too. Location: RFL 137 on the main Auburn Campus.

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:

Poetry Explication Essay	15%
Fiction Character Analysis Essay	15%
Reading Journal	10%
Article Presentation	10%
Annotated Bibliography	10%
Final Research Paper (The final paper must be turned in to pass the class.)	30%
Attendance/ Participation	10%

Grading Scale

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.