

English 2010: Intermediate Writing

Required Texts: The Call to Write, John Trimbur. New York: Longman, 2002.

English 2010 Mercury Reader

Course Description

This course aims to give you opportunities to develop your knowledge and practice of writing, particularly focusing on practical rhetorical knowledge. This means that you will use what you already know about writing—strategies for invention, for composing, for research and critical reading, for revision—to be able to meet new challenges, in the form of more complex writing assignments, where you put your academic knowledge about writing and writing practices into play in public, community settings. In this course, we will continue with many of the assumptions and practices of English 1010, such as small group work, informal and exploratory writing, reading and discussion; but you will have a great deal more responsibility and agency for your choices in terms of subject matter and genre as you write, given your greater knowledge and experience as a college-level writer.

Course Goals

Student writers in English 2010 should be able to:

- Make choices in language that demonstrate awareness of the historical and cultural contexts of a writing situation, as well as make effective use of that

awareness;

- Display proficiency with a variety of writing strategies as they undertake complex writing tasks, and develop more self-awareness and command over their choices as writers;
- Analyze the ways academic texts represent culture;
- Develop deeper rhetorical knowledge of a particular topic, which entails writing within the conventions of a particular social conversation.

The above represents a recent iteration of the department's goals for English 2010. Additionally, we'll examine and exploit the bridges and barricades between academic and public writing, with the goal of enlarging your abilities to write proficiently and usefully in both contexts. As a result of your serious work in this class, you should also learn to make effective use of many different knowledge-making strategies, including formal and field research methods.

Course Methods

As mentioned above, we will work within the learning traditions of composition classrooms, using peer groups, small group discussion, with many different kinds of reading and writing opportunities. The course makes a special point of developing your capacity to research thoughtfully and rhetorically, so that by the time you leave this class, you should have a great deal more useful knowledge about how to find, evaluate, and use data, ideas, and other people's writing for your own specific rhetorical purposes.

My hope is that we will become a community of thinkers, readers, writers, and learners engaged in a mutual endeavor that is interesting and profitable for us all. The work of this course is best done together, with every member of the community fully present and participating. I offer the following as guidelines for such a community: Come prepared; don't miss class casually; respect one another's opinions by responding to them intelligently; read one another's work carefully, with as much thought and input as you would like your own work read.

Much of the work will be done in small groups, to make discussion and the work load manageable. Therefore, the work of the class cannot be done as well if everyone is not present. Working in groups benefits each member of the group. The more fully you participate as an individual member of the group, the more profitable the group will be for you. We will discuss the readings from our text in groups and also comment on drafts of essays in progress.

Conferences

This course is designed to give you opportunities to learn in several different ways: participating in small groups, participating in conversation within the larger classroom community, and working individually. Students often don't take advantage of another way to learn, working one-on-one with their instructors. This kind of work is especially important in classes such as this one, where individual work with your instructor can provide you with specific, direct help on issues that concern you in your writing. Therefore, I will plan two times for each student to meet with me to discuss his or her writing for the course

before that writing is graded.

Feedback and Grading

During the first week of the class we will discuss the "Proposal for a Grading Contract." As a class we will decide if the criteria set out in the proposal are reasonable and appropriate for a college-level writing class. Once that contract is discussed, revised if necessary, and agreed upon, we will use it as the criteria for grading.

Throughout the semester you will be doing informal, exploratory writing, as a means of developing your ideas and rhetorical strategies for the formal written assignments. Informal, exploratory writing will most often be turned into me for comment and discussion, and will also be read and discussed by small peer groups, but will not receive a formal grade.

Three times during the semester, you will turn in a revised writing assignment, along with supporting materials that we as a class agree upon. I will also ask that you turn in your learning journal with these assignments (see below). These assignments I will comment on and will assign a "signal grade." This signal grade will indicate to you the level at which I assess your reading and writing at that point in the semester. At that time you will also receive a general assessment concerning how I believe you are doing in class given the criteria set out in the grading contract.

At the conclusion of the course, you will select and revise what you consider to be the work most representative of your best writing. For this final

portfolio, you will have the opportunity to consult with me on matters of selection and revision. You will, as you have done before, write an analytic essay to "cover" the portfolio, explaining your selections and choices, as well as what the entire portfolio shows about your knowledge and practice as a writer. This final portfolio will also represent a significant portion of your grade (see below).

If at any point in the quarter you have questions or concerns about your grade or your standing in the class, you should contact me, either through an office consultation, a phone call, or an e-mail, to discuss those issues.

Writing Assignments

We will organize our work around three major assignments. Doing the writing for each assignment will entail several pieces of writing, including exploratory writing, responses to readings, research notes, notes from peer review, heuristic work, and a learning journal. Each assignment will culminate in a more formal piece of writing, toward which all the other writing is aimed. In every case, you will have a great deal of choice in both the topic and the details of your formal piece. As an accompaniment to each writing assignment, I will ask for a statement of your learning—a letter addressed to me in which you explain your own learning, interpreting the work you did in writing the assignment, directing my attention to the most important aspects of your work.

Each writing assignment will be worth 25% of the course grade. The final portfolio is worth 20% of the course grade, with the additional 5% based on your attendance/participation/preparation.

Learning Journal

As part of your writing in the course, you'll keep a reflective learning journal throughout the course. Please see the attachment for more about this assignment. We will negotiate the extent to which you need to write in this journal as part of the grading contract.

Technology

The Longman Web Site provides continuously updated resources for reading, writing, and research practice and simulates search activities for finding and evaluating information from the World Wide Web. The address is <http://longman.awl.com/trimbur>.

Writing Center

SLCC's Writing Center is multi-functional. In addition to computers for class use, the Writing Center also offers an advising program where you have the opportunity to discuss your work with a peer tutor or faculty writing advisor. The Writing Center advisor can help you think about your writing process by sharing impressions of your materials, offering revision strategies, discussing different ways to approach an assignment, as well as to provide an experienced reader for your work. The Writing Center is not simply a place to go to get a paper "fixed" or "corrected." Be prepared with questions for your advisor. Ask yourself what you want to work on, whether it's understanding an assignment,

having an advisor give you his/her impressions of a passage you've written, or to talk about "what you want to say." You may sign up for an appointment in AD 218. Advisors are available to help you with any writing assignment for any class you take. You may also send a draft to an advisor through e-mail. The address is ET@englab.slcc.edu. Be sure to include questions and concerns you may have and a copy of the writing assignment.

Accommodation for Disabilities

If you need accommodation, please talk with me and/or someone at the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at the beginning of the quarter or as soon as you are aware that accommodation is necessary. The DRC is in CC 230 or you can call them at 957-4659 (voice) or 957-4646 (TTY).

Learning Journal

In the learning journal, you consider your learning in this class, particularly your learning about your reading and writing processes. One way to describe this work is as metacognitive. This word derives from two roots—cognition, or "the mental process or faculty of knowing, including aspects such as awareness, perception, reasoning, and judgement"; and meta, or "beyond; more comprehensive; more highly developed." One of the goals of the learning journal is for you to think about, become more knowing, about your own knowledge-making or learning. More simply put, the journal is a space for you to reflect on your learning; that is, on how your learning is occurring more than on what you are learning.

For instance, we will be studying how different writers go about constructing arguments and entering into public discussions. In your journal you might reflect upon how you read the arguments of others, how that is different from other reading experiences, how it is similar, etc. Or you might identify what things we do in class that are particularly helpful to you, and what is not—and why. Or you might use the learning journal to sketch out your thinking about a particular issue, analyzing why you think that way as a precursor to more formal writing.

In short, the journal is a space for you to be reflective about your learning in an analytical and critical way—where you will be thinking about your own thinking.

Nuts and Bolts

In the beginning of the semester, I will provide you with many prompts for journal entries. As the semester goes on, these prompts will become less necessary as you find your own best ways to use the journal. When you turn in your formal writing assignments, you'll turn in the journal too, so that I can provide comment and ask questions.

As I read through your journal, I won't be looking for a certain amount of writing, but rather a certain level of engagement—regular entries that include reflection and analysis on the learning process through which you are going. The amount of writing in the journal will vary from person to person, but the regularity with which I would like you to use the journal should be apparent from the frequency of suggested journal prompts you receive in the first part of the semester. Most importantly, a critical level of engagement is required to meet the Grading Contract criteria for an A grade.

Grading Contract Proposal

The idea of the grading contract is similar to that of a job evaluation. To receive a certain grade your overall performance is evaluated. You are graded over the long term rather than in short, discrete pieces. I propose that the following criteria be used for assigning grades. We will discuss this as a class and determine whether or not these criteria are reasonable and agreeable to the class. The assumption here is that everyone starts in excellent (A) standing and that your work in class is your effort to maintain that excellent standing. Consequently, the criteria for an A are set out explicitly, with grades below an A due to performances that fall somewhat, to considerably, short of those criteria.

To achieve an A in the class you must:

- prepare fully for every class—have all reading done, writing accomplished, and be generally prepared to help the class or your group engage with the material for the day.
- participate actively in class—listen attentively to what others are saying (not just the teacher), respond respectfully to others' ideas, be willing to offer your own suggestions on a regular basis, and inform the teacher or class of hindrances to participation.
- turn in all assignments at the appropriate time (exceptions can be negotiated as they arise, but must involve good reasoning and be discussed in a timely fashion).
- exhibit "A" level reading and produce "A" level writing in your journal,

exploratory writings and formal assignments. What determines "A" level will be negotiated through assignments, handouts and feedback from the teacher—in other words, we will develop a shared understanding of "A" level works as the semester proceeds.

- meet the criteria set out for the learning journals.
- miss no more than two classes (extreme exceptions can be dealt with on an individual basis).
- be on time routinely—I will tell you if tardiness is becoming a problem.

To achieve a B, you will generally need to meet the criteria for an A, but with some inconsistencies. This inconsistency could happen in any area, but generally it shows up as not being prepared for every class (not having the reading done, not handing in assignments on time), writing projects that don't meet all the assignment criteria, sporadic participation in class, or attendance and tardiness problems. The key here is that you are generally meeting the criteria for an A, but occasionally or in a particular area you are not.

To achieve a C, those inconsistencies would need to become more of a norm rather than an exception. Any of the inconsistencies listed above that become the typical way that you interact in class—writing that continually misses assignment criteria, little to know participation in class discussions, routinely late writing assignments, etc.—would result in a C grade.

I assume no one is striving for a D or an E since neither grade is acceptable on your transcript. Quite obviously you have to be consistently failing to meet the criteria (or ignoring them all together) to receive any of these grades.

If at any time you are in danger of receiving one of these grades, I will ask you to talk with me to try to avoid that end.