

**ELA 1500-01 -- Voices of Community: A Writing Seminar
Spring 2008**

Monday-Thursday 9am-10:30 Killington Campus

Dr. Mary Pernal

Office: 3rd floor Dunton 34

Office Hours: Monday 2:30-3:30, Tuesday 12:30-2:30, Thursday 2:30-3:30, Friday: 12:30-1:30, *or by appointment.*

Learning Center Hours (additional office hours): **Main Campus:** Wednesday 9am-12, Friday 9am-11, *or by appointment.* **Killington Campus:** Monday at 8am-9.

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Required Texts

1. *The Writer's Presence*, 5th Edition, Edited by Donald McQuade and Robert Atwan, Bedford/St. Martins 2003.
 2. *Into the Wild*, by John Krakauer
 3. *Nickel and Dimed*, by Barbara Ehrenreich
- A Writer's Reference*, by Diane Hacker
Notebook (which must always be brought to class)

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Building on the writing skills developed in *Images of Nature*, *Voices of Community* provides students with more extensive practice in composition and revision. Whereas *Images of Nature* was focused primarily on the natural environment, *Voices of Community* explores our relationship to human communities. The course focuses on cultivating the conventions of Standard Written English and enriching students' expressive and stylistic resources through a series of assignments that explore from diverse perspectives how the environment encompasses human relationships and communities. The critical thinking and communication skills learned in this course enable effective and informed participation in these communities.

The course builds on the following skills introduced in *Images of Nature*:

- Generating ideas for writing (brainstorming, freewriting, evaluating possible ideas, refining ideas to a more specific level)
- Understanding and using each part of an essay's structure (introduction, body paragraphs, conclusion, thesis statement, topic sentences, transitions)

- Developing strategies for paragraphs (multiple examples; a single, extended example; analogy and other comparisons)
- Summarizing and cite information from texts
- Using grammar consistent with principles outlined in *A Writer's Reference*.
- Representing the main ideas guiding a piece of writing.
- Differentiating among theses, supporting ideas, and examples.
- Constructing a valid response to a piece of writing.
- Evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of a piece of writing.
- Listening to the ideas of others
- Clearly differentiating between facts, opinions, and ideas
- Developing and maintaining vocabulary appropriate to your audience
- Extrapolating information from varied sources, forming the basis of an informed opinion

LEARNING GOALS:

While consistently reinforcing these skills, *Voices of Community* examines how we live in the various human communities of which we are members. It focuses on the human environments that we have constructed within the surrounding natural environments.

We will accomplish this through the practice and cultivation of the following:

Knowledge of basic rhetorical strategies, including:

- Narrative
- Comparison
- Analysis
- Classification
- Definition
- Persuasion

Critical Analysis of communication, including print and non-print media

- Identifying logical fallacies
- Weighing the validity of sources
- Identifying potential biases
- Evaluating authorial positions
- Evaluating evidence: empirical, logical, emotional

Research skills

- Determining the nature and extent of information needed
- Accessing the needed information effectively and efficiently utilizing library and electronic resources
- Evaluating information and its sources critically
- Appropriately incorporating selected information into one's writing
- Using information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose

- Understanding the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the construction and use of information, and accessing and using information ethically and with proper documentation (Example: MLA, APA, Chicago).*

HOW WE WILL WORK:

The schedule below is quite complex and detailed, so please consult it frequently and contact me whenever you have questions. You'll note that there is something due, assigned, or to be read for just about every class, and because students who fall behind will be hurting both themselves and the functioning of the class, there is a severe penalty for tardy assignments: your mark will be lowered by one grade each day that they are late. The timely completion of all writing assignments and the taking of the final exam are the minimum requirements for passing the course.

Your writing will include one research paper of 10 or more pages, and two five-page papers. The five-page papers must each utilize a minimum of three sources, at least one of which is not on the course reading list. All work must be typed and follow the format specified by Hacker (p. 57-58) E.G. double-spaced, printed, sensible margins, stapled, page numbers, font: 12.

When I return assignments to you, problems will be highlighted in yellow and be accompanied by either my written comments or a reference to the "Revision Symbols" page at the end of Hacker. If I am returning a rough draft to you, I expect your revisions to be included in the final draft; if I am returning a final draft to you, you must make the indicated corrections and turn them in within one week. All revised assignments **MUST** be handed in with all previous versions, which is where the manila folder comes in. If you do not understand what is wrong with the highlighted passages, come and see me—this is your opportunity to receive individual guidance.

For ecological reasons, please print your assignments out on previously used paper, if possible.

Post-mortems are also an important part of the course. They function as a kind of group therapy during which class members discuss their experience of doing an assignment, while peers contribute insights, suggestions, constructive criticisms, and supportive sympathy. Students often find post-mortems particularly refreshing and revealing, not least because you also get to tell your instructor what should be done to improve the learning process. "Self-evaluation" and "feedback" are the buzzwords here.

RESEARCH PAPER

For Research Paper Guidelines, see Hacker p. 368-370.

Length: 10 or more pages, excluding bibliography.

A final copy of the research paper must be submitted electronically in addition to the hard copy.

PORTFOLIO:

In terms of total pages of finished writing, you will be expected to hand in at least 20 pages of polished writing throughout the semester. At the end of the semester, one essay (selected by the student) will be added to the ELA portfolio begun in Images. The essay will be evaluated in comparison to an essay from Images selected by the student using the Voices essay rubric; this comparative evaluation will be

* Based on the *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education*, The Association of College and Research Libraries, January 18, 2000.

done by the Voices instructor and an evaluator. The averaged evaluation of the readers will constitute 10% of your final grade. An electronic copy of the final research paper will also be added to the portfolio and retained by the ELA program.

GRADING:

Attendance: 10%

Participation: 10%

Written response to plenary session (2-3 pages) 10%

Two 5-page papers: 10% each, total 20%

Research Paper: 25%

Portfolio evaluation: 10%

Final Exam: 15%

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION:

Your class participation grade has a significant impact on your final grade. Included in class participation is completing assignments, engaging in discussions, and paying attention. Also included in class participation is coming to class on time and attending regularly. I begin every class by discussing where we are in the syllabus and outlining requirements for upcoming assignments. If you miss this crucial part of the class meeting time, you will be perpetually out of the loop and have a lost feeling. Every three times you are significantly late counts as an absence. Still, it is always better to come to class than miss it entirely. You are allowed two absences with a neutral effect on your grade. Three to four absences will negatively affect your class participation grade. If you have over four absences, you are no longer in a position to be graded alongside your classmates and should expect to fail. In some circumstances, I allow make-up work for absences exceeding the limit, but I will not grant that privilege in excessive cases. If you have an extended illness or other circumstance that is keeping you away, you must contact me, supply written verification, and I will do my best to work out an accommodation. On the other hand, if you have few than two absences, you will receive extra credit for your class participation grade. I take attendance everyday, out loud, to ensure that my records are accurate. If you are late, and miss attendance, you have the responsibility of notifying me after class that you were present, or else you will be marked absent.

ACCOMMODATIONS

If you have a specific learning, physical, or psychiatric disability and require accommodations, please let me know early in the semester so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. You will need to provide documentation of your disability to the Calhoun Learning Center. The Calhoun Learning Center is the office responsible for coordinating accommodations for students with disabilities. The Calhoun Learning Center is located on the 3rd floor of Griswold Library. If you have questions, please contact Coordinator of Accommodations, at x8234.

SCHEDULE:

Note: We will be discussing readings in class on the day they appear in the syllabus. This means that you should have read the work by that date.

Week One:

M-3/10 Introduction to *Writer's Presence* and the course. Discussion of the portfolio and specific writing needs.

Th-3/13 **Library Research Workshop I.** Rachel will come up from the main campus to work with you on how to research. You will have a writing assignment due at the end of the class: 1-2 page summary of article(s) on wilderness survival or extreme wilderness adventure experiences. You must include a correct works cited page. (Bring your Diane Hacker guide.)

Week Two: Theme: Our Place in Society: One young man's quest.

M-3/17 Discuss *Into the Wild*, by John Krakauer, pages 3-69.

Th-3/20 Discuss *Into the Wild*, by John Krakauer, pages 70-132.

Week Three:

M-3/24 Discuss *Into the Wild*, by John Krakauer, pages 133-203.

Th-3/27 Film: *Into the Wild*

Week Four: DUE Thursday: 5 page response essay to *Into the Wild*. You must utilize at least two outside sources.

Theme: Diverse Voices of Community (Text: *The Writer's Presence*)

M-3/31 Discuss "This is What It Means to Say Phoenix, Arizona" (Sherman Alexie), pp. 885-895, "The Way to Rainy Mountain" (N. Scott Momaday), pp. 510-515, *Mother Tongue*, (Amy Tan), pp. 290-294.

Th-4/3 Discuss: "Learning to Read and Write" (Frederick Douglass), pp. 153-156, "What's Your Name Girl?" (Maya Angelou), pp. 77-82, "A Clack of Tiny Sparks" (Cooper), pp. 121-129.

Week Five: Theme: Diverse Voices of Community (Text: *The Writer's Presence*)

M-4/7 **Topic: Religion, Spirituality and Community**

Discuss "Salvation" (Langston Hughes), pp.162-166, "This is Our World" (Dorothy Allison), pp. 633-641, "Why I am Not a Christian" (Bertrand Russell), pp. 773-785.

Th-4/10 Discuss "Living Like Weasels" (Annie Dillard), pp. 654-658, "Of Our Spiritual Strivings, (E.E.B. DuBois), pp. 658-666, "Corn-pone Opinions" (Mark Twain), pp. 853-858.

**Week Six: Theme: Diverse Voices of Community (Text: *The Writer's Presence*)
Topic: War & Injustice**

M-4/14 Discuss: "Hiroshima Diary" (Hachiya), pp. 34-39, "The First Hours" (Tim Townsend), pp. 51-54, "Last Letters Home" (Aaron White, Diego Rincon, Brett Christian), pp. 55-59.

Th-4/17 Discuss: "Shooting an Elephant" (George Orwell), pp. 221-239, "Stories Hollywood Never Tells" (Howard Zinn), pp. 872-882.

**Week Seven: Theme: Diverse Voices of Community (Text: *The Writer's Presence*)
Topic: War & Injustice (continued).**

M-4/21 Discuss: "Letter from Birmingham Jail" (Martin Luther King Jr.), 738-754, "Specimen days: Civil War Diary" (Walt Whitman), pp. 60-65.

Th-4/24 **Library Research Workshop II.** Rachel will come up from the main campus to work with you on research for your 10-page research/ persuasive essay. You will have a writing assignment due at the end of the class: 1-2 page summary of article(s) on your research topic. You must include a correct works cited page. (Bring your Diane Hacker guide.)

**Week Eight: Theme: Diverse Voices of Community (Text: *The Writer's Presence*)
Topic: Diverse Cultural Perspectives**

M-4/28 Discuss: "Reading Lolita in Tehran" (Azar Nafisi), pp. 516-525, Discuss: "How to Tame a Wild Tongue"(Gloria Anzaldua), pp. 324-334.

Th-5/1 "Notes of a Native Son" (James Baldwin), pp. 83-103.

**Week Nine: Theme: Diverse Voices of Community (Text: *The Writer's Presence*)
Topic: Social Issues & Perspectives**

M-5/5 Discuss: "Sex, Drugs, Disasters, and the Extinction of Dinosaurs" (Stephen Jay Gould), pp. 448-456, "Why McDonald's French Fries Taste So Good" (Eric Schlosser), pp. 559-569, "Worried? Us?" (Bill McKibben), pp.763-767.

Th-5/8 Discuss: "Politics and the English Language" (George Orwell), pp. 533-544, "Why Boys Don't Play With Dolls" (Katha Pollitt), pp. 545-548, "A Traditional Family" (Calvin Trillin), pp. 576-578.

Week Ten: *DUE Thursday: 10-15 page research/persuasion essay. You must have a topic to argue and must provide substantial research to support your position. This piece must present in-depth exploration of a topic and persuasive argument based on*

your views of the issue. It may include material from one of the essays in this section, but must utilize a minimum of 3 sources beyond the reading list.

M-5/12 Discuss: "Family Values" (Barbara Ehrenreich), pp. 671-678, "How Computers change the Way We Think" (Sherry Turkle), pp. 595-600, "The Clan of One Breasted Women" (Terry Tempest Williams), pp. 865-871.

Th-5/15 Short (5 minute) presentations of persuasive arguments & analysis, debate and lively discussion from classmates (active listening and response).

Week Eleven:

M-5/19 Discuss: *Nickel and Dimed*, by Barbara Ehrenreich, pp. 1-50.

Th-5/22 Discuss: *Nickel and Dimed*, by Barbara Ehrenreich, pp. 51-91.

Week Twelve: DUE Thursday: 5-page response/opinion essay. In this essay you must Respond to one of the works read in class (not *Into the Wild*) and provide an analysis of a topic presented by the author followed by your opinion on the subject. You must use at least two outside sources beyond the reading list. Essays will not be accepted after the last day of class.

M-5/26 Discuss: *Nickel and Dimed*, by Barbara Ehrenreich, pp. 91-119.

Th-5/29 Share excerpts from final essay. Discuss final exam.

-----Final Exam: Date to be Announced-----.

The final exam will be a closed-book essay exam covering the readings for this semester. As the time approaches, I will give you hints that will narrow the field a bit. Attendance at the exam is absolutely mandatory.