

# THE HISTORY AND POWER OF WRITING

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ADVANCED WRITING  
SPRING SEMESTER 2004  
COMPUTER MEDIATED

Office Hours: Monday 1:00-3:00  
E-mail: ks46@buffalo.edu  
Mailbox: Clemens 302  
Office: Clemens 504

## DESCRIPTION

English 201 H4 (REG. # 272304) meets Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 3:00-3:50 in Clemens Hall Rooms 106 & 128. This course is a one semester, 3.0 credit course in writing. This course is designed to help you improve your critical skills in articulation, analysis, discrimination, observation, logical debate and argumentation. You will improve your ability to independently design a comprehensive thesis, conduct responsible research and learn valuable methods of documentation based on the guidelines and strategies described by the MLA (Modern Language Association).

Moreover, you will continue to refine your skills in grammar and rhetoric while learning more about human experience and the significance of creative literary, social and artistic works. Emphasis will be placed on your ability to sustain a consistent tone and mode of address throughout your research papers. This course will include a workshop with the faculty in the Lockwood Library.

Though the acts of attentive reading, writing and thinking, your skills as a writer should enhance whatever forms of communication your academic discourse or profession may require. We will begin by postulating that meaning is made through experience and language alike. This hypothesis will be enriched by a diverse selection of readings and writing exercises.

Each of the texts you will encounter in this course has been carefully selected to enhance, refine and inspire your writing. A current *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* will serve as the primary guide to writing a successful research paper. The *MLA Handbook* will provide you with the necessary tools to conduct research effectively and properly. We will make use of this book throughout the semester. I encourage you to bring your copy to class every day, and to keep it at your side while writing at home.

We will have the privilege of working in 128 Clemens Hall, a classroom designed for computer-mediated writing activities such as (1) student conferences, (2) individual tutoring, (3) class presentations, (4) peer-editing activities, and (5) collaborative writing projects.

Henri-Jean Martin's *The History and Power of Writing* provides a fascinating introduction to the history of writing, from prehistorical marks to the evolving questions fostered by the post-digital age, this text is sure to provide a rich context for thinking about your

own writing in time. Supplementary readings, available through UB's on-line course reserve, will compliment these readings while contributing to your understanding of the relationships between various social, cultural, artistic and political debates relevant to the humanities. Through reflection, revision, collaboration and inquiry alike, you will be asked to formulate a critical assessment of yourself as a writer in both the mid-semester evaluation and the final portfolio.

Please note that this is a course in composition, and although the readings we will explore together will require a significant amount of determination, their primary function will be to serve as points for departure into your own writing and inquiry.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

In this composition course, class activities are essential to your development as a writer; in-class activities will include free writing, consultations and discussions with members of your workgroup, and the discipline of analyzing and editing of your workgroup's papers. The success of the course, and your successful performance in it, depend upon your participation and contributions, both spoken and written. You will be expected to complete two major independent studies. In addition to class presentation, students will be required to write, read and respond to the questions and debates outside of class. These should be responses to one particular issue pertinent to each of the assignments, with the objective to draw our attention to specific subjects for discussion, analysis or debate in our classroom meetings.

### **TEXTS**

**Available at Talking Leaves Bookstore**

3158 Main Street (across from the South Campus)

### **REQUIRED**

Gibaldi, Joseph *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2003).

Martin, Henri-Jean *The History and Power of Writing* trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).

### **SUPPLIES**

- a) Any good dictionary. If you do not currently own one, this is a good time to invest in one. There are many available in the bookstore. (I recommend the O.E.D. – which is also available on-line.)
- b) A full-sized notebook for writing assignments in class and for homework.
- c) A sturdy folder in which you keep all your work for the class AND a disk on which you save all your writing (*including* multiple drafts).
- d) All students are advised to download, print and organize all of the readings available at the SUNY Libraries on-line course reserve at the beginning of the semester, so as to avoid any last minute difficulties obtaining the reading materials. Simply click on "UB Libraries Catalogue" then "Search the Catalogue" and go to the "Course Reserve" section at the bottom of the screen. Insert my last name in the "Instructor" field, and an index of titles will appear. Additional materials may be added throughout the semester.

### **GRADING POLICY**

UB uses a lettered grading policy, A - F, including + and - grades. Your final grade will be calculated according to the following breakdown:

**ENGAGEMENT: 10%**

Participation begins with attendance. All students are expected to take responsibility for their own attendance, so as to avoid negative academic repercussions. Both absences and tardiness will affect this portion of your grade. Arrival in class after 3:10 pm constitutes an absence (although it is better to show up late than never). You are allowed three absences without penalty. A fourth absence will result in the reduction of your final grade by a full letter grade. A fifth absence will result in the reduction of your final grade by two full letter grades. A sixth absence will result in a failing grade for the course.

You are responsible for contacting a fellow class member or me in the event of a missed class due to unforeseen circumstances, and to get the assignments in advance if you intend to miss a class. In either instance, you are expected to be fully prepared for the next class session. I know that sickness happens, accidents happen, bad weather happens, computer problems happen, over-sleeping happens, family crises happen, etc., that is what the three excused absences are for. I encourage you to save them for these kinds of unexpected emergencies.

You are expected to keep daily notes, and questions for discussion based on all readings and homework assignments. These notes lead to more productive class discussions and will serve as a solid background for your formal writing assignments. Always be prepared to periodically receive brief tests on your readings and class notes.

Your engagement grade will also reflect the quality and thoughtfulness of your contributions in class, respect shown to class members, your attitude and role in small group exercises, and evidence given of completion of reading assignments. Preparation for, attitude toward, and involvement in our individual conferences count here, too.

Please note that many in-class writing exercises assume (and depend upon) your having read the assigned material. Review your syllabus frequently, and plan your workload accordingly.

**MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS: 70%**

Major assignments include the mid-semester research paper and the final research project.

**CRITICAL RESPONSES, REVISION & OTHER EXERCISES: 10%**

All homework assignments are due at the *beginning of class* on the date due. Late assignments are subject to having their final grade reduced (typically 1/3 grade for each day late). Absence from class on the date due does not excuse the lateness of your assignment. Allow plenty of time for printing your essay in the campus computer lab, and/or keep an extra printer ribbon/ink cartridge handy at home.

All essays handed in to me are to be typed/word-processed. Use a reasonable font such as Ariel, Bembo, Bookman Old, Times New Roman, Garamond, or Palatino in 10 or 11 point, double-spaced, with one-inch margins formatted to MLA specifications. I will not grade essays that are hand-written, and the assignment will accrue late penalties until it satisfies this requirement.

Informal essays and response papers will be evaluated for: a) quality (including technical and mechanical elements); b) command of voice, tone, and a sense of audience; the degree to which they satisfy the given assignment; c) and the development they demonstrate from earlier efforts or original drafts.

Assignments that are more than one week late will receive an F. However, you must complete all major assignments and submit a complete final portfolio in order to earn a passing grade for the course. Major assignments will be graded using the A - F scale. You have the right to revise two of your assignments for a higher grade. I strongly encourage you to meet with me to discuss the nature of the revisions you will make.

**FINAL PORTFOLIO: 10%**

Your portfolio will consist of papers revised especially for the portfolio review committee (see the schedule below for details). The end-of-semester portfolio will include a personal, yet critical evaluation of yourself as a writer that refers to your mid-semester self-evaluation. Revisions of at least three papers, including your final and mid-semester research projects are required.

**INCOMPLETE GRADES**

An incomplete grade may *only* be given to students who have (1) fulfilled the attendance requirement for the course and (2) completed all but one of the written assignments.

**PLAGIARISM**

Plagiarism is using another person's words and ideas as though they were your own. It is easy to avoid plagiarism: simply put the material you have taken from someone else's writing in quotation marks and cite the person's name and publication in your paper. Plagiarism is a serious offense that can result in expulsion from the University. A paper that contains any plagiarized material at all will receive an F; two such plagiarized papers will result in the student receiving an F for the course. (Note: plagiarism is not restricted to the use of published work; the passing of another student's work as your own is also a case of plagiarism.)

**PLEASE NOTE**

Save all the writing you do during the semester. You can clear your files at the end of the semester. Until then, you never know what may prove to be useful during a revision. If you compose and revise on a computer, periodically print out (or save on disk) versions of your draft so that you have a record of its process. Keep a copy for yourself on disk and on paper. In addition, keep all drafts on which you have received comments from your classmates or me.

# SCHEDULE:

## WEEK I GRAMMAR & RHETORIC : LEARNING THROUGH APPLICATION

Mon 01.12.04 Introduction to the syllabus. Freewriting on “language” and “experience.” Discuss an event that changed the way you thought about how language comes to mean. Consult O.E.D. on-line through the UB library homepage for the meanings of “language” and “experience.” Download and bind course reserve. Obtain texts at Talking Leaves Books.

Wed 01.14.04 *Introduction to the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers.* Spelling 3.1-3.1.4. Begin writing a two-page fable on a subject of your choice. Corrupt the spelling exhibiting at least two examples from section 3.1-3.1.4 of the MLA. Bring dictionaries to class on Friday.

Fri 01.16.04 Trade papers with another student. Correct each of their corruptions of spelling, and note which rule they have broken in the margin of their text. Remember to write your name in ink at the head of every paper you revise throughout the semester. Introduction to punctuation 3.2-3.2.4. Begin to construct a two-page essay on an experience that significantly changed your ways of thinking about how language functions in a social situation. Make sure your essay deliberately corrupts (on two counts) the proper use of commas, semi-colons and colons.

## WEEK 2

Mon 01.19.04 Martin Luther King Jr. holiday observed.

Wed 01.21.04 Trade papers with a partner, and correct their errors noting which they have broken in the margin. Introduction to 3.2.5-3.2.7. Reading the Irish Folk Tale, “The Farmer’s Answers.” Discussion of orality and transcription. Begin constructing a two-page essay written in the vernacular that deliberately misuses dashes, parenthesis, hyphens and apostrophes. Bring a hard copy to class on Friday, along with a copy on disk. Bring a disk with all of your current assignments to each and every seminar.

Fri 01.23.04 Correct your partner’s paper, noting which rule they have broken in the margin, and highlighting words and phrases that signify regional or social transmissions between speech and writing. Exchange this paper with a third party, who will review your corrections. Introduction to quotation marks (3.2.8) square brackets (3.2.9), slashes (3.2.10), spacing after concluding punctuation marks (3.2.12), italics (3.3-3.3.3). Create an essay (2 pages in length) that breaks each of these grammatical functions at least once.

## WEEK 3

Mon 01.26.04 Freewriting. Correct your partner’s essay, noting which rule they have broken in the margin of their text. Introduction to “Titles of Works in the Research Paper” 3.6-3.6.6. Create a list of poems, plays, novels, films, etc. Give this list to your partner. He or she will create a short essay or review using these titles properly. When it is returned to you, correct your partner’s writing. Bring four texts to class on

Wednesday. Be sure to have the full citation with you, and that they are from a variety of sources—plays, novels, poetry, newspapers, magazines, etc. Topics for mid-semester presentations will be assigned today.

Wed 01.28.04 Introduction to quotation 3.7-3.7.8. Begin to compose a short music review, making improper use of these quotations in class. Finish your review at home. On Friday, your partner will correct your improper use of quotation.

Fri 01.30.04 Introduction to The Format of the Research Paper, section 4.1 through 4.10 of the MLA Handbook. Discussion of the rhetorical strategies of Lester Bangs' "Astral Weeks."

#### **WEEK 4 MUSIC & METHODS OF RESEARCH**

Mon 02.02.04 Discussion of mid-semester research papers. Distribution of detailed specifications for this project (5-7 pages). Freewrite in the first person and in the present tense on the experience of your first (or favorite) musical performance.

Wed 02.04.04 Trading papers with your partner, ask: a) does the narrative hold my attention? b) how does it hold my attention? cite examples c) how does this narrative differ from the format, mode of address and tone of the music review? d) is it written consistently in the first person and present tense?

Fri 02.06.04 Informing and integrating personal experience. Due to the contemporary nature of many of these artists and performers, you will use digital and on-line periodicals to inform your narrative. Attempt to find three articles written on your subject (be it the specific musician, genre, tradition, etc.) and incorporate secondary sources in your own narrative through the use of quotation (including song lyrics), proper MLA citation and formatting.

#### **WEEK 5 THE "ENGLISH ONLY" DEBATE**

Mon 02.09.04 In this section, emphasis will be placed on your ability to complete a process of observation, inference and generalization with accuracy and precision. Begin by visiting James Crawford's article "Issues in U.S. Language Policy: The Official English Question" (url will be circulated in class via listserv). Follow links, and identify some of the major historical turning points that have contributed to both sides of this debate.

Wed 02.11.04 Class will be divided in two groups, for and against the "English Only" policy. Utilizing strategies in debate and rhetoric, compose a sustained argument for your position with recourse to Crawford's essay, and the sites he lists that oppose his own views on the subject.

Fri 02.13.04 "The Banking Concept of Education" by Paulo Friere.

#### **WEEK 6 DEVELOPING A THESIS/LANGUAGE & CLASS**

Mon 02.16.04 Paulo Friere: Assignments for Writing (Questions 1 & 2).  
Emphasis on argument, consistency of tone and understanding audience.

Wed 02.18.04 Jonathan Kozol's "Life on the Mississippi." Discussion of tense,  
place and tone of the speaker and the vernacular.

Fri 02.20.04 Making distinctions: Compare and contrast Kozol and Friere's  
tone, mode of address, voice within the essay and political/economic agenda. How do  
these authors conduct research? How does each author's mode of address and tone  
support their argument?

### **WEEK 7 CONDUCTING RESEARCH**

Mon 02.23.04 Library Skills Workshop.

Wed 02.25.04 —Fri 02.27.04 Class Cancelled for Mid-Semester Conferences. Mid-  
semester research projects due at conference. Please bring a letter of self-evaluation to  
the conferences. You will be assigned one chapter of *The History and Power of Writing* at  
this conference to outline and summarize for the final section of the course.

### **WEEK 8 THE HISTORY & POWER OF WRITING/ SELECTING APPROPRIATE MODES AND MODELS OF DOCUMENTATION**

Mon 03.01.04 Mid-Semester Research paper due. Introduction to final research  
project on the history and power of writing. Please see handouts entitled "Rubric and  
Requirements for Final Research Paper."

Wed 03.03.04 Modes of Documentation: Footnotes, Endnotes and  
Bibliographies. The details of a working bibliography.

Fri 03.05.04 Last day to resign from course. Conducting research responsibly  
on the web. Introduction to *The History and Power of Writing*.

### **WEEK 9**

Mon 03.08.04 "The Death and Resurrection of Written Culture"

Wed 03.10.04 "The Arrival Point"

Fri 03.12.04 "The Reign of the Book"

### **Week 10 Spring Break**

### **WEEK 11**

Mon 03.22.04

Wed 03.24.04 "The Forms and Functions of Writing: Fifteenth—Eighteenth  
Centuries"

Fri 03.26.04 "The Book and Society"

**WEEK 12**

Mon 03.29.04 "The Industrial Era"

Wed 03.29.04 "Beyond Writing"

Fri 04.02.04 "Conclusion"

**WEEK 13**

Mon 04.05.04

Wed 04.07.04

Fri 04.09.04 Final research paper due.

**WEEK 14**

**Portfolio Workshop Revision Week #1**

Mon 04.12.04

Wed 04.14.04

Fri 04.16.04

**WEEK 15**

**Portfolio Workshop Revision Week #2**

Mon 04.19.04

Wed 04.21.04

Fri 04.23.04

**Week 16**

Mon 04.26.04 Final meeting. Course evaluations. Final portfolios due.