

SYLLABUS FOR ENGLISH 101: ESSAY WRITING Fall 2006

Professor: Tracy Mendham, MFA
Email: tmendham[at]keene[dot]edu (preferred method of communication)
Office: Parker Hall, Room 003
URL: <http://academics.keene.edu/tmendham/KSC.htm>
Voicemail: 603-358-8888, x4164

RESOURCES

Keene State College Library catalog: <http://www.keene.edu/library>;
EBSCOHost (Keene State College Library databases for research essays):
http://www.keene.edu/library/esources_db.cfm. You need only your last name and the barcode from your student ID to log in.
Blackboard online course delivery <http://keene.blackboard.com/webapps/login/>

CLASS MEETING TIMES

Monday and Wednesday afternoons, in Parker Hall, room 13. Section 25 meets 12:00pm to 1:40pm, and section 10 meets 2pm to 3:40 pm

TEXTBOOKS

Your reading assignments will be in:

"They Say / I Say": The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing, by Gerald Graff, and Cathy Birkenstein;
The Conscious Reader, 10th edition, by Caroline Shrodes, et al.

These books will be useful to you throughout your college career at Keene State and beyond:

A Writer's Reference, 5th ed., by Diana Hacker

The Guide to Writing at Keene State College, by Kirsti Sandy and Phyllis Benay.

You also need a standard composition notebook.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Extensive practice in college-level writing and reading. Students will write a variety of papers, including a documented essay, read and respond critically to professional and student writing, and develop critical thinking skills.

EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS

I expect you to:

- Take ownership of your learning process;
- Perform the written work and reading assignments on time and to the best of your ability;
- Participate actively, conscientiously, and courteously in our community of scholars (this class)

TEACHING STRATEGIES

During our class meetings, I'll allot time for writing practice, peer response, discussion of related readings, instruction on the conventions of academic essay writing, and if needed, review of rules for standard written English. In addition to bringing any writing assignments that are due that day, always bring a pen or pencil, notebook, and the assigned reading material to class. When you study or complete reading or writing assignments, write down questions that come up--answering specific questions will always be a priority during class time.

This is not a lecture course. In this class you'll learn by doing, not just listening. A typical class day might entail spending 15 minutes talking about the day's agenda and doing a writing exercise, listening to 15 minutes of discussion and instruction on the day's material, spending 45 minutes completing peer review or a small group activity, (often about a reading assignment), and then talking about and preparing for upcoming assignments, often with informal individual writing time.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

English 101 will help you to develop your essay writing and critical reading and writing skills at the college level. Here's what you'll learn about writing and how you'll learn it:

- **You'll develop your ability to write college-level expository prose** by writing four papers and keeping a journal of your responses to readings (you'll have written approximately 3600 words by the end of the course). You will learn the conventions of MLA style documentation by incorporating appropriate sources into your work, demonstrating your understanding of the meaning and importance of academic honesty.
- **You'll explore the writing process.** Through the use of various invention techniques, writing multiple drafts of essays, your own evolving ideas, and constructive instructor and peer feedback, you'll understand that writing involves serious thinking, preparation, reflection, reconsideration, and revision.
- **You'll understand the role of collective inquiry and collaboration in learning.** You'll learn the value of discussing your ideas and drafts with others (such as other students in the peer review sessions, your instructor in one-on-one conferences, and Writing Center tutors). You'll find that the development and expression of ideas is a process that can be enriched by discussion, debate, and research, and group inquiry.
- **You'll become aware of the influence of the rhetorical situation on your writing** by analyzing assignments and identifying: a) the purpose of the paper; b) the audience or "discourse community" that is to be addressed in the paper; and c) the role, voice, or level of formality required for the paper.
- **You'll become aware of the importance of organization and development.** Through instructor and peer feedback and analysis of the assigned readings, you'll learn to organize an essay according to an identifiable pattern, with an effective introduction, a main point or thesis, the clear development of an idea that builds to a conclusion, and balance between main and supporting points. In developing and revising essays you'll learn the purpose and importance of paragraphs and sentence structure in contributing to the overall effectiveness of an essay.
- **English 101 is not a grammar course**, but grammatical issues and principles that affect style, rhetorical effectiveness, and expression will be addressed with the whole class or individually as needed.
- **You'll learn the importance of editing and proofreading** as you write prose that is free of serious mechanical errors and avoids sexist language. You'll practice eliminating the kind of errors that weaken the effectiveness of the essay or interfere with comprehension.
- **You'll take responsibility for your work** in writing your own essays, expressing your ideas in class discussions, and articulating your understanding of readings.

Here's what you'll learn about reading and how you'll learn it:

- **You'll learn critical reading of professional non-fiction essays** as you are asked to read carefully and critically. You'll learn to recognize both the rhetorical (i.e. purpose, structure, audience, theme, techniques, style, etc.) and cultural (e.g. time period, race, class, gender, etc.) contexts of the essay.
- **You'll articulate your understanding** of what you've read and incorporate that knowledge both in your writing and in class discussions. You'll ask questions about readings and see questions as a means for furthering discussions and learning. You'll learn to read actively, to interact with the text through note taking, and apply what you have read to range of texts.

EVALUATION

4 Essays	40%
Journal	20%
Peer Review	10%
Class participation and preparation	30%
FINAL GRADE	100%

During the term, you will keep a journal of your responses to readings, and write a total of four essays. These papers will cover a range of essay forms. All writing in this course should be revised (looked at and changed between the first and final drafts, before it is handed in). Since good writing is about process as much as product, students must attach to their completed work all preliminary notes, drafts, interviews and outlines—everything which led to the final draft.

In addition to the four essays, each student will be responsible for completing peer reviews for their classmates. I will be looking at these reviews for thoughtful, honest, enthusiastic, and constructive dialogue between two writers.

Your class participation grade will be evaluated by attendance, preparedness (having the writing and reading assignments done), and most importantly, what you do to help this make classroom a lively and thought-provoking, yet a unjudgmental, studious, and *civil* environment. (This means that you cannot just sit in class quietly and expect more than a C for your participation grade: you will need to ask questions and contribute to class discussions on a regular basis, and be visibly and constructively active in small group work and peer reviews.)

You will receive detailed instructions for each of the four formal essays. For your journal, you will be writing short, informal assignments of 1-2 pages in an old-fashioned composition notebook.

SUMMARY OF PAPER ASSIGNMENTS

Essay 1: Examining Received Ideas. You'll examine "the standard view" on a topic of your choice, question it, analyze it, and persuasively express your own views on it.

Essay 2: Responding to a Text. You'll choose one of our assigned readings and illuminate it for the reader, talking about how the text works and discussing the ideas in it. Again, persuasively expressing your own views on the text will be central.

Essay 3: Researched Claim Paper. This will take you deeper into library research and the conventions of MLA style. You'll further explore the art of making a claim which you'll support with evidence, and integrate multiple sources into your writing.

Essay 4: Formal/Informal Tour de Force. This will be hard work but it should also be fun. I'll be asking you to use all the formal writing skills you've acquired, but to also to blend them with informal or colloquial language, and reference popular culture in your research. As a writer, you'll put the "new" you (your academic voice) together with the "real" you (your natural voice and identity).

There are no minimum or maximum numbers of pages for any essay assignment—just write as much as you need to in order to make it a good essay.

When a *peer draft* is due, that means that you have to bring a first (or rough) draft of the essay to class to use in peer review; another student will read it but it will not be graded.

When an *instructor draft* is due, bring in a final draft of the essay to give to your instructor. Attach your peer draft and any peer review or other feedback you've received.

Always bring a printed copy of the essay to class *and* submit it through the online Blackboard Digital Dropbox as a Word (.doc) or Rich Text (.rtf) file. Any sources you use should be documented in MLA style. Dictionary and encyclopedia articles are *not* acceptable sources for these essays.

POLICIES

Late Assignments: Assignments are due at the beginning of class. Instructor drafts will drop a letter grade for each day they are late. Having your rough draft for a peer review is essential; without it you cannot participate fully in the work of the class (and your grade will take a hit not only in terms of your writing assignments but in terms of your class participation as well.)

Attendance: Regular attendance and active, constructive participation are mandatory. You should attend all class meetings; it's hard to do an excellent job on all the assignments otherwise. However, to cover any emergencies, you can miss up to three classes without it affecting your grade. You are adults so there will be no such thing as excused or unexcused absences in the class. (I'm not concerned about whether you use your three days to stay in bed with a cold, attend a wedding or funeral, or recover from a hangover.) A fourth absence lowers your participation grade by one letter grade, and a fifth absence lowers your participation by yet another letter grade. If you have to miss class, you are still responsible for the work. If an assignment is due and you cannot attend class in person, email it to me before class, have a friend bring it to class, or drop it off ahead of time.

Punctuality and Participation: You are expected to be ready by the beginning of class to participate in that day's work. Walking into a class late, without the required materials, or without having read or written the day's assignment is disruptive and will affect your participation grade. If you are more than 10 minutes late more than twice, it will be counted as an absence. If you are not prepared and equipped for class you may be asked to leave, and this will be counted as an absence. You are expected to contact me before class to inform me of any issues that could influence your attendance, participation, or preparedness.

The Center for Writing: The Center has a trained staff of student tutors who work one-on-one with students to assist with all phases of writing, from brainstorming a project to the actual completion and editing of final drafts. You owe it to yourself to check the Center out: it's there, it's helpful, and it doesn't cost you anything (or rather, you've already paid for it). To make an appointment, drop by the Writing Center or call 358-2412.

Accommodations: If you need help with any aspect of this class, please see me during office hours as soon as possible. Students with disabilities who believe they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to make an appointment with the Office of Disability Services at 358-2354. Please meet with me also so that we can work together with the Office of Disability Services to help you meet the goals of this course.

Inclement Weather: If the weather is very bad, call my voicemail to see if there's an announcement. If there is no announcement, that means that class will be held as usual. You can also check Blackboard or the KSC Cancellations web page at <<http://www.keene.edu/newsevents/cancellations.cfm>>, but make sure that it's not some other section of English 101 that isn't being held. (I don't live far away, so I nearly always make it here.)

Academic Honesty: All students will be held strictly accountable for adhering to Keene State College's policies regarding academic integrity (see the College Catalog and Student Handbook). Here is part of the college's policy:

What is Academic Honesty?

Academic honesty is taking full responsibility for your course work and for your intellectual and educational development. One important aspect of academic honesty is acknowledging the writing, ideas, and research of others. This enables you to accept, without reservation, full credit for your own ideas and scholarly work. While learning from the work of others is essential to the educational process and to all serious research, it is important for you and for your audience to discern what is original in your work.

The accepted method of acknowledging the work of others when it appears in your writing is through citation and proper quotation. Citation may take one of several forms: footnotes, endnotes, or parenthetical citation within the text of your essay. The best method is the one generally accepted in the field in which you are business. Quotations should be exact and enclosed in quotation marks. Some form of citation usually accompanies quotations. If you are restating in your own words the ideas of others you should use some form of citation to remind the reader that these ideas originated elsewhere. Websites as well as books and articles are sources you should acknowledge. If in dealing with a web site you are unsure of the author you should at least cite the location of the web page so your reader can examine it. Current handbooks and manuals such as the MLA Handbook and The Chicago Manual of Style explain how to cite websites as well as all kinds of printed materials.

Beyond the writing and research process, academic honesty extends to every aspect of course work. It requires proper conduct during exams, accepting assignments and carrying them out to the best of your ability, and always being truthful about every aspect of your course work, research, and laboratory work. The academically honest and responsible student respects the work of fellow students, respects the function and property of the library, honors scientific procedure, and understands the role of exams in determining intellectual growth.

(From the Keene State College Policy on Academic Honesty at <<http://www.keene.edu/policy/academichonesty.cfm>>.

Grades at KSC are recorded as A, AB, B, BC, C, CD, D and F. You may find the following scale helpful for understanding your numerical grades on assignments:

A	93+	Distinguished work, excellent thinking and analysis
A/B	88-92	
B	83-87	High quality thinking, above average work
B/C	78-82	
C	73-77	Typical, standard quality work
C/D	68-72	Below C-level work
D	60-67	Far below C-level work
F	0-59	Fails to meet minimum standards

ABOUT YOUR INSTRUCTOR

I teach college writing at Keene State College, the Keene campus of Franklin Pierce College, and New Hampshire Community Technical College, and have taught both in the traditional classroom setting and hybrid online courses. I have a Master of Fine Arts in Writing degree from Vermont College, and a bachelor's degree in psychology from Smith College.

I am a strong believer in writing as a means of empowerment, discovery, and self expression. **The most important thing for you to know about me is that *I believe that no one is a bad writer.*** If you have been led to believe you are a bad writer, we will bend all our efforts toward proving it isn't so. Often very important things are said and done in academic essay writing and I feel privileged to be a part of that process.

RECEIPT OF COURSE SYLLABUS

I certify that I have received, read and understood the course syllabus for Essay Writing (English 101).

If I have any questions, I will write them below.

SIGNED: _____

DATE: _____

Print your name here in case I can't read your signature: _____

Write your unanswered questions below. You may also use this space to inform me of any special needs or concerns you have regarding the course. This information will be kept confidential.