TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY-COMMERCE

Instructor
Office Location
Phone number
email address
Office Hours

***English 100**: Semester, Year*

> [Texts] have many meanings because they touch us at points at which each of us is himself many-minded. Understanding them is very much more than picking a possible reasonable interpretation, clarifying that, and sticking to it. Understanding them is seeing how the varied possible meanings hang together, which of them depends on what else, how and why the meanings which matter most to us form part of our world—seeing thereby more clearly what our world is and what we are who are building it to live in. IA RICHARDS, *How to Read a Page*
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> Rhetorical spaces . . . are fictive, but not fanciful or fixed locations, whose (tacit, rarely spoken) territorial imperatives structure and limit the kinds of utterances that can be voiced within them with a reasonable expectation of uptake and "choral support"; an expectation of being heard, understood, taken seriously. LORRAINE CODE, *Rhetorical Spaces*

Required Materials:

- ✓ Rose, Mike. *The Mind at Work: Valuing the Intelligence of the American Worker*
- ✓ a three-ring binder that will later serve as your Final Portfolio.
- ✓ A notebook (your choice) that will serve as your Dialogue Journal.

Course Description:

Welcome writers! This is a theme-based composition course. That means we will be learning about and practicing strategies in academic literacy by working through an intellectual project together; this particular academic project considers the role literacy may play in our lives by looking at the ways in which people put literacy to use. In truth, the academic project itself is secondary. I do not expect we will all be experts in literacy education by the end of the semester. Expertise like that is hardly necessary. What I do expect, however, is to help you hone your skills as users of the particular kinds of literacies most common in the academy. Why? When you tackle academic projects in the future, I want you to be able to draw on strategies you have found successful in other contexts so you can be "heard, understood, and taken seriously" in new, even unfamiliar contexts.

A course like this demands some deep thinking about some rather controversial topics. I'm certain you are up to the challenge, and I am also certain that the more you put into the class, the more you will get out of the class. You should expect some heated discussions, but you should also expect your opinions to be heard and treated with fairness and dignity just as you will be expected to treat the opinions of others with respect and dignity--even those opinions that are radically different from your own. Discussions in this class should not mimic *Jerry Springer*--we will listen to each other carefully, thoughtfully, and openly. We should even be willing to change our minds (if only slightly) about this rather complex topic, something that happens quite often when we join in on a conversation as complicated and complex as the role literacy plays in our lives and the lives of others. Even more importantly, in fact, these conversations—online, in writing, face-to-face—should offer those who work for it a greater awareness of (and, therefore, control over) the various literacies already at their disposal, especially as they consider the variety of ways they already put literacy to use and recognize the (re)usability of the multiple literacies with which they are already quite competent.

Objectives:

English 100 Course Objectives: The student will (1) understand that literacy is context-dependent, (2) investigate one or more familiar communities of practice, (3) articulate the unwritten rules participants must obey in that

community of practice if they want to remain/become accepted as members, (4) investigate new literacies in order to articulate the unwritten rules participants must likewise obey (or at least acknowledge), (5) locate and articulate the points of contact between familiar literacies and school-based ones, (6) examine and—where possible--articulate the points of dissonance between different communities of practice, and (7) put rhetorical dexterity to use in a variety of contexts for a variety of purposes.

We (your instructor, your English 100 'Writing Group" tutor, the other members of your writing group, and the members of this class) are here to help you through all this. In class, we will discuss our readings, explore our writing assignments within the context of our readings, and develop strategies for revision and *active* reading. Additional assistance will come from your English 100 Writing Group tutor. For 100 minutes a week, you will meet with your tutor and about five to ten other English 100 students. The purpose of this Writing Group is to provide you with further guidance and feedback regarding your reading and writing assignments. Your classmates will review each major writing assignment you prepare for this class at least once, and they will also offer feedback and guidance via class and group discussions.

My promise to you:

I promise to (1) provide you with challenging work that honors your experiences and ideas, (2) teach strategies for close reading and critical analysis of texts, (3) teach strategies for improving your writing processes, and (4) provide you with tutor support for one-on-one and small group interaction.

Final Course Grade

Your final course grade will be determined by three, deeply-inter-related projects and activities.

> *15%--Reflections* (official "Writing Group" and class—the majority of this score will come from your Dialogue Journal)
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> *15%--Final Reflections* (The culminating essay in this class, describing your "growth" as a writer this term)
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> *15%--Writing Workshops.* The majority of this score will come from your official Writing Group and the class. official "Writing Group" and class. If you fail to come to class with a draft ready on the day you are scheduled to have a draft reviewed—either by your partner in class or the rest of your official Writing Group—you will lose points (five points for each and every time). If you fail to provide thoughtful, constructive, and rigorous feedback on your peer's drafts, you will lose points here too.
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> *15%--Presentations.* You will be offering two presentations this semester, one with a group of your peers (on Mike Rose's *The Mind at Work*) and one by yourself or with a partner (a comparison of the points of contact found between school literacies and those beyond the school—much more on this below).
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> *40%--Final Portfolio* (more on this below and much more throughout the term)

Writing Workshops are feedback sessions in which you share a draft with another reader and they offer their responses to it as readers. We will engage in many peer review sessions, and you will be expected to engage deeply with each and every one of those as both a writer and a reader. You should also expect to contribute as enthusiastically, knowledgeably, diplomatically, and productively as possible to any and all class, pair, and writing group discussions. In order to do so, you must also be prepared for each and every meeting of both class and your official writing group. In short, all interactive activities assigned and carried out in class and in your writing group will be considered "participation." Please do not be fooled into thinking that this is a "gimme" grade. It is possible for a student to be here every day and still do very poorly in this category. Keep up with your readings, your writing assignments, and everything else necessary to be a trusted and reliable member of each writing community of which you are a part this term (certainly those related to English 100).

Reflections emphasize thinking about thinking and writing about writing. We will discuss much more about this requirement later, but for now let me just say that you will be expected to document regular, engaged, and productive habits of reflection in (a) your "Dialogue Journal" and (b) the companion pieces you develop to set the

context for each reader who will be responding to a given draft and responding to that response as well flections-in-Action").

Final Reflections. *You* will be developing this culminating project in your Writing Group that will set the context for your Final Portfolio.

Final Portfolio. The ultimate goal of English 100 is twofold: to develop (1) an understanding of the importance of using multiple drafts to manage the complexities of writing and (2) strategies for effective revision. Because of this, I will respond extensively to each writing assignment you hand in with an eye to what you may do to strengthen it, but you will not receive a final grade on any writing assignment until I see it in your Final Portfolio. At Midterm, you will receive your first grades for these major writing assignments, but you will have some time to revise these essays to earn a higher grade. Your Final Portfolio should include everything you produced this semester, and I will expect to see evidence of deep, effective revision on all major writing assignments.

> *Your Final Portfolio will be reviewed by a panel of experienced English 100 instructors.* This panel will be looking for things like this: How evident is your growth as a writer in this portfolio? Is there evidence here that you understand the importance of deep revision? Is there evidence of your ability to effectively rework these writing assignments to meet (or exceed) specified criteria? Are you ready for the demands of English 101?

Please see *Talking Back* for much more specific information (and suggestions) on how the portfolio and portfolios work and how students can best make it work from them ("Revising Literacy").

Rhetorical Constraints for Formal Essays and Other Assignments

When you hand in your major writing assignments, I need you to (1) underline one statement that you think is your best and really seems to get at the heart of what you want to say, (2) highlight any changes you have made since the previous draft (in most cases, revisions you have made since your peer or I reviewed it last), and (3) include ALL drafts, notes, revisions (EVERYTHING) you used to prepare this major writing assignment, leaving the most recent draft of this writing assignment on top. You will be required to turn in the reflections required to set the context for the reader. We will discuss this in much more detail soon.

Also, make sure you type and double-space all major writing assignments. We will discuss MLA guidelines for heading, citations, and other formatting concerns soon.

Deadlines

The syllabus you hold in your hand supplies due dates for each assignment, so I don't expect these due dates to come as a surprise. If you have to miss a class when something is due, get it to me beforehand. If you know you will not be able to meet a particular due date before it comes up, let me know before it comes up. We may be able to negotiate something--once. After that one reworked deadline, I can't help you.

But if you don't turn in something when it is due and you haven't discussed it with me beforehand, you may receive a zero for that writing assignment and place your ability to pass this class in serious jeopardy. Do the math: it is better to hand in SOMETHING and receive *some* feedback so you can rework it than it is to hand in nothing and receive a zero. Give me something when it is due, you get a chance to revise it. Give me nothing when it is due, you may get a zero and no chance to make it up.

Inform your computer and printer about this policy. Often during the semester, students come to me saying that they do not have the assignment because there was a glitch in the computer and/or printer or the cartridge broke or wore out or the computer ate the file and/or disk or a virus destroyed the entire system or their roommate/former boyfriend/former girlfriend locked the dorm room door which housed the computer on which the paper was being written . . . For goodness sake, avoid this! Work in the Writing Center or bring your disk and plan on printing your paper in the Writing Center. Take some precautions. Don't be a statistic!

"Rules" for Establishing and Maintaining a Productive Writing Community

1. *BE HERE.* If you miss class more than once or twice in a given term, you make it difficult for the class to establish the trusting relationships necessary to maintain a productive writing community. We must be able to depend on you to do what you say you will do and to be here to do it on a regular basis. This is not a lecture course. This is a course that *demands* intense participation. If you are not here, you cannot participate. If you cannot participate, you cannot do well. If you cannot do well, the class suffers as a community. So BE HERE. If you absolutely must miss, let me know asap by sending an email before class begins. Get the phone number and/or other contact information from someone else in class so you do not fall too far behind. Do not ask me if you "missed anything" while you were out. Of course you did. We work hard and we work every day. Look at your calendar to find out what you "missed," call a friend to hear more about the context of the assignments and activities you missed, and contact me with specific questions about the missed assignments and activities if you have them (after you have consulted the syllabus and discussed it with a classmate).
2. *BE ON TIME.* If you come in late more than once or twice in a given term, you make it difficult for the class to establish productive relationships for the reasons stated above. When you walk in late, you disrupt the class. Don't do this. I consider it a sign of disrespect—to everyone who understands our meetings to be important enough to arrive on time. Be here on time. I will consider you late if you walk in even one minute after our class begins. If you are more than ten minutes late, you will be marked absent. If you are tardy twice, I will treat this as an absence. I know sometimes things come up that are simply unavoidable, but I want you to understand how important your punctuality is to the group as a whole. If you come in late more than once or twice, our learning community suffers—the reason for your late arrival can't really reduce the negative impact your disruption may have on the group. All of this goes double for your attendance: when you are absent, it doesn't really matter why you aren't here; the reason for your absence can't reduce the difficulties it causes your group.
3. *BE PREPARED.* Assignments are always due at the beginning of class. You will have one or two assignments due each week, and the work is cumulative—that is, the work on one assignment builds from the work on the previous assignments. For this reason, once a student falls behind in this course it's difficult to catch up; therefore, if you get too far behind we won't hesitate to drop you from the roster. Since we all depend on one another to contribute to class discussions and engage with one other in meaningful ways about the subject at hand, it is imperative that all of us always come to class prepared. That means keep up with your dialogue journal, keep up with your readings, mark in your book so you can refer to passages and evidence quickly and readily. In short, be prepared so you can pull your weight in this class. We will talk more about this quite regularly throughout the term.
4. *BE HERE, BE ON TIME, AND BE PREPARED* for each meeting with your writing group and your group tutor in these same ways and for these same reasons.

If you need a more tangible breakdown of the ways failure to be here, be on time, and be prepared can affect your overall grade, here it is:

Regarding excessive absences: If a student misses class or her regularly scheduled Writing Group meeting (or lab") more than two times, her grade will be affected indirectly in a number of ways, not the least of which is the fact that she will fall behind. However, excessive absences will affect a students final grade more directly, as well, in that a third absence will cost a student 2 points on her final course grade (with the fourth absence, a student's final grade will drop 4 points, fifth absence the score will drop 6 points, and so forth).

Exactly the same policies and penalties apply in your Writing Group meetings.

Regarding excessive tardiness: A student will be considered late if she arrives even one minute after class or her Writing Group begins. If she is more than ten minutes late, she may be marked absent. If she is late twice, this will be treated as an absence. The same rules for calculating the cost of excessive absences then apply when calculating the direct cost of excessive tardiness. If you have any questions bout this at all, let me know.

Other important info on Attendance Policy: A couple times during the semester, we may cancel classes and/or Writing Group meetings so we can hold individual conferences with you. *If you miss a conference, you will be counted absent for the same number of classes that were canceled in order to hold conferences.* For instance, if we cancel class for two days to hold conferences and you miss your conference, that "counts" as TWO ABSENCES.

Exactly the same policies and penalties apply when a regularly-scheduled meeting of your Writing Group is cancelled so your group tutor can meet with his or her students individually.

On University-Sanctioned Activities: To accommodate students who participate in university-sanctioned activities, the Basic Writing Program offers sections of this course at various times of the day and week. If you think that this course may conflict with a university-sanctioned activity in which you are involved--athletics, etc.--please see me after class today.

Avoiding Plagiarism

In *Transition to College Writing* (2001), Keith Hjortshoj explains plagiarism this way: "Derived from the Latin word for kidnapping, *plagiarism* is the theft of someone else's 'brainchild'—that person's language, ideas, or research—and the origin of the word conveys the seriousness of such offenses in the view of college teachers and administrators. The reason is that words, ideas, and research are the main forms of currency in academic life. Because they represent the 'intellectual property' with which scholars have built their careers, using that property without permission or credit is a form of larceny. Teachers also assume that the writing and other work students turn in is the product of their own effort, and because grades (another form of academic currency) are based on that work, 'borrowing' language and ideas from someone else constitutes cheating" (172).

Pretty harsh stuff, I know. Even worse, sometimes plagiarism is unintentional because students are not completely sure what actually constitutes plagiarism. Most know that they can't submit papers they have purchased from a commercial service or another student; many know that writing a paper for someone else is unacceptable behavior, as well. Others know that they can't turn in work written for another class without the direct permission of both instructors involved. In fact, plagiarism includes all these things, but students may also be charged with plagiarism in less clear-cut circumstances. Sometimes you may not mean to plagiarize, but you use misuse sources in ways that some may consider plagiarism anyway. In their official statement "Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism," the Council of Writing Program Administrators makes a distinction between

1. "submitting someone else's text as one's own or attempting to blur the line between one's own ideas or words and those borrowed from another source, and
2. carelessly or inadequately citing words borrowed from another source."

Thus, the WPA defines plagiarism as "occur[ing] in an instructional setting when a writer *deliberately* uses someone else's language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source." It is very hard to tell what may be considered common-knowledge and what may not, though. So the "deliberate" use may be difficult for teachers and administrators to discern. It is for this reason that even when plagiarism is unintentional, you may still be held accountable. If you have any questions at all about how to handle a source to avoid crossing that line ("kidnapping" or stealing "someone else's 'brainchild'"), even if you or only working with portions of sources written by others, talk to me about it. Better yet, ask questions in class. I feel that one of our jobs in English 100 is to help you determine the best ways to avoid any suspicious acts that may be read as "plagiarism." One of my dad's many life lessons applies here, I think: "It is not enough to *be* innocent. You must also *look* innocent." I never really thought that was fair, but I have always found that lesson to profoundly accurate.

The official departmental policy: *"Instructors in the Department of Literature and Languages do not tolerate plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonestly. Instructors uphold and support the highest academic standards, and students are expected to do likewise. Penalties for students guilty of academic dishonesty include disciplinary probation, suspension, and expulsion. (Texas A&M University-Commerce Code of Student Conduct 5.b [1,2,3])*

If you ever have any questions about a particular use of a source, always ask your instructor. They want you to avoid plagiarism, too, so they will help you do so whenever and wherever they can. Do what you can to take advantage of this support—to *look* innocent in addition to *being* innocent when it comes to charges of plagiarism.

Additional Official Statements

Student Conduct: All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. In addition, you are requested to turn off your cell phones before entering the classroom. Common courtesy says you do not receive or answer calls during class. If there is an emergency that requires you to leave your phone on, talk to me about it beforehand and switch the phone to vibrate so you don't surprise me when you leave class to take a call and you don't interrupt class when the call comes in. Also, Instant/Text Messaging is off limits.

Americans with Disabilities Act Statement: Students requesting accommodations for disabilities must go through the Academic Support Committee. For more information, please contact the Director of Disability Resources and Services, Halladay Student Services Building, Room 303D, 903.886.5835.

The Writing Assignments

Writing Assignment 1: Literacy Narrative. What does literacy mean to you? What makes the current contexts in which you are most literate relevant to you? How can you help someone else understand the significance that literacy has to your own life? *This first essay asks you to reconstruct key moments in your literacy history in order to help your reader understand what literacy means to you (and for you) in your life thus far.*

Writing Assignment 2: Literacies at School. What are the "rules" and/or expectations writers should follow when writing for school? How do we learn these rules? Who made the rules and who determines whether nor not writers are following them? How do you feel about these rules and/or expectations? How have they shaped you and your approach as a writer and/or reader? *This essay asks you to reconstruct key moments in your literacy history by identifying "rules" that have shaped your experiences with literacy at school.* This is your chance to deeply revise WA1 by "re-seeing" it through the productive lens of "rules." You should also use the interview as fodder for this project.

Writing Assignment 3: Literacies Beyond the School. What are the "rules" and expectations governing "literate" practices in a discourse community other than those involved with school? How did you learn those rules? Who made the rules and who determines whether or not members are following them? *This essay asks you to examine the expectations governing what may be considered literate practice in a discourse community with which you have quite a bit of familiarity but actually extends beyond the "school" literacies you examined in WA2.* Again, use your interviews and previous writing assignments as fodder for this project.

Writing Assignment 4: Literacies at Work. What are the "rules" and expectations governing "literate" practice in specific occupations with which you have some familiarity? How did you learn these rules? Who made them and who determines whether or not employees are following them? *This essay asks you to examine the expectations governing what may be considered literate practice in a discourse community associated with the workplace.* Here again, use your interviews and previous writing assignments as fodder for this project.

Writing Assignment 5: Literacies at Play. What are the "rules" and expectations governing "literate" practice in one or more discourse communities associated with leisure activities with which you have some familiarity? How did you learn these rules? Who made them and who determines whether or not participants are following them? *This essay asks you to examine the expectations governing what may be considered literate practice in a discourse community associated with play.* Just as with WA2-4, use your interviews and previous writing assignments as fodder for this project.

Writing Assignment 6: Literacies at School (revision). *This essay is your chance to revisit the idea of "rules" in school literacies (see WA2).* Now that you've had a chance to explore the rules and expectations shaping literate

practice in areas beyond the school (and you've been writing for college for some time), can you list new rules? Why or why not?

Writing Assignment 7: Literacies Beyond the School (revision). *This essay is your chance to revisit WA3, WA4, WA5, or all of the above in order to reconsider what it means to be considered "literate" in a discourse community beyond the school.* Now that you've written about literacies at work and at play, what do those less familiar with a discourse community beyond the school need to know in order to be considered "literate"?

Writing Assignment 8: What Alternative Literacies Have to Teach Us about Academic Ones. What are some of the similarities between what it takes to be considered literate at school and what it takes to be considered literate in the discourse community you illustrated in WA7? What are some of the differences? *This essay asks you to compare and contrast WA7 and WA8 in order to reveal what literacies beyond the school may have to teach us about writing for school.*

Final Reflections. This last assignment asks you to look back over the reading, writing, and thinking you've done this term so you can tell your reader (specifically) how your Final Portfolio should be read. You want your reviewer to understand exactly how this portfolio works as evidence of your growth as a reader, writer, and critic this term. What have been the key moments in your work this term? How are you writing differently now than you were at the beginning of the term? What new things have you learned about yourself as a writer and reader? I also want you to examine each of the pieces you have written: think about the *story* each assignment tells, from your earliest invention, to your peer, tutor, and instructor responses, to your final choices for revision. How did your writing change within and across these different assignments? What did you learn about writing? Play a "movie of your mind" for us so we may learn what you were thinking and feeling when you pulled your portfolio together and/or developed these final revisions. What is your reaction to the collection of work that your portfolio represents? If you see this process as important to your development or growth as a thinker (or something else), why do you see it this way, and what have you gained from the process? This is your chance to wow us! To complete this assignment successfully, you must reflect on and quote from selected writing you've done this term, as well as from the readings. You choose what you want to quote and use, determine how to best use it, and make sure your reader understands how everything you quote works as evidence in support of your growth as a writer. Think of this as your final exam. Show us what you learned.

As you do so, consider these objectives: WA6: The student will (1) understand that literacy is context-dependent, (2) validate and investigate one or more familiar discourse communities, (3) articulate the unwritten rules participants must obey in that discourse community if they want to remain/become accepted as members, (4) investigate new literacies in order to articulate the unwritten rules participants must likewise obey, (5) locate and articulate *points of contact*[i] between familiar literacies and new ones, (6) examine *points of dissonance*[ii] between different literacies, (7) determine how to make productive use of these points of dissonance, and (8) put the rhetorical dexterity[iii] to use in a variety of contexts for a variety of purposes.

NOTE: You will be completing the majority of this project in your official Writing Group (your "lab"). Thus I only offer the description of this important writing assignment here. Later in the term, your tutors and I will be offering the actual strategies you may use to develop this.

[i] *Points of Contact:* In "The Organization and Development of Discursive Practices for 'Having a Theory," Roger Halls uses this term to refer to the points of similarity between two different activities. I am using the term here to mean those points of similarity between two different discourse communities

[ii] *Points of Dissonance:* Those points of difference between two different discourse community that confuse or disorient literacy learners.

[iii] *Rhetorical Dexterity:* the ability to effectively read, understand, manipulate, and negotiate the cultural and linguistic codes of a new discourse community based on a relatively accurate assessment of another, more familiar one.