

English 101

Fall 2007



"Place is space which has historical meanings, where some things have happened which are now remembered and which provide continuity and identity across generations. Place is space in which important words have been spoken which have established identity, defined vocation, and envisioned destiny. Place is space in which vows have been exchanged, promises have been made, and demands have been issued" - *The Land* by Walter Brueggeman

Required Materials:

Mathieu, Paula, et.al. *Writing Places*. New York: Pearson, 2006.

Graff, Gerald and Cathy Birkenstein. *They Say/I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2006.

Ray, Janisse. *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 1999.

Three-ring binder that will later serve as your Final Portfolio.

Camera (disposal kind will work, but you need to be able to work with the photos in digital format)

A pocket folder to use when you turn in your writing assignments

A valid, working email address that you check often (everyday)

Course Description:

English 101 is, above all, a course about ideas. We work from the assumption that rigorous reading and writing and provocative discussions can lead us to new ideas, so we will be doing lots of both throughout our next several weeks together. We also assume that the best way to stimulate this rigorous engagement with academic literacy is via what we call a "sequenced" approach, which basically means we will be learning about and practicing strategies in academic literacy by working through an intellectual project together--just as members of a graduate seminar would. This particular academic project considers the relationship we have to place--the ways that people relate to places, or the types of bonds we have with places. In truth, the academic project itself is secondary. It is simply a vehicle to get us talking and thinking about a particular issue from a variety of angles. Thus throughout all our readings, writings, and in-class discussions, we will be asking ourselves and one another questions like the following: What exactly is place? Is it the geography? the culture? the people? Does it change or adapt? Is it sacred? Who has a right to claim it? In a culture as mobile as ours, infused with computer technology, do we even have places anymore?

Objectives:

You should leave English 101 at the end of the semester having developed (1) an ability to dig into a topic more deeply through exploratory writing and talking; (2) strategies for translating these explorations into effective academic prose for a particular rhetorical context; (3) an understanding of the importance of using multiple drafts to manage the complexities of writing; (4) an ability to shape essays and frame arguments in effective and convincing ways for particular audiences and particular purposes; (5) an understanding of (and appreciation for) some of the many methods and purposes of revision, (6) an effective writing process that is flexible enough to address different writing situations and individualized enough to draw on what we already know well; (7) an ability to read critically (both your own texts and the texts of others) in ways most appropriate for rhetorical contexts like those most often required of college-level writers; (8) a working understanding of MLA format and an awareness of the contextual importance of documentation styles in general.

We (your instructor, your classmates, and the tutors in the Writing Center) 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. 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. In other

words, the class and the Writing Center are here to support the writing you do this term and to encourage reflection on the writing you've already done and will soon do.

More About the Writing Center

The Writing Center (or the "Communication Skills Center") offers writers free, one-on-one assistance. We welcome *all* writers, majors, and disciplines—undergraduate and graduate students alike. In fact, we work from the premise that all writers, no matter their ability level, benefit from the feedback of knowledgeable readers. The Writing Center staff is trained to provide writers with just this service. In short, we are here to help you help yourself. In order to ensure the most effective session possible, we offer visitors the following suggestions: (1) Get started on your writing project early, and visit the Writing Center at least one day before your final draft is due. You will need time to work with the ideas and suggestions generated in your tutorial sessions. (2) Bring a written copy of your assignment, any relevant readings, and one or two specific questions or concerns you would like to discuss with us. We are located in the Hall of Languages, Room 103 (903-886-5280) and online at <http://www7.tamu-commerce.edu/litlang/CSC/index.htm>.

Grading Policy

In this course, your final course grade will be based primarily on the quality of work you include and submit in a final portfolio (more on that below—see "Final Portfolio"). The remaining items include participation, peer review sessions, and a final writing assignment ("Critical Reflections") that will serve as an introduction to your Final Portfolio.

Final Portfolio (50% of final course grade). The ultimate goal of English 101 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 major 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. If you have any questions about your grades at any point in the term, you can schedule an appointment with me, bring in all your work, and we can talk about it.

Participation (30% of final course grade). Participation should be a rather self-explanatory concept. You should expect to contribute as enthusiastically, knowledgeably, diplomatically, and productively as possible to any and all class, pair, and group discussions. In order to do so, you must also be prepared for each and every class meeting. In short, all interactive activities assigned and carried out in class 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 (related to English 101).

Peer Reviews (10% of final course grade). 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. Be sure to prepare for each of our peer review sessions by having your essays written on or before the date of the peer review. Each time you come to a peer review session without your completed essay, you will lose a point on your semester average. You cannot make these up, and if you miss class or come late to class on a day when we have peer review, you will lose one point on your semester average.

Critical Reflections. (10% of final course grade). Self-reflection emphasizes thinking about thinking and writing about writing (etc.). We will discuss much more about this later, but for now let me just say that you will be expected to document regular, engaged, and productive habits of reflection, all of which will lead to the Critical Reflections you will be developing, an essay that will later set the context for your Final Portfolio.

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 also 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 deadline 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 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 (ONLY after you have consulted the syllabus and discussed it with a peer).
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 feels our meetings are important enough for them 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 arrive after I take roll, you will be marked absent. If you are tardy twice, I will treat this as an absence. I know sometimes things are 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, it's difficult to catch up once you fall behind in this course; 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. 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.

On University-Sanctioned Activities: To accommodate students who participate in university-sanctioned activities, the First-Year Composition 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 a writer doesn’t *mean* to plagiarize, but she uses 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 are 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 101 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 dishonesty. 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.

TEExES/TOPT Statement: Students who plan to teach English, Spanish, or English as a Second Language in Texas public schools must pass the appropriate state certification tests. The Department of Literature and Languages grants approval to take the content-area tests, subject to the policies described at this URL: <http://faculty.tamu-commerce.edu/bolin/texas.html>.

The Writing Assignments

Writing Assignment 1

Consider the places of your past and how they have helped to define you.

Writing Assignment 2

Reflect on how the various people who inhabit a place define and create that place.

Writing Assignment 3

Examine what it means to represent a place.

Writing Assignment 4

Examine how place has attributed to your sense of identity.

Writing Assignment 5

Examine the bigger picture and investigate the ways geography and the landscape have influenced and helped to create your identity.

Final Project

Construct a photo essay of a significant place

Critical Reflections (10% of course grade) 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.

Tentative Schedule

*This schedule is subject to change. **Read your syllabus daily.** It is the key to knowing where we are. All readings and assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date assigned. Please bring all assigned materials to class for each meeting. Please also be certain to bring to each meeting the following: your Dialogue Journal, your required books, questions, ideas, and everything else you need in order to make this class work for you (for all of us)—a productive community of writers working together to make literacies as meaningful and relevant as possible for everyone involved.*

Week 1: In-class WA, "To the Student" and "Chapter 1, pages 1-4 (WP); "Introduction" (They Say)

Week 2: Wheaton pages 4-7 and Harden pages 18-23 (WP) and WA1; Chapter 9 (They Say); begin *Ecology* pages 3-33

Week 3: Fletcher pages 81-84 (WP); Chapter 8 (They Say); *Ecology* pages 35-64

Week 4: WA 1 due; Frazier pages 107-115, Chapter 2, pages 57-61(WP) and WA2; Chapter 1 (They Say); *Ecology* pages 65-97

Week 5: Casimiro pages 44-48 (WP); Chapter 2 (They Say); *Ecology* pages 99-126

Week 6: WA 2 due; Lindgren pages 24-29 (WP) and WA3; Chapter 3 (They Say); *Ecology* pages 127-149

Week 7: Black pages 8-13 (WP); Chapter 4 (They Say); *Ecology* pages 151-186

Week 8: WA 3 due; Arrieta pages 92-101 and WA4; Chapter 5 (They Say); *Ecology* pages 187-216

Week 9: Chapter 6 (They Say); *Ecology* pages 217-243; begin discussing *Ecology*

Week 10: WA 4 due, *Ecology* pages 245-273; continue discussing *Ecology* and WA5

Week 11: Komada pages 209-213, Chapter 4 (WP)

Week 12: WA5 due; Lockwood pages 139-147, Owens pages 61-73 (WP); Chapter 10 (They Say); introduce the final project

Week 13: Work on final project

Week 14: Continue working on final project

Week 15: Presentation of final projects

Finals Week: Continue presentation of final projects