

English 1A--Reading and Composition

Instructor: Jennifer Stevens

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M 2:00-3:50 (Room HUM 62)

W 2:00-3:50 (Room INC 2)

Earl Shorris, an educator and writer, has argued that the humanities are "a foundation for getting along in the world, for thinking, for learning to reflect on the world instead of just reacting to whatever force is turned against you." This class is designed to help you not only to express your ideas clearly and effectively on paper, but also to think critically--a crucial skill in any discipline whether it fall into the humanities, the sciences, or somewhere in between. Each of our writing assignments this semester will provide you with the opportunity to reexamine and reflect on an aspect of the world that we often take for granted, that we absorb and accept without questioning. We will pay particular attention to language: how it works, why it works, how it is both used and abused for power and persuasion.

Course Description and Goals

English 1A is designed to offer training and practice in expository and argumentative writing, the kind of writing and level of analysis that is expected of college students across the disciplines. To this end, we will address the writing process (pre-writing, composing and revising essays prepared at home, and producing competent written work in class), as well as questions of essay organization, coherence, and development. At the sentence level, we will look at ways of extending short, choppy thoughts into longer, fuller statements while keeping mechanics and grammatical errors in check.

Textbooks/Supplies:

- *Motives for Writing* 3rd ed., Robert Keith Miller
- *Brief Handbook for Writers* 3rd ed., Howell and Memering
- HD Disk (You will need a high density disk--not a double density disk.)
- A 3-ring binder or some other method of organizing your class materials.

You will find very quickly that this course is a flurry of paperwork. My experience has led me to believe that while the 3-ring binder may not be the most compact or stylish of academic accoutrements, it is still the best method of organizing masses of loose material. If you have discovered a better way please let me be the first to know. With a binder you can create sections for essays, handouts, journal entries, and homework, which will save time and ease panic later when you desperately need to find some item.

- I also highly recommend, though I don't require, that each of you have (and use) a good dictionary.

Grade Scale

Course Requirements:

I. Class Participation and Attendance (Required)

You may notice that no percentage of your grade comes from attendance. It is simply required. Roll will be taken every day. Excessive absences may result in my dropping you from the class. I consider 4 absences excessive. Since this course includes in-class writing and activities, learning the content of this course and improvement in writing are directly related to attendance. We will often be working in groups during class; when a member does not attend, class activities will not function as intended and all participants lose out. For these reasons, absences will affect your overall grade via the work you are producing, or more likely, not producing. You are responsible for any work that you miss while you are gone and I expect you to contact me or a classmate to get any homework assignments or materials you may have missed.

II. Essay Assignments (70% of your final grade)

- You will be completing four graded essays written outside of class. Each of these essays must be completed in order to pass the class.
- Essays will be assigned a grade of A, B, C, or NP (not passing). Essays receiving a grade of NP (with the exception of the final essay) may be revised and regraded. If you wish to revise an essay (whether it was a non-passing or passing essay) please make an appointment to see me first.
- I will be handing out a grading criteria sheet that will help you to understand what I regard as excellent work (A), better than adequate work (B), adequate work (C), and not-passing work (NP). We will discuss this in greater depth once the course is underway.
- You should expect to have an essay due every 3-4 weeks. Essays will be based on our discussions of assigned readings, as well as our discussions of, and activities concerning various essay, paragraph and sentence development techniques.
- Peer Evaluations: Each of you will work with classmates in small groups, reading and responding to one another's writing. Your final drafts presumably will be informed by the feedback you receive during these workshops, as well as by the rereading, rethinking and rewriting you do about your work.

Because you will be working with two other classmates during these workshops, *you will need to bring 3 copies of your draft to class, one for each of you.* When you turn in the final draft of your essay, I'll ask you to include the peer response sheets or marked-up drafts of your essays.

- Essays are always due at the beginning of class on the assigned due date. All essays must be typed and double-spaced in a 12 point font on 8 & 1/2 x 11 inch standard weight paper, with 1-1&1/2 inch margins on all sides. Please staple all pages together (no paper clips or funny little folds in the corners to hold the pages together), number the pages, and proofread carefully.

- Please turn in **2** typed copies of each of your final drafts.

- **Late Papers:** Attached to this syllabus is a Late Paper Contract which can be turned in in the place of any essay (except Essay #5), no questions asked, no lowered grade. You will then have one week from the original due date to turn in your essay. While a late paper turned in with a contract is not penalized in terms of the grade, you run the risk of getting your paper back later than you otherwise would and without substantial written comments from me. If you are absent on the due date, be prepared to use your late paper contract to turn in your essay. Any late essay not covered by the contract *will not be accepted*.

III. Homework/In-Class and At-Home Journal Entries (20% of your final grade)

This category is a catch-all for the writing that you do which falls outside of the formal essay assignments. Examples of work that will comprise this category are:

- sentence structure exercises
- in-class writing assignments
- written responses to assigned readings and class discussions
- evaluations of your own and others' writing

No late work will be accepted from this category.

IV. The Final (10%)

Throughout the semester, we will work on timed writing as well as essays written outside of class. Timed writing, while not the most pleasant activity in the world, is a valuable skill to possess, the essay test being common in many disciplines. Your final, an essay written in the classroom, will give you the opportunity to display the writing skills you've developed and enhanced during the semester, from the sentence-level to the essay-level. Grading your essay, I will take into consideration the writing situation, the challenges and pressures that accompany a test of this sort.

Some Final Notes:

- It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw from this and/or any course. Failure to do so may result in an "F" grade being awarded. (As an instructor, I have the option at various times during the semester to drop a student. Should a student not be attending regularly, I will drop said student at that time.)

- Always keep a copy of each writing assignment. You should have all writing assignments saved on your diskette, but you may want to keep hard copies as well, lest anything terrible happen to your diskette.
- Keep track of your returned work as well so that you can double check your final grade. These two tips are to protect you should I lose any of your work or misrecord it. I am very diligent about keeping accurate records but am only human after all.
- I know that strange circumstances often arise during the course of the semester, making it difficult to juggle school-work, and "real" life. If you are experiencing any trouble completing assignments, whether it be because of the assignment itself or other outside pressures please, please, please come see me as soon as possible so that we can work something out. I am actually a very understanding person despite my rather oppressive sounding syllabus. It is far better to come see me early to explain your situation than have me think you are simply a slacker.

Important dates to keep in mind:

Monday Sept. 6:	Labor Day Observed--Class will not meet.
Friday Oct. 15:	Last day to drop the class and receive a "W". After this date, a letter grade must be assigned.
Thursday, Nov. 11:	Veterans Day Observed--Class will not meet. (This won't actually affect <i>our</i> class, but it's good to know nonetheless.)
Thursday and Friday, Nov. 25 and 26:	Thanksgiving Holiday.
Wednesday, Dec. 15:	English 1A Final 1:00-3:00pm.

Please sign and return the portion below on Wednesday, August 18, 1999.

I, _____, have read the course syllabus for English 1A for the Fall 1999 term. I understand that by signing this contract I am agreeing to abide by all the rules and requirements described in this syllabus and that my failure to comply can result in my failing this course.

Signed,

(please sign your name)

on

(please write the date)