

ENGL 050
FALL 1999
Kristen Katzin-Nystrom

COURSE OUTLINE

Over the course of the semester I will be prompting you to explore, in depth, the concept of perspective. I will be asking you to create a “working definition”, as a class, for what perspective is, in general.

Based on our definition and what the authors we will be reading contribute to our definition, we will begin to discuss and write about what each of us feels is his or her own perspective of the world.

The second “unit” of the class will be centered on how and why different groups of people have different perspectives. These differences in how the world is viewed, we will discover, is due in part to people’s various cultural, religious, socio-economic, ethnic and racial backgrounds and current circumstances.

Finally, for the third “unit” of the course, we will explore what happens when a person’s individual perspective is challenged by information that contradicts that assumption, or by another’s differing viewpoint.

*Grade scale
drop date
attendance*

ENGL 050 sec 80328
Reedley campus
MWF 8:00-8:50 in BUS 40
TTH 8:00-8:50 in AGR 1
Office: A5
Office phone: 638-3246
Office hours: MT 1:30-2:30 and F 10:30-11:30

Required text: *Writing Inside and Out* by Mike Quinn, De Wayne Rail and Judy Ryan.

The text is available in the campus bookstore. Additional readings will be distributed in class.

Materials: A loose-leaf binder (not spiral notebook) used only for this class is required for all class notes, freewritings, drafts of essays, readings handed out, etc. Please always have notebook paper and a pen or pencil for class. Two 3^{1/2} inch computer disks are also required; disks may be purchased at the bookstore or any computer or office supply store.

Introduction to Basic Writing

I envision this class as emerging from and revolving around communication: your conversations with yourself, your own and others' writing, your classmates and me. At other schools you may have listened while the teacher did all of the talking, and you may have been expected to pick through readings for a "main idea" or "central theme", or to regurgitate back to the teacher his or her interpretations of the readings. Don't expect that here. I believe that meaning is not in the text alone; instead, meaning is created through the continual interaction between you — the reader — and the text, through reading and writing. This way of viewing reading and writing, I believe, will serve you better as you confront complex college level reading and writing assignments in your other classes. In other English classes you may have been asked to write essays arguing a position or a point of view on a text, to create an airtight argument. Learning, I feel, arises from communication rather than argumentation; and, although you will be expected to try to explain your personal understanding of writings, it won't merely be an academic exercise in academic debate. I want to know what you think and why — in your own words. That's how we readers are enabled to re-see or review the readings and thus to learn, to make meanings.

This is not a lecture course. Our class will be modeled on the workshop format. We will frequently create small discussion/work groups of three to four class members or pairs. In these groups we will explain our own writings to others, discuss readings, work on assignments or specific peer review sheets on groupmates' writings, and consider others' feedback; thus, we will see ways to make what we want to say match what our papers do say. We will also realize

that we are teaching each other about the writing process. We are here to support and encourage each other; no cruel or flippant comments will be tolerated. The success, the life, of this class depends on you — all of you. Your being here to participate in class discussions and peer reviews is absolutely essential.

We will be viewing reading and writing as a process. You will always have a chance to revise your writings. We don't view reading or writing as an all or nothing/one shot deal (this introduction is at least a fourth draft!). What you put on the page is even more adaptable than the words that come out of your mouth. We think of the words that you write as possibilities; nothing is carved in stone. Language, we feel, is moldable like clay; and, as with clay, you only realize what you want to create as you are shaping it. In a similar manner, your impressions of readings, and the meanings that you make of them, may grow in complexity and even become altered as you re-read and thus re-view them. You will also re-view individual readings when they are seen in relation to other readings, when they are placed in a new context.

I expect that our course will challenge some of your expectations of what a college class is, or "must" be. Our readings will probably challenge expectations about English class texts. All of the readings may challenge "common sense" assumptions and expectations about education, teacher/student relationships, and the reading and writing processes themselves. They all invite you to talk back to them, to critically challenge them as they will challenge you, to respond and thus begin a never-ending conversation with them. They will invite you to continually ask questions, compare points of view, grapple with ambiguities, and never settle for a pat or simplistic answer. Our readings are painted in shades of gray rather than simply in black and white. Working with them will be a challenge for all of us, but we're up to it. We will be here to help each other, to lend encouragement, offer ideas and comments, give alternative points of view, and offer 25 sets of eyes, ears, and minds, and all the discoveries they can make. There's safety in numbers! Also, when I read your papers I won't be "correcting" them to fit some preconceived answers in my head. There are no right or wrong answers to these readings. Rather, I'll be making comments and suggestions, responding in a way that will help you come closer to what you want to say. We'll be reading fewer readings than you might have expected so that we'll have more time for your own responses to the texts. Your papers are the most important pieces of writing in this course — they deserve all of our close and careful attention.

You may be a bit apprehensive about the mechanics of your writing: grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc. I am very interested in helping you approach those aspects of writing because they can enhance the clarity of your ideas, but not at the price of your fluency. I don't want you to feel censored as you begin to write. Often people get so bogged down with how they say something that they have no energy left for what they want to say. Therefore, I will only check the

“mechanics” of final drafts of your formal papers, and this aspect of your writing will not influence my grading of the paper. In cases in which problems with the mechanics of the paper create serious problems in the clarity of the paper’s meaning, I may ask you to fix the problem and submit a revised draft to me as soon as possible for grading. We’ll be meeting individually later on in the semester to look at some of the rough spots. However, I am happy to correct the mechanics in your journals if you choose for me to do so. If you do, please write a note telling me so on the top of your journal. Whether you choose for me to correct the mechanics in your journal or not, this aspect of your writings will not be reflected in your grade.

Description of Writing Assignments

We will be doing many different types of writing for this class — in class and take home freewritings, class preparation notes or lists, short writings composed in small groups responding to your group discussion, journals on individual readings, and many drafts of formal papers. All of these writings will relate and build on each other. For example, freewritings on your own ideas might be combined with journals on relevant readings to help you compose a rough draft of a formal paper. For each of the three formal papers you will need to incorporate the two readings preceding that assignment. Therefore, you can borrow whole sections from the two journals leading up to that formal paper, combining and adding to the journals to build a draft. So, if you like, you might think of journals as “mini-drafts” of formal papers.

You will be writing three formal papers for our class. They need to be three pages minimum in length. You will revise each formal paper three times. The first draft you write will be reviewed by a classmate (peer review). You must then revise the paper to turn in to me. I will return the paper and you must revise it once again for me. The last revision will be before the portfolio is due at the end of the semester. Revisions that receive a higher grade will take the place of the original paper’s grade.

You must revise formal paper second drafts (the revised draft copies after peer review of your rough draft) within one week after the draft is returned to you. The second draft will not receive a grade, but it will have comments/suggestions for revision on it when I return it to you. We will continue working on new assignments during this time; schedule your time accordingly. The third draft will receive a grade of check+, check, or check- and additional comments. If you do not turn in a third, revised, draft within a week of the second draft’s return, you will not receive a grade for that paper.

You will also be writing several journal entries. They need to be at least one and one half (1 ½) pages in length. You may always revise a journal and turn in the revised draft up to one week following its being returned to you. Although the journals are not as formal as papers, they are still public writing, not private

diaries; please do not write anything that you would not want to read by anyone else. The journal entries will receive a check+, check, or check- rather than a letter grade. A higher mark on a revision will replace the original entry's mark.

We will also be doing some spontaneous, ungraded writing in class intended to help you get started writing (and to keep up your steam!) called "freewriting." We will also apply ourselves to discussions and revisions of student example papers. With the strong reading of example papers as a base (what we decide makes a paper "work" for the reader) you will be able to begin revising sections of your papers in class as in class writing assignments. As mentioned in the "grading" handout, all of these class activities do affect your grade.

You must revise all portfolio papers/journals following our "portfolio" revision meeting." In other words, your finished portfolio papers will be fourth drafts of formal papers (first draft plus three revisions). Your revised portfolio paper "grades" (check+, check, or check-) will replace your third draft grades for those papers.

Earlier drafts of journals and formal papers must be handed in (attached with a paper clip please) with your revised drafts. When you hand in your second draft of a formal paper you must also hand in your rough draft and peer review sheet to receive credit for that paper. Thus, previous drafts of papers must accompany revised drafts; you must turn in a rough draft (or drafts) of formal papers, the revised "second" draft, and the peer review sheet that your reviewer filled out for you. After your partner has filled out the peer review sheet for your paper, writing down comments and suggestion for revision for you, you will take those peer review sheets home with you to help you revise, and then turn in those sheets with all of the drafts of your paper.

Before you hand in revised drafts with your earlier drafts attached, highlight in the earlier draft those sections which you revised/alterd/edited or added to. Thus, I will be able to quickly find/comment on all revisions.

Remember — your reader(s) appreciate it when you use spell check on the computer for typos and proofread your take home writings. We will work on strategies for proofreading and using spellcheck, as well as editing, in class.

Grading Information (Pass/Fail)

- I. Grade Breakdown for Determination of Pass or Fail
 - A. Combined journal marks=20%
 - B. Each formal paper (the forth "portfolio" draft)=20%
 - C. Class participation including discussion and peer review participation=10%
 - D. Participation in all instructional technology activities (weekly entries on our e-mail mailing list, for example)=10%

- II. Absences
 - A. No more than 5.
- III. Portfolio Revisions
 - A. Failing to revise portfolio papers after our "portfolio revision meeting" will keep you from receiving credit for the course.
- IV. Missing Work
 - A. Each "missing" journal (any journal assignment not turned in) will lower your final course grade one half ($\frac{1}{2}$) letter grade.
 - B. Each "missing" formal paper "draft packet" (rough draft, peer review sheet, revised second draft, revised third draft) drops the final course grade two and one half ($2\frac{1}{2}$) letter grades.
- V. Additional Grading Information
 - A. I do not mark journals as stringently as formal paper drafts. Journals reflect more preliminary, early work on readings/assignment questions. Formal paper drafts are the product of former journals, freewritings, class discussions, earlier drafts, and peer review sessions. Thus, I expect much more of formal papers than of journals.
 - B. Always read and consider all comments/suggestions for revision on journals and formal papers, even if your mark is high. These comments and suggestions are for your benefit and can aid you in revising your drafts. Do not assume that a check+ on a journal or an A on a formal paper means that the draft needs no revision. Any paper can benefit from revision.
 - C. Grading of journals and formal papers becomes more stringent as the semester progresses because as your skills grow, readers (including teachers) expect that progress to be reflected in your work. I mark/grade/write comments and suggestions on journals and papers based on what can be expected at any given point in the semester. Thus, do not assume that a paper that received a check+ early to mid-semester is ready to be put in your portfolio at the end of the semester. Similarly, suggestions for revisions on early journal/papers only "count" at that point in the semester. All papers need new revision comments/suggestions before you compose a final revision for the portfolio at the end of the semester. Therefore, we will set up private meetings approximately two weeks prior to the portfolios due date to discuss final revisions. We will also have informal peer review sessions in class towards the end of the semester so that you may receive feedback/suggestions from several classmates.
 - D. If you have been diagnosed with, or feel you may have, a learning disability please let me know so that I can make accommodations.

CLASSES NOT IN SESSION

September 6 (M) Labor Day

September 20 (M) Yom Kippur

November 11 (Th) Veterans' Day

November 25-26 (Th, F) Thanksgiving Day Holidays