

COURSE: Philosophy 2 "Critical Thinking and Writing"
Spring 2000

INSTRUCTOR: W. Laird Durley

OFFICE HOURS: For Monday-Wednesday-Friday classes: Wed. 11-12 & 1-2

OFFICE: Humanities 54

OFFICE PHONE: 638-3641 ext. 3274

FAX: 638-5040

HOME: 222-8638 please call (but not after 7:00 PM
or before 7:00 a.m.!!)

CLASS MEETS: MWF 10:00-10:50 or MWF 12:00-12:50

DROP DATE: See your schedule (YOU MUST DROP YOURSELF; I WILL NOT)

FINAL EXAM DATE: See "Final Schedule" in the Spring 2000 Schedule of
classes.

TEXTS: Audiences and Intentions (Bradbury/Quinn), Third Edition and
The Elements of Reasoning (Corbett)

OBJECTIVES/NON-OBJECTIVES:

This is a course designed to help you see exactly how people (i.e., Major Authors, politicians, ADVERTISERS, your friends, you, et al.) attempt-sometimes legitimately, sometimes not- to persuade others who disagree with them. It is a course about becoming careful: more careful about your reasons for accepting or rejecting another's argument when he or she tries to persuade you, and more careful about the reasons you give when you try to persuade others. Thus, while at first blush it appears to be only a course about hearing and responding to objections to your claims, claims that seem perfectly obvious to you, one usually finds that in the course of trying to defend a claim to another person 1)for whom one has respect but 2)with whom one finds oneself in disagreement, that what seemed so obvious is so no longer without considerably more thought.

In other words, the course is more basically, and perhaps more importantly, about becoming more critically careful of your **own** thought. (and hence the UCs' and the CSUs' interest in your having taken the course *before* you start their upper division work. You can, of course, transfer to a UC or a CSU without this course-tens of thousands of high school students do so every year- you just can't transfer as a junior.)

PRESUMPTIONS and PREREQUISITES

To help you do so the course might begin at almost any level, but, as this is a second semester transfer level course, this course is designed to

Drop date
Final exam date
Grade scale

capitalize on the content covered and the skills learned in the **RC English 1A course**. It, therefore, *presupposes and does not directly teach* the basics of grammar and sentence and expository paragraph construction; it also, therefore, *presupposes* in the student an ability to write a basic 3/5 page expository paper without errors in such. As 70% of the grade for the course will come from up to 7, five page essays (up to 5 originals, at least 2 rewrites), it is essential that you realize at the outset just where you stand vis-a-vis the writing skills presupposed by the course.

To this end an in-class Writing Assessment (which must be taken and will be included in your file but will not figure in your final grade) will be given during your 1st week of class and returned by the end of your 2nd. Again, it is given to help you see how you "stack up" initially against the criteria mentioned above. If you have taken and passed English 1A, or its equivalent with a "C" grade or better **and can document having done so**, you will be admitted to the class no matter how you do on that assessment. You must, nevertheless, take the assessment and meet with me in my office during your first 3 weeks of class so that I can (1) counsel you on its basis and (2) get to know you. (Please bring a picture of yourself to the meeting as I am terrible on names and need to get your face firmly in mind.) **This meeting is not optional and is part of your class participation grade.** An appointment schedule will be posted on my door and extended office hours will be available. If you **have not** already taken and passed with a C or better English 1A or its equivalent, this assessment will be the sole basis of any exception to the English 1A prerequisite of the course.

EXAMS/QUIZZES, HOMEWORK/READING, AND WRITING ASSIGNMENT PAPERS:

What will determine your final grade:

- 70% papers: 6/7 papers, one approximately every 3 weeks.
- 10% class participation: a grade given each week
- 10% quizzes/tests: at least 10 given, maybe more
- 10% final

METHOD OF DETERMINING FINAL GRADE:

After the final I sit down with your complete file: no, not just my grade book but your *entire* file. I look at all of your work (quizzes, papers, homework, class participation, final) and come up with the highest grade I can justify, i.e., the highest for which I can at that moment SEE evidence. To this end, it is essential I have a complete file. In other words, (1) throw out nothing, and (2) keep copies. I want to see again anything my pen has touched of yours (No, not unmarked rough drafts or fresh-out-of-your-computer-but-unmarked replacements for lost originals.)

Every semester 2 or 3 students at least turn in the final paper, some rewrites and the final exam, and when I ask for "the rest" they say, in seeming utter surprise, "You mean you want it all, even the originals of the stuff I rewrote!?" And every semester those students' grades suffer. Please, I beg of you; don't be one of those students. The file is for your protection.

EXPECTATIONS:

Initially most students find this course very disorienting as they are being asked to make an 180 degree turn from an **Expository style:**

I.e., "Here is something I believe, and here are the reasons I believe it!"

with which they've had some success both in high-school and here at the college to a **Rhetorical style:**

I.e., "What do you think about this belief? (listen to objections) oh? Would this new information change your mind as it has mine? NO? Well, can we at least agree on this third idea? Yes? Then if we can add to this third idea some other new stuff, is that enough for you? OK, Then we might have to conclude that this belief with these modifications is better than the ones you and I, seemingly so reasonably, started with."

Please note the huge shifts from "I" to "you" and "we" and from *declaration* to *question*. Most students find this shift away from self expression and toward thinking critically about the value to others of that expression valuable but difficult. It is.... The grades initially are, therefore, almost universally low (i.e., from F's to a few B's). Therefore, when it comes time for a final assessment of your work, it is essential that I see (1) your original work (2) my comments and (3) your response (i.e., the rewrites and later papers) to those comments. Final skills are more important than initial weaknesses and thus later papers count more than earlier ones, but I need **all** of your work to make that assessment.

For example: What if I gave you some advice, you tried to follow it but misunderstood or overdid it? Maybe the result is my fault but who will ever know if you turn in only a rewrite? I'll have your original low grade in my grade book and a new low grade to add to it. Ugh! My fault (but no evidence) but your low grade. Additionally, I don't revise grades down (except for cheating, plagiarism etc.) on a re-reading, but sometimes I revise them up during that final reading; given both documents I can assign points for improvement of the document. With only one I cannot. Finally, if I can see all the documents I can count later papers as worth more than the usually lower earlier ones as part of a whole body of work. Are these enough carrots and sticks? We shall see....

Back to the QUIZZES etc... Some of the quizzes will be almost entirely of a "did you read the assignment?" sort. Others will be of a "How well did you read the assignment?" sort. The former will not be announced and the latter will. Both will be graded:

"+1"= Well Done!

"+" = O.K.

"-" = you did badly (F=50%)

"-1"= you didn't show up (0%)

Class participation, which seems so subjective, is not over a long enough period of time and enough entrees. I evaluate weekly on the same "-1, -, +, and +1" basis. To do this I need your picture as mentioned above. That picture is due at our counseling meeting; it is part of your 1st homework assignment and is thus part of your grade. (No, not how beautiful it is, but whether I got it and can use it.) Which brings up . . .

HOMEWORK/ATTENDANCE/MAKE-UP/EXTRA CREDIT:

You are expected to attend all classes. 6 absences (two weeks of an eighteen week course) will be 'tolerated.' Tardies, while less objectionable, are none the less impolite and show, if frequent, the basic 'disrespect for audience' that is the cardinal fault in a critical thinking class. Either more than six absences or excessive tardiness is grounds for a **W** or **F** grade. While there is no direct grade for attendance, how does one receive anything for class participation but a "-1" if one is not there?

Late work is always accepted but only with a written explanation (due at the time the assigned work was due) and only within certain individually negotiated parameters (i.e., see me/call me if something is late or going to be late to work out a schedule for turning it in.) You must turn in all work; work not submitted gets a "-1 (i.e. 0%) not an "F" (i.e. 50%) You may not choose to simply not turn in an assignment because you think you are doing well enough (whatever that may mean to you). This rule applies absolutely to the 6-7 major papers, their re-writes, and the final: if when I open the file at the end of the semester even **one** of these is missing I simply stop reading and give you an F for the semester. This issue is not negotiable.

Quizzes cannot be made up!!

There is no extra credit in this class.

ONE LAST POINT:

Please, if you have a paper due and you can't or don't have it done, come to class. I know it is tempting not to (and who hasn't tried "my car broke down" or "I was sick" or "the computer ate my paper,"), but after a few years at this job I am getting not just a little cynical about such claims. We do in-class work on those days and new work is assigned for which, "I wasn't here" the next time you do come to class is not an excuse. (See the above two phone numbers, both with answering machines.)

Again, please: don't penalize yourself three times (i.e., no on-time paper, no work done in class that day, unprepared for next class) just to avoid a little embarrassment.