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course

## ENGLISH 116: FRESHMAN SEMINAR WRITING & PHOTOGRAPHY

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### COURSE DESCRIPTION

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**E**nglish 116: Freshman Seminar is, according to the college catalog, the “gateway course for North Central College’s integrative curriculum. [It f]ocuses on writing, reading, and critical thinking related to a specific area of inquiry [and is t]eam-taught by faculty from English and another department. Topics vary, but emphasis is on rhetoric and interdisciplinary perspectives. [An i]ntensive research component [is required].” As the gateway course, English 116 introduces students to college-level expectations in general; to thoughtful, critical reading and writing skills; and to research. The course requires that students complete three or four essay assignments and that they participate in two library instruction sessions. Our section of the course, entitled “Writing and Photography,” explores intersections between the written word and the visual art of photography and is taught by a creative writer (Anna Leahy) and an art historian (Debora Rindge).

Anna Leahy’s critical work has appeared in the *Journal of the Midwest MLA*, *Facts on File Companion to the American Short Story*, *The Encyclopedia of American Poetry: The Twentieth Century*, and other publications and has been presented at conferences such as the Modern Language Association, the Associated Writers and Writing Programs conference, and others. Leahy’s poetry chapbook *Hagioscope* appeared in 2000, and her creative work has been published in journals such as *Connecticut Review*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *The Journal*, and *Quarterly West*. She is editing a collection on creative writing pedagogy and serves on the Pedagogy Steering Committee for the Associated Writers and Writing Programs. She holds a Ph.D. from Ohio University and an M.F.A. from the University of Maryland. She was awarded North Central College’s Dissinger Award for faculty research last year.

Debora Rindge is a consultant for the American Art Collection at the El Paso Museum of Art. Rindge's scholarly work has appeared in *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph*, *Gendered Landscapes: An Interdisciplinary Exploration of the Past Place and Space*, *American Naïve Paintings*, and other publications. Rindge has served as curator for exhibits of the work of Eugene Thurston and of John Meigs and is currently developing a traveling exhibit entitled *Light in the Sky: A Tom Lea Retrospective, 1907-2001*. She has lectured widely, including at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, and has presented research at numerous conferences, both in the United States and internationally. She was a Fulbright Scholar in American Art in 1994 and holds a Ph.D. from the University of Maryland, where she earned an outstanding teaching award.

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### INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

North Central College is located in Naperville, a Chicago suburb. Naperville was recently designated the best community in the U.S. to raise children, in part because of the low number of families in poverty and the high number of two-parent households. For several years, the public library system has been named the country's best. The college's student body consists of 1800 full-time, 350 part-time, and 450 graduate students. More than 1000 of the undergraduates live on campus. Though students are largely from the Chicago area, they represent 25 states and 25 countries. Minority enrollment is 13%. The cost of tuition, fees, room, and board is \$27,312 (*Undergraduate Catalog* 13); 80% of students receive need- and/or merit-based financial aid. The college employs 140 full- and half-time faculty and numerous part-time instructors.

The college's mission is to be "a community of learners dedicated to preparing informed, involved, principled and productive citizens and leaders over a lifetime" (*Undergraduate Catalog* 5). To support this mission, the college has three goals, the first of which relates directly to English 116 as the gateway course: students will experience "One faculty committed to teaching...in small classes...in which writing and speaking skills are emphasized" (ellipses in original; *Undergraduate Catalog* 5). A few years ago, North Central College overhauled its curriculum and made English 116 the foundational course that enables students "to make informed, ethical, and globally aware arguments whatever their disciplinary emphasis" (*Curricular Implementation*). The integrative curriculum includes general education requirements in areas such as intercultural seminars; leadership, ethics, and values; and religion and ethics. The calendar is three 10-week terms, with most composition sections scheduled to accommodate more than 450 first-year students during the first two terms.

The composition requirement is fulfilled by completing English 115: Composition I and English 116: Freshman Seminar or, for those students with

the highest ACT scores, English 125: Freshman Seminar, an accelerated version. Obviously, the best-prepared students are most often found in the latter course. Our experience in English 116 shows few students consider themselves “good” writers, whether that reflects honest assessment or the level of praise previously received. The others, seemingly discouraged by struggling to communicate interesting, clear thoughts or by perceiving they lack some innate gift, tend to resist the adage that more writing leads to better writing. This resistance to the risk and revision we value as teachers, coupled with our short 10-week term, guides us to be wisely cautious about how much can be accomplished in the course.

Each section of the Freshman Seminar is housed in the English department but is interdisciplinary in the topics and in the staffing that brings to the classroom one instructor from the English department and one instructor from another department. As James Davis puts it in *Interdisciplinary Courses and Team Teaching*, “If there is a key characteristic of interdisciplinary courses, it is ‘integration,’ scholars working together to pool their interests, insights, and methods, usually with the hope of gaining and presenting new understandings that could not be derived from working alone” (6). In other words, the integrative curriculum and its gateway course advances the “one faculty” that is a major part of the college’s mission. It seems no coincidence, then, that our students noted on institutional evaluations that enthusiasm for and knowledge of the subject were our greatest strengths. Because this first-year seminar fosters integration of knowledge, faculty and students use existing resources and expertise to expand our understandings, to become greater than the sum of our few parts.

The small-college environment creates both obstacles and rewards for a team-taught seminar. North Central College invests significantly by granting each instructor full credit for the course and by offering a week of summer training supported by a stipend and reimbursement for materials such as books, videos, and laser pointers. Davis and others recognize the challenges of team teaching, including “some initial confusion” and issues of “coverage” (47); “inventing the subject for a team-taught course is not an easy process” (48); and “the resolution of differences involves a great amount of ‘homework’ on the part of the faculty” (51). In other words, highly integrative team teaching demands institutional support and also significant planning and ongoing negotiating between instructors. Our program challenges traditional, institutional ways of valuing time and effort, including faculty evaluation policies and the relative demands of teaching, service, advising, and professional development. Team teaching and interdisciplinarity highlight existing differences between administrative views of time and “the classroom-based, polychromic perspective of many teachers [...], with its emphasis on personal relationships more than

on things” (Hargreaves 113). We have found that, as Davis asserts, “[T]eam teaching often proves more difficult than teaching alone” (74).

North Central College has 12 full-time (including non-tenure-track) English faculty and offers 15 sections of English 116 and 5 sections of English 125. As a result of these typically small-college numbers, not enough full-time English faculty exist to staff all sections and also fulfill other obligations. Still, because at least one instructor in each section is full-time, all full-time English faculty teach at least one section. This staffing investment in gateway or composition courses is probably typical for small colleges and ensures that first-year students work with full-time faculty in small classes and that faculty who teach our gateway course, regardless of specialization, approach it within a liberal arts tradition. The program, then, makes significant demands on faculty in terms of scheduling but helps the college meet its mission.

While pairing teams can be a challenge, the small college fosters success. In order to propose a topic and coordinate schedules many English faculty, for instance, secure partners with whom they share research interests or prior relationships. However, while all full-time and many part-time English faculty teach this course, the non-English half of teams is drawn from volunteers (with encouragement from the administration to represent a variety of disciplines); so, some English faculty teach in areas in which they may have neither interest nor experience. In addition, full-time faculty are sometimes teamed with part-time instructors whom they don’t know and who are on campus infrequently. Some college faculty fears that the course isn’t integrative enough, which may be related to nuances of staffing. In a survey of faculty, however, most had positive responses to the course, and one aspect valued by non-English faculty was that they learned a great deal about writing, which may be especially valuable for a small college with a liberal arts tradition and for our college’s stated mission.

### **THEORETICAL RATIONALE**

The broadest rationale for “Writing and Photography” is to oppose the notion that “‘the disciplines’ have become gated communities or combat zones. They are invitations to nostalgia, a longing for a lost unitary knowledge and a lost unitary self” (Garber 89). In opposing this notion we also defer the question of whether the course is either interdisciplinary or a topic-based composition course. Our course design and Davis’s definition of team teaching ask us to embrace what Marjorie Garber calls “discipline envy” (60), “an exhilarating intellectual curiosity” (60), and “that predisciplinary interdisciplinary moment” (95). It asks that we become, as North Central College’s mission asks, “one faculty” working together. Thus, we—teachers and students—purposely risk our individual disciplines’ integrity and our own comfort zones.

In addition, given that teaching is often done in relative isolation from other teachers but that small colleges promote community and intersection, team teaching seems an ideal way “to avoid the professional limitations of teacher individualism, while embracing the creative potentials of teacher individuality” (Hargreaves 183). Though Andy Hargreaves doesn’t address team teaching specifically and draws his points from research on school systems rather than colleges, he outlines pros and cons of teacher isolation, namely that isolation removes interference but also colleagues’ “feedback on their value, worth and competence” (167). North Central College, perhaps unintentionally, uses its composition program to balance these aspects of our teaching lives and to promote a faculty that shares pedagogical values without limiting individual freedom. To do this, the program and our iteration of the course take advantage of the interplay between disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity that Garber asserts is vital.

Though she addresses more overtly political topics, Donna Qualley, too, hits upon the teacher’s role in pushing students beyond the search for unified bits of knowledge and toward both/and thinking. She asserts, in response to Diana Fuss’s ideas about essentialism, “The way we make binary oppositions less oppressive, then, is not by pretending they don’t exist, or by getting rid of them, but rather by keeping them fluid and open to redefinition” (28). This shifting and blending—who’s responsible for teaching what, whose voice is the authority on a given topic, to whom does a student turn for the best guidance, can or should a teaching team have a unified persona, and so on—remains a challenging aspect of our course, especially because our classroom is filled almost entirely with first-year students still getting their bearings in relation to college-level expectations, disciplinary boundaries, and their own opinions.

Our texts, activities, and team teaching “can create occasions for students to rethink and reflect by inviting them to experience, at least temporarily, what it is like to be two places at once” (Qualley 28-29) when they may not yet have established themselves in one place. As James Wilkinson notes, “To acknowledge the validity of competing and often contradictory points of view, to accept the limited nature of what can be known with certainty, to resist the temptation to reduce the world to simplistic categories [...] requires a sophistication that must be acquired gradually” (3). Occasions for supported rethinking are a strength of the small college and liberal arts tradition, as we resist either/or positions and attempt “to keep the student’s initial drive and enthusiasm intact while thwarting her or his desire to be content with easy answers” (Wilkinson 3). Discussion-based classes, though, can leave students feeling as if “No generalization truly withstands scrutiny” (Wilkinson 7), and team teaching compounds that uncertainty in students because what are intended

as complementary comments or options from instructors may be perceived by first-year students as contradictory assertions or demands.

As with any course, “Writing and Photography” requires planning, teaching, evaluation, and, because the course is team taught, content integration. Davis offers questions for negotiating these aspects as a team (8-9). In addition, we find that our experience with course design and implementation reflects Davis’s definition of a highly integrative course:

[Instructors] develop a common syllabus, they struggle to integrate their various perspectives, they come to agreement about ordering of topics, and they intermingle their teaching activity throughout the course. They take primary responsibility for individual class sessions, but sometimes two [...] faculty are involved in planning and delivering the instruction for a particular class. They attend each other’s classes and provide feedback and support for each other in their teaching. They agonize together over grading and evaluation procedures. When the course is evaluated, they sink or swim together. (7-8)

As we sequenced the course, we came to compromise and consensus. Leahy suggested that content readings be cut to increase focus and to allow for more writing instruction; Rindge, who taught the first iteration of this course with a part-time English instructor in 2003, decided which readings could be cut without undermining course goals or support for essay assignments. Rindge organized the field trip to the Art Institute of Chicago, including the exercise and discussion that were part of the museum visit, but both instructors were available for on-site brainstorming with individual students. Leahy planned workshop sessions for Essay 3, but Rindge and Leahy each ran a separate workshop group so that both instructors implemented the activity. The course, then, is surprisingly comprehensive and cohesive and is likely to become more so as we continue to negotiate it as a team and better convey that cohesiveness to our students.

The course is designed to give students confidence in their ability to grapple with visual and textual sources from the first day of class, despite their varying levels of experience. As Davis notes, “Without some sense of the logic for sequencing the topics in a course, students as well as faculty often feel lost” so it’s especially important that the team work together to determine criteria for sequencing (60). The readings are structured to quickly expose students to accessible written texts, photos, and analytical exercises to establish a foundation upon which to build in anticipation of more complex material later in the course. Sarah Kennedy’s poetry requires less knowledge of context, setting, and photographic technique than Muriel Rukeyser’s or Natasha Trethewey’s poems; Cynthia Ozick’s story “Shots” utilizes playful language

but is not as challenging as Julio Cortazar's "Blow Up"; and Wright Morris' straightforward autobiography is easier to summarize than Susan Sontag's persuasive, cultural criticism.

One perennial conceptual problem is moving students past notions that photographs are mere illustrations when paired with written text. While this problem may be particular to our topic, faculty in team-taught courses commonly "find themselves making unhappy compromises [...]; and, unhappily, students don't always learn what we hope they will learn or want them to perceive about the course" (Davis 74). So, we emphasize interrelationships between written and visual text. When presented with *The Sweet Flypaper of Life* by Roy DeCarava and Langston Hughes, students are both enchanted and convinced that each medium successfully reinforces the other. Yet, when faced with the photo-essay and research assignments, most students find applying this idea to their own writing difficult. Rindge learned in the 2003 iteration that, unless students had taken an art history course or had other instruction that demanded critical engagement with visual texts, students hadn't developed a critical approach to visual texts. Students encounter few good models prior to our course, though photographs as merely illustrative are modeled widely. Historian Louis Masur, for instance, observes that most history books are rife with illustrations but void of text that engages these images. One of our students stated, in an instructor-generated evaluation, that the favorite reading was *The Sweet Flypaper of Life*—a book-length photo essay depicting Harlem residents—because he/she 'had never seen a book such as this one before.' The photographs dominate the pages and are at least as important as the text in conveying the narrative. One of our course goals is to expose students to integrating the visual and linguistic, but it is unrealistic to expect that advanced skills will be developed intuitively by the end of a single academic term.

Students understand texts relatively well as observers or readers but not as well as writers, as illustrated by the success students have reading *The Sweet Flypaper of Life* but the difficulty they have composing their own photo essay. One in-class exercise that helps students articulate thoughts with greater specificity and clarity is to have each act as an author interviewed on the radio. Each author-expert describes to the interviewer and listening audience the ideas in his or her essay as if it were to be published as an article for the public. That the audience can't see the photographs strengthens authors' descriptions and overall integration of visual references. The discussion of "Gauley Bridge" also helps students understand integration of words and images, as we reconstruct in the classroom the town's visual, physical layout and the camera position that Rukeyser's poem describes. While some students continue to struggle with whether the course is about writing or about photography, texts and exercises

push students to articulate their own responses with increasing clarity and to think both/and.

The three essay assignments, too, are designed to emphasize various approaches and skills. The photo essay asks students to consider how academic writing might be creative and display individual style and also requires the practice of narrative that informs. This assignment uses Gilles Mora's definition of the photo essay: "a close association between a text and a group of photographs, often in narrative sequence, concentrated on a given subject" (142). In addition, to show students this form, which may initially strike them as not academic, we play a video clip of *Life* magazine's photo essays from the *American Photography* series; this segment further defines the genre as a story told through both media "with a beginning, a middle, and an end." So, while this essay assignment challenges students' assumptions about academic writing, it emphasizes narrative modes with which they are often adept.

The interpretive essay focuses more overtly on strengthening critical thinking skills and on writing as a way to discover, better understand, and respond to an aspect of the world around us, in this case a photograph observed at the Art Institute. The research essay employs similar interpretive, critical skills and engages larger, ongoing, critical conversations. Our first-year students often hesitate to rely on their own ideas or to develop their own structures for articulating their ideas. So, the essay sequencing asks them to value their own ideas first; to learn some logical, analytical options for articulating their ideas; and then to engage their own voices in a research project. These ways of understanding writing intentionally match the ways in which *A Writer's Resource*, the college's required handbook, talks about academic essays.

The most essential text for guiding students in developing their critical thinking and writing skills are chapters one and three from Terry Barrett's *Criticizing Photographs*, introduced in conjunction with the interpretive essay. In his first chapter, "About Art Criticism," Barrett relies on a definition of criticism that is adaptable across disciplines and encourages students to see writing as a learning process instead of as a stance that risks being wrong: "Criticism is informed discourse about art to increase understanding and appreciate of art" (3; italics removed). This reading introduces students to a process of describing, interpreting, evaluating, and theorizing (2) that works well when discussing and writing about photographs and can be adapted to various kinds of texts in other disciplines. Another Barrett chapter, "Interpreting Photographs," introduces students to basic theoretical approaches (i.e., feminist, Marxist, etc.). While first-year students struggle with theorizing and while the course provides only brief definitions of theoretical approaches, students move beyond what they already know and begin to choose and apply appropriate

theories to visual texts as they read Barrett, discuss photographs at the Art Institute, and write the interpretive and research essays.

### CRITICAL REFLECTION

Sequencing of the essay assignments affects the construction of class concepts. Ideally, the essay assignment sequence would be as follows: the interpretive essay; the research essay, which builds directly on the skills developed in the interpretive essay and for which library instruction is scheduled; and the photo essay, which can, later in the course, demand a complex understanding of visual and written narrative and of the roles of photographer and author. The first iteration in 2003 confirmed Rindge's expectations that the interpretive essay should be the first assignment due to its success in establishing a critical model and that the research project should not be the last project, for first-year students plan and manage their first college research more successfully by beginning early in the term. In addition, by returning graded research essays during the course, we create some opportunity for students to learn from evaluation of that defining essay, see weaknesses in their revision processes of a longer essay, and discuss ways to improve the research skills they will employ in other courses. On the first day of class in 2004, however, we faced two scheduling problems. The Art Institute of Chicago had just announced that their photography exhibit's opening would be delayed; therefore, we had to delay the class field trip upon which the interpretive essay assignment hinges. In addition, the instructional librarian informed us that she was teaching a course during the second half of the term; therefore, we had to reschedule the two required library instruction sessions to occur in the first five weeks of the course. The schedule included below reflects changes we made on that first day of class and represents the course as we taught it in 2004. While confusion is not an uncommon experience for first-year students, we surmise that our necessary changes to sequencing resulted in the consensus by students that the course or instructors were disorganized or that the assignments were not clear. In future iterations, we will either revise the essay assignments more extensively for the sequence below or reorder them to test whether sequencing indeed plays a role in students' perceptions of course clarity and organization.

The text that perhaps best brings together the disciplines and helps students comprehend and articulate interdisciplinary approaches and also understand how writing and photography relate to larger issues of creativity is *The Sweet Flypaper of Life*. Students, too, ranked this as their favorite reading, with 7 of 19 students designating it as such on instructor-generated evaluations. (One student listed it as least favorite because it was on reserve at the library, and another listed it as least favorite "because of the content.") As the work of an acclaimed photographer and a canonical poet, the text challenges disciplinary

boundaries between the visual and language arts and offers a concept of *book* or *narrative* that depends on both image and text, instead of relegating the image to the role of illustration. The photographs are of actual Harlem residents whose daily lives are represented visually, but the written text is a fictional story of relationships that are likely never to have existed in the subjects' lives. Are photographs documentary if the text is not? Is the written story fictional if the photographs document real moments lived? Into what genre—artistic and literary genres—does the book fit? While this text fosters the course's interdisciplinarity and classroom discussions, it also fosters students' understanding of the photo essay they must compose, though students are prohibited from fictionalizing. *The Sweet Flypaper of Life*, moreover, prepares students to think both verbally and visually before imagining the exhibit documented in Edward Steichen's *Family of Man*.

Although most students do not master the verbal-visual interplay in one term, we believe exposure to and the attempt to integrate these two forms of communication is important in and of itself. Most of our students will never take another English or art history course, but, living in an intensely visual world, they are constantly bombarded with visual-verbal messages and may become the creators of such messages. The ease of incorporating imagery into word-processing documents fascinates this generation, and while our course does not teach graphic design, a new respect for the power of visual-verbal discourse in their somewhat clumsy photo-essays is conveyed both in conferences and in the sparks of successful interaction in this assignment.

One or two readings may be eliminated in 2005 simply due to time constraints. While in 2003 Therese Harlan's "Adjusting the Focus for an Indigenous Presence" elicited energetic discussion and resulted in an awakening for many students about insider/outsider issues for photographers and their subjects, the 2004 students generated a lackluster response and two of 19 declared it their least favorite reading on instructor-generated evaluations. Rindge led the discussion both years, but there was less time in 2004 to discuss relevant photographs. We hate to eliminate exposure to such important ideas, but the brevity of a 10-week term mandates that we must either cut this reading or make more time for it, thus eliminating another topic.

Issues related to both team teaching and adjustments first-year, small-college students are expected to make remain our greatest struggle and are articulated well by Stephen Brookfield:

Teachers often make the mistake of presuming that this realization of the contingency of ideas, behaviors, and structures will be experienced by students as liberating and exciting. They expect that students who see themselves freed from the shackles of distorted perceptions and invalid assumptions will feel a sense of release or gratitude toward

the teacher who has made this transformative breakthrough possible. [... However, b]ecause of the discomfort this causes, students will often resent the teacher who jerked them rudely out of a golden era of certainty.

If teachers are not aware of the strong possibility that students may be angry and resentful, they may feel very threatened when this occurs. Under this sense of threat, they may feel that they have failed in their educational efforts. (470)

Our interactions with students and our evaluations indicate that students were sometimes resentful, particularly when they perceived harsh grading or lack of early clarification for essay assignments. As one student criticizes, “They made us figure things out.” Another found the course “disorganized” because the instructors “never had the same answer to a question.” Overall, evaluation comments indicate that many students felt uneasy making decisions for themselves about writing and resented contingency or a variety of options. The advice students gave on instructor-generated evaluations for future students bears this out: “be prepared” to read a lot, for hard work, for a difficult class; “read everything and start papers as early as possible”; “keep an open mind”; “talk with the teachers if you don’t understand something”; “don’t miss any classes.” With the knowledge that interdisciplinary, integrative, or team-taught courses can exacerbate challenges that students perceive as obstacles, we continue to negotiate the way we share our expertise and teaching tasks, whether splitting time in front of the class, using group work, or balancing art history lecture, the field trip, and videos with effective writing activities.

Conferencing and workshopping are activities that practice theories of collaboration and complementarity underpinning integrative team teaching and that we use to address confusion (or panic) that might stem from the very perspectives and approaches we intend will liberate. We find one-on-one conferences effective and rewarding, though time-consuming and taxing. Conferencing, in particular, allows students to claim an assignment for themselves while seeking guidance from teachers. In *Writing Without Teachers*, Elbow asserts that teachers are experts and are, therefore, indifferent to student writing and also treat student writing as practice of objective standards instead of as individual, thoughtful expression. Conferences, as an alternative to Elbow’s teacherless classroom, allow us to share and individualize our expertise, to discuss expectations for academic writing in relation to individual students’ strengths and weaknesses, and to encourage individual style in our students’ writing. Some students seemed to recognize the benefits, with 14 of 19 students reporting that they met with a course instructor or a tutor at the Writing Center at least once in addition to the conference we required.

We found workshop sessions lively and well focused. Students, too, found workshopping especially useful, with 13 of 19 students noting its benefits in instructor-generated evaluations. Some recommended that we incorporate more workshopping, and none mentioned it as ineffective. Logically, if team teaching is sound pedagogy, team—or peer—review of writing is valuable in fostering the interaction of various perspectives and encouraging students to teach each other within the course context. Though workshopping was enthusiastically received, Rindge wonders if its prominence on the evaluations was influenced by the fact that it was the last major class activity, thus easier to recall than other well-received activities that had taken place earlier. Our main concern with workshopping is that, while students found it productive, we did not observe much significant revision that responded to workshop comments, nor did we see overall improvement in grades for that essay. However, the workshop may have taught students how to learn from each other and offered ways to write more effectively in the future.

Grading presents few obstacles procedurally. Our process is to each take half the batch; complete a grading sheet for each essay in the batch; and then meet to read each other's batches, negotiate essay grades, and compile comments. Occasionally we disagree but, even then, usually only by one increment (i.e., a B- instead of a B) and usually when one of us has met with the student and the other hasn't. This agreement probably stems from our frequent discussions as we plan and administer the course. Our ease in negotiating grades—and anecdotal evidence that this is the experience of other teams—is also evidence of the complementarity of our pedagogical perspectives. Our main concern about grading, then, is that most of our students rank the grade as very important when they write; on a scale of 1-10 (with 10 as most important), 16 of 19 students ranked the importance of the grade as 8 or higher, even though only 9 of 19 ranked their enjoyment of writing as 8 or higher. In addition, though grades seem important, students do not necessarily spend a great deal of time on the essays to be graded. For Essay 1, for which students had two weeks between distribution of the assignment and collection of the final draft, the average time students reported spending on drafting and revising outside of class was 5.5 hours, with four students reporting 2 hours and two students reporting just 1 hour. For the longer, research-oriented Essay 3, time invested nearly doubled, with an average of 10.3 hours and six students spending 5 or fewer hours. So, while our grading procedures are more consistent than we had expected from team teaching and while our grades are in line with college policies, we remain concerned that students feel extraordinary pressure to earn high grades without expecting of themselves significant time drafting and revising the essays that determine those grades.

This instructor pairing was virtually frictionless; it was fascinating and delightful. Rindge found this true in 2003 as well. How often does a professor have the chance to act as both instructor and “student” simultaneously, teaching students in the class but learning from a colleague? Some of our colleagues have suggested moving team teaching to the more advanced, third-year level, when students are familiar with disciplinary identities, better adjusted to the challenges of college life, and more adept at college-level discourse. Some are concerned that the current program unfairly burdens English faculty since all English faculty are mandated to team teach and are faced with new subjects and new pairings as is no other department on campus. However, until college funding now earmarked for first-year students changes, the realization of team-taught courses at the upper levels or with more faculty outside of English is unlikely.

We will teach this course again in 2005 and will adjust the essay sequence and related writing, reading, and activities. We will also look carefully at our greatest concerns—resistance to revision and confusion when faced with options—to determine how we might guide students more effectively to recognize obstacles as challenges that, ultimately, build skills and esteem. In the future, we may also seek ways to adapt this kind of course for upper-level teaching.

*Naperville, IL*

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## SYLLABUS

### **English 116: Writing and Photography**

#### **COURSE OVERVIEW**

English 116 emphasizes writing, reading, critical thinking, and research skills needed across the curriculum. This course prepares students for some of the challenges of college-level writing. It is designed to guide students in writing more clearly organized, better supported, and more engaging essays and to involve students in discussion about who sets the rules of writing and how those rules have developed across disciplines. In addition, English 116 employs team teaching to introduce students to the value of different perspectives on a given topic or issue.

In this section of English 116—“Writing and Photography”—we critically examine relationships between the written word and the visual art of photography, including stories and poems about photography, literary responses to photographs, historical analyses of photography, photographic criticism, and writing by photographers. Throughout, we compare and contrast photography and writing as art and media, considering the craft, techniques, and capacities of each.

#### **REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS**

Maimon, Elaine P. and Janice H. Peritz. *A Writer's Resource*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003.

Rosenblum, Naomi. *A World History of Photography*. 3<sup>rd</sup>. ed. New York: Abbeville, 1997.

Readings in books on reserve at the library are listed in the syllabus.

We also occasionally show video clips from *American Photography: A Century of Images*. St. Paul/Minneapolis: Twin Cities Public Television, 1999.

A camera (disposable okay), film (one roll okay), and development into prints for Essay 1

#### **GRADING POLICY**

Each of the following components is calculated as 25% of the final course grade. If the last essay grade reflects significant improvement, that assignment

may be weighted slightly more heavily when the final grade is calculated so that improvement is credited.

- Essay 1: 1000-1500 words / photo essay using 4-5 photographs shot by the author
- Essay 2: 800-1200 words / interpretive analysis essay of a photograph
- Essay 3: 2500-3000 words / persuasive research essay about photographic topic or issue
- Participation: active listening, discussing, and questioning; quizzes; written tasks; etc.

### **POLICY ON DRAFTS**

Because this is a writing course, we collect good faith drafts before every assignment is due for grading. Strong college papers usually unfold through a process of creation and revision that takes days and weeks. Drafts receive response from the instructor(s) and/or peers. Drafts turned in, then, must be complete, organized, and thoughtful—they should represent your best efforts to that point. Good writers spend long enough on their essays that they discover, through writing, what they think and want to say, rather than simply jotting down what they already know.

Though good faith drafts are not perfect, they are evidence of your effort. These drafts should:

1. Be typed and within 250 words of the assignment's length requirement.
2. Demonstrate clearly that you've begun thinking through and organizing relevant issues.
3. Include a clear thesis statement or controlling idea, underlined.
4. Be brought to class on the day they are due.

These drafts may also include typed questions about your topic, your thesis, the evidence you've selected, or other aspects of the paper. If your draft doesn't meet requirements, a full letter grade will be subtracted from your essay grade.

*The syllabus also includes policies on attendance, resources for assistance with writing, the museum field trip, the library instruction sessions, plagiarism, and disabilities.*

CALENDAR (*This course meets Tuesday and Thursday at 10:00-11:50am.*)

### Day 1

In class: What compels us to write about images with passion?

- Introductions—of syllabus and class members.
- Discussion of plagiarism and page 37 of the *NCC Guide to Writing*.
- Analysis of a photograph (Lange's *Migrant Mother* in *WHP*).
- Poems from Kennedy, Sarah. *Double Exposure*. Cleveland: Cleveland State UP, 2003.

Homework:

- Peruse *The World History of Photography (WHP)*; note interesting images; read 531-543.
- Read DeCarava, Roy and Langston Hughes. *The Sweet Flypaper of Life*. 1955. Washington, DC: Howard UP, 1984. Copy two text-image relations.

### Day 2

In class:

- Brief history of photographic technology.
- Discussion of DeCarava and Hughes.
- Discussion of “Writing to Learn” and “Writing in College” (4-9) and “Writing Papers”. (21-42) in *A Writer's Resource (WR)*.

Homework:

- Read Ozick, Cynthia. “Shots.” *The Short Story and Photography 1880s-1980s*. Ed. Jane M. Rabb. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 1998. Write (typed, double-spaced) a one-page summary and response to the Ozick story.
- Read *WHP* Chap. 2 (38-93) and 280-295.
- Read “Summarize” (*WR* 23).

### Day 3

In class:

- Discussion of Ozick's story and the one-page summary-responses.
- Discussion of strategies for summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting.
- Assignment for Essay 1.

Homework:

- Read *WR*: “Read Critically” (21-24), “Quote and Paraphrase...” (186-187), and “MLA Style: In-Text Citations” (204-206).
- Consider audience and purpose by reading *WR* 33 and 35-37.

- Read Moholy-Nagy, Laszlo. “Light — A Medium of Plastic Expression.” *Photographers on Photography*. Ed. Nathan Lyons. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1966. 72-73.
- Weston, Edward. “Photography — Not Pictorial.” *Photographers on Photography*. 154-158.
- Read Conger, Amy. “Edward Weston’s Toilet.” *Perspectives on Photography*. Eds. Peter Walch and Thomas Barrow. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico P, 1986. 167-183.
- Read Grundberg, Andy. “Ansel Adams: The Politics of Natural Space.” *Crisis of the Real: Writings on Photography since 1974*. New York: Aperture, 1999. 31-36.
- Write a one-page summary addressing two of the following: Moholy-Nagy (identify topic and who his audience is), Weston (identify topic and who his audience is), Conger (identify her thesis and discuss structure of argument), and Grundberg (identify his thesis and discuss structure of argument); use paraphrasing and quoting, with in-text page citation, at least one time per author.
- Read *WHP* Chap. 10 (462-515) and 516-531.

#### Day 4

In class:

- LIBRARY SESSION (introduction to basic research and especially periodicals).
- One-page summary due on Moholy-Nagy, Weston, Conger, and Grundberg.

Homework:

- Read Morris, Wright. “Photography in My Life.” *Time Pieces: Photographs, Writing, and Memory*. New York: Aperture, 1999.
- Decide which periodical is your prospective audience for Essay 1 (peruse in library).
- Shoot/develop your photos so that they are part of your drafting process.
- Read *WHP* 259-274 and 392-441.

#### Day 5

In class:

- Discussion of Morris.
- Discussion of Moholy-Nagy, Weston, Conger, and Grundberg.
- Confirm choice of periodical for audience of Essay 1.
- Discussion of planning strategies and writing habits.

- Discussion of strategies for thesis statements and opening paragraphs.
- Discussion of drafting (*WR* 42-58).

Homework:

- Read about paragraph development in *WR* (47-58).
- Work on good faith draft of Essay 1.

## Day 6

In class:

- DRAFT OF ESSAY 1 DUE.
- Discussion of paragraph-level writing issues.

Homework:

- Prepare for conference by reading “Revising” (*WR* 59-69).
- Read *WHP* 172-178.

## Day 7

Instead of meeting as a class, individual conferences will be scheduled to do the following:

- Discuss strengths, weaknesses, and revision possibilities of draft of Essay 1.
- Map and information for AIC.

Homework:

- Revise Essay 1.

## Day 8

- ESSAY 1 DUE.
- Assignment for Essay 2.
- Discussion of opening strategies for essays.

Homework:

- Read Harlan, “Adjusting the Focus or an Indigenous Presence.” *Over Exposed: Essays on Contemporary Photography*. Ed. Carol Squiers. New York: New Press, 1999. 134-152. Write a one-page summary and response.
- Read “Interpretive Analysis” (*WR* 88-93).

## Day 9

In class:

MEET AT THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO, Photography Galleries, 11:05 AM

- Summary-response of Harlan due at the museum.

Homework:

- Read Barrett, Terry. “About Art Criticism” and “Interpreting Photographs.” *Criticizing Photographs: An Introduction to Understanding Images*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Mountain View: Mayfield, 2000. 1-14, 36-52.
- Read about thesis statements and outlines (WR 43-46).
- Work on thesis statement and working outline or plan for Essay #2.
- Read about working bibliographies (WR 180-183).

### **Day 10**

In class:

- LIBRARY SESSION (research strategies focused on Essay #3 assignment).
- Thesis statement is due for Essay #2; instructors will respond in writing in class.

Homework:

- Work on a good faith draft of Essay #2.

### **Day 11**

In class:

- DRAFT OF ESSAY #2 DUE for peer response.
- Discussion of transition strategies and other organizational issues for long essays.
- Work from WR editing sections (339-496).
- Discussion of Barrett.

Homework:

- Revise Essay #2.

### **Day 12**

In class:

- ESSAY 2 DUE.
- Assignment for Essay 3.

Homework:

- Narrow a topic for Essay 3.
- Read “Arguments” (WR 97-111).
- Read chapters 4, 7, and 8 in Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 2003.
- Read “Photographs of Agony” and “Uses of Photography” in Berger, John. *About Looking*. 1980. New York: Vintage, 1991.
- Read WHP 179-189.

### Day 13

In class:

- Discussion of Sontag and Berger.
- Brainstorming of Essay 3 topics.
- Discussion of pre-drafting techniques.

Homework:

- Read Rukeyser, Muriel. "Gauley Bridge." *Waterlily Fire: Poems, 1935-62*. New York, Macmillan, 1962. 23-4.
- Read poems from Trethewey, Natasha. *Bellocq's Ophelia*. Saint Paul: Graywolf, 2002.
- Read *WHP* 365-383.
- Review drafting in *WR* 42-58.
- Read about planning, doing, and keeping track of research: *WR* 149-175 and 180-184.
- Compile a working, annotated bibliography for Essay 3; refer to *WR*.

### Day 14

In class:

- Discussion of Rukeyser and Trethewey.
- Discussion of annotated bibliographies.

Homework:

- Read Cortazar, Julio. "Blow Up." *The Short Story and Photography*. Ed. Rabb. 198-211.
- Work from *WR* editing sections (339-496).

### Day 15

In class:

- Discussion of Cortazar.
- Activities in preparation for *Family of Man*.
- Work from *WR* editing sections (339-496).

Homework:

- Read Steichen, Edward. *Family of Man*. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1955.
- Read *WHP* 483-5.
- Work from *WR* editing sections (339-496).

### Day 16

In class:

- Discussion of Steichen reading.
- Work from *WR* editing sections (339-496).

Homework:

- Bring 3 copies of your opening two paragraphs for Essay 3.

### **Day 17**

In class:

- Discussion of and peer-response exercises for opening and closing paragraphs.
- Discussion of formatting of in-text citations and works cited lists.

Homework:

- Work on good faith draft of Essay 3.

### **Day 18**

In class:

- DRAFT OF ESSAY 3 DUE IN CLASS (lack of enough copies constitutes lateness).

Homework:

- Read peer essays to prepare for in-class workshop discussion as instructed.

### **Day 19**

In class:

- Workshopping of Essay 3.

Homework:

- Read peer essays to prepare for in-class workshop discussion as instructed.

### **Day 20**

In class:

- Workshopping of Essay 3.
- Course evaluations.

Homework:

- Revise Essay 3.

### **Finals Week:**

- FINAL COPY OF ESSAY 3 due at the beginning of the regularly scheduled final exam.