

Dr. Phyllis Cole
Email: phc2@psu.edu
Phone: 610-892-1456

Office: Main 312E
Office hours: TTh 3:00-4:00,
W 1:30-3:30, and by appt.

ENGLISH 30S: Honors Freshman Composition

Penn State Delaware County, Fall 2007

Theme: Joining the Conversation

Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so no one present is qualified to retrace all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you....However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress.

—Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form*

Think of the university as one version of Burke's parlor, a place where you can both hear and join the significant conversation of others around you. Or maybe it's a suite of parlors, with different campuses, disciplines, and programs talking in special ways within the big conversation. Put another way, parts of the university make up distinct but overlapping *discourse communities*.

English 30S is a course in college writing as a response to reading and hearing the ideas of others. It will emphasize critical thinking, narrative, analysis, and argument. We will approach writing as a process that begins with brainstorming for ideas and goes on to drafting, revising, and editing. Each of three parts of the course will engage a different discourse community: humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences. We will also join discussions within the honors program (about our summer reading, trip to Washington, etc.) and the campus (the semester program on climate change.)

Finally, the last five weeks of the course will immerse us in the social sciences through an active fieldwork project: researching the first ten years of Penn State Delaware County's life (1967-77) through live interviews with early students, faculty, and administrators. This opportunity for outreach and hands-on research makes English 30S a course bearing credit toward the Community and Civic Engagement Minor. Most important, our collective writing will result in a published book (with your name among the authors) for the campus's Fortieth Anniversary celebration in the spring of 2008.

Books to buy:

Honors Program summer reading: Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* (Back Bay Books, 2002)

One Campus One Book reading: Elizabeth Kolbert, *Field Notes from a Catastrophe: Man, Nature, and Climate Change* (Bloomsbury, 2006)

Richard Rodriguez, *Hunger for Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez, An Autobiography* (Dial Press, 2005; originally 1982)

Sylvan Barnet and Hugo Bedau, *From Critical Thinking to Argument: A Portable Guide*, Second Edition (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2008)

Diana Hacker, *A Writer's Reference*, Sixth Edition (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007)

Course requirements, resources, grades:

- **Regular attendance and active participation are required!** Please attend all classes unless illness or disaster strikes. Come on time and stay to the end. More than three unexcused absences will lower your grade, as will frequent lateness; and with more than eight unexcused absences you cannot pass the course regardless of other grades. This is a small discussion class, so come prepared and ready to participate. The skills of reading, listening, and contributing are central to our course and to all college work. Attendance and participation will count for 20% of your semester grade.
- **Informal homework exercises and in-class writings** will sometimes start our class discussion. These will be evaluated on a credit-no credit basis for a cumulative 10% of your semester grade.
- **There will be SIX papers to write**, two for each of the three disciplinary units. These should each be 3-4 pages in length. Each will be assigned with guidelines and suggestions, but also considerable room for you to choose your own topic. At the end, as a final project, we will edit the last two (campus history) papers into publishable form for the 40th anniversary book. The grade on each paper, as well as on the final editing project, will count for 10% of your semester grade. There will be no mid-term or final exam in the course.
- **Policies on papers:** Papers must be ready at the beginning of the class for which they are due. Please turn in hard copies, not electronic attachments. Papers should be word-processed, with one-inch margins and standard fonts (like **Times New Roman**, not Allegro B7 or **Bauhaus 93**.) Please number the pages and staple or paper-clip the whole package. Late papers will be penalized by one grade level per calendar day. For each assignment there will be a rough-draft workshop in the class preceding the final due date. For these you must bring a full draft. Failing to bring a draft will keep you from taking part in the workshop and will result in a penalty of one level on the final grade for that paper. Completion of all papers is required for a passing grade in the course.

- **Revision of papers:** Each writing project already includes revision of a rough draft, but in addition you may revise a returned paper for a second grade if you first have a conference with me to discuss ways of improving it. I will accept revisions any time until the end of classes (but not exam week.)
- **Course communications will include ANGEL, the university's online course service.** If you're not already familiar with it, see www.angel.psu and click on this course's title. I will be posting all syllabi and assignment sheets there as a backup to hard copies handed out in class. I'll also send you messages that way, with additional copies to your regular email account. I'll ask you sometimes to have an online ANGEL discussion or to post your paper there for reading by others in the class. When you want to send me a message, feel free to go either through ANGEL or to my regular email address. (I'm compulsive about checking regular email, so that will probably result in the fastest turnaround.)
- Speaking of technology reminds me of **cell-phones**. Please turn yours off before class so we aren't interrupted by bizarre ring-tones and hasty exits from the room. Thank you.
- **Be aware of the Writing Center as a resource for this course.** The Writing Center in Main 312 provides help for students at all levels (including Honors) with any stage of a writing assignment. Their instructors are professionals who offer one-on-one service to help you draft, revise, and edit coursework. They are open from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday-Thursday and on Fridays from 9:00 a.m.--3:00 p.m. Drop in, or to guarantee availability call 610-892-1352 or e-mail pam47@psu.edu to make an appointment. In addition the LION OWL, the on-line writing lab, provides the same help for students off-campus from 7-11 p.m. To register, go to the campus home page, click Current Students and then LION OWL.
- **Academic integrity policy:** All students at Penn State are expected to act with civility and respect for other students, to create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through their own best efforts. (Think of Burke's parlor: it has room for passionate opinion but not shouting or put-downs.)

Academic integrity includes a commitment not to engage in or tolerate acts of falsification, misrepresentation, or deception, such as cheating, plagiarizing, submitting another's work as one's own, using internet or other published sources without citation, or facilitating the academic dishonesty of others. Any of these is a violation of university policy and will result in a failing grade on the assignment or possibly in the course. Questions concerning proper and improper use of sources will be taken up both in this class and in your Library Studies course, but ultimately the responsibility not to plagiarize is yours. Ask questions whenever you're uncertain how to proceed.

- **Note to students with disabilities:** In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, it is Penn State’s policy to provide reasonable academic adjustments for students with documented disabilities. If you have a disability-related need for modifications in this course, contact Sharon Manco, 610-892-1461, 203A Main Building, sam26@psu.edu. This notification should occur by the end of the first week of the semester. Students may visit www.equity.psu.edu/ods/ for complete information.
- **Be in touch.** This is a course about communication, so communicate! I’ll want each of you to have at least one conference with me during the semester, but in addition see me after class or during office hours as often as you’d like to discuss progress on a paper, share your latest idea, or tell me about any sort of problem with this course. And/or use email any time.

Tentative Schedule of Classes: Reading assigned for each date should be completed by that class.

Introduction

Aug. 28 (T) In-class workshop: brainstorming, discussing, writing about “tipping points” (from Gladwell and/or your own observation).

30 (Th) Introduction to the course and to critical thinking. Read all of this syllabus and be ready with questions. Read Barnett and Bedau, ch. 1, and think about examples of critical thinking that might apply to Gladwell’s *Tipping Point*.

Sept. 4 (T) Read B & B, ch. 2. Think about your own critical reading habits in this framework. More discussion of Gladwell. Assignment sheet for Rodriguez/autobiography papers will be handed out.

1. Writing in the Humanities: Autobiography

6 (Th) Read Rodriguez, *Hunger of Memory*, Prologue and ch. 1-2 (pp. 1-78).

11 (T) Read Rodriguez, ch. 3-4 (pp. 81-149).

13 (Th) **First draft of Paper #1 due:** 3-4 page essay, your own autobiography or biography concerning education, family, literacy, religion, or ethnicity—or an analysis of such a theme in Rodriguez’s writing. In-class workshop on drafts. For this and every workshop, be sure to bring Hacker, *A Writer’s Reference*.

18 (T) **Final draft of Paper #1 due.** Further discussion of Rodriguez and autobiography.

20 (Th) No class—I’ll be at the Penn State English Dept. Conference. But read

Rodriguez, ch. 5-6 (pp. 153-212) and take part in **on-line (ANGEL) discussion** with a group of other class members.

- 25 (T) Read selections from B & B chs. 3 and 5 (pages to be announced.) In class discussion of Rodriguez's arguments (about bi-lingual education, affirmative action, etc.) and how he makes them.
- 27 (Th) **First draft of Paper #2 due**—analysis of Rodriguez's argument and/or a counter-argument of your own. In-class workshop.
- Oct. 2 (T) **Final draft of Paper #2 due.** Introduction to the next unit; new assignment sheets handed out. Class will be held at the pavilion of Ridley Creek State Park before or after the **welcome-back picnic for all honors scholars over Common Hour.** (We can car-pool to get there and back.)

2. Writing in the Natural Sciences: Changes of Climate

- 4 (Th) Read Kolbert, *Field Notes from a Catastrophe*, Preface and chs. 1-3 (pp. 1-66).
- 9 (T) Read Kolbert, chs. 4-6 (pp. 67-132).
- 11 (Th) **First draft of Paper #3 due**—definition or explanation of a chosen concept from scientific research on climate change, with Kolbert as main source and other resources possible as well. In-class workshop.
- 16 (T) **Honors fieldtrip to Washington DC** to see the Solar Decathlon on the Mall (see www.solardecathlon.org for what this is) as well as your choice of other monuments, museums, or political sites on the Mall. This will be a required all-day commitment, excusing your absence from other classes. We will travel by bus, leaving campus at 7 AM and returning by 7 PM.
- 18 (Th) **Final draft of Paper #3 due**, further discussion of Kolbert's "field notes" and Washington experience.
- 23 (T) Read Kolbert, ch. 7-10 and Afterword (pp. 133-99).
- 25 (Th) Read selections from B & B, chs. 6 and 10 (pages to be announced), conduct own research toward Paper #4.
- 30 (T) **First draft of Paper #4 due**—researched argument or policy proposal about climate change, possibly addressed to an audience outside this class. In-class workshop.
- Nov. 1 (Th) **Final draft of Paper #4 due.** Introduction to campus history research. Assignment sheet and information sources provided.

3. Writing in the Social Sciences: Fieldwork on Campus History

- 6 (T) Read campus history 1967-77 on campus website, plus newly created alumni blog and annotated bibliography of archival resources. Assignment of your subject and discussion of interviewing.
- 8 (Th) Email your subject to start a conversation. In-class panel of founding faculty and administration to interview. (Timing of this is provisional.)
- 13 (T) Instead of regular class, an evening gathering to meet and interview all subjects on campus. (Timing of this is provisional. I'll keep you informed about developments so you can plan in advance.)
- 15 (Th) **First draft of paper #5**—an oral history of your subject and his or her experience at Penn State Delaware County between 1967 and 1977. In-class workshop.
- 19-23 **Thanksgiving Holiday all week**—possibly including some time to continue the conversation with your subject by phone or email
- 27 (T) **Final draft of paper #5**—post it on ANGEL for all class members to read as well as handing in a hard copy to me. **Common Hour: Honors Socratic Symposium**, required of all honors scholars, Large Conference Room of Commons Building. Representatives of all honors classes and projects will report on their semester's work. In class time: a guided tour of campus history archives in the library and campus executive office.
- 29 (Th) Conduct research for your paper on an aspect of campus culture or experience. Resources include oral histories just written by your classmates, campus archives in the library and campus executive office, and the alumni blog. Count on using and integrating all three kinds of documents.
- Dec. 4 (T) Continue research as above, discuss results with classmates.
- 6 (Th) **First draft of paper #6 due.** In-class workshop.
- 11 (T) **Final draft of paper #6 due.** Planning to edit for publication.
- 13 (Th) Making our papers fit together, perfecting their form. Celebration of our great accomplishments.
- 17-21 Exam week. **Edited versions of two campus history papers due in Main 312E by 4:30 on Dec. 20 (Th).**

Other events to know about

Campus Honors Program Activities Outside This Course

Sept. 17 (M) National Constitution Day discussion for all honors scholars in TMZKO 101, Common Hour. Free pizza. Optional and recommended.

Oct. 10 (W evening) Fall Convocation, required of all freshmen honors scholars and scholarship recipients. You and your family will be invited as the time approaches.

Oct. 12 (F) National Collegiate Honors Council Student Service Day. Optional and recommended. Sophomore honors scholars will plan this, and you will be invited to take part.

Early or mid-November—(Hot)dogs with the DAA. Optional and recommended—come out for some food and fun while meeting our new Director of Academic Affairs, Dr. Paul deGategno. Details to be announced.

One Campus One Book Global Climate Change Programs: I will ask you to attend at least one of these events and recommend as many as you have time for.

Sept. 13 (Th) Science Faculty Panel Discussion organized by Dr. Timothy Lawlor (Asst. Prof. Physics)—Common Hour, Gym

Sept. 27 (Th) “An Inconvenient Truth,” lecture by Dr. James Sweitzer of Science Communications Consultants, Chicago—Common Hour, Gym

Nov. 15 (Th) (date may be changed) “The Convenient ‘Truth’ of Global Warming,” lecture by Dr. David R. Legates (Assoc. Prof. Geology, University of Delaware, and Delaware State Climatologist)—Common Hour, Main 101

Oct. 10 and again Dec. 3 Green Film Fest (organized by Prof. Pat Hillen, English Dept.)—films to be announced. 4:00-6:00 in the Lion’s Den, Commons. Popcorn provided, discussion following films.