

English 030H: Honors Freshman Rhetoric and Composition
Honors Theme: Competing Forces/Creative Tensions
Penn State University
Fall 2008

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Course Syllabus

Course Description:

You've read *Nickel and Dimed*; now we're going to spend the semester exploring class and culture in the United States. We will approach this task by reading, discussing and investigating how class and culture affect/effect change and impact lives. This course will enable you to better understand who you are, how your lives are scripted, and why you need to exceed your own comfort zones of beliefs and actions in order to make informed decisions about your world. You will be encouraged to "go outside of your own skin" and see the world from multiple perspectives.

English 030H is really three courses in one: First, this is an English course that will entail a great deal of reading, discussing and persuasive writing. It is designed to refine your skill at persuading various audiences that your ideas have merit. The readings serve both as models and as sources of arguments. Our discussions should give us the opportunity to engage in the sort of 'mutual inquiry or exploration' that can help us shape our ideas about the culture we are a part of and the problems—and choices—we face. Our writings will be real attempts to say something of worth to someone else. That's what rhetoric is all about.

Second, this is a course about class and culture in the United States. Social class is not merely an objective fact; it is also a perception of who we are – our identity. In this sense, it is more than a personal attribute; it is also a contextual variable that influences our education, health and occupation. In other words, it influences our destiny. But in order to know about class, we have to know about culture. In this course, we will approach culture as something that is shared and something that is dynamic:

Culture is shared: In a country as diverse as the United States, there is a great deal of cultural diversity, based on ethnicity, race gender and social class, all of which create a number of different societies. But even with these differences, there is still a kind of "overarching" culture that people grow up with that distinguishes them from those who live in other countries.

Culture is dynamic: Cultures change as their populations change. Nowhere is that more evident than in the United States as we enter the 21st century, where immigration, refugee resettlement, and a number of other demographic patterns have created a rapidly changing population and country. To understand the dynamics of class and culture is to

understand the core values of our nation. As a bonus, because this is a presidential election year (fits in neatly with our theme), we will discuss how class and culture both influence and are influenced by the election process.

Third, this is a First Year Seminar course, which will help you to understand your role as a student at Penn State University and the opportunities available to you as an honor student on this campus. Also, it will work in tandem with L ST 100H – Information Search Strategies (1/2 semester, 1 credit) as you engage in your ethnographic field work and write your research paper.

Course Objectives:

1. You will read literary texts analytically and evaluate them critically—grounding your analyses in a variety of perspectives.
2. You will analyze and evaluate literature as a persuasive tool and the function of imagination in the reasoning process.
3. You will debate, defend, and advocate ideas in critical essays, demonstrating your understanding of the writing process, especially the relationship among writer, audience and purpose.
4. You will gather data from literary sources and personal experience, evaluate the evidence, and draw sound inferences in the form of a substantial researched argument.
5. You will better understand how and when to use rhetorical techniques—to fit your purpose and audience.
6. You will engage in an ethnographically-oriented project (much like that of Barbara Ehrenreich’s study).

This course satisfies the requirements for the Civic and Community Engagement Minor.

Required Texts:

Acting out Culture, Reading and Writing. James S. Miller, 2008

Writing and Revising: A Portable Guide, X.J. Kennedy, D. Kennedy, and M. Muth

Nickel and Dimed, Barbara Ehrenreich, 2001/2008.

Class Matters, Correspondents of *The New York Times*, 2005, (on line book).

Assigned Readings: Handouts and on Angel.

Class Participation and Attendance:

Attendance and participation are required and essential: no classes should be missed to obtaining the maximum benefit from this course. 20% of your grade will be given for class participation and attendance (and quizzes and essay responses). Excessive absences will result in a lowered final grade. In other words, for every three (beyond the three

allowed by the university), will lower your grade one full grade. Finally, tardiness is very disruptive and will also be considered in your final grade evaluation (3 late = 1 absence).

Academic Integrity:

All students are expected to act with civility, personal integrity; respect other students' dignity, rights and property; and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their own efforts. An environment of academic integrity is requisite to respect for self and others and a civil community.

Academic integrity includes a commitment to not engage in or tolerate acts of falsification, misrepresentation or deception. Such act of dishonesty include cheating or copying, plagiarizing, submitting another persons' work as one's own, using Internet sources without citation, fabricating field data or citations, "ghosting" (taking or having another student take an exam), stealing examinations, tampering with the academic work of another student, facilitating other students' acts of academic dishonesty, etc.

Students charged with a breach of academic integrity will receive due process and, if the charge is found valid, academic sanctions may range, depending on the severity of the offense, from F for the assignment to F for the course.

Note to Students with Disabilities:

Penn State does not discriminate against qualified students with documented disabilities in its educational programs. If you have a disability-related need for modifications in this course, contact Sharon Manco, 610-892-1461, 203A Main. This notification should occur by the end of the first week of the semester.

Course Requirements and Grade Weighted Values:

We will discuss several essay techniques, most of them argumentative in nature. You will turn in the following essay assignments:

Major essay assignments 3-5 pages:

#1 – Encomium – discussing the role this person played in your life, how this person influenced you, in terms of your values and beliefs (culture) from this person. (15%).

#2 – Lacking paper – discussing something is lacking in your life and how it has affected you. (10%)

#3 - Definition of an Issue: related to the course theme or class and culture (15%)

#4 – Cultural artifact – discussing a person, place or thing that represents who we are as a culture (15%)

#5 In-class critique of film or television show – illustrating class/culture within film or show. (10%)

#6– Researched ethnographic project – 8-10 pages - Final research paper (20%) You will receive a handout on this project, fully explaining your exploration of a class/culture.

All essay assignments are to be turned in on the due date unless you have made arrangements with me. Late papers will be docked one letter grade per day. All papers must be turned in to pass the course. You are also required to visit the writing center at least one time during the semester to get help with a writing assignment. I get feedback from the writing center for every student that attends. I will check off your name when I get confirmation that you attended.

Quizzes on the readings and class participation make up the final fifteen percent of your grade (positive class participation counts a lot!) (15%)

There is no midterm exam. The final exam will be your research policy proposal paper.

Conferences:

You will have the opportunity to meet with me to discuss your writing. These conferences are especially valuable when they are conversations about your ideas and how to convey these ideas to your audience. You are required to meet with me once during the semester, but you may meet with me as often as you like.

Format for Papers:

Final copies of essays should be typed or word-processed, double-spaced, on one side of the paper only, with margins of approximately one inch at top and bottom, and one and one quarter inch on each side. Make sure your print is dark enough. No odd fonts. Place your name, date, and my name in the upper right-hand corner of the first page. Place your title above the text on page one, and double space beneath it. The title should not be underlined. Page one need not be numbered; all subsequent pages should be numbered in the upper right-hand corner. Fasten the pages with a paperclip or staple.

Proposed Schedule: (subject to change) Acting out Culture (AoC); Writing and Revising (WR); Nickel and Dimed (ND); Class Matters (CM).

We will be discussing Nickel and Dimed throughout the semester.

August 25, 27, 29: Introduction to course, syllabus, class and culture.

Readings for September 3rd: The Next Kind of Integration (Angel); Chapter 1 (WR); How We Believe: Introduction – pg 4 (AoC).

September 1 (no class), 3, 5: Peanut Butter Paradigm. Discuss readings. Discuss Nickel and Dimed.

Readings for September 8th: “Statistical Citizens,” pg. 10; “Two Cheers for

Materialism,” pg. 28 (AoC); Chapter 3 (WR), “The Language of Loss for the Jobless” - handout.

September 8, 10, 12: Discuss readings. Give out Ethnography Project assignment. Due Finals week. Encomium assignment – Due Sept. 22nd. Discuss pgs. 78-81 – reading pictures. Sept. 12 – required attendance for speaker during Common Hour.

Readings for September 15th: Class Matters (on line) – Introduction and Chapter 1 – “Shadowy Lines That Still Divide” and pick one of the essays from Encounters with Class and read it. (CM); Chapter 4 (WR). “All Consuming Patriotism,” pg 39 (AoC).

September 15, 17, 19: Encomium due on Sept 15th. Discuss readings from the perspective of the Trolley Tour – visual messages. Constitution Day – Wednesday – required attendance during Common Hour.

Readings for September 22nd: “I Do. Not.”; “People Like Us,” pg. 67 (AoC); Chapter 5 (WR); Read one of the chapters (2-14) in Class Matters (CM)– on line, “College and Class” – handout.

September 22, 24, 26: Assign “Lacking” Essay – due Oct. 6th. Discuss readings.

Readings for September 29th: Chapter 6 (WR); Part 2 – How We Watch - Introduction, pg. 86, “Rule Maker...Rule Breaker,” pg. 90, “Watching Torture in Prime Time,” 109., “Watch Me! Webcams and the Public Exposure of Private Lives,” pg.150 (AoC), “Social Class in America” - handout.

September 29, October 1, 3: Discuss readings. Definition of an Issue Assignment – due October 15th.

Readings for October 6th: “Lacking” Essay due Oct. 6. Chapter 6 (WR), Pick one chapter to read and discuss in Class Matters – 2-14 (CM). Begin How We Eat unit in Acting out Culture – Introduction – pg. 168, Rule Maker....Rule Breaker, pg. 172, “Big Organic,” pg. 174 (AoC).

October 6, 8, 10: No class on October 10th – work on ethnography project. Discuss readings.

Readings for October 13th and October 20th: “Explorations in Social Inequality” – handout, “In Gorging, Truth,” pg. 204, “Add Cake, Subtract Self-Esteem,” pg. 217, “America’s Wandering Families,” pg. 249 (AoC); Chapter 7 (WR).

October 13, 15, 17: Definition of an Issue essay due Oct. 15th. Discuss readings. Monday’s class taught by Writing Center staff. Oct. 15th – required attendance for speaker during Common Hour.

October 20, 22, 24: Dr. Guertin teaching class on Wednesday, Oct. 22nd. No class on Friday, Oct. 24th – work on ethnography project.

October 20 – Discuss readings.

Readings for October 27th: Chapter 8 (WR), Begin unit on How We Work in Acting out Culture, Introduction – pg. 272, “Finding a Coach in the Land of Oz,” pg. 278, “Fifteen Years on the Bottom Rung,” pg. 312 (AcC).

October 27, 29, 31: Discuss readings. In-class film critique (critique a culture).

Readings for November 3rd: Chapter 9 (WR); “How to Choose a Career,” pg. 326, Begin unit on How We Fight, Introduction, pg. 352, “War is a Force that gives us Meaning, pg. 368, (AoC).

November 3, 5, 7: Discuss readings. Cultural Artifact assignment – due November 19th.

Readings for November 10th: “Love and War in Cyberspace,” pg. 380, “Make Metaphor No More?” pg. 428 (AoC); Chapter 10 (WR).

November 10, 12, 14: Discuss readings. Attendance required for speaker on October 14th.

Readings for November 17th: Begin unit on How We Learn, Introduction, pg. 444, “From Degrading to De-grading,” pg. 472, “Reasonable Disagreements,” pg. 484, “Against School,” pg. 506 (AoC); Chapter 11 (WR).

November 17, 19, 21: Discuss readings. Cultural artifact essay due on November 19th.

Readings for December 1st: “Learning in the Shadow of Race and Class,” pg. 515, “Preparing Minds for Markets,” pg. 530, Begin final unit on How We Talk, Introduction, pg. 566, “Fighting for our Lives,” pg. 572, and pick one more essay to read from this unit – your choice (AoC). We will have completed all of our texts.

November 24, 26, 28: (no classes).

December 1, 3, 5: Discuss readings. Ethnography project presentations begin on Friday, December 5th.

December 8, 10, 12: Ethnography project presentations.

Final ethnography paper due December 15th.