

Critical Reading, Writing, & Thinking
Fall 2009

Basic Course Information:

Instructor: Christy Tidwell
Course Number: ENGL 1301.061
Room: 200 Preston Hall
Day/Time: 2:00- 3:20 TR

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Course Description & Goals

English 1301 is designed to help students develop critical reading, writing, and thinking skills, focusing on expository writing for college. In this class we will think about the ways that the texts and contexts of our individual lives – our particular culture, social and economic class, education, gender, and race – affect the sorts of interpretations that we produce when we read and write. We will learn several techniques that enhance our abilities as critical readers and writers. English 1301 is also designed to help students understand writing as a process, including invention/prewriting, writing, revision, editing, and proofreading. This course (or its equivalent) is required of all students at UTA because the skills it emphasizes are extremely important. If you take this course seriously, you will greatly improve your chances for success in college and in your chosen career. But this class will be very demanding. You will do a great deal of reading and writing, perhaps in ways that are unfamiliar to you. Reading and writing will be integrated in this course; you will study the readings as examples of successful writing, noting how authors solve problems. These readings will also serve as a springboard for ideas from which you will write your own essays. The goal of this course is not only to improve your reading and writing skills, but also to sharpen your abilities as a critical thinker in any field.

This course is designed to make you think about the beliefs and ideas you take for granted, to make you question the assumptions you make daily about yourself, other people, and the way the world works in general. Throughout this course you will read things and/or talk to people who disagree with you and see the world in a different way, challenging the status quo. At least I hope this happens. I want you to encounter something different and new. I want you to learn to think critically not only to the point where it is comfortable, but beyond that point; I want you to think critically not only about other peoples' ideas and essays, but about your own. And in learning to think critically about all these ideas and to analyze the way they're put together, I also

want you to, at least briefly, try to believe them. Critical thinking is not synonymous with criticism; therefore, in this class, I want you to open your minds to the possibility of other ways of thinking and play “the believing game.” Even if your first instinct is that a new idea is wrong, even if, finally, you decide that you do not believe or agree with this new idea, I want you first to indulge in believing it. Working to believe something foreign to what you already believe can broaden your horizons in ways that criticizing other ideas (no matter how well you do it) never will.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of ENGL 1301, students should be able to:

Rhetorical Knowledge

- Use knowledge of the rhetorical situation—audience, purpose, genre—to analyze and construct texts
- Compose texts in a variety of genres, expanding their repertoire beyond predictable forms
- Use conventions of structure, tone, diction, and syntax appropriate to the rhetorical situation

Critical Reading, Thinking, and Writing

- Use writing, reading, and discussion for learning, communicating, and examining assumptions
- Summarize, respond to, and analyze texts
- Employ critical reading strategies to identify author’s position, main ideas, genre conventions, and rhetorical strategies
- Produce texts with a focus, thesis, and controlling idea, and identify these elements in others’ texts
- Provide appropriate support for claims
- Find, evaluate, and synthesize appropriate sources to inform and situate their own claims

Processes

- Practice flexible strategies for generating, revising, and editing texts
- Practice writing as a recursive process that can lead to substantive changes in ideas, structure, and supporting evidence through multiple revisions
- Use the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes to critique their own and others’ works

Conventions

- Apply knowledge of genre conventions ranging from structure and paragraphing to tone and mechanics
- Summarize, paraphrase, and quote from sources using appropriate documentation style

Control such surface features as syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling
Employ technologies to format texts according to appropriate stylistic conventions

Requirements & Assignments

Required Texts:

Rereading America (7th edition), edited by Gary Colombo, Robert Cullen, & Bonnie Lisle
Deep Economy by Bill McKibben

Course Requirements:

This course requires regular attendance and participation in class discussions and activities, and completion of all reading and writing assignments. Your grade will be based on three essay projects, an in-class essay, several shorter writing assignments, and regular summary/responses and journals. All work written outside of class should conform to the criteria for papers. You must complete all three major essays in order to receive a passing grade in this course.

UTA Conversations Events:

The UTA OneBook program is designed to create a university-wide community surrounding one book (this year, Bill McKibben's *Deep Economy*) and one theme (community). There will be numerous presentations throughout the semester related to this text and this theme. You will be required to attend one of them and write a two-page summary/response paper about the event you have attended and its relation to *Deep Economy*. You will write one page that summarizes the presentation or event and another page responding to the ideas within the presentation. This first event attendance and paper is mandatory; however, you will also have the opportunity to attend another event for extra credit.

Seminar Discussions:

A regular feature – weekly or nearly weekly – of our class will be seminar discussions of assigned readings and related ideas. These discussions will be led by you. Ideas and questions will be developed by you as a class, as will potential answers to those questions. This type of discussion is designed to give you more control over and responsibility for your learning in this course and will work best if everyone gets involved. These discussions will also generate essay prompts for the major essay projects.

Short Papers:

Almost every week over the course of the semester, you will be required to bring a one-page response paper to class. These papers will be written in response to one of the questions brought up during the previous class's seminar discussion and will be used for in-class writing workshops to help you build your skills as well as develop your ideas on the topic at hand in preparation for the major essay projects.

These workshops may provide you with ideas for improving your short papers; therefore, to take full advantage of these workshops and the feedback you receive, you will have the opportunity to revise your short papers after they have been workshopped. Revision is not required, but it is recommended that you take advantage of others' feedback to improve your writing. If you do not revise your paper, you should turn in a clean copy the day of the workshop, accompanied by all notes and workshop materials; if you do choose to revise your paper, you will still turn in a clean copy on the day of the workshop, but you will also turn in a revised copy, along with any notes and workshop materials, the following class day. To make this system possible, you should bring two copies of your short paper to class on workshop days: one for you to turn in to me on that day and one for you to annotate and work from.

Writing Notebook:

This course is based on the idea that you will benefit, as writers and thinkers, from the feedback of other writers and thinkers – not just myself. Therefore, you will be asked to share your work with other students and you will be asked to read and respond to other students' writing regularly. The writing notebook is one way that you will do that. It will be an online notebook maintained by me through Mavspace that will make your major essay projects (and perhaps other writing) available to the rest of the class; you will each be asked to read other students' essays and write responses to that writing multiple times over the course of the class.

Papers:

The three papers you will write this semester will range in length from 3-4 pages to 5 full pages and will be guided and developed by our discussions in class.

Rewrites:

You will have the opportunity to rewrite all major papers except the final paper one time each if you are not satisfied with the grade you earn. You will not be allowed to rewrite the final paper. Rewrites do not allow you to regain points lost for turning in your work late. In order to gain points through rewriting, you *must* do a substantial revision of your paper, which means you should revise the paper on the level of content, organization, focus, etc. Proofreading and editing are not considered substantial revision. All rewrites must be accompanied by the original, graded paper and all draft work in order to be graded. If you do choose to rewrite a paper, the grade on the revised paper will replace the original grade.

Grading & Papers

To pass this course you must meet all the course requirements. All major essay assignments require that you turn in not only the final version of your paper, but also any notes, drafts, critiques, etc., that you drew on to help you write it. Final drafts must be typed, double-spaced, and submitted in a pocket folder with all other materials. I expect all essay assignments to be turned in on time. The grade on late essay projects, as well as all other late work, may be reduced by 10% for each day of the week (not each

class day) after the due date that the work is handed in. All out of class assignments must be typed in order to receive credit. If you are absent on a day when an assignment is due, it is your responsibility to turn in the assignment on the day you return to class.

Grade distribution (out of a total of 100 points):

Essay Project #1:	15
Essay Project #2:	20
Essay Project #3:	25
In-Class Essay Project:	10
Short Papers:	10
Other (homework, quizzes, in-class work):	10
Participation:	10

Please be advised that it is your responsibility to retain all of your assignments until after you have received your final grade. You cannot formally challenge a final grade if you do not have evidence of your work.

In accordance with the UTA undergraduate catalogue, final grades are as follows:

90-100%:	A
80-89%:	B
70-79%:	C
Below 70%:	F=assignments missing and/or excessive absences Z=all work completed but not meeting standards for

passing

There are no D grades for this course. Students who receive a Z have completed all coursework but still are not writing at a C level. Z grades do not affect students' grade point average. Students who receive a Z must retake ENGL 1301. If you make a Z on the final paper, earlier Zs that were rewritten for a higher grade will be averaged as Zs. If a student receives a Z on any major project, the student must receive a C or better on the In-Class Essay to pass the course. **All** students must receive a C or better on the In-Class Essay to pass the course. The Z grade is not related to a final average, but is instead a judgment that a student is unable to demonstrate minimal competency by producing at least a C quality essay by the end of the course.

****Students should not call the English office for their final grade.**

Attendance Policy:

Much of the work done in this class will be collaborative and your active participation is extremely important. For this reason you must attend class regularly. It will be assumed that any absence from class is for a valid reason; therefore, please do not tell me the reason. Simply be aware of the following policy and its consequences. I will

allow four absences during the semester. After these absences, your grade will be lowered by 5% for each absence. Students who are absent on peer critique days will lose points on their essay grade and must make arrangements outside of class to have their essay critiqued at the Writing Center. Keep in mind that much of the work of this class will be done during classtime and your absences (even if they do not count against your final grade) will likely affect your grade in other, indirect ways.

Tardiness:

You are college students, and I should not have to remind you to show up to class on time. When students arrive late, it disrupts what we are doing and takes away from our class time. Therefore, excessive tardiness will not be tolerated. Every four tardies will count as one absence.

Participation:

The Attendance/Participation portion of your grade consists of more than simply showing up for class. General participation accounts for some of the grade. This means, first, that you must take part in groupwork and, second, that you must be not only physically present, but mentally present as well. It is not acceptable to doze in the back of the room. Neither, though, must you talk all the time in order to participate. Talking is not the only form of participation. But there is a difference between active, participatory silence (the good kind) and passive, obviously bored silence (the not-so-good kind). That being said, everyone must make an effort to actively participate from time to time in seminar discussions and all students must take part in writing workshops and groupwork in order to be able to earn full participation credit.

Course Schedule

(All dates and assignments subject to change.)

Week 1

08/25: syllabus
introductions
08/27: syllabus quiz due
select readings from anthology
explain specific assignments
discuss expectations and guidelines for classroom discussion

Week 2

9/1: readings TBA
seminar discussion
9/3: Writing Center visit
Short Paper 1 due
writing workshop
discuss writing summaries

Week 3

- 9/8: readings TBA
seminar discussion
summary paragraph due
- 9/10: Short Paper 2 due
writing workshop [write letters of response in class]
discuss introductions

Week 4

- 9/15: readings TBA
seminar discussion
introduction homework due
- 9/17: Short Paper 3 due
writing workshop
write essay prompt
discuss MLA format and plagiarism

Week 5

- 9/22: thesis discussion and work
tentative thesis due
MLA/citation homework due
- 9/24: peer critiques

Week 6

- 9/29: Essay 1 due
McKibben, intro and Chapter 1
seminar discussion
- 10/1: Short Paper 4 due
writing workshop [write letters of response in class]

Week 7

- 10/6: McKibben, Chapter 2
seminar discussion
Deep Economy food project due
Essay 1 comments due [writing notebook]
- 10/8: Short Paper 5 due
writing workshop

Week 8

- 10/13: McKibben, Chapter 3
seminar discussion
Deep Economy community project due
- 10/15: Short Paper 6 due

writing workshop

Week 9

- 10/20: McKibben, Chapter 4
seminar discussion
Deep Economy third project due
- 10/22: Short Paper 7 due
writing workshop

Week 10

- 10/27: McKibben, Chapter 5 & Afterword
seminar discussion
- 10/29: Short Paper 8 due
writing workshop [write letters of response in class]
write essay prompt

Week 11

- 11/3: peer critique 1
- 11/5: peer critique 2

Week 12

- 11/10: Essay 2 due
readings TBA – film-related
watch opening of *Doubt*
- 11/12: finish watching *Doubt*
Short Paper 9 due – *Doubt*

Week 13

- 11/17: readings TBA
seminar discussion
Essay 2 comments due [writing notebook]
- 11/19: Short Paper 10 due
writing workshop
sentence structure exercise
discuss Essay 3 and In-Class Essay prompts

Week 14

- 11/24: sentence structure homework due
- 11/26: **No Class – Thanksgiving Holiday**

Week 15

- 12/1: thesis work/peer critique
- 12/3: peer critique

**Finals Week
In-Class Essay & Essay 3 due**

Other Important Course Information

Communication:

I have provided you with both of my regular emails and my office phone number so that you can contact me whenever you have a question. When I need to contact you, I will use [MyMav](#) to email you. This means that you have a responsibility to know what your UTA email address is and to check it regularly. You should also check the [Announcements](#) page of this syllabus regularly, as that is where I will post announcements or additional information about the course, including notes about changes to the schedule, additional details about assignments, or more information following discussions.

Academic Honesty:

The work you submit must be your own original work, written for this course. Plagiarism is the presentation of another person's work as your own, whether intentional or not. Copying or paraphrasing passages from another writer's work without acknowledging that you have done so is plagiarism. Allowing another writer to write any part of your essay is plagiarism. Plagiarism is a serious crime. It is easily detected and will not be tolerated. Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary sanctions, including the possibility of failure in the course and dismissal from the University. Since dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. Please visit UTA's [Office of Student Conduct](#) website for more detailed information.

Classroom Conduct:

I expect all participants in this course to behave in a mature and respectful way, treating others with the same respect you would like to receive. Because this course relies heavily on discussion and working together, we will establish together what we can do to have productive and interesting discussions and to be respectful of others' contributions.

Disruptive behavior, that which "is intended to obstruct, disrupt, or interfere with, or that in fact obstructs, disrupts, or interferes with any instructional, educational, research, administrative, or public service activity or program, or any athletic event or public performance or other activity authorized to be conducted in or on a University Facility" (UTA Handbook of Operating Procedures, chapter 2, section 2-202), will not be tolerated. I reserve the right to ask disruptive students to leave if necessary, and regular disruptive behavior will affect your participation grade.

Drop Policy:

I will not and cannot drop anyone from the course. It is your responsibility to execute drop procedures correctly and within the deadlines. After the late registration period has ended, if you wish to drop the class you should **not** visit the English office to do so. You must speak with me and get my signature on the proper form; you must then discuss the consequences of dropping the course with your major advisor. **Note: If you stop attending class but do not officially drop the course you will receive an F.**

The Writing Center:

The Writing Center is a free service for all enrolled students that offers one-on-one instruction in writing. Tutors do not proofread or edit students' papers, but can help students acquire the ability to edit their own work. The Writing Center also has computers for students to use. The Writing Center is located in the Central Library on the fourth floor, rooms 411 and 412. For more information, call 272-2601.

Disabled Students Notice:

If you require an accommodation based on disability, I would like you to meet with me during the first week of the semester to be sure you are appropriately accommodated.

Necessary Changes:

I have tried to make this syllabus as complete and as thorough as I possibly can. Even so, during the course of the semester I may be required to alter, add, or abandon certain policies. I reserve the right to make such changes as they become necessary.