

**WRITING STUDIES 1301: UNIVERSITY WRITING**  
**§ 82: VIOLENCE AND THE WRITER'S RESPONSIBILITIES**  
**Spring 2008**  
**320 Lind Hall**  
**T 5:30-8:00**  
**Instructor: John Pistelli**  
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**Office hours: T 4:30-5:30 / W 2:00-3:30**

*We die. That may be the meaning of our lives. But we do language. That may be the measure of our lives.*  
—Toni Morrison

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### **Required Materials**

Available at the University Bookstore in Coffman Memorial Union:

- *The Longman Writer's Companion*. 4<sup>th</sup> edition. University of Minnesota edition.

Available at Paradigm Copies in the Dinkydome at University Avenue and 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue:

- Custom course packet.

### **Course Description**

Writing Studies 1301 introduces you to university writing practices, with an emphasis on developing well-researched, properly-cited academic papers. Activities include but are not limited to: introduction to academic genres of reading and writing; critical reading and analysis of writing for rhetorical principles; emphasis on performing research with electronic and print library; and sequenced readings and writing, with a research paper as a major assignment. You should expect to write formally and informally, produce drafts and revise, edit and proofread. In addition, you will share their writing with others in the class, receive responses from others and read and respond carefully to the work of others.

This course also requires you to read a number of demanding texts—because you cannot write well if you do not read good writing. We will focus on texts that force us to confront one of the gravest problems the world presents to us: violence in all its forms, from the individual to the collective, from the symbolic to the physical. The theme of violence makes us aware of our responsibilities as thinkers and writers within communities—in short, our responsibilities to other people whom we may hurt or help. In learning how to write analyses, argumentative essays, annotated bibliographies and research papers while “regarding the pain of others” (to use Susan Sontag’s words), we will better appreciate the seriousness of our task to explain the world to ourselves and to our community.

## Course Goals

**Develop a process of writing:** 1. use prewriting and planning strategies to arrive at a focused topic; 2. craft thesis statements that indicate a clear position on a topic and tie the paper together; 3. develop a topic through clearly structured paragraphs and the whole paper so that ideas are fully explained, assertions are backed up, supporting evidence is sufficient and claims are credible; 4. through the sequence of assignments, develop a body of knowledge and growing perspective on a topic

**Explore diverse contexts and styles of reading and writing:** 1. communicate your ideas and those of others to specific audiences; 2. write in appropriate academic genres to communicate with different audiences; 3. make choices in your own writing and articulate other options

**Practice disciplines of research and study:** 1. identify an author's audience, purpose, argument, and assumptions (i.e., critical reading) in an analysis paper or class discussion; 2. locate and evaluate relevant scholarly and popular sources on a research topic using library resources; 3. properly and ethically use MLA documentation format for in-text and external bibliographic citations of scholarly, popular, and electronic sources; 4. consistently follow standards of written, edited English

## Workload

Students can expect to spend an average of eight hours per week on this course outside of class time.

## Course Policies

### Grading

There are 100 points available in this course. Here is the point breakdown:

- 10 points – Analysis
- 15 points – Argumentative essay 1
- 15 points – Argumentative essay 2
- 05 points – Library training
- 10 points – Annotated bibliography
- 20 points – Research paper
- 10 points – Quotation journal
- 05 points – Final essay exam
- 10 points – Attendance and participation

More information about assignments and their criteria will be given during the course.

“Participation” means both regular attendance and active engagement in the class; even if you have perfect attendance, you will not earn more than 7 out of 10 points—that is, a “C-” for this assignment—if you do not speak up in at least each class.

The grading policy in this course conforms to CLA guidelines. Therefore a “C” is equivalent to basic fulfillment of requirements; to achieve a grade higher than a “C” a student must perform beyond the basic requirements. Please keep the following scale and criteria in mind:

- A 90-100 – Achievement outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements
- B 80-90 – Achievement significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements
- C 70-80 – Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect
- D 60-70 – Achievement worthy of credit, even though it fails to meet course requirements fully
- F 0-60 – Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either completed but at a level of achievement not worthy of credit, or was not completed without an agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an incomplete

### **Incompletes**

A grade of incomplete (“I”) is given only in a genuine emergency, and only for work which is due during the last two weeks of the course. You must make arrangements with the instructor for an incomplete before the last day of class.

### **Use of Computers**

All workshop and revised drafts of major assignments must be done on a word processor. Students can use the University's public computer labs, including the ones in Wilson, Walter, and McGrath Libraries. No fee is charged, except to use lab printers. Students may also use one of the sixteen Macs in the Center for Writing in 15 Nicholson. University Technology Training Center (<http://uttc.umn.edu/training/>) schedules regular training sessions. Students who think that computer access will present a serious difficulty should talk to the instructor immediately.

### **Assignments**

In order to receive credit for this course, you must turn in all required drafts and revisions. If you do not, you will receive a failing grade for the course. Late assignments will receive a lower grade. Keep copies of all your work in a folder dedicated exclusively to this course; back up your work on your computer in case assignments get lost.

### **Attendance Policy**

I will take formal attendance at the beginning of every class. You are permitted to miss one of our meetings without apology or excuse—that means you can miss one class and don't have to contact me about it in any way. If you miss a second meeting without having documentation of a legitimate excuse (serious illness, death in the family etc.), your attendance grade will be lowered. Be advised, however, that there will be many in-class exercises, assignments and

activities in this course; it is your responsibility to make up any work you have missed even during excused absences. If you miss three or more classes, you will not receive credit for the course and will be asked to apply for a formal withdrawal. If you miss class for any reason, it is your responsibility to ask a classmate rather than the instructor for notes or a summary. Finally, be on time to class—lateness is highly disruptive and it will affect your participation grade. If you are more than five minutes late, you will not be able to sign the attendance sheet.

## **Student Conduct**

Please do not engage in behavior that disrupts the learning environment for others. This includes any behavior that substantially or repeatedly interrupts either student learning or my ability to teach. Students responsible for such behavior may be asked to cancel their registration (or have their registration canceled).

In order to avoid disruptions, please observe the following policies: 1. Turn cell phones off and put them away before coming to class. 2. During class, your attention should be directed toward whomever is speaking or to your assigned task; this means no talking to your neighbor, no texting, no cross-word puzzling, etc. 3. During classroom discussions, robust debate and the voicing of all opinions are encouraged, but avoid abusive speech, personal attacks and generally offensive language.

## **Contact**

The best way to contact me with questions or concerns about the course is to come to my office hours. If your schedule conflicts with my office hours, please let me know so that we can arrange to meet at another time. Feel free to email me (with brief, fact-based questions only), but please allow 24 hours for a response.

## **Students with Disabilities**

Any student with a documented disability condition who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations should contact the instructor and Disability Services (626-1333) at the beginning of the semester.

## **Scholastic Dishonesty**

The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows: “Scholastic Dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering, forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis.”  
(<http://advisingtools.class.umn.edu/cgep/studentconduct.html>)

Plagiarism, representing someone else's intellectual work as your own, will result in a failing for the assignment, and may result in a failing grade for the course. Plagiarism can include submitting a paper: 1. written by means of inappropriate collaboration; 2. written by you for another course, submitted without the permission of both instructors; 3. purchased, downloaded, or cut and pasted from the Internet; 4. that fails to properly acknowledge its sources through standard citations.

### **Extra Credit**

The College of Liberal Arts does not permit students to submit extra work in an attempt to raise their grade unless the instructor has specified at the outset of the course that such opportunities are afforded to all students. There will be no extra credit opportunities for this class.

### **Student Writing Support**

Students can get one-to-one-consultations on any course paper or writing project at Student Writing Support. Student Writing Support has several campus locations, including the main location in 15 Nicholson Hall. See <http://writing.umn.edu/sws/index.htm> for details about locations, appointments, and online consultations.

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### **Schedule of Readings and Major Assignments**

**Note 1:** (C) indicates that the reading is in the course packet; *LWC* indicates that reading is in *The Longman Writer's Companion*.

**Note 2:** *The Longman Writer's Companion* contains a complete guide to English grammar, spelling and punctuation found on pages 317-405 and 423-466, as well as a glossary of usage on pages 475-486. While I am not formally assigning this reading, our course requires you to develop and improve your knowledge of how to use the English language, so I would advise you to familiarize yourself with these sections of the textbook.

#### 01/20 – Introduction

- Heraclitus, from *Fragments* (handout).
- Lao Tzu, from *Tao Te Ching* (handout).

#### 01/27 – Argument

- W. E. B. Du Bois, from *The Souls of Black Folk* (C).
- *LWC* 1-5, 11-17.

#### 02/03 – Analysis

- Lawrence Weschler, “Vermeer in Bosnia” (C).
- *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (C).

- *LWC* 5-10, 45-54.

#### 02/10 – Language

- **\*\*ANALYSIS DUE.\*\***
- George Orwell, “Politics and the English Language” (C).
- *LWC* 103, 407-421.

#### 02/17 – Representation

- **\*\*ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY 1 FIRST DRAFT DUE.\*\***
- Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, “Disability and Representation” (C).
- *LWC* 54-62, 467-474.

#### 02/24 – Emotion

- **\*\*ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY 1 FINAL DRAFT DUE.\*\***
- Virginia Woolf, “The Mark on the Wall” (C).
- F. T. Marinetti, “The Foundation and Manifesto of Futurism” (C).

#### 03/03 – Responsibility

- Susan Sontag, from *Regarding the Pain of Others* (C).
- *LWC* 93-98.

#### 03/10 – Empathy

- **\*\*ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY 2 DUE.\*\***
- **\*\*LIBRARY TRAINING MUST BE COMPLETED BY THIS DATE.\*\***
- Anonymous, *Why Vegan?* (C).
- *LWC* 137-150.

#### 03/17 – Break

- **\*\*NO CLASS\*\***

#### 03/24 – Structure

- Slavoj Žižek, from *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* (C).
- *LWC* 151-174, 209-232.

#### 03/31 – Morality

- **\*\*ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE.\*\***
- John Gray, from *Straw Dogs: Thoughts on Humans and Other Animals* (C).

- *LWC* 180-188.

#### 04/07 – Community

- **\*\*RESEARCH PAPER OUTLINE DUE.\*\***
- Gloria Anzaldúa, “How to Tame a Wild Tongue” (C).
- *LWC* 188-200.

#### 04/14 – History

- **\*\*RESEARCH PAPER FIRST HALF DRAFT DUE.\*\***
- Robert D. Kaplan, from *Warrior Politics: Why Leadership Demands a Pagan Ethos* (C).

#### 04/21 – Memory

- **\*\*RESEARCH PAPER FINAL DRAFT DUE.\*\***
- Harold Pinter, “Art, Truth and Politics” (C).

#### 04/28 – Care

- Ursula K. Le Guin, “She Unnames Them” (C).
- Toni Morrison, “The Nobel Lecture in Literature” (C).

#### 05/05 – Finale

- **\*\*COURSE EVALUATION.\*\***
- **\*\*QUOTATION JOURNAL DUE.\*\***
- **\*\*FINAL EXAM.\*\***

## A NOTE ABOUT THE READINGS

I have deliberately chosen readings from across the spectrum of ideas. We will be reading writers who called themselves conservatives, imperialists, fascists, liberals, anarchists, communists, feminists, pacifists and vegans. In short, there is something here to offend everyone—some of it offends me! My purpose is not to offend you, however; the purpose is to learn how to counter arguments we despise with better arguments of our own. If you are offended by something you read here, remember that the skills we learn in this class will enable you to explain more effectively why you think it is wrong.

## QUOTATION JOURNAL

Worth 10 points

Due Tuesday 05/05

Each week at the beginning of class I will present you with a brief quotation, either from that day's reading or from somewhere else, and I will ask you to take five to ten minutes to write about the meaning of that quotation. This is a free-writing, warm-up activity, so you can write whatever you want as long as you use the time well. However, you must write *something*—the purpose of this assignment is to measure your attendance and participation as well as your writing ability. If you are late or absent, you will not be able to make this assignment up. Since you are free to miss one class, you are also free to miss one quotation without losing points. For each journal entry missed after that, you will lose 1.5 points—that means if you miss two classes, you will get an 8.5 out of 10 (a B), if you miss three classes, you will get a 7 out of 10 (a C-), etc. I will collect your quotation journal on the final day of class, so you may want to write it in a separate notebook or on paper that can be easily torn out.