

WRT120 Effective Writing I

Fall 2012

Topic: “The Task of Education”

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Office: 520 Main Hall

Course Site: www.thinkingtogether.org/120

Ofc Hrs: MW 1:50-3 pm & Tues 1:45-4 pm & by appointment

Phone is the *worst* way to reach me; email is *best*. I respond within a day, sometimes within minutes

WRT120 Overview *WRT120: Effective Writing I* provides instruction in composition as a means of communication within an academic environment. By mediating thought through language, writing offers a means for developing an understanding & knowledge that is at once personal—for & by ourselves—but also shared with and based on the thoughts of others. The ability to write, to have a voice, is a powerful tool for self-understanding and engagement in the world. This course will help you to develop that voice.

Three foundational principles guide this course. First of all, I believe that the instruction of writing requires practice—regular, repeated, reflected practice. We’ll write this semester from beginning to end, weekly, and with an eye to continued development of analytical and interpretive forms. Writing is not a skill one can develop through theoretical understanding; the only way to develop oneself as a writer is to write. This class, therefore, will not devote much time to articulating a theory of writing, or to lectures on writing. Instead, writing instruction will occur within a process that involves reading, thinking, reflecting, and questioning. Instruction in writing itself will occur in class and in conferences, in discussion and in written comments.

The second principle guiding the pedagogy of this course is the notion that good writing requires good thinking. One can’t write well without thinking well. Accordingly, the discussions and writing assignments will attend to the process of reflective thinking. Your ability to think, critically and creatively—but above all, with focus and purpose—will drive the writing that you do this semester.

And thirdly, good thinking and writing need something to think about—engagement can’t be merely theoretical; it must be immediate and personal. We’ll read material that is complex enough to situate a variety of responses, yet compelling enough to become immediate and personal. Our topic plays on your own histories and skills: the topic of education. We’ll think about what it means to *learn*, to engage in thinking on one’s own and with others. Throughout, we’ll use what we read to inform what we write.

General Education Goals This course meets the Academic Foundations in English Composition component of the WCU General Education curriculum. This course meets four General Education goals that will help students learn to: (a) think critically and analytically; (b) respond thoughtfully to diversity; (c) communicate effectively; (d) demonstrate the sensibilities, understandings, and perspectives of a person educated in the liberal arts tradition.

Departmental Requirements You will write 17-20 pages of finished writing, both formal & revised (essays & analyses) and informal (online writing, rough drafts, etc). You will compile a portfolio of finished, formal writing completed in the course this semester and submit that portfolio at the semester’s completion. You will complete a Self-Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ), which asks you to reflect on the skills learned in this WRT120 class.

Students with Disabilities If you have a disability that requires accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), please present your letter of accommodations and meet with me as soon as possible. For more information, please contact the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (OSSD) at x3217.

Plagiarism Your finished work must be your own, as a result of the engagement of your mind with the thoughts of others in a way that reflects your perspective. Plagiarism is academic dishonesty, a theft that robs you of the chance to either succeed or fail but most of all it robs you of the chance to learn. It will result in at best an F on the assignment, and it risks university-level judicial sanctions. For questions regarding Academic

Integrity, the No-Grade Policy, Sexual Harassment, or the Student Code of Conduct, students are encouraged to refer to the Department's Undergraduate Handbook, the Undergraduate Catalogue, the Ram's Eye View, and the University website at www.wcupa.edu.

Attendance Regular attendance is encouraged and required for this course; it's not possible to do well in a course that you do not attend. Participation is **qualitatively and quantitatively** assessed, and participation requires presence. However, **there is no formal penalty for missing any class**. In my experience, students who miss classes gradually lose touch with the pace of the course and inevitably fail for the term. In order to ensure your success, I recommend attending each of the class meetings.

Grades & Assignments

I follow the standard 100 point grading scale, using numbers and letters with a + or a -. I take grading to be an ethical contract: I demonstrate what the expectations are for each level, and you are confident as to where you stand as the semester progresses.

Essays 50%

You will plan, write, and revise three essays for this class. These essays will be formal, polished out of class writings that represent a serious attempt to think alongside the issues of the class. You will be graded on the sophistication and development of ideas, on the fluency and cohesion of language, and on the structure and success of the argument. Part of each essay assignment will involve a period of proposing, drafting, revising, and rewriting. I require and encourage writing as a process of thoughtful reflection and revision; once complete, however, each essay will receive an unalterable grade— I do not allow revisions after the due date. I'll give much more information on the essays as I assign them.

Weekly Analyses 20%

Each week's reading assignment will carry along with it a writing assignment. These assignments will ask you to critically analyze some specific textual question— either to make sense of some passage, or to explain some concept, or to make connections between ideas. Over the semester, there will be approximately 8 of these assignments, which will be averaged together for 20% of your final grade. Each writing assignment will ask you to think about some specific aspect of the text and present a reasoned perspective on that issue. These minor writings are a tool for you to prepare for the essays, as they spur your thinking about the issues of the class. The purposes of these writings are twofold: to support the readings, and to spur you to develop your ideas about the readings in argument form. They also serve to prepare you for the essay assignments, as they model the ways that thoughtful readers and writers move from reading a text to responding to a text to thinking critically. Missed writings can't be made up, regardless of the excuse. I will drop your lowest writing in this category before computing the average.

Participation, in class & online: 25%

This class uses discussion in class and online as a significant pedagogical element. Together, we'll build an awareness of the complex issues of the semester, and the contributions of each member of the class will help serve as scaffolding for the intellectual work of the semester. Each individual's contribution of a thoughtful, reasoned perspective will significantly ease the task of forming new synthetic propositions. Some individuals will gravitate to the face-to-face participation, while others will find it easier to contribute online. Regular participation in both areas will greatly enhance your semester's grade.

Portfolio & Self Assessment 5%

At the end of the semester, you will submit a portfolio of your formal writing along with the required response sheet and a self-assessment. This activity will comprise 5% of your final grade.

Tentative Schedule

updated 11/5

Week One August 27-31

Introduction to the Course

Paulo Freire's "The Banking Concept of Education"

Writing 1

Week Two: Sep 5-7

Paulo Freire's "The Banking Concept of Education"

Writing 2

Week Three Sep 10-14

Paulo Freire's "The Banking Concept of Education"

Writing 3

Essay I Assignment

Week Four Sep 17-21

Essay I Workshops:

Targeted Discussion of Freire

Thesis Building & Revision

Writing 4

Week Five Sep 24-28

Essay I Workshops:

Revision & Development

Conferences

Writing 5

Essay I Due Mon Oct 1

Week 6: Oct 3-5

Walker Percy's "The Loss of the Creature"

Introduction to Unit II

Week 7: Oct 10-12

Walker Percy's "The Loss of the Creature"

Week 8: Oct 15-19

Walker Percy's "The Loss of the Creature"

Writing 6

Week 9: Oct 22-26

Walker Percy's "The Loss of the Creature"

Writing 7

Week 10: Oct 29-Nov 2

Sandy visits West Chester

Essay II Workshops:

Targeted Discussion & Thesis Workshops

Week 11: Nov 5-9

Essay II Workshops:

Thesis Building and Revision

Targeted Discussion & Thesis Workshops

Conferences possible all week—tungle me!

Writings all week: 7, 8, 9

Thesis Due Sunday, 11/11 (Writ 10)

Week 12: Nov 12-16

Essay II Workshops

Required Conferences—no meetings in class

Conferences possible all week—tungle me!

Rough Draft Due 11/14 (Writ 11)

Essay II Due Sunday, 11/18

Week 13: Nov 19

Learning in a Digital Environment

Essay III Assignment

Week 14: Nov 26-30

Learning in a Digital Environment

Analytic Writing Assignment (Writ 12)

Week 15: Dec 3-7

Essay III Workshops:

Thesis Building and revision

Targeted Discussion & Thesis Workshops

Conferences possible all week—tungle me!

Thesis Due 12/5 (Writ 13)

Finale: Dec 10

Farewell, so long, auf wiedersehen

Overview of Final

Conferences possible all week—tungle me!

Rough Draft Due 12/10 (Writ 14)

Essay III Due 12/14

Final Exam due 12/15