

WRT120 Effective Writing I

Topic: “The Task of Education”

Prof. R. Cream rcream@wcupa.edu

Office: 312 Main Hall 610.436.2481

Fall 2011

Sections 33, 39, 81

Course Site: www.thinkingtogether.org/120

Ofc Hrs: MWF 10-11 am & 2-3 pm & other times 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) prepare to lead a productive and contributing life.

Departmental Requirements You will write 17-20 pages of finished writing, both formal & revised (essays) and informal. 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.

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 60%

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 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 & Informal Writing Online: 5% + 10% = 15%

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

Week One: August 29, 31, Sep 2

Introduction to the Course
Paulo Freire's "The Banking Concept of Education"
Analytical Writing 1

Labor Day Sep 5

Week Two: September 7, 9

Paulo Freire's "The Banking Concept of Education"
Analytical Writing 2

Week Three September 12, 14, 16

Paulo Freire's "The Banking Concept of Education"
Analytical Writing 3
Essay I Assignment

Week Four September 19, 21, 23

Essay I Workshops:
Targeted Discussion of Freire
Thesis Building & Revision

Week Five September 26, 28, 30

Essay I Workshops:
Revision & Development
Conferences

Week Six: October 3, 5, 7

Essay I Due
Richard Rodriguez's "The Achievement of Desire"
Analytical Writing 4

Fall Break Oct 10-11

Week Seven October 12, 14

Richard Rodriguez's "The Achievement of Desire"
Analytical Writing 5

Week Eight October 17, 19, 21

Richard Rodriguez's "The Achievement of Desire"
Analytical Writing 6
Essay II Assignment

Week Nine October 24, 26, 28

Essay II Workshops:
Targeted Discussion of Rodriguez
Thesis Building & Revision
Paragraph Development & Organization

Week Ten October 31, Nov 2, 4

Essay II Workshops:
Revision & Development
Conferences

Week Eleven November 7, 9, 11

Essay II Due
Walker Percy's "Loss of the Creature"
Analytical Writing 7

Week Twelve November 14, 16, 18

Walker Percy's "Loss of the Creature"
Analytical Writing 8

Week Thirteen November 21

Walker Percy's "Loss of the Creature"
Essay III Assignment

Thanksgiving Break November 23 to 27

Week Fourteen November 28, 30, Dec 2

Essay III Workshops:
Targeted Discussion of Freire, Rodriguez, Percy
Thesis Building & Revision
Paragraph Development & Organization

Week Fifteen December 5, 7, 9

Essay III Workshops:
Revision & Development
Conferences
Essay III Due

Finals Week Dec 12-17

Portfolios Due