

Fall 2015

ENGL 1157

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ENGL 1157:20 Intro to English Composition

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Phone: TBA

Office: LA 314

Class time/location: 2pm Tues/Thurs. Milneburg Hall Room 265

Office Hours: Tues/Thurs 1:30-2pm & Tues 3:30-4pm
and by appointment

Required Texts and Materials*

Ballenger, Bruce. *The Curious Writer*. UNO **Second** Custom Edition* ISBN: 1-269-88765-3

*This is a NEW edition. You MUST purchase the new edition.

- Kennedy, *Aunt Alice vs. Bob Marley* ISBN: 978-1-60801-013-4
- A standard-sized, college-ruled notebook
- Copies of your essays for peer review (you are responsible for making copies and for copying costs.)
- Two standard-sized manila or two-pocket folders (one that you will be your daily writing folder; another to house the contents of your final portfolio.)

*You should bring your textbook, notebook, and writing folder to *every class*.

The Big Picture, or Why We're Here:

The late writing scholar Donald Murray explains that we write for a variety of purposes. We write "To learn, to describe and therefore to see, to entertain, to inform, to persuade, to celebrate, to attack, to call attention, to think, to make money, to promote, to advocate, to connect, to relate, to make, to share. But always behind each writing purpose is the secret excitement of discovery: the word, the line, the sentence, the page that achieves its own life and its own meaning." In this course, we will explore the many reasons writers write and the many genres they use to express their ideas. Through critical reading and writing, discussion, peer review and writing workshops, and through one-on-one student-teacher conferences, you will develop the skills necessary to express your own ideas in effective college-level essays. By the end of the semester, you will have developed a writing portfolio that will represent your best efforts in this course. In the process—and with your enthusiasm—we'll have a lot of fun!

Course Goals

The core of the class is the crafting of three essays and the development of a writing folder and final portfolio that will contain not just well-developed essays, but also prewriting, drafts, and revisions, as well as letters of reflection. Because the writing process incorporates many more elements than simply writing, itself, you will be responsible for nearly daily writing *and* reading, and you will be expected to respond critically (and constructively) in writing to your own work and that of your classmates. *Given that you commit yourself to the process of improving your writing*—through reading critically, prewriting, drafting, participating in writing workshops, and editing multiple drafts—*this course will elicit an improvement in your writing!*

Student Learning Outcomes

After successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Understand writing as a process that involves invention, drafting, collaboration, and revision
- Demonstrate familiarity with and/or compose in different genres (such as editorial writing, personal narratives, reviews, satires, dialogues, letters, or profile essays)
- Determine purpose and audience in your own and others' writing
- Summarize, analyze, evaluate, and respond to the ideas of others
- Use library and non-library research methods
- Incorporate the ideas and texts of others into your work

Your Goals

Now, set three goals of your own. You'll revisit these goals at semester's end to evaluate how you've done:

-
-
-

Course Writing

The work in this class will be comprised of four major units, each revolving around a Long Essay (LE). LE1, LE2, and LE3 will increasingly ask you to think, read, and write in ways you may not have before. LE4 will be a sort of reflection on the entire semester and your own personal growth as a writer.

Each LE unit will contain shorter essays (sketches and/or drafts) as well as various readings and in-class writing activities (including fast writing, brainstorming, and group work). These activities will help guide you to a deeper understanding of the LE. Also, you will engage in peer review with your classmates: you will help each other with your writing in small groups and in class-wide workshops. At the end of each LE unit, you will turn in a submission packet to me, including a reflective letter discussing how you went about the LE and addressing what revisions you would or would not make if you chose that particular LE for portfolio revision.

At the end of the semester, you will choose two of your first three LEs to thoroughly revise for your Final Portfolio. Your fourth LE will also be included in your portfolio. The portfolio will be graded not only on the quality of writing, but also on the level of revision and effort that went into the portfolio.

Course Grading

The grading for this course will not be based on things such as tests but rather on the work (and amount of work) you do as a writer.

Final Portfolio: 45%

The Final Portfolio is an important project that allows you not only to go back to your work, but also to illustrate to me how much effort you have put into the writing process. Even if a paper starts off really well, there is always room (much room) for improvement, regardless of the writer. (This includes you, me, and even any professional author you can think of.) This portfolio shows how well you understand the work required of writing and also illustrates the growth you have undergone as a writer over the semester. The criteria for grading will include clarity of purpose and audience, the ability to reflect on your own writing practices, understanding of genre, ability to correctly and effectively use evidence, and willingness to undertake the process of real and substantive revision.

Long Essay Submission Drafts/Packets 1-3: 20%

In order to provide you with a positive atmosphere to write, and to have you focus more on writing than on grades, I will not initially "grade" your LE submission drafts. What I mean by this is that instead of simply giving you a simple letter grade early in the semester, I will instead give you full credit for these drafts **provided that you are turning in a draft that represents your very best efforts to respond thoughtfully and thoroughly to the LE assignment** (this includes submitting all of the required materials in their appropriate format, and meeting the length requirements). Instead of a grade, I will give you a credit award (full credit, half credit, or no credit) as well as extensive commentary to help you understand what's working and what may still need work should you choose to revise that LE for your final portfolio. ***In order to pass the course, you must complete all four of the LEs***—the three mentioned here and the fourth (the reflective introduction to your final portfolio).

Other Writing: 20%

Like your LE drafts, **most of the writing you do in the course will not receive letter grades.** The only thing that will be given a letter grade during the semester is your Final Portfolio. All other process writing—including in-class writing, listing, brainstorming, fastwriting, sketches, peer review responses, reflective writing, and so on—will periodically be collected and given a credit award. “Full credit” for these pieces of writing is not the same thing as an “A” for a Portfolio submission. *Full credit means that you’ve produced a text that you’ve worked really hard on, that shows that you have met the requirements for the assignment, and that you are thinking deeply and critically about the topic at hand.* In these pieces of process writing, the goal is to “search, circle around, and explore,” to engage in dialogue with yourself, your peers, your resources, and your audience / reader. It’s about taking risks, trying things out, and stretching your brain. That focused, disciplined bravery is what I’ll be reading for.

Participation: 15%

Since so much work is done in-class and collaboratively, attendance and *active participation* is crucial to your success in this course (both your success and the success of others). Active participation means you must be in class on time and in every single class period. If you are not in class, you will miss out on any writing activities and group work (which cannot be made up due to the nature of the work). This also means that you come to class prepared, with reading done and assignments written. If you miss class, not only will your participation grade suffer, but your understanding will suffer and thus your success in this class will suffer even more. So, please make it a priority to be in every single class prepared and mentally ready.

Course Policies

Participation:

As you have read above, participation is an *extremely important* part of this class (and a major portion of your course grade). Writing requires a lot of collaboration, and a lot of different ways of thinking, and we will participate in many activities to help you grow as a writer. However, these activities cannot benefit you if you are not here.

Therefore, it is crucial for you to come to class every day, ready to work. Your reading should be finished, your writing assignments should be ready, and your brain should be geared to go. Depending on your level of preparedness, there may be times (for instance, if you do not have a Peer Review draft) when I will be forced to count you absent because you cannot participate in the activity for the day. Sometimes, not having specific materials may not bar you from participating (if you forgot your notebook, for instance). But in the case of Peer Review days, it is essential that you show up prepared, more essential than any other day (otherwise, how could you receive and give feedback?).

Attendance:

Of course, attendance is part of participation; you have to be here to participate. I understand that life sometimes interferes with one’s best intentions. Therefore, you may have three absences from this class during the semester (although any work we do in class may be impossible to make up, and thus you’ll receive no credit for missed work). For the every absence over three and up to five, your final grade will drop by one full letter (from an A to a B, and so on) for each class that you miss. With more than five absences, you will be unable to pass this class. Two tardy arrivals equal one absence. Show up, and show up on time.

Special note on absences:

Certain days are more crucial than others. Especially important days throughout the semester are the days on which we do peer review or hold a writing workshop. We will devote entire class periods to peer review, since it is a very useful and important activity. You should only miss these days in an

extreme emergency. Since peer review is necessary for your submission drafts and portfolio, even if you miss class (and thus lose credit for the activity), you must make it up.

Late work:

Late work in a writing class will invariably have far-reaching negative consequences: doing one assignment late will thus push everything else back. Therefore, make every effort to get everything in on time (at the *beginning* of class) and to submit your work in its proper submission format. If something is not turned in on time or is incorrectly formatted, you will not receive credit for it. The only exception to this is that *one* LE submission draft can be turned in late (within two class periods) for half credit. However, since every assignment contributes to the end product (the Final Portfolio), even if you are not receiving credit for an assignment (because you turned it in late) you must still complete the assignment. If you do not turn in a completed portfolio, with every assignment in it, it will be impossible for you to pass the class.

Technical problems (such as running out of ink, having a broken printer, etc.) are not valid excuses for late work. You should always do your work early enough (i.e. not the morning before class) so that if a problem arises, you have enough time to print the draft elsewhere. If you don't procrastinate, problems like these will not occur.

Document Design: Your essays must be properly headed and formatted (see the handout on formatting). Essays that fail to conform to the formatting requirements will be penalized.

Grading:

Until the portfolio, I will not assign letter grades. Instead, for process work and Long Essay drafts, I will give you full credit, half credit, or no credit. You will receive full credit (a "✓") if you demonstrate that you dedicated a lot of effort to the draft. You will receive half credit (a "✓-") if it is clear to me that you did not put in the amount of time and energy that I asked for. And finally, if it is clear to me that you did little or no work (such as turning in a page with three sentences on it), you will receive no credit (an "✗"). In order to pass the course, you must complete *all* of the LEs.

At the end of the semester, I will grade your portfolios. After that, I will apply the percentages listed above to come up with your final grade. Since LE submissions and other course writing are graded on genuine effort, you can guarantee a total of 40% of your final grade by working hard on those texts. **The purpose of this class is not to turn out professional writers who have years of experience and can write nearly perfectly. Rather, it is to help you develop the necessary processes of writing that will enable you to become better thinkers and people. Thus, the most important thing for you to do, no matter what level of writing you're at, is to try hard and provide real academic effort.**

When I apply a grade to your final portfolio, I will use the A-F grading scale. The standards for A-F grades are loosely described here:

An "A" represents achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements

A "B" represents achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.

A "C" represents achievement that **meets the course requirements in every respect.**

A "D" represents achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements.

An "F" represents achievement that fails to meet the course requirements to such a degree that it is not worthy of credit.

I want to direct your attention to "achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect." I will be giving you prompts that explain in writing the requirements for each assignment. You are responsible for meeting all of those requirements, and you should expect to receive a grade below C if you do not. You are also responsible for contacting me in advance for clarification if you do not

understand the requirements. (Attached to this syllabus you'll find a rubric that outlines the general criteria for my evaluation of your LEs and your Final Portfolio.)

Again, most of the work you do in this class will not receive a letter grade. Instead, it will be given a credit award, which I'll indicate with either a "✓," a "✓-" or an "✗" (credit, half credit, or no credit). In order to receive full credit, the assignment must adhere to the assignment requirements (include length requirements), and be submitted on-time and in the appropriate format.

Around midterms, you will receive a midterm grade. This grade will represent your **effort** in the course, thus far, and *will not be a reflection of the quality of your writing*. Why don't I give you a grade at midterm that evaluates the quality of your LEs? Because they won't have been revised, and thus, won't be done! It doesn't make sense to grade a text that is not as polished as it can be! Having said that, it's important that you understand that you can get an "A" at midterms (for working hard and putting forth your best effort), and a "C," "D," or even an "F" in the course (for failing to revise successfully, failing to devote yourself to your work for the remainder of the semester, or for failing to meet the other course requirements.)

At the end of the semester, I will grade your portfolios. When I apply a grade to your portfolio, I will use the A-F grading scale. After that, I will apply the percentages listed above to come up with your overall course grade.

Final Drop Date:

The last day to withdraw from the course with a grade of "W" is October 14th. I will email all students whose current standing puts them at risk of failing. (This does NOT mean that you cannot still fail if you do not receive this email. You could, for instance, miss more than the maximum number of classes after the drop date, or your portfolio could be submitted missing key components or in very poor quality.) While you will not receive grades until the final portfolio, you will know if you are failing the course on the date of October 14th.

Being Part of a Classroom Community:

In a writing class, all participants must behave with civility and respect at all times. Writing—and especially sharing writing—can be an at-times frightening endeavor. Moreover, what's said and/or written about may sometimes be provocative. That's a good thing; good writers take risks, and you should all feel comfortable enough to do so. Having said that, I expect that even when you disagree with the opinions of anyone in the class (including me), you will respect the right of each individual to *have* those opinions and you will behave with civility and respect at all times. No one in our class should ever feel belittled or undermined by anyone else in the class. Any actions that purposefully undermine or belittle either another person or a classroom activity will not be tolerated.

What can you expect from me, as your facilitator? Well, you can expect that I will respect your opinions and that I will behave with civility and respect at all times. Our classroom is—and I hope, always will be—a place where we, as writers, explore ourselves and our world in a safe and supportive environment. Course policies like this one are designed to make sure that happens.

Public Nature of Writing:

Since academic writing (and most writing) is directed toward an audience, you should consider the writing that you do in this course "public," that is, writing that others will read. Obviously, I will read what you write. But, in the case of Peer Review, other students will also read your work. This provides a great learning opportunity for both reader and writer, but also needs to be considered when picking topics and when writing. If there is a personal subject that you don't feel comfortable sharing, it would probably be best to write about something else in class. Also, I will periodically use stellar examples of student writing in class. I will use your writing ONLY to demonstrate fantastic

examples of what we're doing, however. If there is writing that you would rather I not use for this purpose, you can note it on the paper and/or send me an email.

Cell Phones and Other Gadgets:

I ask that you turn them off—all of them—for the duration of class. Do not mute them. Do not put them on vibrate. Turn them OFF. If you forget to turn things off and they ring, shake, rattle or roll, well, you're human aren't you? But if you answer the phone or look at the text or sneak a look or sneak a text, you will be dismissed from class. I'll say something friendly, like "See you next time!" But I will mean: "You are dismissed," and I will mark you absent. This includes phones and smart phones and laptops and invisible shields. Pretend we're on an airplane for an hour. You are welcome to text the heck out your friends once we've landed (when class is over). In class: your captain has spoken.

Laptops in the Classroom

This is not a computer-assisted classroom. The use of laptop computers (or tablets) in our class is prohibited.

Academic Integrity: Academic integrity is fundamental to the process of learning and evaluating academic performance. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to the following: cheating, plagiarizing, tampering with academic records and exams, falsifying identity, and being an accessory to acts of academic dishonesty. If I suspect academic dishonesty, then I will investigate. If I uncover evidence of academic dishonesty, I will seek judicial punishment, to be determined by your principal and school. At the very least, *you will fail the course*. With all of this in mind, please ask me if you don't know how to avoid plagiarism or aren't sure what it is. For more on UNO's Academic Dishonesty policy, go here:

<http://www.uno.edu/student-affairs-enrollment-management/documents/academic-dishonesty-policy-rev2014.pdf>.

Emails and Instructor-Student Correspondence:

Just as you should take care to behave professionally in the classroom, so too should you take care before sending emails—particularly if you are feeling upset or frustrated by my feedback on your work (see "Discussing My Comments on Your Work"). In your emails to me, I ask that you refer to the course and section number in the subject line of your message, before your message's specific subject (e.g., Subject: ENGL 1157-004: Question about LE 1). Remember: tone of voice and body language—aspects of communication that help clarify a writer's intent—do not come across in emails. Please read your email carefully and critically before clicking on "Send." I check my UNO email account frequently during regular business hours. Because I have so many students, though, I ask that you allow 12 hours response-time for any reply. Emails sent after 6:00pm will not be read until the following day. I do not check or respond to emails on the weekend.

Conferences:

Because one-on-one interaction can often be more productive than classroom learning, you and I will meet at least once this semester to discuss your writing. You will meet with me for a private conference at least once during the semester. However, I commonly call students in for conferences more often. This time will enable us to discuss specific issues in your writing in a one-on-one setting.

Discussing My Comments on Your Work:

I am happy to clarify or discuss my written comments on your work after 48 hours between the time of their return and our discussion have passed, but not before then.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: If you qualify for academic modification services, you are legally entitled to those services. It is, however, your responsibility to register with the Office

of Disability Services (UC 260) each semester, and to follow their procedures for obtaining assistance. I am happy to make every effort to accommodate students who qualify for such academic assistance.

The Writing Center: While you are not required to make use of UNO's Writing Center, I urge you to do so. The tutors in the Writing Center offer their services both in-person and online. Students who have participated in regular sessions with a tutor have seen significant improvement in their writing (and their grades!) What's more, the highly trained and qualified tutors in the Writing Lab offer their services to you for FREE! To schedule a tutoring session—either in-person or online—visit [the UNO Writing Center's website: http://english.uno.edu/writing/](http://english.uno.edu/writing/) or visit the Writing Center in person. It's located in room 334 of the Liberal Arts Building at UNO.

Tentative Course Schedule:

I will distribute a tentative course schedule that corresponds to each of the course units at the beginning of that unit. You'll get the due dates for the first unit within the first two weeks of class. You should expect that the course schedule for each unit will change. *You are responsible for keeping track of any changes to the schedule announced in class.*

For now, know that the *approximate due dates* of the four major assignments will fall within the following weeks:

LE1: Week Five
LE2: Week Ten

LE3: Week Fourteen
LE4/Final Portfolio: Week Sixteen
(at the time of the scheduled final exam)

If you have any questions at all, please don't hesitate to ask. I'm here to help!