

EngL 3027W: The Essay

MW, 12:20-2:15 pm
Lind Hall 303
4 credits
Spring 2008
Class #90820
Section 3

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Course Description

This is a course for students ready to face more challenging assignments and deepen their comfort and skill with writing. The instructor helps the student develop more sophisticated research strategies and experiment with more creative stylistic choices. Assignments might include autobiographies, critical comparisons, reviews of articles or books, cultural analyses, persuasive essays, and annotated bibliographies. Students in this course learn to: Generate topics and develop essays with greater independence than they exercised in freshman composition. Write for multiple audiences—academic and non-academic—making appropriate decisions about content, rhetoric, structure, vocabulary, style, and format. Write creative non-fiction and other genres incorporating complex description and analysis. Analyze the conventions and styles of writing in their major field. Experiment with new and more sophisticated writing strategies and styles. This course fulfills the liberal education requirements for “Writing Intensive.”

Course web site: <https://moodle.umn.edu/>

Class time: 25% lecture, 75% discussion

Work load: 20-30 pages reading per week, 15-20 pages writing per term, 4 papers, several short quizzes, several short reading responses, review of literary event

Grade: 65% reports/papers, 10% quizzes, 10% attendance, 10% reflection papers, 5% workshops

Objectives

What questions will the course help you to answer? How will you grow in knowledge and understanding? What intellectual abilities will the course help you to develop?

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- understand writing as a form of critical thinking, responding to a rhetorical situation, and expressing your creative vision
- appreciate that writing is a complex process of brainstorming, drafting, revising, editing, and proofreading
- recognize and manipulate the conventions appropriate to particular rhetorical situations, including conventions of format, genre, structure, voice, tone, formality, and mechanics (syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling)
- integrate your ideas with those of others, especially by finding, evaluating, analyzing, synthesizing, and documenting appropriate primary and secondary sources
- use different technologies to conduct research and to communicate with a range of audiences
- collaborate with others to craft and critique written texts

Texts

What reading materials will help you to pursue the goals of this course?

There are two required textbooks for this course:

1. Linda H. Peterson and John C. Brereton, eds. The Norton Reader. Shorter Twelfth Edition. New York: Norton, 2008. ISBN-13: 978-0-393-93173-0. \$46.45.
2. Mark Tredinnick. Writing Well: The Essential Guide. New York: Cambridge UP, 2008. ISBN-13: 978-0-521-72768-6. \$16.99.

We will also be reading a number of articles that will be available on our course web site, listed above.

Grades

How will I evaluate the nature, quality, and progress of your learning?

I will award grades in this course according to the University of Minnesota's Uniform Grading Policy:

A: achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements

B: achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements

C: achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect

D: achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements

F: represents failure and signifies that the work was either:

- completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit, or
- not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an "I" (Incomplete)

I will also award pluses and minuses, with the highest possible grade being an "A."

An "I" (Incomplete) is assigned at the discretion of the instructor when, due to extraordinary circumstances, such as hospitalization, a student is prevented from completing the work of the course on time. An Incomplete requires a written agreement between instructor and student.

Students taking this course using the S/N option must complete all requirements, which will be graded using the A-F system. Students must earn a "C-" or better to receive an "S" (Satisfactory). Students earning a "D+" or worse will receive an "N" (No Credit).

Grades will be assigned in terms of a percentage of possible points according to the following standards:

	B+ \geq 87%	C+ \geq 77%	D+ \geq 67%		
A \geq 93%	B \geq 83%	C \geq 73%	D \geq 63%	F < 63%	
A- \geq 90%	B- \geq 80%	C- \geq 70%			

I may choose to grade more generously, but I will not raise my standards above these. If at any time you have concerns about your grade, please do not hesitate to contact me.

How to Calculate Your Grade

You can calculate your grade at any time by adding up all the points you received on your assignments to date and dividing that number by all the points you could have received on those assignments. (Grades for attendance and participation will not be calculated until the end of the semester.)

Credits and Workload Expectations

This four-credit course will require, for the average University of Minnesota undergraduate student, twelve hours of academic work per week, averaged over the term, in order to complete the work of the course. Since the course meets for four hours a week, you should expect to spend an additional eight hours a week on coursework outside the classroom. All grades are based on the quality of the work submitted, not on hours of effort.

Student Academic Success Services

University Counseling & Consulting Services (UCCS) offers learning support services, including classes, workshops, individual consultation and counseling, and study skills resources to help you be successful at the University. They have two Twin Cities campus locations: Minneapolis (109 Eddy Hall) and St. Paul (199 Coffey Hall). Phone: 612-624-3323. Web: <<http://www.uccs.umn.edu/>>.

University Policies

What University policies apply to this course so that you will have a safe, productive, and fair environment for learning?

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment by or toward a member of the University community is prohibited by Board of Regents policy. Complaints about sexual harassment should be reported to the University's Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 419 Morrill Hall.

Classroom Conduct

All students at the University have the right to a civil, productive, and stimulating learning environment. In turn, instructors have a responsibility to nurture and maintain such an environment. Lively, even heated, discussion is not disruptive behavior. Both instructors and students have a fundamental obligation to respect the rights of each other and an equally fundamental obligation to respect the instructional setting as a place for civil, courteous behavior. Students who disrupt the educational process because of discourteous, threatening, harassing, or other aggressive behavior will be removed from class.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

It is University policy to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. If you have a disability, please contact me and/or Disability Services (180 McNamara Alumni Center, [612] 626-1333 TTY/voice) to schedule an appointment with a Specialist. All requests will remain confidential. This syllabus is available in alternative formats upon request.

Student Academic Integrity and Scholastic Dishonesty

Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own can result in disciplinary action. Any student found guilty of scholastic dishonesty in this course can be assigned a penalty up to and including an "F" or "N" for the course and be reported to the University's Office for Student Academic Integrity. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, please ask.

Requirements

What will you be doing to pursue the goals of this course?

To succeed in this course, you must complete the following requirements, which are worth a total of 1,000 possible points. For more information on this point system, see the section on grades.

1. Attendance and Participation (100 points)

Learning is social; it occurs in community. As a result, you will need to participate actively in this course on several levels, so that all of us can learn as much as possible from one another.

More than two unexcused absences will seriously affect your grade in this portion of the course, and a pattern of unexcused absences is cause for a grade of "F" or "N" in the entire course. If you know in advance that you are going to be absent on a particular day, please let me know. You are also responsible for documenting the legitimacy of any absence. Legitimate reasons for absence include:

- illnesses certified by Boynton Health Service or your family physician
- emergencies caused by a death or serious illness in your immediate family
- participation in intercollegiate athletic events or other group activities sponsored by the University
- subpoenas, jury duty, military service, and religious observances

Our time in class is limited and therefore valuable. For this reason you should:

- arrive on time and stay the entire class period. Students who arrive late or leave early disrupt the flow of class and may miss important information. You should not expect to pass this course if you arrive late or leave early on a regular basis.
- turn off your cell phone, pager, and/or watch alarm before coming to class. It's very distracting when these go off during lectures and discussions.
- refrain from eating meals during class. You are welcome to bring a soda or light snack with you to class, but please be considerate of those around you.

In return, I will always begin and end class on time, will place any lecture notes online as soon as possible after the end of class, and will make myself available to answer your questions and discuss your concerns before and after class, whenever possible, in addition to during my office hours.

I will evaluate your class participation using the following scale:

- A: frequent and courteous participation, with mature and thoughtful insights
- B: above average participation and insight
- C: moderate participation and reasonable insight
- D: below average participation with little understanding of the issues
- F: little or no participation

Halfway through the semester, I will ask you to evaluate your own class participation using this scale, as well as identify what can you do to improve. At the end of the semester, I will ask you to evaluate yourself again, as well as indicate what have you done to improve since mid-semester. I will then take this final evaluation into account when assigning grades in this portion of the course.

To receive the full 100 points for attendance and participation, therefore, you should read the assigned texts carefully, attend the class meetings conscientiously, and participate actively in class discussions, small-group work, and other in-class assignments.

2. Reading Responses (100 points)

Another important part of our course are the eight short reading responses you will write over the course of the term. These responses will allow you to share your thoughts on the readings with the other students in the class, and they could also help you to develop one or more of your papers.

Logistics: At each of the dates listed on our syllabus, you should submit a reading response to the appropriate "Discussion Forum" section of our Moodle site. All reading responses are due by 9 a.m. on the dates we are scheduled to read the text(s) to which you are responding. In other words, you need to submit a written response to the reading before we discuss it in class, not after we do so.

Content and Grading: Each response should be approximately 300 words long (the equivalent of a printed page) and should be a thoughtful, considered reaction to one or more of the readings assigned for that day. These reading responses should be based primarily on your own attention to and engagement with the text(s). However, I also encourage you to engage the responses of other students by posting follow-up responses. Each reading response will be worth 10 points, which will be awarded on a pass-fail basis at the end of the semester. The remaining 20 points in your reading response grade will be awarded based on the number and quality of replies you post to the reading responses of other students.

3. Quizzes (100 points)

I will give occasional quizzes over the course of the semester as needed, to make sure you are keeping up with the reading and understanding the course material, including discussions of grammar. I will sometimes, though not always, let you know about these quizzes in advance. If you do the assigned reading before coming to class and pay attention during our discussions, you should have no problem doing well on these, since they provide an easy way for you to demonstrate your learning. Given the nature of these quizzes, no make-ups will be given.

4. Attendance at a Reading or Literary Event (50 points)

At some point during the semester, I would like you to attend a reading or literary event, so that you can hear an author or literary/cultural critic in person, have the chance to ask this person questions, and participate in the broader conversation about books and ideas that extends beyond our classroom. After you attend this event, I would like you to write 600-900 words (approximately 2-3 pages) about your experience, the reading or event itself, the ideas discussed, and the manner in which they were addressed and post your response on the appropriate "Discussion Forum" section of our Moodle site. Links to several calendars of literary events may be found on the site as well.

5. Papers (600 points)

To help you develop your skills as a writer, in this course you will write four essays of approximately 1,500 words each (4-5 pages) in two stages: a draft and a revision.

The **draft** should be a full-length, totally conceived, mechanically clean essay. It should have a main idea (a conceptual framework), develop that main idea with concrete examples, and satisfy requirements of focus, organization, and style.

The **revision**, due one week after the draft, should be a substantial rewriting of the draft based on class discussion of essays as well as our comments and advice. When you turn in your revision, always turn in your draft with it.

Grades: Because the emphasis in this course is on critical comments, drafts will not receive letter grades. Instead, we will try in our written comments to give you a sense of the relative success of your essay in relation to the assignment. Each revision will be worth 150 points, and specific assignments will be given out in class.

Late papers: Papers are due at the beginning of class on the dates indicated on the schedule. You may submit part or all of one paper late (that is, a late draft, a late revision, or both), but this policy does not apply to papers that are scheduled to be workshopped (see below). Late papers may be turned in no later than one week after they are due. Late papers submitted after more than one week, as well as additional late papers, will have their grades reduced by ten percent for every class day they are late. I cannot accept "computer problems" as an excuse for late papers. Please back-up your files and avoid waiting until the last minute to print your papers.

Submissions: Papers may not be submitted by email. You must bring a hard copy of your paper to class with you. I do, however, encourage you to print your papers on the reverse sides of previously used, recycled paper. Please keep a copy of each paper you write in case your original is somehow lost or destroyed.

Format: All papers must be typed, proofread, and spellchecked. The text should be double-spaced with one-inch margins and set in 12 point Times Roman. Your pages should be numbered in the upper right-hand corner and stapled in the upper left-hand corner. Your name, the course number, my name, and the date should appear at the top left of the first page, and your title should be centered on the next line. Do not include a separate title page.

Grading criteria: We will grade your papers according to the following criteria, recognizing that not all of these criteria apply equally to the different kinds of essays you will be writing:

1. **Content:** Did you follow the assignment instructions? Have you read and understood the course material? Is your analysis insightful?
2. **Coherence and clarity:** Is your paper focused and well organized? Do you clearly state your purpose, explain how you will fulfill that purpose, and devote your paper to doing so? Do you support your claims with evidence and address opposing arguments?
3. **Format, proof-reading, and documentation:** Did you follow the formatting guidelines? Is your paper free of errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling? Do you credit the source of borrowed ideas and statements appropriately?

The Center for Writing: The U of M Center for Writing <<http://writing.umn.edu/>> offers free, individualized writing instruction, both face-to-face and online.

6. Workshops and Peer Editing Groups (50 points)

An essential part of this course will be the workshops and peer-editing groups through which you will receive valuable feedback about your writing. At the beginning of the course, I will assign you to one of five peer-editing groups. The process will work as follows:

On the day a draft is due, you should bring in five copies of your draft. Four copies will be distributed to the other members of your peer-editing group, along with worksheets that each group member must complete for each paper. The fifth copy will be given to the instructor.

At the next class meeting, group members will share their comments with the authors of the drafts. The authors will then receive all the worksheets for their papers, as well as marked-up copies of their papers from each group member, to consult when preparing their revisions.

On the day the revision is due, you should return the worksheets and marked-up papers with your draft and revision for grading.

In addition, each time a draft is due I will ask a few students to post their papers on our Moodle site, so that the entire class can provide them with feedback. As the course progresses, we may move some or all of these activities to the web, based on student interest and web site functionality.

Note: Missing a class in which we are scheduled to workshop your paper, or failing to submit a paper that is scheduled to be workshopped, is a serious breach of the sense of respect needed in all workshop classes. It will, therefore, result in a lowering of your final grade.

7. Final Portfolio

At the end of the course I will ask you to submit a final portfolio of all your work from this course, so I can make as informed a judgment as possible about your progress as a writer. Save all of your work: freewriting, prewriting, drafts, revisions, worksheets, quizzes, and any other assignments I may give you. There is no midterm or final examination in this course.

Contact Me

How can you contact me to help you learn?

The best way to contact me is immediately after class; I would be happy to meet with you briefly to answer a question or elaborate on a point made in class. To contact me at other times, feel free to call me at my office, send me email, or stop by during my office hours. If my office hours are inconvenient for you, please let me know, and we can arrange to meet at another time. Even if you do not have a specific question, I encourage you to stop by my office at some point during the semester, so that I can get to know you better as a person and so that we can talk in more detail about the subjects that interest you. The main reason I am here is to help you learn and grow, so please take advantage of this opportunity and come see me. **My contact information appears at the top of this syllabus.**

Course Schedule

How is this course structured to develop your knowledge, understanding, and abilities throughout the semester?

This schedule is subject to change, so if you miss a class you should check with a classmate for the most current information. Lecture notes, handouts, and additional readings will be available on our web site. (NR = Norton Reader, WW = Writing Well)

W 1/21 **Welcome**

1. Interpreting Personal Experience

M 1/26 **The Rhetorical Situation**

Read: Abraham Lincoln, Second Inaugural Address (NR 537-39)
 John F. Kennedy, Inaugural Address (NR 539-42)
 Ashley Parker, "What Would Obama Say?" (Moodle)
 PAPER #1 ASSIGNED

W 1/28 **Reading and Writing**

Read: "Introduction: Reading and Writing with *The Norton Reader*" (NR xvi-l)
 Frederick Douglass, "Learning to Read" (NR 228-232)
 Ben Franklin, "Learning to Write" (NR 233-36)
 John Holt, "How Teachers Make Children Hate Reading" (237-45)
 Eudora Welty, "One Writer's Beginnings" (NR 625-31)
 Michiko Kakutani, "From Books, a New President Found His Voice" (Moodle)
 READING RESPONSE #1 DUE

M 2/2 **How and Why We Write**

Read: Mark Tredinnick, prologue, "Stepping Out" and chapter 1, "Lore" (WW 1-42)
 George Orwell, "Politics and the English Language" (NR 317-27)
 DRAFT OF PAPER #1 DUE

- W 2/4 **Workshop / Sentencing, Part I**
Read: Mark Tredinnick, first half of chapter 2, "Sentencing" (WW 43-74)
WORKSHOPPED PAPERS DUE
- M 2/9 **Sentencing, Part II**
Read: Mark Tredinnick, second half of chapter 2, "Sentencing" (WW 75-96)
Lewis Thomas, "Notes on Punctuation" (NR 308-10)
DRAFT OF PAPER #1 RETURNED
- W 2/11 **Language and Culture / On Structure**
Read: Mark Tredinnick, chapter 6, "Shapely Thoughts" (WW 196-228)
Gloria Naylor, "Mommy, What Does 'Nigger' Mean?" (NR 279-81)
Maxine Hong Kingston, "Tongue-Tied" (NR 282-86)
READING RESPONSE #2 DUE

2. Making an Argument

- M 2/16 **What Is and Isn't an Argument: Essays on College Education**
Read: William Zinsser, "College Pressures" (NR 245-51)
Caroline Bird, "College Is a Waste of Time and Money" (NR 251-59)
Brent Staples, "Why Colleges Shower Their Students with A's" (NR 260-61)
David Foster Wallace, "2005 Commencement Address at Kenyon College" (Moodle)
REVISION OF PAPER #1 DUE / PAPER #2 ASSIGNED
- W 2/18 **Two Issues to Argue About: Animal Rights and Abortions**
Read: Tom Regan, "The Case for Animal Rights" (NR 403-13)
Michael Pollan, "An Animal's Place" (NR 414-29)
Mary Gordon, "A Moral Choice" (NR 437-43)
Sallie Tisdale, "We Do Abortions Here: A Nurse's Story" (NR 444-450)
READING RESPONSE #3 DUE
- M 2/23 **Style in Argument: Two Essays About Guns**
Read: Debra Dickerson, "Who Shot Johnny?" (NR 224-27)
Molly Ivins, "Get a Knife, Get a Dog, but Get Rid of Guns" (NR 198-99)
DRAFT OF PAPER #2 DUE / REVISION OF PAPER #1 RETURNED
- W 2/25 **Workshop**
WORKSHOPPED PAPERS DUE
- M 3/2 **Grace: On Style, Economy, and Poise**
Read: Mark Tredinnick, chapter 3, "Grace" (WW 97-133)
DRAFT OF PAPER #2 RETURNED
- W 3/4 **Arguing about Biology**
Read: Edward O. Wilson, "Intelligent Evolution" (NR 590-600)
David Baltimore, "Limiting Science: A Biologist's Perspective" (NR 601-610)
READING RESPONSE #4 DUE

3. Analyzing Human Nature

- M 3/9 **Men and Women**
Read: Scott Russell Sanders, "Looking at Women" (NR 118-28)
Anna Quindlen, "Between the Sexes, a Great Divide" (NR 128-30)
REVISION OF PAPER #2 DUE / PAPER #3 ASSIGNED

- W 3/11 **Gender and Sexuality**
 Read: Lauren Slater, "Love" (NR 131-41)
 E. S. Maduro, "Excuse Me While I Explode" (NR 142-49)
 Amy Cunningham, "Why Women Smile" (NR 149-54)
 Andrew Sullivan, "What Is a Homosexual?" (155-59)
 READING RESPONSE #5 DUE
- M 3/16 **Spring Break**
- W 3/18 **Spring Break**
- M 3/23 **Gender in School**
 Read: David Brooks, "The Gender Gap at School" (NR 262-63)
 Jennifer Britz, "The Dean's Daughter Gets Thin Envelope" (NR 264-66)
 Adrienne Rich, "Taking Women Students Seriously" (NR 272-78)
 Mary Wollstonecraft, from *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (NR 332-333)
 DRAFT OF PAPER #3 DUE / REVISION OF PAPER #2 RETURNED
- W 3/25 **Workshop**
 WORKSHOPPED PAPERS DUE
- M 3/30 **Poetics: On Creative Writing**
 Read: Mark Tredinnick, chapter 4, "Poetics" (WW 134-82)
 DRAFT OF PAPER #3 RETURNED
- W 4/1 **Death and Human Nature**
 Read: Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, "On the Fear of Death" (NR 160-66)
 Mary Roach, "How to Know If You're Dead" (NR 166-79)
 Jessica Mitford, "Behind the Formaldehyde Curtain" (NR 186-92)
 Virginia Woolf, "The Death of the Moth" (NR 697-99)
 READING RESPONSE #6 DUE

4. Understanding Place

- M 4/6 **Imagining Place**
 Read: Andrea Barrett, "A Hole in the Wall" (NR 3-11)
 E. B. White, "Once More to the Lake" (NR 53-58)
 REVISION OF PAPER #3 DUE / PAPER #4 ASSIGNED
- W 4/8 **The Context for Place: Population and Consumption**
 Read: D. Guterson, "Enclosed. Encyclopedic. Endured: The Mall of America" (NR 105-117)
 Bill McKibben, "The Case for Single-Child Families" (NR 212-21)
 READING RESPONSE #7 DUE
- M 4/13 **The Context for Place: The Lessons of Ecology**
 Read: Aldo Leopold, "Marshland Elegy" (NR 377-81)
 Aldo Leopold, "The Land Ethic" (NR 430-36)
 REVISION OF PAPER #3 RETURNED
- W 4/15 **Reading Natural Spaces**
 Read: Rachel Carson, "Tides"
 John Muir, "A Wind-Storm in the Forests"
 Edward Abbey, "The Serpents of Paradise"
 READING RESPONSE #8 DUE

- M 4/20 **Becoming Native to a Place**
Read: Chief Seattle, "Letter to President Pierce, 1855" (NR 364-65)
N. Scott Momaday, "The Way to Rainy Mountain" (NR 88-94)
Terry Tempest Williams, "The Clan of One-Breasted Women" (NR 381-88)
DRAFT OF PAPER #4 DUE
- W 4/22 **Workshop**
WORKSHOPPED PAPERS DUE
- M 4/27 **Illustrating Place**
Read: Al Gore, "The Climate Emergency" (NR 365-77)
DRAFT OF PAPER #4 RETURNED
- W 4/29 **Learning to See**
Read: Annie Dillard, from *An American Childhood* (NR 70-75)
Annie Dillard, "Sight into Insight" (NR 699-709)
Henry David Thoreau, "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For" (NR 688-96)
- M 5/4 **Attitude**
Read: Mark Tredinnick, chapter 5, "Attitude" and epilogue (WW 83-95, 229-30)
REVISION OF PAPER #4 DUE
- W 5/6 **Last class**