

“Real Life Writing” Semester Syllabus

This syllabus for English 110 will be used next semester (with some modifications—mainly date changes) using the theme of Real Life Writing as the connector for the semester. This will likely be the students’ first composition class in college, and I want to introduce writing in the academy in helpful and gradual ways. Thus, using the theme of real life writing will help the students ease into academic writing. Murray advocates using the students’ writing as the text, and I will use that idea in a broader sense of using the students’ knowledge—and writing—as the foundation from which the course grows. I envision my class will be comprised of a mixture of traditional and non-traditional students, so some activities will be easier for young students (social/personal website job description) while working students may have an easier entry into the course through the professional writing. One of my main goals is to give students the tools to excel in writing, while enjoying it.

We will write for all discourse communities, beginning with the social/personal, as it is a very familiar method for any student—even though some of the other students may not initially recognize it. We will do some basic research on a job/internship/graduate school and the students will write a 200-word social networking site biography focused on describing their (future) job. We will then write for the professional world, as the specific rules and conventions will help them learn new methods with controlled direction. This unit will consist of business letter, résumé, and exploratory interview writing. The exploratory interview will be a mix of social and professional writing, and will stretch the students to interact with the larger world, which I think is a good beginning for activist/service learning (Cushman). This will then help them to move into academic writing, knowing they have mastered the basics of writing for two communities. I want to scaffold on their knowledge of writing and also of their opinion toward writing and their feelings of “being writers.” Additionally, I feel that giving the students practical documents that they can actually use once they leave my classroom will be one of the most valuable things I do (I consider this my feminist activism—practical methods of helping students excel).

Once students have had success in two methods, it will be easier to give them tools to excel in academic writing. We will spend a large portion of the class on academic writing, but used in non-academic ways, such as an extended unit on advertising analysis. In this unit, we will learn description/narration techniques, in addition to compare/contrast and analysis. Also in the academic writing unit, we will learn the conventions of timed writings, which will serve them well both in the academy and in the workplace. I will use many examples of how they will come into contact with timed writings, culminating in a midterm that will mirror the Exit Exam, giving them the tools (and confidence) to pass it. Finally, in the last unit we will write persuasively for a civic audience (a “This I Believe” essay), combining another method of writing with the final discourse community.

The class will consist of a mix of activities—lectures, discussions on readings and other topics, freewrites, pop quizzes, group work, peer/group editing, student-instructor conferences, field trips. I hope to give opportunities to all students to participate, acknowledging that some students may have trouble with large-group participation but may excel through other means (although Romano shows that not all “participation” is equally affirming, thus keying me to be alert and helpful in guiding groups and class discussion).

I feel that class discussion, group work, peer editing, and student-instructor conferences are the most important aspects of an effective composition class, especially from a feminist perspective. I am informed by Rich and Flynn’s thesis of women’s composing and thinking methodologies as different than men’s, so conferences offer an opportunity to tailor instruction and interactions to students’ needs. Hearing students’ perspectives and insights on readings gives students ownership of the class, and the other methods mentioned allow for quieter students to participate. Conferences with students bring egalitarian methods to the classroom, as students can direct the discussion on their papers, and it can

be an equal back-and-forth interaction. Some feminist critics say that conferences are hierarchical, but as a feminist and from my past tutoring experience, I think that collaborative conferences are the most equal interactions instructor and student can have (Ashton-Jones; Sommers).

Another major goal for the course is for students to see writing as a process. I will encourage them in this outlook by rewarding them with points for peer editing, pre-writing, conferences, and drafts. Murray recognizes that respecting students for their quest for truth and not for their product helps students experience the process for themselves (5). Multiple revisions and drafts are also feminist-advocated methods of allowing writers discover the truth at different stages (Sommers; Rich; Mackie). In the ad analysis, for example, we will write the paper in several steps/parts. A focus will be on the idea that writing improves by writing and revising and reading good models.

Week One: Tuesday

MATERIALS NEEDED: small and large index cards, quiz on group work (oral), quiz on syllabus

- Introductions—have class make semicircle, write on small cards for me to keep, have all students share from cards, make name place cards
- Give students quiz on how much they like/dislike group work. Have them line up in the room based on their score and ask several students their experiences with group work. Number off so there are five groups. Tell them these will be their groups for the semester, so they should get to know the others in their group.
- Explain there will be a short quiz on the syllabus and the students’ reading comprehension. Have students individually read over syllabus and hand out quiz. After individually answering questions, have students break into their groups and reanswer all the questions. Go over answers to quiz (self-grade). Discuss usefulness or not of group work. What is gained in group? Explain class participation grades will be based on individual participation and also on group work. Collect both quizzes.
- Go over syllabus as group. Highlight important aspects. Ask students for questions. After reading through syllabus, have students work in groups to add personal/group objectives to the (instructor’s) course objectives. As a class, discuss what objectives should be added. Instruct students to add the class and their individual objectives to the syllabus.
- Discuss expectations for first day of class, for first days of college. What is unexpected? What do they hope to get out of the course? (If not brought up by students, bring up what they expected their instructor to be like. Discuss why you are dressed ‘untraditionally’ and how it relates to the course—“Because I wanted to provide something unexpected and hope that you remember my outfit is sort of like the course. You all have to be here, but you all don’t necessarily want to be here. So I’m going to try my hardest to make it unexpected and fun and interesting, and I expect you to put forth the same effort. Also, I wore this because we are going to be reading and writing about diverse topics, ideas, and people. Discuss how diversity of ideas and backgrounds will be appreciated in this course.”

HOMEWORK: Have students write out how they plan to achieve their personal objectives and several of the class objectives. Have students discuss why it is important (or not) to have personal objectives for a course.

RATIONALE: Students need to understand and “own” the syllabus, so that they will be invested in projects, process, and participation (Ashton-Jones; Mackie; Murray). The purpose of the first quiz is to gauge where students are in relation to openness to group work, pairing them with others unlike themselves, to make group dynamics as good as possible. Also, assigning them to stay in the same groups for the whole semester gives them continuity and comfort, so they know what to expect and can

get to know several other students on a deeper level than the entire class. The second quiz shows the students the usefulness of group work, as it should show that they get more of the answers correct by collaboration. Group work collaboration will be a focus in this course, as it aligns with feminist teaching theory (Ashton-Jones 8-9). Also, I wanted the students to have a memorable picture of me, as the instructor. I feel that wearing an untraditional outfit (Indian, Pakistani, or Pilipino) surprises students and can provide an excellent “real life” picture of appreciating diversity of ideas and people.

Week One: Thursday

MATERIALS NEEDED: Assignment sheet for Diagnostic Essay.

- Discuss what students wrote on how they plan to achieve personal objectives.
- Give a short lecture on a liberal arts education. Have class discuss why they have to take gen-ed courses. Ask students how this changes the way they think about this course and other courses they are taking.
- Use this lecture as segue to discuss theme of the course—“Real Life Writing.” Introduce idea of discourse communities and how liberal arts education prepares students to participate in all discourse communities. In their groups, have students look at syllabus and assignment descriptions and determine which assignment prepares them for which discourse community. Discuss.
- Plagiarism presentation.
- Hand out Diagnostic Essay assignment.

COLLECT: Students’ personal plans/objective discussion.

HOMEWORK: 1. Diagnostic Essay.

2. Read pages 9-12 in the *Bedford Reader* (BR) and pages 1-14 in *Quick Access* (QA) Then students should use personal critical reading skills to read Annie Dillard’s “The Chase,” pages 104-107, author intro at the top of the page and the questions on pages 107-109, and read Maya Angelou’s “Champion of the World,” pages 93-96 and questions, pages 96-97. You don’t have to answer the questions, but pick one or two that you are interested in talking about.

RATIONALE: Students are often annoyed and uninterested in being in “gen-ed” courses. This results from a lack of understanding the purpose of a liberal arts education. Tim Bostic brought to my attention the fact that most students do not understand the concept, so I want to introduce it early, so they can perhaps see all courses, not only mine, in a new light. Also, this allows us to discuss the course theme and give the students practical applications of the knowledge they will be gaining. If students understand the benefits, they will be more invested in the course. Although I do not think this syllabus would have many potential places for plagiarism, the University wants us to present on it, and I think the introductory composition class is a good place to introduce ideas/definitions/methods of avoiding plagiarism. In other classes at the freshman level, students may have more opportunities for plagiarism, so I would like to help them understand the seriousness of it and the consequences. Not only am I doing them a favor, but also their other instructors (if I am successful in conveying the information in a way that will encourage them to not plagiarize in the future!)

Week Two: Tuesday

MATERIALS NEEDED: Fliers from CC, DS.

- Give pop quiz on plagiarism, Dillard’s “The Chase” and Angelou’s “Champion of the World.”
- Introduce several Student Services: Printing, Counseling Center, and Disability Services.

- Discuss contacting instructor—proper protocol for email, availability for office hours, extra conferences. Assign students to email you by next class using proper methodology for professional email protocol re: difficulties they foresee in the class, assignments most/least excited about.
- Discuss critical reading skills and break students into groups to discuss which essay they enjoyed more and why.
- Mini-lecture on reading tips.

COLLECT: Diagnostic Essay.

HOMEWORK: Email.

RATIONALE: The Diagnostic Essay will be a 2-page essay on the students’ experiences with writing. This serves several purposes: it starts students writing from the beginning of the semester, setting a tone for the course; it shows me what problems students are having in the writing process (and product) from the beginning, allowing me to tailor lessons to the class’ unique make-up; it gives students something to refer back to at the end of the semester, to see how they have changed/progressed (Mackie; Murray; Sommers on process, revision, understanding students’ unique strengths and weaknesses).

For students to excel in university, they need critical reading and thinking skills. In a liberal arts conception, critical thinking and reading skills are two of the most important skills. I want to introduce these skills early, also giving them methodologies to learn these, such as tips on reading. We will continue to work on these skills throughout the semester, deepening the students’ abilities.

Week Two: Thursday

MATERIALS NEEDED: RLW Assignment sheet, doc/PP with links for class to look at.

- Host WTS tutor.
- Go over Real Life Writing Assignment, part one, research and Internet biography write-up.
- Look at some Internet bios (MySpace, Facebook, professional networking sites) and have students analyze what is being said.
- Second half of class, take field trip to Library. Have librarian give tour, focusing mostly on the web site and how to find sources.

HOMEWORK: 1. RLW #1—research of actual job/internship/graduate school print-out, Internet biography write-up of job/internship in 200 words, research article attached.

2. Notes/draft of résumé.

RATIONALE: Although I am not requiring any more than one research article or book for background for their Internet social networking site job biography, I think students should be introduced to campus services early in their career. Discovering the library is not a scary place is more than enough of a pedagogical rationale, I think! Reviewing examples of networking sites and how to write for the social audience will give students models for their own writing.

Week Three: Tuesday

- Visit from Career Management Center—workshop on résumé writing. Have students break into groups to discuss how to make their experiences applicable to jobs/internships/graduate school. (Break into groups based on interests/experience, not regular groups.)
- Mini-lesson on business letter writing.
- Brief discussion on how to choose someone for exploratory interview.

COLLECT: RLW #1.

HOMEWORK: RLW #2—Résumé and business letter addressed to hiring director or financial aid director.

RATIONALE: See Week Two: Thursday on campus services. Also, breaking into groups helps students come up with more creative ideas on how to make their experiences memorable and applicable. Also, business letter writing is rather formulaic, so a lecture is the best method to teach the basic conventions. However, I will have examples for the students to look at, in addition to looking more extensively at résumé examples, explaining to students that effective writers borrow/copy effective methods or wording from others. Résumé writing is certainly a place where I believe borrowing is completely allowed. I will discuss the different conventions and that some writing works off of borrowing material or format, etc., while other types of writing does not.

Week Three: Thursday

MATERIALS NEEDED: Grammar Presentation Assignment Sheet.

- Review Grammar Presentation Assignment.
- Mini-lecture on exploratory interview, following by discussion of what questions to ask.
- Mini-lecture on general interview etiquette.
- Allow time to do mini-conversations with students on finding sources for interview, while students sign up for grammar presentation times/topics (five groups/five topics).

COLLECT: Résumé and business letter.

HOMEWORK: Have students work on interview (rough draft/notes due by time of conference).

RATIONALE: Most students will not have done exploratory/informational interviews before, so spending a chunk of time on this is important for them to be comfortable and prepared to do these interviews. As a class we will come up with questions all members of the class can use (I will have some to start the discussion). Also, this is a time when I can connect them back to the “real world” by teaching interview etiquette, giving them tools to succeed out of the classroom or post-graduation.

Week Four: Tuesday

- Conferences—conference on rough draft of interview the students bring and the drafts of their resume and business letters. Also discuss grammar presentations. Have students bring two questions about their current work, grammar presentation, or class or writing in general.

RATIONALE: Conferences are required. However, I feel that conferences allow good opportunity for student and instructor to focus more in-depth on that student, both on their academic work and their personal life, adjustment to college, how they feel they are doing in the class, etc., affirming them as people (Ashton-Jones; Mackie; Rich; Sommers). Having the students come with questions puts them in control of the conference and they are empowered to think critically about their work or their progress in the class (Goldstein). Also, I can tailor my responses and feedback to students based on their preferences, how comfortable they feel talking to me one-on-one, and hearing what I am perhaps failing to communicate effectively. Student feedback enables me to become a better instructor.

Week Four: Thursday

- Conferences.

RATIONALE: See Week Four: Tuesday

Week Five: Tuesday

MATERIALS NEEDED: Printed versions of 2-3 essays, including Fatemi Mernissi’s “Size 6: Western Women’s Harem” (BR, 252-257) and Dave Barry’s “Batting Clean-Up and Striking Out” (239-241)

- Thesis statement mini-lecture.
- Have students break into groups and find theses in several essays handed out in class.
- Have students break into the grammar presentation groups to work on their presentations—deciding division of labor and how much outside group work the group members will do.

HOMEWORK: Real Life Writing interview.

RATIONALE: Thesis statements are a key aspect of academic writing, no matter the discipline. Most students likely have a basic understanding of thesis statements, but I will scaffold off of their high school (or work experience) knowledge of thesis statements to build more knowledge. The group work will allow me to see if they understood the lecture, and allow them to learn from one another. Also, the two essays are extremely different, showing students how to find thesis statements in diverse writing types. I think I will look to find a more scientific article to include in this analysis to help those going into more scientific fields see the importance of thesis statements in their own genres.

Week Five: Thursday

MATERIALS NEEDED: Exit Exam prompts. Exit Exam examples and explanations of why/why not pass.

- Pop quiz on thesis statement lecture.
- Lecture on timed writings, five-paragraph essay, the Exit Exam. Tie into real world writing with examples of numerous professions that daily must write under time restraints.
- Break into groups and have students practice thesis writing for EE prompts. Share with class, discuss.
- Have students pick two general topics from list for midterm.

COLLECT: RLW #3—interview.

HOMEWORK: Read over EE handouts, do research for midterm topics.

RATIONALE: I do not think I have mentioned elsewhere why I am sometimes giving pop quizzes. From my limited teaching experience, if students are not told they will be held accountable for the knowledge, they more often than not tune out. All my pop quizzes are not actually pop quizzes, but I warn the students the class before or email them to be prepared for a quiz. This I think is fairer than a true pop quiz, because it gives the students opportunity to be fully prepared.

Students will encounter timed writings in all areas of their academic and post-academic life. Teaching the students methods and conventions early will help them in other courses and after graduation. I will give examples of other classes and professional experiences where timed writings will be necessary. I will tailor these examples to the students’ interests and majors, which I will know, because of the prior assignments. I want my examples to connect to students’ individual goals and lives, thus making the lesson more memorable and applicable. On group work, see above rationales.

Week Six: Tuesday

MATERIALS NEEDED: Midterm prompt packets for each student. Computer lab reserved for midterm.

- Midterm.

RATIONALE: The midterm will, in a sense, “test” how much about timed writings and thesis writing the students have learned. I will explain before the exam the Exit Exam critique the essay will be graded on.

Students will know what to expect because of this and all should be able to pass the exam, at least on the thesis and support elements.

Week Six: Thursday

- Mini-lecture/discussion on common mistakes from their midterms.
- Mini-lecture on ekphrastic writing.
- Field-trip for rest of class to gallery by bookstore for ekphrastic writing.

HOMEWORK: Revise some of your ekphrastic writing to share for next class period. Read Emily Dickinson’s poem “‘Hope’ is the thing with feathers” on page 510, BR.

RATIONALE: This is an excellent opportunity to discuss common mistakes in student writing, especially in a timed setting, so that students can be aware of their own mistakes and understand the connections between grammatical mistakes and content (Micciche).

Ekphrastic writing is writing using art as a springboard. This is an activity that students can enjoy and write freely, without any constraints, as a “reward” of sorts after the very structured midterm. I have found that most individuals that I have taught ekphrastic writing to have enjoyed it. Also, this field trip introduces the students to another aspect of campus life—the campus gallery. Students can write about any art they want to, in any method—poetry, short story, non-fiction, giving them opportunities to write in ways they don’t have much chance to do in the college classroom.

Week Seven: Tuesday

- Have class share ekphrastic writings.
- Grammar Presentations.

COLLECT: Ekphrastic writing and grammar presentation handouts.

RATIONALE: I think we all learn a rule, skill, etc., better when we have to teach it. Thus, I will encourage students to pick a grammar topic that they think they have problems with, giving them a chance to really learn it. Also, students will have to give presentations in other classes, so a low-stakes introduction to presentations will enable students to get used to the idea of speaking in front of others. Also, I will require students to make handouts for their classmates, in the hopes that the classmates will have a cache of useful grammar tips and help, in a format perhaps more accessible than Quick Access or another grammar handbook. Also, this is a time when students can be creative in their presentations, using props, videos, music, or candy to encourage participation from their classmates, teaching them the lesson of how difficult it is to engage a class, hopefully helping them understand their instructors better. The grammar presentation assignment will break the class into five groups on five common grammatical problems and I will, in the presentation on the common mistakes in timed writings, try to teach the grammar in the rhetorical context, linking grammar to “cultural attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions” (Micciche 732). The students will be encouraged to do the same in their presentations. I would have to admit suspicion of completely abandoning teaching “school grammar” like Hartwell advocates; however, I do take his criticisms seriously. Thus, we will focus on major grammatical problems that affect rhetorical understanding.

Week Seven: Thursday

- Grammar Presentations.
- Have class fill out survey/critique of grammar presentations—whose was most memorable, which worksheet most helpful, etc. (Have names and presentation topics on board for them to refer to.)

COLLECT: Survey/critiques and grammar presentation handouts.

HOMEWORK: Read and write a response how the authors use description in their essays, “Arm Wrestling with My Father” (Brad Manning) (BR, 146-153) and “Shooting Dad” (Sarah Vowell) (BR, 154-161).

RATIONALE: See Week Seven: Tuesday. Additionally, I will have the students fill out surveys so that I can see what about the grammar presentations were helpful and what were not, to improve the assignment in the future. Also, I can give positive feedback to the students whose presentations were memorable, encouraging them. I will use the student write-ups, which will include a section to “grade”/comment upon the work done by their group members, to maintain accountability within the group (to prevent problems noted by Leverenz).

Week Eight: Tuesday

MATERIALS NEEDED: Ad Analysis Assignment Sheet.

- Pop quiz on readings.
- Mini-lecture on description and narration techniques, concentrating on “meaningful detail.”
- Break into groups and discuss the essays based on techniques of description and narration.
- Review assignment sheet.

COLLECT: Reading responses.

HOMEWORK: Have students choose what ads to analyze and write up description/narrations of the ads chosen.

RATIONALE: Looking at memorable writing teaches the students more about description and narration than simply lecturing does. This is a place where example is used to its fullest extent. I will also introduce the Ad Analysis assignment, and connect the uses of narration and description in the ad analysis. I will have the students begin the assignment with the relatively simple task of describing and narrating the ads. We will use these to scaffold the compare/contrast and analysis aspects of the assignment.

Week Eight: Thursday

- Mini-lecture on ethos, pathos, logos.
- Watch most of PBS Frontline documentary: “The Persuaders” on the advertising industry.

HOMEWORK: Read and write a response taking a side for one of the essays on the topic of The Media and the Self: Brian Williams’ “But Enough About You...” (BR, 539-541) and Andie Wurster’s “Won’t You Be My Friendster?” (BR, 543-545)

RATIONALE: Ethos, pathos, logos are key concepts to analysis. The mini-lecture is supplemented by the excellent documentary on the advertising industry. Several of the individuals in the documentary use the terms, connecting very philosophy/academic terms to the real world. Additionally, the documentary synthesizes the importance of analysis in ways that I never could, mostly by use of example. The documentary is extremely engaging, thus more than deserving a large portion of a class period.

Week Nine: SPRING BREAK—NO CLASS

Week Ten: Tuesday

- Finish watching “The Persuaders.”
- Discuss how knowing more about the ad industry enables us to critique advertizing.
- Discuss the two essays and any other aspects of the documentary students want to discuss.
- Have the students break into two groups based on which essay they agree with. Have the two groups come up with plans to persuade their classmates and then have the class try to persuade the opposing side.

- Have students come up with rubric for the ad analysis.

COLLECT: Reading response.

HOMEWORK: Read Jonah Goldberg’s “They Think They Get It,” posted on BB. Respond in writing to it, disagreeing or agreeing.

RATIONALE: The students should have an opportunity to apply what they learned in the documentary to beliefs they themselves have. They will learn how difficult it is to synthesize an argument and convince others of that argument. Additionally, to encourage class ownership, I will list major categories on the board and have the students decide point amounts, following one methodology advocated by Anson and Dannels for designing rubrics.

Week Ten: Thursday

- Discuss the Goldberg essay. Have students disagree or agree with it using specific examples. Have class come to consensus if his thesis is correct or not.
- Mini-lesson on other aspects of analyzing a visual or video, such as color, placement, texture, demographics, gender/sex/race/ethnicity stereotypes.
- Analyze several ads as a class, concentrating on one ad for elements of ethos, logos, pathos (as refresher).
- Watch Dove ads that subvert/critique popular idea of beauty and a Media That Matters video about splicing words together to create a new message. Discuss, especially on the aspect that in Dove’s “subversive” ads, the company is still selling something.

COLLECT: Reading response.

RATIONALE: Students need to understand the other aspects that go into making an effective ad. Also, the videos we will watch will provide fertile ground to discuss the complexity of advertising and the power of manipulation—of words, of images. I will make sure to focus a portion of the mini-lesson on gender, race, sexual orientation, as I have seen how students are unaware of these extremely important aspects to being an engaged and thoughtful critic of the media and advertising.

Week Eleven: Tuesday

MATERIALS NEEDED: Visual Analysis Worksheet.

- Visual Analysis Worksheet workshop. Break students into small groups, based on the subject matter of the ads they are analyzing. Have students work together to analyze their ads, filling in a worksheet that will help them write their paper.
- Circulate, making sure students understand the questions, helping them on difficult aspects of analysis.
- Remind students that analysis needs to include aspects of ethos, logos, pathos, compare/contrast and analysis.

HOMEWORK: 2 copies of rough draft of ad analysis for peer editing workshop.

RATIONALE: A workshop on visual analysis greatly helps the students break down the complicated advertisements into workable chunks. Students can help one another, as some of them will likely be analyzing the same or similar ads. (I will provide a list of paired ads on Blackboard. Those who choose to do other ads must get approval from me from the beginning of the assignment.)

Week Eleven: Thursday

MATERIALS NEEDED: Peer editing handouts.

- Peer editing workshop. Mini-lecture on do’s and don’ts of peer editing.

- Pair off students based on strengths and weaknesses of students, making it seem random.

HOMEWORK: Rough draft for me.

RATIONALE: In the past, I had the rough draft turned into me at the same time the students peer-edited. I realized that the students weren't seeing immediate benefit for peer editing, so I will require the students to turn in a rough draft to me, with the peer-edited versions stapled to the back, for me to see what changes they made based off of recommendations of their peers. I will give a mini-lecture on peer editing, because I want the students to make collaborative remarks and written comments (Mangelsdorf and Schlumberger.) Additionally, Mangelsdorf and Schlumberger stress the importance of establishing “an effective context” for peer reviewing. I will also model a mini example of how to do a peer review, using my own work, or the work from the textbook. I will also make sure to circulate to all the groups to ensure that the reader-and-author discussion is a give-and-take, with hopes of preventing harmful or useless sessions (Leverenz).

Week Twelve: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday

- Conferences.

RATIONALE: See Week Four: Tuesday. Conferences are extremely important for such a large assignment as this. I can help students make sure they have a solid thesis that is supported by evidence. Also, students can discuss with me their thoughts on the assignment and their frustrations.

Week Twelve: Thursday—NO CLASS

- Conferences (earlier in the week).

HOMEWORK: Final draft due Week Thirteen: Tuesday.

RATIONALE: See Week Four: Tuesday and Week Twelve: Tuesday.

Week Thirteen: Tuesday

MATERIALS NEEDED: “This I Believe” assignment sheet.

- Introduce assignment.
- Mini-lecture on audience and persuasion, building on what the class would have already discussed.
- Listen to several radio essays. Discuss in groups what the thesis is, how effective the essay is in persuading the listeners to the speaker/writer's point of view.

HOMEWORK: Listen and read several more essays chosen from a list posted on BB. Write out the thesis/belief of the essays chosen.

RATIONALE: This unit introduces in a more cohesive manner the method of persuasion. The students will have already learned many elements of this from the analysis, especially the documentary and discussion on the documentary. Listening to actual radio essays introduces the idea of writing to persuade and the civic discourse community. Students will be required to submit their essays at the end of the semester to solidify the connection between their own personal writing and the civic community.

Week Thirteen: Thursday

MATERIALS NEEDED: Credo exercise worksheet/questionnaire.

- Have students do a credo exercise in class.
- Have students break into groups and discuss the pre-writing they did. Have them brainstorm with one another ways that they can illustrate this credo.

HOMEWORK: 2 copies of 3-4 page rough draft that expands and illustrates credo.

RATIONALE: Different methods of getting at personal belief and using persuasion are necessary. Some students will benefit most from the short credo exercise, where others will need to write a long draft of narration to get to the heart of their belief and how to persuade.

Week Fourteen: Tuesday

- Peer-editing workshop. Have students look at the credo exercise and the long draft and what aspects need to be kept of each, what aspects clutter the essay.

HOMEWORK: Distill essay into 300-500 words—rough draft due next class—sent to instructor by email.

RATIONALE: Students will choose who they work with for this peer-editing workshop, because the writing is much more personal than the other assignments. I placed this assignment at the end of the semester for several reasons: persuasion is one of the more complex genres of writing and I wanted the students to be as comfortable as possible with one another and me in sharing their beliefs and trying to persuade us to their perspective on a certain credo. I will leave time at the end of the class for students to come talk to me about their difficulties in the assignment.

Week Fourteen: Thursday

- Second peer-editing workshop, in larger groups, but still keeping partners from last peer-editing workshop together.

HOMEWORK: Final draft of essay due next class.

RATIONALE: Mirroring a slow introduction to society of a debutante (small intimate party to large party), I will have students begin with personal writing and move to small groups to larger groups, in preparation for them to share the essays with the entire class and then to submit to NPR. This mirrors participation in society. Also, because of the difficulty students may have with distilling a 3-4 page essay into 300-500 words, a second peer-editing workshop will be invaluable. I will be very present during this workshop and sit in on all of the groups. Also, I will respond to their 300-500 word draft by email because of the fast deadline.

Week Fifteen: Tuesday

- “This I Believe” celebration. Have all students share essays, including instructor. If not all essays are shared, time will be reserved for Thursday.

COLLECT: Final, printed versions of essay.

HOMEWORK: Put together portfolio to bring to class Thursday. Also, write final reflective essay while putting together portfolio. (Reflective essay not due in class Thursday.)

RATIONALE: See Week Fourteen: Thursday.

Week Fifteen: Thursday

- Finish “This I Believe” presentations.
- Watch film “As We Forgive,” about personal beliefs, persuasion, analysis of complex situation in Rwanda.

HOMEWORK: 1. Print-out confirmation that essay was submitted to NPR “This I Believe” project.
2. Reflective essay on how students’ writing as changed/improved/progressed.

RATIONALE: The film “As We Forgive” is an excellent synthesis of the semester, because it was a student documentary that won the top prize in the student Emmys and portrays the horrors of post-genocide

Rwanda and how people’s beliefs enable them to move on. Additionally, one man must convince a young woman to forgive him for murdering her father, thus bringing real life applicability to the concept of persuasion and the importance of strong beliefs. Also, the film is visually/artistically well-made, and is also a reward for the students’ hard work.

The portfolios must have an introduction to them, but I will be giving back the portfolios to the students when they come to turn in the final essay. But because the essay is based on looking through and self-critiquing their writing throughout the semester, the students need to write the essay before it is actually due, since instructors cannot make the final due before the final time.

Week Sixteen: FINALS

- Have students turn in reflective essay.
- Hand back portfolios with letter to each student on what progress I see in their work.
- Have a party/brunch—students can stay as long or as short as they want.

RATIONALE: I think if I require students to write and reflect on their work throughout the semester, I should as well. This is a sign of respect to the students and how seriously I take them and their work/progress. Additionally, I think all classes should end in celebration, thus, the party. Also, our class is a microcosm of the college community that I have hopefully introduced them to, and encouraged them to stay in. Students are more likely to complete college if they are connected to the college community. I will have stressed this throughout the semester, but solidify it in the final party, showing I care about them as people, not only students.

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