

Professor: Michelle Mouton  
Email: [mmouton@cornellcollege.edu](mailto:mmouton@cornellcollege.edu)  
Phone: 895-4223  
Office: 203 South Hall  
Availability:

ENG 111: TOPICS IN LITERATURE, FILM, AND CULTURAL STUDIES  
**SUSTAINABILITY, FOOD, AND WRITING**  
South Hall 18, Term 2, 2015-16



**REQUIRED TEXTS**

*Changing Writing: A Guide with Scenarios*, by Johndan Johnson-Eilola  
*The Nuts and Bolts of College Writing*, by Michael Harvey  
*The Omnivore's Dilemma*, by Michael Pollen  
*Cannery Row*, by John Steinbeck  
Readings on Moodle or the web: when due, always bring print copies to class.  
6x9 (or extra large) lined index cards; folder

**COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES**

Food movements today are a media event. Some movements emphasize eating locally grown (or raised) foods. Others advocate for organics, or call for GMO food labelling. Bee watchers worry about the impact of declining honey bee populations on common food sources; and vegetarians, vegans and others point to inhumane (and unsustainable) practices common in raising animals for food. Fish and seafood provide good sources of Omega 3 nutrients but some sources also carry risks related to high mercury levels traceable to human industrial activities. In all food-related industries, human labor can be rewarded or exploited, sometimes to the point of engaging in modern forms of slavery. What a picture!

Contemporary food movements have their advocates and detractors. Conflicting information can make it difficult to know what position to hold and how to eat both nutritionally and responsibly. But the picture is usually more complex than any position “for” or “against” can reasonably encapsulate. Often “neither/nor” and “both/and” logics are necessary to construct an informed viewpoint. Above all, this class seeks to help students to understand the interrelated nature of all of these issues, by focusing on vital points of connection.

Moreover, using both popular and academic sources related to food, you’ll hone your skills in reading critically—or, reading with an inquisitive, well-reasoning, creative and truth-seeking mind; you’ll practice evaluating arguments, and learn how to move past soundbites and toward an understanding of academic research behind those soundbites. You’ll learn to locate credible and academic sources of information and to read those from an informed perspective, evaluating *their* arguments too.

In your *own* writing about food, you’ll aim to start investigations with an open mind, to avoid personal bias in face of conclusive evidence, to recognize that new knowledge in every discipline is *never* the final word but is continually challenged and reconstructed (and that that’s OK!), and to write persuasively for college-level readers. At the back of this syllabus are more specific writing lesson outcomes, as articulated for all of Cornell’s introductory writing (W) courses.

Class format will primarily be discussion-based and workshop-based, and work will often be collaboratively produced. Peer groups will help you to sharpen your understanding of the issues, your arguments and writing skills.

## REQUIREMENTS

**I. Daily Writing: ONE-PAGE PAPERS, BLOG ENTRIES.** Most days you’ll write a one-page paper (week one) or a blog entry (weeks 2 and 3), on an assigned topic. The purpose of these assignments is to help you develop a daily writing habit, and to deepen your engagement and learning with the topics we’ll cover. These will be graded as a collection at the end of each week, with the most important criteria being critical engagement. Use these to think issues through in a thoughtful and meaningful way, rather than writing in minimal fashion what you expect me (or a teacher) to hear. This is a pass/fail part of your grade.

**II. PARTICIPATION IN DISCUSSION and the WRITING PROCESS.** I expect universal participation each day: every person will contribute ideas and questions, and will listen carefully to others. This requires you not only to speak but to attend to whether other class participants have had a chance to contribute each day. When we have full class discussions, please raise a hand for acknowledgement before speaking so that I can encourage balance. Discussion can be especially meaningful when students talk to one another, so I will not respond personally to every comment—feel free to respond to your peers’ comments and questions. You are also expected to participate fully in the research and writing process—completing multiple drafts of your work, being open to input on drafts, and doing focused revision.

**III. POLICY PAPER: GREENING THE CAMPUS.** This collaboratively-written paper, with advice from *Changing Writing* and addressed to the Mount Vernon city council, will propose a specific plan for becoming a “bee city,” with emphasis on creating a pollinator-friendly environment. The proposal will be grounded in known scientific evidence related to the present state of

pollinators, particularly honey bees. What are the most pressing issues, and what can we do to contribute to a solution?

**IV. CONTRIBUTIONS TO CLASS WEBWORK.** In modular fashion, you'll design, and research and write content, for a website devoted to a food ingredient that you'll choose at the beginning of week 2. Research and writing topics will include—what is the history of this food? how is it pollinated and grown today, and where? what is its cultural significance, presently or in the past? what issues related to the environment are pertinent? what controversies, if any, have erupted related to this ingredient? what scholarly and popular sources are most helpful in studying this food ingredient? The purpose of this assignment is to learn to write for a variety of audiences, to do college-level research, and to read critically.

**V. CLASS MEAL.** Toward the end of the block, you'll create a recipe using this ingredient, one that includes no processed foods, and share both the recipe and the dish with the class.

## RESOURCES

Me: I welcome and encouraged you to reach out to me if you have questions, find yourself struggling academically, need individual assistance completing reading and writing assignments, or just want to get to know your professor better. The best way to reach out is to come to my office, South Hall 203, during my stated office hours. (See the top of the syllabus.) No appointment is necessary, though on busy days I might put a sign-up sheet on my door so you won't have to wait in line. Stop by to check.

I have a personal aversion to phone calls, so if you have a conflict with my office hours and cannot reschedule it, you can reach me most easily email ([mmouton@cornellcollege.edu](mailto:mmouton@cornellcollege.edu)) or text (319-560-2973) to set up another appointment. You may also leave a message for me at my office phone (319-895-4223). I will respond as soon as I am able to do so, normally within 6 hours or so.

Two caveats: I do not check email or calls after 9 PM. And I do not give feedback on drafts via email, as this can lead to too easily to misunderstandings. I am always happy to do so during individual meetings.

The Writing Studio: An invaluable resource for students at all stages of the writing process, from working to understand an assignment to polishing the final draft. They will not edit or rewrite papers for you, but will provide good sounding boards so that you can see your own work through fresh eyes. They can also help you to better understand expectations of college writing, including but not limited to good grammar. Any single session may or may not be especially helpful, but use the studio early and often, and you'll emerge a better writer than you ever thought yourself capable—in part because you'll grow to have a better understanding of why readers are important during the writing process and not only at the end. The studio takes walk-ins, or by appointment. Director: Laura Farmer, 319-895-4462.

Hours: M-Th: 8am-11-pm; F 9am-5pm; Su: 1am-11pm. (Check the website in case of changes.)

The Quantitative Reasoning Studio: A great resource for assistance in understanding the data and arguments in scientific articles you come across in your research. Takes walk-ins, or by appointment. Director: Jessica Johanningmeier, 319-895-4222.

Hours: M-Th: 8am-5 pm, 7-11 p.m.; Fri: 8am – 5pm; Sun: 3-5 p.m., 7-11 p.m.

Consulting Librarians: Jen Rouse (Humanities) and Amy Cullen (Sciences) are available to consult with you on your research. Email them ([jrouse@cornellcollege.edu](mailto:jrouse@cornellcollege.edu) or [acullen@cornellcollege.edu](mailto:acullen@cornellcollege.edu)) if you have research questions or want to set up an appointment. You can also stop by: their offices are located on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of Cole Library.

Academic Technology Studio: Brooke Bergantzel will be providing assistance on academic technologies to help us map Mount Vernon and set up academic blogs. She and her staff are available for individual consultations, and her office is in the lower level of Cole Library, near the Writing and Quantitative Thinking Studios.

Student Health and Counseling Center: College can be stressful on any number of levels. If you find yourself distracted or unmotivated, or a personal issue is undermining your academic success, take advantage of the on-campus counseling center to talk it through. This is a great resource and you don't have to be on the brink of disaster to benefit from their services. (If you do feel that you're on the brink of disaster, that's all the more reason to see them early.) You might even think of it as an "adjunct" course, only the subject is (how great is this?) YOU and you get full attention of the instructor! Ph: 319-895-4234 for appointment, open M-F 8am-4pm; 24-hour crisis intervention services (provided by Foundation 2 Crisis Center) at 319-362-2174.

## **POLICIES**

Grading: Note that grades in college are earned and not assumed. That is, you should not assume that you begin with 100 points and are "marked down" for errors, particularly in writing assignments. Instead, you *earn* credit for what is good about your critical thinking and writing, while being pointed to areas for improvement. Furthermore, your written work will be graded based on its quality and not simply based on the fact of your having completed it, or on the effort you spend on it. That said, research shows a significant long-term correlation between time spend on coursework and overall success in college, so don't be discouraged if you spend a great deal of time your homework but your grades do not *immediately* meet the goals you set for yourself. Congratulate yourself for what you do well and build on it.

Inasmuch as writing is often a social activity reliant upon teamwork, and because biggest improvement in writing happens through good habits practiced over significant amounts of time, your course grade will be based on more than the quality of your final drafts, though this, too, is important.

Your final grade will be weighted (roughly) as listed here, and will reflect the overall quality of your work in the course:

- |     |  |
|-----|--|
| 60% | Quality of written work, final drafts, for city proposal (group grade) and for web (individual grade)                                |
| 15% | Satisfactory completion and submission of written homework assignments   |
| 15% | Teamwork/Leadership Contributions (including but not limited to class discussion)  |
| 10% | Knowledge of "best practices" for improving as a college writer (to be practiced throughout the term and demonstrated on final exam) |

Technology: Laptops, e-readers, and cell phones may not be used in class unless otherwise stated. Be certain that your cell phone is off or on silent and put entirely out of sight (yours as well as mine!) at the start of each class.

Professionalism in the classroom: While class discussion may be relatively informal at times, certain behaviors are inappropriate because they suggest disrespect for participants and a lack of engagement. Examples include engaging in side conversations when someone else has the floor, speaking over others, tardiness, packing up your things before the end of class, wearing pajamas or slippers to class (OK—that's just my pet peeve, but it can be distracting), excessive yawning, nose-picking, and you can probably think of others. Put in more positive than negative terms, please be on time, be respectfully engaged, and eat meals and snacks before or after (not during) class time. (Beverages are fine).

Accessibility: I will provide accommodations for students with documented learning disabilities provided that you request them within the first three days of class and if documentation is on file with the college's disabilities services coordinator. Here is Cornell's official policy as stated in the college catalogue:

- Students who need accommodations for learning disabilities must provide documentation from a professional qualified to diagnose learning disabilities. For more information see [cornellcollege.edu/disabilities/documentation/index.shtml](http://cornellcollege.edu/disabilities/documentation/index.shtml).
- Students requesting services may schedule a meeting with the disabilities services coordinator as early as possible to discuss their needs and develop an individualized accommodation plan. Ideally, this meeting would take place well before the start of classes.
- At the beginning of each course, the student must notify the instructor within the first three days of the term of any accommodations needed for the duration of the course.

Attendance: I expect you to come to class every day and to participate constructively. Because our class format will be based on discussion and workshops, you'll learn most from being fully present and engaged. Any absence after three missed class periods (not days) will result in the automatic diminishment of your final grade by ½ letter grade. I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences, so I advise you to save these three class periods for illness, travel, co-curricular events, and other times you might really need them. Perfect attendance will work in your favor should your final grade be a borderline percentage.

Coordinating Co-Curricular Activities and Religious Observances: Although I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences, if you have a sports or other co-curricular activity scheduled that could interfere with your ability to attend class, or plan to observe a religious holiday, please notify me at the beginning of the term and provide me with a schedule of events. Afterwards, you should consult others in the class about what you may have missed. I will also meet with you before or after that class period at your request to discuss options.

Deadlines: Because getting behind on the block plan can be fatal for later assignments, I typically will not accept late papers, and I do not grant extensions except for true emergencies. If you find yourself falling behind, talk with me about it as soon as possible, and I will help you to strategize.

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism is using others' words, research, or ideas without crediting them fully and accurately, and it is a serious academic offense. Plagiarism can include writing a classmate's paper,

stealing (or buying) an essay and submitting it as your own, cutting and pasting from the internet, or mis-paraphrasing an article that you document. Cheating includes receiving unauthorized assistance in class discussions or exams (e.g., relying on crib notes rather than your own reading). We will talk more in class about what constitutes plagiarism and cheating and how to avoid them. Whatever the form, know that you are ultimately the person responsible for maintaining academic integrity. If you plagiarize or cheat, whether it is intentional or not, you'll receive an F as your final course grade and I will document the incident with the registrar. Feel free to ask me questions any time about properly documenting sources, or the distinction between collaboration and cheating. Here is Cornell's official policy:

"Cornell College expects all members of the Cornell community to act with academic integrity. An important aspect of academic integrity is respecting the work of others. A student is expected to explicitly acknowledge ideas, claims, observations, or data of others, unless generally known. When a piece of work is submitted for credit, a student is asserting that the submission is her or his work unless there is a citation of a specific source. If there is no appropriate acknowledgement of sources, whether intended or not, this may constitute a violation of the College's requirement for honesty in academic work and may be treated as a case of academic dishonesty. The procedures regarding how the College deals with cases of academic dishonesty appear in *The Compass*, our student handbook, under the heading 'Academic Policies – Honesty in Academic Work.'" *The Compass* may be found on Cornell's website and located through the student portal.

## **SCHEDULE (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)**

Have readings completed prior to the day on which they are listed below. Unless otherwise specified, morning sessions are from 9:00-11:00, and afternoon sessions are from 1:00-3:00—in South Hall 100.

### **WEEK I: Food Pollination; Writing for Change**

#### **M Introductions**

*AM class:* Discussion Topics: using the syllabus; defining sustainability; defining food systems; pollinator habitats and Mount Vernon.

*PM class:* Walk around Mount Vernon—wear comfortable, secure shoes!

*Homework* (due following morning at 9 am—as always with homework unless otherwise stated):

**Read** (and markup, and take notes on—as always with homework readings):

*Changing Writing*, Chapter 1 (Skip texts for analysis and following); Bee and Pesticide Fact Sheets: <http://www.pan-uk.org/news/new-bee-and-pesticide-fact-sheets>

**Write** (one typed page; bring to class): Analyze the set of fact sheets, applying the concepts in chapter 1 of CW. What central argument does the set make? (Go beyond the argument that bees are in trouble), and what rhetorical situation (or PACT) is implied? Quote and cite the fact sheets to support your points. Remember to print the fact sheets (black-and-white is OK) and to bring these to class for the purposes of discussion.

- T AM: Bring laptops and/or tablets if you have one on campus. Discussion: fact sheets; sharing of analyses; becoming a Bee City.
- PM: *More Than Honey*, followed by discussion of film's PACT.
- Homework:
- Read:** *Changing Writing*: Chapter 2 (skip texts for analysis ff.); *National Strategy to Promote the Health of Honey Bees and Other Pollinators* (available at a [whitehouse.gov](http://whitehouse.gov) site); Madison Pollinator Protection Task Force Report (Google this to locate).
- Write** (as before): Explain your own PACT considerations, if any, when you wrote yesterday's homework; then analyze the writing you produced yesterday, quoting the homework for evidence—what PACT considerations are evident from the text itself? what could be more successful, i.e. more in line with your intentions? what role did readers play, or might readers have played, in your process?
- W AM: Field Trip: Collectively critique the *National Strategy* from the perspective of the drafters of the PAN Fact Sheets (where is it strong? Where does it fall short?); Robbing the Bees—field trip.
- PM: Discuss incorporating and citing sources; explore ideal city ordinances and policies. Brainstorming Workshop: Transforming Mount Vernon into a "Bee City."
- Homework:
- Read:** *Changing Writing*, Chapter 8 (skip text for analysis ff.)
- Write:** Describe specifics that you wish to see in the proposal to Mount Vernon, and explain why.
- Th AM: Drafting workshop
- PM: Workshopping draft
- Homework:
- Read:** *Nuts and Bolts*, Chapters 1, 2, and 6; *Changing Writing*, Chapter 9
- Write:** Return to your homework completed for Wed.
- F AM: Putting draft altogether; do sentence-level edits of one section of the proposal, as assigned in class. drafting cover letter.
- PM: Sentence-level editing, cont.
- Homework:
- Read:** *Cannery Row* (pages TBA); memory of uni (Moodle).

**Write:** one-pager: what's been your personal relationship with fish and seafood? Is there a memory of a particular meal that stands out—describe! Is there a media event that influences your relationship to fish and seafood? Explain! Be creative, and go beyond clichés to explain your story!

**Week II: Sustainable Meat and Fish Practices**

Readings TBA

**Week III: Vegetables!**

Readings TBA

**Week IV      Writing Time; presentations**



## Learning Outcomes for First-Year Writing Courses

Through the First-year Writing Course, students should—

**Be introduced to:**

- conventions of formal academic writing in contrast to informal writing
- some types of writing assignments in the discipline, e.g. a public policy paper, close literary analysis, a primary research paper analyzing data, or analysis of empirical research

**Gain guided practice in:**

- critical reading
- analyzing student writing
- writing as a process
- incorporating feedback and revision
- writing appropriately for a given audience

**Know:**

### About writing

- that conventions of good writing are different from spoken language and are dependent on discipline, audience, subject and media
- that writing is an iterative process
- the distinction between topic and thesis (thesis=assertion)
- the distinction between primary and secondary sources

### About writing as a process

- that pre-writing, composing, and revising are distinct intellectual activities
- the value of varied pre-writing activities (brainstorming, critical reading, etc.)
- the distinction between revising and editing/correcting
- some useful roles readers can play in the revising process

### About academic honesty

- when to document sources
- ethical, legal, and professional reasons for documenting sources
- that citation styles vary among disciplines

**Be able to do the following at the basic level:**

### Literacy

- read critically
- identify a thesis
- identify and paraphrase argument

## Writing

- limit scope of argument appropriately
- develop a clear, arguable thesis
- introduce and conclude a topic
- develop and sustain an argument
- target claims to specific text/data
- judiciously select and effectively integrate evidence/supporting details
- follow conventions of formal academic writing
- make appropriate stylistic choices
- cite and document sources properly
- write grammatically
- strive to write with clarity, coherence, and unity, whether writing narrative, argument, or summary

---

### **General Grading Rubric**

- Written work will be graded holistically according to the following rubric:
- "A" = thoughtful and in-depth analysis of the text or subject, strong evidence, highly convincing and memorable presentation of ideas, clear and careful organization, smooth and concise writing with very few or no errors;
- "B" = solid development of ideas, good evidence, good organization, generally good writing with few errors;
- "C" = presentation of ideas is adequate but still sketchy in some places, organization is not always clear, writing is rough in a number of places (major and minor writing errors), evidence is uneven;
- "D" = incomplete development of ideas, unproved assertions, unclear organization, evidence is thin or irrelevant, many errors in writing;
- "F" = undeveloped ideas, little or no organization, lack of focus, multiple mechanical errors in writing (e.g., poor grammar, inappropriate choice of words, misspellings, etc.).