

Instructor: Stacy Bell

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Office: Humanities 105

Office hours: TTh 1-4, and by appointment

Required Texts

Conover, *Newjack*

Covington, *Salvation on Sand Mountain*

Krakauer, *Under the Banner of Heaven*

Nazario, *Enrique's Journey*

The Bedford Handbook [Hacker]

Miscellaneous assigned readings

Course Description

An examination of grammar, mechanics and principles of effective written expression, with primary emphasis on the expository essay and research incorporating secondary sources. Writing topics are inter-disciplinary, to emphasize the importance of effective written communication across the curriculum.

Objectives

The student will demonstrate an understanding of the differences in spoken and written English. The student will apply this understanding in the process of expository writing. The student will submit four 5 page essays on a selected topic, and for some of the essays will be required to use secondary sources; the essays will be well-organized and will demonstrate mastery of grammar, mechanics and organization appropriate in college-level writing, as well as the ability effectively to utilize a variety of rhetorical forms and to follow MLA guidelines for documentation. The TPSL component of this course will enable students to make real-life connections between the topics in our readings and the communities in which we live, thus enhancing the effectiveness of students' own arguments.

What is effective writing and why does it matter? Many students think that all the "good" writers are English majors, and that only English majors can be "good" writers. In fact, many of the people who make a living as writers never write novels or poetry. The first fact of effective writing is that it occurs within a context, but the context varies across a wide range of topics and disciplines. In my course you will read a variety of texts that examine issues of inequality; all of the authors are journalists, but they have very different styles and approaches to their subjects. Some are literary; others are reporters. What they all have in common is the ability to present a central unifying claim and to support it; all of them, of course, have mastered the rules of standard grammar and mechanics. Coming from varied backgrounds, they present their arguments in different ways, some with greater success than others. We'll discuss the ways in which argument—which is the core of most writing—varies in its effectiveness, and we'll talk about why effective arguments are essential to "good" writing.

Responsibilities

Late essays: Your essays are due at the *beginning* of class on the specified date. I will lower the grade for an unexcused late essay by one full letter grade **for each day it is late**; after one full week the essay will receive a grade of zero. Do NOT print your essays during class. I will not accept unstapled essays.

Attendance: As per Oxford College policy, class begins at the designated time. If you are not present when class begins, I will mark you absent. If you are not prepared for class, I will mark you absent. You may miss three days of class without penalty, beyond which I will deduct ten points from your participation grade for each additional unexcused absence. I will excuse absences ONLY in the event of a medical emergency requiring

hospitalization or a religious observance approved by the chaplain. Finally, I don't teach in your bedroom—don't sleep in my classroom. Of all the mistakes you can make in college, sleeping in class is the very worst because it sends a clear negative message, to the person who decides your final grade, that you are irresponsible, you are disinterested, and you are disrespectful. If you sleep in my class I'll mark you absent, and you can expect such behavior to have a negative impact on your overall grade.

Plagiarism: The work you submit for class must be your own. You may not submit an essay more than once. If you use another author's words, sentence structure or original ideas in your writing, you must give credit to the author by using MLA documentation form as it is presented in your handbook. All papers suspected of plagiarism will be turned over to the Honor Council (*Oxford College Handbook* pages 98). If you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism, read your handbook and **please see me**. I am on the Honor Council. Need I say more?

Behavior: The instructor and students will display professional and courteous behavior, including but not limited to respect for the opinions of others. What constitutes professional and courteous behavior is at the discretion of the instructor. I will dismiss and mark absent any student who fails to show respect for his or her classmates and/or instructor. Continued disruptions and/or discourtesy will result in automatic dismissal from this class and referral to the Academic Dean. Dismissal from class may negatively impact the final grade.

Email: Students must learn appropriate uses of email. The best way to communicate with an instructor is in person, during class or during office hours. I accept email for the following reasons:

- To cancel an appointment
- To notify me of an absence
- To ask a legitimate question about an assignment

I will not respond to email requesting information contained in the syllabus. If you don't know what is in the syllabus, you aren't prepared for class. Finally, I will **never respond** to requests for grades or "averages" via email or in person. Your grades and averages will be available to you this semester on our Blackboard site.

- Please note: cell phones, blackberries and iPods are strictly forbidden in my classroom. If you have one with you, it had better be turned off and concealed from my sight. If I hear or see it, I'm going to ask you to remove it from the classroom, and I will mark you absent. Laptops are permitted during the final exam **only**. Stay off the computers during class unless I have asked you to type a lesson. If I catch you on-line checking email or, heaven help me, *Myfacebook*, I will mark you absent.

TPSL: Your TPSL placement is important. Ten percent of your total points comes from successful completion of your assignment. For each absence from your placement you'll miss a percentage point, and if you receive a negative evaluation from your supervisor, you'll lose half of your participation points. View this as a learning experience; volunteering is not necessarily "fun" or "warm and fuzzy"—it can be, but sometimes it is frustrating and even boring. All of your experiences will be valuable to our discussions, and I want you to be willing to share the good, the bad, and especially the ugly. In exchange for this extra commitment of your time, I am canceling several of our classes.

Evaluation: Eight one-page responses: 2.5 % each
Four formal 5-page essays: 12.5 % each
Final Exam: 10%
Participation: 10%
TPSL: 10%

If you are absent without an excuse on a day in which an in-class activity is assigned, you will NOT be permitted to make up missed work. You will submit a rough draft for your essay on the day that you are scheduled to present it in class. Failure to do so will result in deduction of one letter from the essay grade, and you will be marked absent for that day. ***Note:** Your essays will be evaluated based on a predetermined set of criteria, including demonstration of competency in the mechanics and organization of essay writing. This is a college level writing course; spelling errors will not be tolerated. An essay with more than five spelling errors will receive a failing grade--NO EXCEPTIONS.

Any student who a) receives a grade of C- or lower on an essay, or b) has failed to cite sources correctly, MUST schedule a conference with me during my regular office hours immediately after receiving the evaluated work.

Unless you obtain approval from the Academic Dean, there will be no exceptions to the policies outlined in this syllabus, which represents a contract between student and instructor. The instructor will meet her responsibilities in regard to instruction and evaluation of the student, and the student will meet his or her responsibilities in regard to completion of all assignments and adherence to all class policies.

I have read and understand all components of this syllabus. I agree to adhere to all the policies and guidelines outlined in this syllabus.

print your name

signature

date