

Critical Reading and Writing: Individualism and Its Critics

English 185, Section 08A, Oxford College of Emory University

Spring 2014 — MWF, 8:15-9:20am

Language Hall 102

Instructor: Joe Johnson

Office hours MWF, 3-5pm and by appointment, Branham Hall

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Description

This course focuses on academic reading and writing as the democratic art of close listening to what other people have to say. Our theme will be one of the most controversial ideas in the history of American culture: individualism and its relationship to the American Dream. We will listen closely to what other people have said regarding individualism and its dangers, and we will work hard to develop ideas and arguments of our own. The core principle of this course is that effective academic reading, writing, thinking — as well as responsible public discourse — involves not just stating our own views but summarizing the ideas of those around us, past and present, and developing our own arguments in dialogue with others. Students will learn what it takes to become more confident college readers and writers and more active, engaged citizens of the world.

Course Requirements

1. *Attendance & Participation*

This course is discussion based, which means I expect you to attend each class, to have done the reading in advance, and to come prepared to discuss the readings. Always *print out* the assigned readings and bring them with you, along with the notes you've taken. During the first third or so of most class periods, you will break up into small groups (or pairs) to answer questions on the assigned reading before we engage the material together. You will answer these questions in writing, and one member of your group will be required to revise your answers and post them on Blackboard after class. These answers will help you and your classmates generate ideas for your papers, which will be based on the questions we discuss in class. I expect you to *participate actively* in both small group and large group discussions. More than two unexcused absences from class will significantly lower your participation grade. I reserve the right to count lateness as an absence. Lateness is extremely disruptive and will not be tolerated.

Class participation forms an important part of your final grade (15%). You will get high marks if you attend every class *on time* and participate *every day* in small and large group discussions, in a way that shows you've read and thought deeply about the course readings.

2. *Presentations*

There will be three required classroom presentations. Your first presentation (due before spring break) will be 10 minutes in length and focus on a key term, theme, idea or

concept from the day's reading. You will be asked to identify passages in the assigned text that engage the term, theme, idea or concept that you choose; your job is to summarize or explain its significance, as a way of leading the class into a larger discussion of the day's reading assignment. Your second presentation (due after spring break) will also be 10 minutes and will follow the same form as your first presentation. Your final presentation will be 15-20 minutes in length and will present the ideas of your research paper.

We will discuss expectations and strategies for effective classroom presentations throughout the semester. Presentations will reflect 15% of your final course grade.

3. *Three Major Papers & Portfolio*

There will be three required papers, which will focus on the skills and readings that we work on in class. These papers will range from 3-4 pages (Assignment #1) to 4-5 pages (Assignment #2) and 6-8 pages (Assignment #3) in length. These assignments will build on one another in terms of skills and concepts — and you will receive feedback on early drafts of each assignment. We will discuss detailed expectations for each assignment well in advance of the due date. Each paper will be worth 20% of your final course grade.

A final course portfolio is also required. We will discuss the details of your portfolio after spring break. It will reflect 10% of your final grade and will be due on the day scheduled for the final exam.

Informal response papers and journal writing will also be assigned throughout the semester. You will be required to post some of these informal writings on Blackboard. There will be no midterm or final exam.

Here's how each of these elements adds up to a final grade:

Attendance & Participation	15%
Classroom Presentations	15%
Writing Assignment #1	20%
Writing Assignment #2	20%
Writing Assignment #3	20%
Final Portfolio	10%

This is a rough formula to show that I will give more weight to some assignments. I won't be using a calculator, and I always consider improvement throughout the course of the semester.

Cell Phones & Personal Computers

The use of cell phones is prohibited in class. You may take notes on a computer or tablet, but personal web surfing, emailing, tweeting, Facebook posting, etc., is both academically and socially unacceptable in a learning community. This kind of behavior is extremely distracting and your participation grade will suffer if you persist.

Required Books

Gerald Graff, Cathy Birkenstein, and Russel Durst. *They Say / I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*. Second Edition. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012.

Jack Kerouac. *On the Road*. Penguin Classics Edition. New York: Penguin Books, 1955, 1957.

Henry D. Thoreau. *Walden, Civil Disobedience, and Other Writings*. Third Edition. Edited by William Rossi. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008.

Joseph M. Williams and Joseph Bizup. *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace*. Eleventh Edition. Boston: Pearson Education, 2014.

Please make sure you acquire the editions listed above, so we're all on the same page.

Schedule of Classes

Week One

1/15 (W) Introductions and Expectations

1/17 (F) **“How I Write” Self-Assessment Essay Due**
Read: *They Say/I Say* Preface (xv-xviii) and Preface to “They Say/I Say” (xix-xxix) — as well as Chapter 11 (“I Take Your Point”: Entering Class Discussions, 141-144)

Week Two

1/20 (M) **“How I Read” Self-Assessment Essay Due**
Read: *They Say/I Say* Introduction (Entering the Conversation, 1-15) and Chapter 1 (“They Say”: Starting with What Others Are Saying, 19-29) — as well as Chapter 18 (What’s Up with the American Dream?, 561-585)

1/22 (W) Read: *They Say/I Say* Chapter 12 (“What’s Motivating This Writer?”: Reading for the Conversation, 145-155) and Chapter 18 (What’s Up with the American Dream?, 586-623)

1/24 (F) **“How I Speak” Self-Assessment Essay Due**
Read: *They Say/I Say* Chapter 2 (“Her Point Is”: The Art of Summarizing, 30-41) and Chapter 18 (What’s Up with the American Dream?, 624-664)

Week Three

1/27 (M) Read: *They Say/I Say* Chapter 4 (“Yes / No / Okay, But”: Three Ways to Respond, 55-67) and Robert Bellah, “Individualism and Commitment in American Life” [Bb]

In-class: Presentations TBA

1/29 (W) Read: *They Say/I Say* Chapter 3 (“As He Himself Puts It”: The Art of Quoting, 42-51) — Bring First Draft of Assignment #1 to Class

1/31 (F) Read: George Kateb, “Democratic Individualism and Its Critics” [Bb]
In-class: Presentations TBA

Week Four

2/3 (M) **Assignment # 1: Summarizing, Quoting, Responding Due**

Read: Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Vol. II, Part 2, Ch. 2, “On Individualism in Democratic Countries” [Bb]

2/5 (W) Read: Daniel Walker Howe, *Making the American Self: Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*, Introduction [Bb]
In-class: Presentations TBA

2/7 (F) No Class

Week Five

2/10 (M) Read: *They Say/I Say* Chapter 5 (“And Yet”: Distinguishing What You Say from What They Say, 68-77) and Daniel Walker How, *Making the American Self*, Chapter 4 and Chapter 7 [Bb]
In-class Presentations: TBA

2/12 (W) Read: Kerouac, *On the Road*, Introduction (vii-xxxiv) and Part One (1-108)
In-class Presentations: TBA

2/14 (F) Read: *They Say/I Say* Chapter 6 (“Skeptics May Object”: Planting a Naysayer in Your Text, 78-91) — and Kerouac, *On the Road*, Part One continued
In-class Presentations: TBA

Week Six

2/17 (M) Read: Kerouac, *On the Road*, Parts Two and Three (109-248)
In-class Presentations: TBA

2/19 (W) Read: *They Say/I Say* Chapter 7 (“So What? Who Cares?”: Saying Why It Matters, 92-101) and Joseph M. Williams and Joseph Bizup, *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace*, Lesson 7 (“Motivation,” 98-112) — and Kerouac, *On the Road*, Parts Two and Three continued
In-class Presentations: TBA

2/21 (F) Read: *They Say/I Say* Chapter 8 (“As a Result”: Connecting the Parts, 105-120) and Williams and Bizup, *Style*, Lesson 8 (“Global Coherence,” 113-124) — and begin thinking about Assignment #2

Week Seven

2/24 (M) Read: Kerouac, *On the Road*, Parts Four and Five, 249-307

In-class Presentations: TBA

2/26 (W) Read: *They Say/I Say* Chapter 9 (“Ain’t So / Is Not”: Academic Writing Doesn’t Always Mean Setting Aside Your Own Voice, 121-128) and Chapter 10 (“But Don’t Get Me Wrong”: The Art of Metacommentary, 129-138) — Bring First Draft of Assignment #2 to Class

2/28 (F) Read: Jack Turner, *Awakening to Race: Individualism and Social Consciousness in America*, Preface and Chapter 1 [Bb]

In-class Presentations: TBA

Week Eight

3/3 (M) **Assignment #2: Entering the Conversation Due [Kerouac]**
Read: Williams and Bizup, *Style*, Lesson 3 (“Actions,” 28-45)

3/5 (W) Read: Jack Turner, *Awakening to Race: Individualism and Social Consciousness in America*, Chapter 2 [Bb] and Williams and Bizup, *Style*, Lesson 4 (“Characters,” 46-65)

In-class Presentations: TBA

3/7 (F) Read: Christopher Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites*, Introduction and Ch. 2 [Bb]

In-class Presentations: TBA

Spring Break

3/10 (M) – 3/14 (F)

Week Nine

3/17 (M) Read: Thoreau, *Walden*, “Economy” and “Where I Lived, What I Lived For” (5-70) and Claude Fischer, “Paradoxes of American Individualism” [Bb]

In-class Presentations: TBA

3/19 (W) Read: Thoreau, *Walden*, “Reading,” “Sounds,” “Solitude” (71-97)

In-class Presentations: TBA

3/21 (F) Read: Thoreau, *Walden*, “Visitors,” “The Bean-Field,” “The Village” (97-119) and Williams and Bizup, *Style*, Lesson 5 (“Cohesion and Coherence,” 66-79)

In-class Presentations: TBA

Week Ten

3/24 (M) Read: Thoreau, *Walden*, “The Ponds,” “Baker Farm,” “Brute Neighbors,” “Housewarming” (119-172)

In-class Presentations: TBA

3/26 (W) Read: Thoreau, *Walden*, “Former Inhabitants; and Winter Visitors,” “Winter Animals,” “The Pond in Winter,” “Spring,” “Conclusion” (172-224)

In-class Presentations: TBA

3/28 (F) Read: Williams and Bizup, *Style*, Lesson 6 (“Emphasis,” 80-95) and *Walden* continued — begin thinking about research topic

Week Eleven

3/31 (M) Read: Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Self-Reliance” and “The American Scholar” [Bb]
In-class Presentations: TBA

4/2 (W) Read: Henry David Thoreau, “Civil Disobedience” (227-246) and Williams and Bizup, *Style*, Lesson 9 (“Concision,” 126-142)
In-class Presentations: TBA

4/4 (F) **Research Paper Proposal and Annotated Bibliography Due**
Read: Williams and Bizup, *Style*, Lesson 10 (“Shape,” 143-167)

Week Twelve

4/7 (M) Read: Mary Ann Glendon, *Rights Talk: The Impoverishment of Political Discourse*, pp. 1-32, 40-88 [Bb] and Review *They Say/I Say* Chapter 4
In-class Presentations: TBA

4/9 (W) Read: Robert Putnam, “Bowling Alone” [Bb] and Review *They Say/I Say* Chapters 2, 3, 8
In-class Presentations: TBA

4/11 (F) Bring First Draft of Assignment #3 to Class and Review *They Say/I Say* Chapters 6, 7

Week Thirteen

4/14 (M) Read: Theda Skocpol, “Voice and Inequality: The Transformation of American Civic Democracy” [Bb] and Review Williams and Bizup, *Style*, Lessons 7, 8
In-class Presentations: TBA

4/16 (W) Continue Preparing Research Paper

4/18 (F) **Assignment #3: Entering the Conversation (with Research) Due**

Week Fourteen

4/21 (M) Research Presentations & Discussion (papers distributed beforehand)

4/23 (W) Research Presentations & Discussion (papers distributed beforehand)

4/25 (F) Research Presentations & Discussion (papers distributed beforehand)

Last Day of Class

4/28 (M) Research Presentations & Discussion (papers distributed beforehand)

Portfolio Due on the Day of the Final Exam

Office of Disability Services

“Emory provides all persons an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs and services afforded to others. The Office of Disability Services (ODS) assists qualified students in obtaining a variety of services (i.e., alternative testing, notetaking, interpreting, advocacy, mobility/transportation, etc.) and ensures that all matters of equal access, reasonable accommodation, and compliance are properly addressed. Qualified students and faculty/staff must register and request services — contact the Office of Disability Services at Emory University or Oxford College. Confidentiality is honored and maintained.”

<http://www.ods.emory.edu/>

Honor Code

“The responsibility for maintaining standards of unimpeachable honesty in all academic work and in campus judicial proceedings falls upon every individual who is a part of Oxford College of Emory University. The Honor Code is based on the fundamental expectations that every person in Oxford College will conduct his or her life according to the dictates of the Honor Code and will refuse to tolerate actions in others which would violate the Honor Code.”

http://oxford.emory.edu/audiences/current_students/Academic/academic-success/student-honor-code/

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“Counseling and Career Services (CCS) strives to be recognized and utilized as the mental health resource for the entire Oxford College community. Our first priority is to provide ethical and competent mental health and career guidance services to all Oxford students.

Students seeking our help may receive a variety of services, including: consultation, crisis intervention, individual psychotherapy, career counseling and assessment, psychiatric evaluation and medication management, and couples counseling. As needed, we provide referrals for psychological testing, inpatient and partial hospitalization, nutritional counseling, substance abuse evaluation and counseling, and/or long-term psychotherapy. We realize there are students in need who do not visit our facility.

To extend our expertise and services to the students who do not frequent Counseling and Career Services, we offer outreach programs on a variety of issues related to career exploration, academic success and emotional health/wellness.”

<http://oxford.emory.edu/counseling/>

Note: This syllabus is subject to change at the instructor’s discretion. All changes will be announced during class.