

ENGLC1010 - University Writing, Readings in Sustainable Development

Phillip R. Polefrone

Fall 2015

Basic Information

- **Date/Time:** Monday/Wednesday, 1:10–2:25
- **Location:** Philosophy Hall, 408A

Instructor

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- **Office Hours/Location:** W and F, 11:00am – 12:00pm
- **Mailbox Address:** 310 Philosophy Hall

Course Description

University Writing is designed to help undergraduates read and write essays in order to participate in the academic conversations that form our intellectual community. We will give special attention to the practices of close reading, rhetorical analysis, research, collaboration, and substantive revision. Students will learn that writing is a process of continual refinement of ideas and their expression. Rather than approaching writing as an innate talent, this course will teach writing as a unique, learned skill that can be practiced and developed. Over the course of the semester, you will read and discuss texts relating to sustainable development, complete regular informal reading and writing exercises, write several longer essays, and prepare an editorial for a public audience.

What exactly does “sustainable development” mean, though? We will explore many different answers to this question along the way—even come up with some of our own—but we can begin with a few persuasive definitions. The U.N.’s “Brundtland Report” (1987) says it is “development which meets the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Jeffrey A. McNeely of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature says that SD “unites the ecological concepts of carrying capacity with the economic concepts of growth and development” (qtd. in Guha and Martinez-Alier, 48). Others, like Carolyn Merchant, see it as a catchall term for movements that attempt to resolve the “contradiction” between production and ecology—movements like sustainable agriculture and “bioregionalism” (Merchant 211-22). Though these definitions differ, they all understand sustainability as a way of reconciling short-term development with long-term preservation and management of the environment. Throughout the semester, we will confront texts addressing this issue from a wide range of disciplines and with vastly different perspectives on concepts as fundamental as nature, growth, and community.

The theme of the course may be environmental, but its main goal is to help you develop as a reader and writer. You will learn from accomplished thinkers and essayists addressing topics in SD from different disciplinary perspectives. Using the techniques you learn in studying these texts, you will choose several of them to build on, emulate, or challenge in your own essays. The course is organized into four units we call “progressions.” Each progression consists of a series of class activities and reading and writing exercises that will prepare you to write a particular kind of essay. In progression one, you will analyze the ideas and method of one text to respond to the writer’s argument on its own terms. In progression two, you will learn to enter into a conversation or debate among multiple texts. In progression three, you will work with your classmates over several class sessions to explore the sources and implications of a single seed text . You will then write an individual research essay on a project that has emerged out of these explorations. In progression four, you will apply the skills you have been developing over the course of the semester to make an argument to a public.

Note: Your syllabus is a reference document to be frequently consulted. In it you will find course policies, all major due dates, and a schedule of readings. **You are responsible for every assignment on the syllabus, whether or not it is mentioned in class.** This syllabus is also available on the Courseworks site <http://courseworks.columbia.edu>.

Requirements

- Complete four revised essays ranging from 750-3000 words, each accompanied by at least one draft. Students must submit all four final essays in order to pass the class.
- Attend and participate in all classes and conferences.
- Complete reading and writing exercises as assigned.
- Submit all of your writing assignments on Courseworks.

Assignments

You will do at least three types of writing in this course: exercises, responses, drafts, and final essays. These assignments will connect with one another in a developmental sequence called a progression.

- **Exercises:** (250-750 words) Exercises will help you develop skills and ideas as you work toward your essay draft.
- **Responses:** (250-500 words) Responses require you to write one to two pages in which you pick one aspect of the text that especially interests you to discuss. This does not require a full argument (and certainly no research), but your discussion should be organized, written in complete sentences and structured paragraphs, and have a clear topic. The last thing a response should be is an elaboration of whether you liked or did not like a text.
- **Drafts:** You will write one or more drafts prior to submitting a final version of your essay for a progression. The stronger the draft at any stage of composing, the more useful it (and the feedback you receive on it) will be to your final essay.
- **Final Essays:** (must have a title, word count, and a works cited page) A final essay is the most public kind of writing you will produce for this course. Your essay should aim to persuade astute, interested readers who are unfamiliar with the texts you engage; you need to convince them of why your argument is significant.

Sustainable Development Event

As part of our themed track, all SD sections will attend one event together to expand on the work we have done in the course. Details will be announced later, but expect something late in the second progression

or at some point during the third. **Unless you can provide documentation of a prior academic commitment, you are required to attend this event.** If you have an academic conflict, I will provide you with a replacement assignment.

Weekly Article Share

Every Monday you will also be asked to pick one article, event, or news item relating to the environment or sustainable development. You must post a link to the article, your name, and a 1-3 sentence summary of the article's argument. This is informal, but important: together we will build a repository of pieces that can be used to spur possible essay topics later, either as exhibits or research topics. Perhaps more important, it will also help you draw connections between what we discuss in class and what is happening in the rest of the world. For instructions on how to post, see the [instructions on the class wiki](#).

Required Texts

The syllabus, course description, requirements, readings, assignments, and links to resources are available [on CourseWorks](#).

Additional readings will be assigned from The Morningside Review, morningsidereview.org, which is the journal of selected essays from Columbia's Undergraduate Writing Program.

An up-to-date style manual for current MLA citation formatting conventions. You are strongly encouraged to purchase a copy for your reference.

Here are links to two online versions: The Bedford style manual: http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/resdoc5e/RES5e_ch08_s1-0001.html

The Online Writing Lab from Purdue University: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

As a student at Columbia, you can download bibliographic software to your PC or Mac (not yet tablets or phones) that will archive and organize your textual references and generate formatted citations in many formats. You will learn to use one, Zotero, during the research progression, but you are free to use another if you want to. You can download one of those programs from CUIT: http://cuit.columbia.edu/bibliographic-information*

Course Policies

Attendance

The discussion and workshop elements that are at the center of this course cannot be made up, so attendance is vital.

In accordance with Columbia University regulations, there will be distinctions made between excused absences and unexcused absences. Excused absences include those due to religious observance, athletic commitments (e.g. away games), and illness, and they will not incur a grade penalty if proper documentation is submitted correctly. In the first two weeks of class, students will also not be penalized if they have been attending a different section of University Writing and elect to change their section. Please see the specific requirements below for how you should document absences you wish to be excused.

Documentation for excused absences

Religious observance: By the fourth class session, send an email to your instructor—copied to your academic advisor—in which you outline all of the dates you will be absent for the semester. Create a plan with your instructor to make up work or reschedule deadlines.

Athletic commitments: Only participation in athletic contests will count as excused absences; practice sessions do not. Prior to any absence, you must submit to your instructor a completed and signed “Columbia University Intercollegiate Athletics Academic Absence Notification Form.”

Here is a link to the form: http://www.college.columbia.edu/sites/default/files/intercollegiate__athletic__academic__absence__notification__form.pdf

Illness: A signed doctor’s note is required to excuse an absence. You should bring the note to class on the day you are able to return. It is also advisable—if you are able—to contact your instructor by email in order to alert him or her that you will be unable to attend class.

Section changes: If you change your section of University Writing in the first two weeks of class, you must provide your new instructor a completed and signed “University Writing Attendance Confirmation” form. Please see Mr. John Stobo in the Undergraduate Writing Program office, 310 Philosophy Hall, for a copy of the form.

All other absences, including those due to late registration, are considered unexcused. Unexcused absences will be penalized according to the chart below. Please also note the Lateness policy in the next section to understand how latenesses count towards your total number of absences.

More than six unexcused absences will result in an automatic F course grade.

Computers

Students are permitted to use laptops or tablets in class, but *strictly* for the purposes of the class—accessing readings, making notes, or looking up relevant facts. I tend to call on people when they need help being drawn into the conversation; if you are not attending to class, I am likely to call on you, and that will be uncomfortable for everyone. Help me avoid this situation by not surfing the internet.

Unexcused Absence Penalties

- 1-3 - You may incur 1/3 of a letter on the final grade for the progression per absence.
- 4 - 1/3 of a letter, course grade
- 5 - full letter, course grade
- 6 - 2 full letters, course grade
- 7 - F or UW, course grade

Lateness

Lateness is disruptive to the entire class. If you arrive once class is underway or depart before the class session has ended, you will be marked as late. Two latenesses count as one absence in calculating your final course grade.

Conferences and Office Hours

You will have at least two 20-30 minute conferences with me during the semester, although I may require more. These conferences give you the opportunity to discuss your ideas, to work through your drafts, to prepare for presentations, or to revise your essays. You are welcome to come and see me in office hours or by appointment to discuss any aspect of the course.

Assessment and Response

All of the writing you submit on time for this class will receive some sort of written or recorded response from me and/or your classmates. While writing exercises and preliminary drafts will not receive grades, they will be important for your development as a writer and thinker, and you are expected to complete them all.

During the first three progressions, I will write marginal comments and typed end-comments to one preliminary draft as well as your final draft. (If we had a conference that progression, the conference will replace written comments on a draft. You will still receive written comments on the final.) For your final progression, you will receive end-comments on your final draft that respond to the essay as well as your development over the course of the semester.

My comments are designed to help you assess your draft and prioritize goals for the next stage of your writing. Just as important, my comments will offer you practical strategies designed to further your ongoing development as a writer. If you have any questions about my comments, please make an appointment with me to review them.

Grading

Each final essay for the progression will receive a letter grade from A to F. Your final course grade will be computed on the 4.0 scale.

Each letter grade signifies the following:

“A” essays not only fulfill the goals of the progression, but push beyond those goals in surprising ways. This is more likely to be possible when the writer has found something compelling to write about and has taken great care to attend to his or her language and form. A essays reflect excellence and artistry.

“B” essays come in two basic varieties: the “solid B” and the “striving B.” The solid B is a good, competent paper. The striving B may excel in certain areas, but it is sufficiently uneven to preclude it from receiving an A. B essays reflect superior understanding of the progression’s goals.

“C” essays reflect struggle in fulfilling the progression’s goals. This kind of essay may show a fair amount of work, but it does not come together well enough to be a competent paper.

“D” essays may appear to have been hastily written, incomplete, or thrown together.

“F” essays fail to meet the minimum level of expectations for the progression.

Late and Missed Assignments, Drafts, and Final Essays

I will not accept any late exercises, and I will not give extensions for problems such as computer and printer crashes, conflicts with other course assignments or extracurricular activities, oversleeping or other personal difficulties. Technical problems happen, so be prepared: back up all your documents. Many students use free services like Dropbox, and I am happy to recommend other methods. If your essay draft is late, I will respond to it if I can, but I will not extend your revision time, making it much harder for you to do well on the essay.

If you do not hand in a preliminary draft at least 48 hours to the deadline for the final draft, your final essay grade will be lowered by one whole grade (e.g. from a B to a C). Your grade on the final essay will be lowered by 1/3 (e.g. from a B- to a C+) beginning the minute after the deadline. The grade will continue to go down by a third every 24 hours until the essay is submitted. All work must be submitted to Courseworks by the deadline in order to be considered on time. **Failure to submit the final draft of any essay by the end of the semester will result in an automatic failure for the course.**

Final Grades

Your course work for the semester will be weighted as follows:

| | |
|---|------|
| Progression 1: One-text essay (Critical Response) (1200-1500 words) | .15% |
| Progression 2: Conversation Essay (1500-2000 words) | .25% |
| Progression 3: Research Essay (2500-3000 words) | .35% |
| Progression 4: Editorial Essay (750-1000). | .20% |
| TOTAL: 95% EXTRA: 5% | |

(The “extra” percentage will be added to the essay on which you get the best grade. If you don’t do as well as you’d like on an essay, this percentage will give you a chance to make up for it elsewhere.)

Radical Revision

One of the fundamental principles of this course is that writing and reading are recursive, iterative processes, which benefit from the input of others. Therefore, I will give you the opportunity to revise one of your first two essays once they have been commented on and graded, for an entirely new grade.

All radically revised essays must be preceded by a revision proposal that describes the significant difference between the previously assessed version and the proposed new one. *You may only revise if your proposal would provide a significant improvement over the earlier version.* I may require that you see me in conference before you submit a revised essay. If your revision has been approved, I would strongly encourage you to bring any essay you would wish to have reconsidered under this policy to the Writing Center to help you gauge how much your radically revised draft has changed from your previous one.

Academic Integrity

University Writing will provide you with strategies for working ethically and accurately with the texts you engage and fulfilling the Columbia Undergraduate Honor Code <http://www.college.columbia.edu/ccschonorcode>. We will discuss source use practices that prevent plagiarism, a serious academic offense that runs counter to our academic community’s core values of honesty and respect for others. Here is a partial list from the Columbia University Undergraduate Guide to Academic Integrity <https://www.college.columbia.edu/academics/academicintegrity> of some of the forms plagiarism can take:

- “Verbatim copying without acknowledgement – copying a whole paragraph or larger sections; in effect, claiming that the writing is your own.”
- “Copying select phrases without acknowledgement – using your own words to pad the selectively copied words of others.”
- “Paraphrasing text without acknowledgement – rewriting text in your own words, but using the idea or argument as your own.”
- “Using data gathered by another, claiming it as your own – even if you submit an analysis of the data that is yours alone.”

Final drafts that contain plagiarism will receive a zero, may result in failure of the course, and the case will be reported to the director of the Undergraduate Writing Program and the Office of Judicial Affairs and Community Standards [<http://www.studentaffairs.columbia.edu/judicialaffairs/index.php>]. That office initiates the dean’s discipline process and determines whether to apply sanctions, which range from a warning to expulsion from the university.

The Writing Center

I encourage you to visit the Writing Center [www.college.columbia.edu/core/uwp/writing-center], where you can receive free individual consultations on your writing at any stage in the writing process, including brainstorming. Writing consultants work with all members of the Columbia community on any academic or nonacademic writing. You can make an appointment and view drop in hours on their website.

Other Support Services: Accessibility and Wellness

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Columbia University provides students who register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS) <http://www.health.columbia.edu/ods/news/ds-programs.html> with a range of support options and will provide you with a letter stating the accommodations to which you are entitled, without disclosing any other information about you. If you know or believe you have a disability of some kind, please consult with Disability Services and your advising dean as soon as possible; University Writing instructors need official documentation from the ODS in order to provide accommodations, and we cannot make retroactive accommodations.

Counseling and Psychological Services

The Office of Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) <http://www.health.columbia.edu/cps/index.html> provides many kinds of support for student wellness and academic success.

References

- Guha, Ramachandra and Juan Martinez-Alier. *Varieties of Environmentalism*. London: Earthscan Publications, 1997. Print.
- Merchant, Carolyn. *Radical Ecology*. New York: Routledge, 1992. Print.
- United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development. *Our Common Future*. 1987. *UN-Documents.net*. Web. 14 Aug. 2015.

Schedule of Assignments:

1st Progression:

9/9: Introductions (Defining “Environment”)

- **Reading:** none
- **Homework** none

9/14: Problem, Claim (Conservationism and Deep Ecology)

- **Reading:** Aldo Leopold, “The Land Ethic”
- **Homework** Exercise 1a

9/16: What is an intellectual problem? (Economy, Environment, Text)

- **Reading:** the first few pages of “Private Discourse in *Walden*” by Ronald B. Schwartz and “Economic Metaphor Redefined: The Transcendental Capitalist at Walden”; *skim* “Economy,” Henry David Thoreau (from *Walden*)
- **Homework** Exercise 1b

9/20: Exploratory Draft due 5PM

9/21: Close Reading (Environment, Culture, and Epistemology)

- **Reading:** Jamaica Kincaid, “To Name is to Possess”
- **Homework** Exploratory Draft (due 9/20 by 5PM)

9/23: Methods and Tactics of Engagement—Response vs. Analysis

- **Reading:** Jack Klempay, “The Definitively Non-Standard English of David Foster Wallace” (TMR); Joseph Harris, “Coming to Terms” (from *Rewriting*)
- **Homework:** Exercise 1d

9/25: Formal Draft Due by 6PM (to me and your workshop partner)

9/28: Workshop

- **Reading:** Workshop partner’s draft
- **Homework** Formal Draft (due 9/25 by 6PM)

9/30: Structure-Based Revision; Sentences

- **Reading:** Handout from Joseph M. Williams, *Style* (lessons 3 & 4)
- **Homework** Plan for revision

10/5: Final P1 Essay Due (in class)

2nd Progression: Conversation: The Commons

10/5: What’s the point of conversation?

- **Reading:** “They Say, I Say”
- **Homework** Final P1 Essay Due (in class)

10/7: Problem and Evidence, Revisited (Defining the Commons)

- **Reading:** Garrett Hardin, “The Tragedy of the Commons”
- **Homework:** Response to Hardin (See syllabus on requirements of a “response”)

10/12: Exhibits (Critiquing the Commons)

- **Reading:** Naomi Klein, “Why #BlackLivesMatter Should Transform the Climate Debate”; Rob Nixon, “Neoliberalism, Genre, and the ‘Tragedy of the Commons’”
- **Homework** Exercise 2b

10/14: Deepening Analysis (Critiquing the Commons)

- **Reading:** Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons* (Chapter 1); TMR essay (TBA)
- **Homework:** Exercise 2c

10/19: Proposing Alternatives and Weighing Paradigms (Governing the Commons, or an Alternative Economics)

- **Reading:** Williams, “Cohesion and Coherence”
- **Homework Formal Draft**

10/21: Workshop

- **Reading:** Partner’s draft
- **Homework** Continue revising

10/26: Workshop/TBA

- **Reading:** Booth, “Judging Rhetoric” (from *The Rhetoric of Rhetoric*)
- **Homework** Continue revising

10/30: Final Essay Due, 5PM

3rd Progression: Research: Ecology vs. Economy

10/28: Introduction to the Research Progression; Topics

- **Reading:** none
- **Homework** Exercise 3.0 (Pick 3-5 articles from class database, identify topics)

11/4: Discourse and the Academic “Genre” (Climate Change and the Economy)

- **Reading:** Naomi Klein, “Capitalism vs. the Climate”
- **Homework** Exercise 3a

11/9: Ideas and their Histories

- **Reading:** Dawson, “The Hostile Environment” (TMR)
- **Homework** Exercise 3b

11/11: Mediating Discourse Communities

- **Reading:** TBA
- **Homework** Exercise 3c

11/16: Library Day

- **Reading:** Handout (from *The Craft of Research*)
- **Homework** Exploratory Draft

11/18: Research Motives

- **Reading:** none
- **Homework** Lightly Annotated Preliminary Bibliography and Abstract

11/23: Using Sources

- **Reading:** Crooke, “Overlooking the Rite in the Name of What’s ‘Right’ ” (TMR)
- **Homework** Exercise 3d

11/24: Formal Drafts Due by 5PM

11/25: Topic Sharing

- **Reading:** none
- **Homework** none

11/30: Draft Workshop

- **Reading:** partner’s essay
- **Homework** Annotated copy of partner’s essay **Final due 12/4**

12/4: Final P3 Draft Due

4th Progression: Op-Ed: Localism and the Planet

12/2: Audience/Public

- **Reading:** Op-Ed samples TBA
- **Homework** Exercise 4a

12/7: Paper versus Publication

- **Reading:** Gordon, “Reaching beyond the University: Writing the Op-Ed” (TMR)
- **Homework** Exploratory Draft

12/9: Persuasion and Motive (Localism)

- **Reading:** Excerpt from Caroline Levine, *Forms*; Carolyn Merchant, “Bioregionalism” (from *Radical Ecology*)
- **Homework** Exercise 4b

12/11: Formal Draft Due 5PM

12/14: Workshop

- **Reading:** Partner draft
- **Homework** Annotated partner draft

12/16: Final Op-Ed Due