

Course Description

As the course title suggests, this class is meant to acquaint you with the literary and rhetorical tradition of the essay, a genre which has been described by one scholar as "the meeting ground between art and philosophy," and by another as "the place where the self finds a pattern in the world, and the world finds a pattern in the self". Though the essay is part of a tradition of prose which stretches back to antiquity, it is also a thoroughly modern and popular form of writing, found in print media and on the web. This class will emphasize a specific range of the essay's functions:

- The essay as commentary on the writing of others and on textual/numerical data.
- The essay as the discovery of meaning in personal experience through the narration of experience.
- The essay as a vehicle conveying specialized knowledge to a general audience.

By the end of the semester, you will be familiar with each of these modes in the class reading and in your own writing.

Course Requirements

- Assigned reading (see schedule below)
- 5 essays (5-7 pages each), rough *and* final drafts
- 2 oral reports (5-10 minutes long)
- Participation in class discussion
- In-class peer review (see below)
- Peer-review-related photocopying
- In-class and out-of-class writing exercises (1-2 pp)
- Maintenance of a portfolio (see below)
- Regular attendance (see below)

NOTE: It is not possible to pass the course if you have failed one of the essays, if you have failed to participate in peer review, or if you have more than 5 absences. Failure to participate in class discussion will result in a deduction of one-half or one grade point from the final grade, depending on the severity of the problem.

Attendance Policy

Because this course is a laboratory for composition and interpretation, you must be present at every class and arrive in a timely fashion. Only 5 unexcused absences are permitted.

An absence on a peer review day will count as a regular absence *and* result in the deduction of two grade-steps from the final draft (e.g. B reduced to C+). 2 latenesses = 1 absence. You are late if you arrive at class after I take attendance.

*In case of personal emergency, serious illness, or injury, **do not** come to class, but inform me of the reason for your absence as soon as possible. [A dean's note will be necessary to be excused from class under these circumstances.]* Absence for religious observance is automatically excused; nonetheless, please inform me before the fact.