

Syllabus: Composition as Critical Inquiry

Instructor: Dr. Claire Lamonica
Office: xxx Stevenson
Office Phone: 438-xxxx
Home Phone: xxxx
No calls after 10 p.m., please!
e-mail: xxxxx@ilstu.edu

Co-Teacher: xxxxxxxxx
Office: xxx Stevenson
Office Phone: 438-xxxx
e-mail: xxxxx@ilstu.edu

Office Hours: MWF 9-10 *or by appointment*

Office Hours: MWF 2-3 *or by appointment*

Course Information: English 101.10, Section 5 will meet 10-10:50 a.m. MTWRF in STV 250B

Catalog Description

Rhetorical approach to writing, taught through extensive collaborative drafting, revising, and editing. Emphasis on critical reading and analysis. Computer assisted. Specialized version (English 101.10) meets 5 hours/week.

Overview of Course

Welcome to *Language and Composition*, your freshman writing course. A couple of years ago, I read an article that said that, as a whole, university freshmen reported fearing their first year composition courses more than they feared anything else—including nuclear holocaust! I hope you haven't been feeling that way about this course, but if you have, let me put your mind at ease—*Language and Composition* isn't going to be NEARLY as bad as a nuclear holocaust.

Of course, I can't guarantee that it's going to be your favorite course. For one thing, you're going to have to be here five days a week, and I know at least some of you probably aren't too thrilled about that. For another thing, we're *all* going to have to work very hard in this class. I will guarantee, however, that if you work hard, you'll find that English 101.10 is one of the most useful courses you'll take this year. The skills you develop in this class are skills you can use in almost every other course you take at the university.

Like everything else, writing improves with practice. The more you do it, the better you get at it. The purpose of this course, then, is to give you lots of opportunities to write and to improve your writing. As you write, you're going to be developing your abilities to

- generate ideas for writing,
- explore and expand your ideas in a variety of ways,
- get your ideas down on paper,
- mold and shape those ideas into effective texts,
- look at your own texts with a critical eye,
- ask others to look at your texts with a critical eye,
- provide helpful feedback to your classmates,
- use effectively the feedback they provide you,
- copy-edit your own and others' texts, and
- look at and understand your own development as a writer.

That's a pretty ambitious agenda, but if you take it seriously and really *work* at it, you'll reap the rewards for years to come.

Expectations for Learning

The programmatic goals and learning outcomes for English 101 are discussed in great detail on pp. 5-8 of your *Course Guide*. You should familiarize yourself with these as soon as possible and review them from time to time during the course of the semester. They are the backbone of the course, and we will work diligently to meet them.

On a more personal level, however, I have one central expectation for each of you, and I would like you to think seriously about adopting it for yourself: *I hope each of you will finish this semester feeling that you have grown as a writer.*

My own philosophy is that “every writer is a developing writer.” As a voracious reader, I know that even published authors improve with practice. Mark Twain developed significantly as a writer between *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*. Louisa May Alcott wrote pulp fiction for years before she produced *Little Women* (although her early work wasn’t nearly as bad as she thought it was). Contemporary authors are much the same. Thus, if you read carefully, you can almost trace the development of your favorite writer through the body of his or her work.

If professional writers are always improving, don’t you think you can probably improve as well? I think you can, and my goal is to help you do just that.

Required Texts and Materials

Texts

The Mercury Reader, 2003 Edition

Course Guide for English 101: Language and Composition I, Spring 2003 Edition

The Redbird Reader, 2003 Edition

Things Your Grammar Never Told You (or a comparable handbook)

Materials

Flash drive (have in class every day)

Redbird card with money available for printing (I think about \$15.00 would be plenty)

Activated ISU e-mail account (should be checked at least once each day)

Course Policies

Attendance

As stated in the *Illinois State University Undergraduate Catalog, 2002-2003*, “students are expected to attend class regularly; and students are primarily responsible to the instructor in matters pertaining to class attendance.” *I expect that you will attend class every day.* If you can not attend, you should notify me of your absence in advance, either by phone (leave a message if I’m not there) or e-mail.

If you are absent for more than three days during the semester, your grade may suffer—not necessarily because you were absent, but because by being absent, you will have missed course content and classroom experiences that you need to have in order to improve as writers.

E-mail and Internet

It is important that we be able to communicate with each other both in and outside of class. E-mail is an efficient, effective, relatively painless way to do this. For this reason, I am going to ask

that you check your ISU e-mail account at least once a day. I, of course, will do the same. That way, we should have no trouble communicating.

Speaking of e-mail, I have no objection to your using the classroom computers to check your e-mail or surf the 'Net before and after class, but I am going to ask you to refrain from doing so during our scheduled time together. From the time I start class until the time I dismiss it, you need to be engaged in the activities planned for the day. Generally speaking, these will not include e-mailing your friends and family or surfing the web. I hope I won't need to say any more about this. Thanks for your cooperation.

Late Work

All work is due at the start of class on the date indicated on your Course Schedule. Please do not plan to print, organize, staple, etc. at that time. Do this in advance! If you are absent, please arrange to turn in your work before *as soon as possible*. I reserve the right to penalize late work appropriately, depending on when the work was assigned, when the assignment is submitted, and how frequently this happens.

Grading

At the end of each unit (approximately every 2-3 weeks), you will receive an advisory "unit grade." This will give you some indication of your progress in the class. At the end of the semester, however, you will be required to submit a portfolio, which will include all the work you have completed during the individual units *and* additional revisions of several papers. Basically, *the grade you earn for your portfolio will constitute your grade for the course*. You should be aware, however, that one of the criteria for a satisfactory portfolio is completeness. If you fail to complete assignments during the course of the semester, you will be submitting an incomplete—and therefore less-than-satisfactory—portfolio.

For a detailed explanation of how your grade will be determined, see pp. 131-138 of your *Course Guide*.

Computer Matters

This is, as you will quickly see, a technology-dependent class. I realize that some of you are going to be more comfortable with that than others, and that's okay. I'm perfectly willing to provide as much assistance as my (somewhat limited) expertise allows, and when I run out of expertise, we'll find some real experts to help. In the end, however, whether you love technology or hate it, you are responsible for using it and using it wisely.

In this class, the wise use of technology means saving everything—and saving it more than once. *Truly wise students will save ALL work in at least three places*. Possibilities include:

- flash drive
- the instructor folder (more about that later)
- your datastore01-home space on the university server (more about that later, too)
- the hard drive of your personal computer.

If you don't save your work in more than one place, you'll risk losing your work, and if you lose your work, I can't help you. This is your responsibility, and "the computer ate my homework" is not an acceptable excuse.

One more thing about computers: The computers in the STV 250 labs run Microsoft Word 7.0. So does the computer in my office. If you are using a different program to write your assignments, that's fine, **but you are responsible for submitting electronic versions of your work that, when opened in Word 7.0, look just the way you want them to look for evaluation.** That means you are responsible for making any necessary conversions and performing any necessary reformatting BEFORE you submit electronic versions of your work. Fortunately, there are computers available on campus pretty much around the clock, so if you have a personal computer that doesn't allow you to meet these requirements, you can always use a university computer to do your work.

Classroom Manners

Most of you have been at the University for at least a semester now, and you know how to behave in a university classroom. Please behave that way here. You also have a pretty good idea of how an instructor should conduct herself, and I promise to do that as well. Let's all **be respectful of ourselves and each other.** If we do that, our classroom will be a place where we're all comfortable; that's the essence of civility.

Intellectual Dishonesty and Cheating

Intellectual dishonesty involves the theft of other people's words or ideas, and that's unacceptable in this and all university courses. Cheating is letting someone else do your work for you. That's unacceptable as well.

If you don't do your own thinking and writing, you can hardly expect to improve as a thinker or writer. Therefore, I expect that the writing you submit to me will be your own work. That's the only way we can tell what kind of progress you're making!

For a detailed discussion of intellectual dishonesty and cheating, see pp. 183-184 in your *Course Guide*. You may also want to take a look at the *2002-2003 Undergraduate Catalog*, which contains the University's policies on these matters.

Special Needs

Any student needing to arrange a reasonable accommodation for a documented disability should contact Disability Concerns at 350 Fell Hall, 438-5853 (voice), 438-8620 (TTY).