

**Dr. Sara Schotland**

**Summer 2012**

**office hours: before or after class or by appointment**

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## **WRITING IN AN INTERDISCIPLINARY ENVIRONMENT BLHS 120-41**

### **Course Description**

This course is intended to teach students how to write cogent essays in a variety of disciplines, including public policy, social sciences, and criticism of literature and film. The goal is that students should *enjoy* research, writing, and discussing papers: the atmosphere in this class will be one of encouragement rather than one of negative correction.

In each class, we will discuss a short text--for example, short story, public policy paper, or film critique--that is thought provoking and engaging. The course will offer students latitude to elect essay topics that they find challenging and useful in light of their academic and personal interests. It is difficult to write well, and impossible to enjoy writing, about a topic that seems commonplace or boring. Students will write three short papers that include: an analysis of rhetoric in a Hollywood or documentary film; a critical reading of a short story; and an advocacy paper on an issue of public policy. In each instance the student has free choice of the text and the topic, although optional prompts will be provided for students who would like a suggestion. In addition, students will prepare a final term paper in an area of academic interest that makes use of the research tools and interdisciplinary approaches covered in the course.

### ***Learning Objectives***

After completing this course, a student should be able to write with improved confidence and skill in a variety of disciplines. The student should be able to:

- Generate ideas for papers and prepare a sketch outline to “kick off” the writing project
- Understand basic differences between essays and advocacy pieces
- Adjust writing depending on audience and purpose
- Write coherent sentences and well-organized paragraphs
- Avoid common grammatical errors
- Use library data bases and resources in a broad variety of disciplines, including the humanities and social sciences
- Conducting sophisticated internet research in the student’s field of interest
- Choose paper topics and thesis statements
- Critique literature and film
- Understand the components of rhetorical advocacy and how they can be marshaled to prepare a persuasive argument
- Understand the need for sourcing and demonstrate familiarity with citation styles (MLA, APA, Chicago)
- Prepare and present a term paper

I have structured the course to allow students optional opportunities to make revisions to papers to provide further writing practice and to step up grades.

## Schedule of Readings and Discussion

### *Class One May 22: Introduction to The Course and to College Writing*

- In class:
  - Review of syllabus and course requirements
  - Student introductions and indication of interests
  - How does academic writing differ from other writing?
  - What kinds of writing will we explore in this course—and why?
  - Discussion of common problems in writing and how to overcome them
    - Choosing a thesis statement
    - Organizing the paragraph
    - Organizing the paper
    - Building confidence about grammar: how grammar ~ yoga
  - Kicking off the writing project
    - How do you get started on a project and overcome “writer’s block”
    - How can a topical outline help? What is the role of the topical outline?
  - Example approaches
    - Building a one page advocacy essay
    - Film clip from “Star Trek” “Justice” episode -constructing your argument

### *Class Two May 29: Evaluating Rhetoric in Film*

Read Andrea Lunsford, *Everyday Writer*, Sections 30-37.

Read Williams, *Style*, Chapters 3 and 4

- In class:
  - Review of readings from Lunsford and Williams
  - Review of common grammar errors
  - View Film clips from *Dead Man Walking*
    - What is the “agenda” of this film?
    - Identifying the “rhetoric” in Hollywood films and documentaries

### *Class Three June 5: Rhetoric in Film, continued*

Read Lunsford, *Everyday Writer*, Sections 38-47

Read Williams, *Style*, Chapters 5 and 6

- In class:
  - Review of readings from Lunsford and Williams
  - Review of common punctuation errors
  - View film clips from *A Time to Kill*: What is the “agenda” of this film?

### *Class Four June 12: First Essays Due*

**Submit first essay: evaluating rhetoric in a film of your choice (three pages)**

- In class:
  - Peer Review and discussion of first essays

- View and discuss film clips from dystopian film

*Class Five June 19: Writing an Advocacy Piece on Public Policy Issues*

Read extract from Sharon Cowley's treatise on rhetorical advocacy (Blackboard)

Read extract from Martha Nussbaum's *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, and Species Membership* (Blackboard)

- In class:
  - What is rhetorical advocacy? How can this tool help you not only in your academic and professional writing, but also in expressing your opinions on government and social policies?
  - Examples to show how to structure advocacy essays

*Class Six June 26: Public Policy Advocacy Continued*

**Submit advocacy paper (four pages).** The rhetorical advocacy paper may be based on essay prompts dealing with challenging public policy questions that will be posted on Blackboard, or the student may initiate his or her own topic. Example topics might include: reform of immigration policy, medical ethics issues, legalization of marijuana for medical use, reform of the death penalty, health care, nuclear power, environmental policy, and respect for privacy.

- In class:
  - Peer review of rhetorical advocacy essays

*Class Seven July 3: Literary Criticism*

Read excerpts from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (Blackboard)

- In class:
  - Discussion of alternative approaches to literary criticism
  - Film clips

*Class Eight July 10: Literary Criticism-The Short Story*

Jamaica Kincaid's one paragraph "story," "Girl" (internet)

Read Jack London's "Chinago" (Internet)

Read Andre Du Bus's "Killings" (Blackboard)

**Submit critical essay on short story (three-four pages)**

- In class:
  - Discussion of student essays
  - Discuss short stories

*Class Nine July 17: What Research Tools Are Available in the Georgetown Library for the Term paper?*

**Submit (via email) brief description of term paper topic**

Read Reference guides on GU Library websites –Literature, social science, and a third field of interest

- In class:
  - Visit to library to discuss data bases with research librarian

*Class Ten July 24: How to Prepare a Term (Research) Paper*

Read Williams, *Style*, Appendix

Consult Lunsford, *Everyday Writer*, Part 9, Chapters on MLA, APA, and Chicago Styles [just browse]

- In class:
  - Selection of term paper topic
  - Discussion of the elements needed in a research term paper
  - Review of a sample student term paper
  - Selection of references—How many? What type?
  - Evaluating the quality of Internet cites
  - Evaluating the quality of published work
  - Formulation of the thesis statement
  - How do you marshal evidence and support for your position?
  - Discussion of alternative citation formats

*Class Eleven: July 31* **Submit (via email) draft term paper in advance of class**

- In class: Individual student meetings with professor to discuss your draft—this is an opportunity for you to get my feedback/suggestions on style and content

*Class Twelve Aug 7: Student Presentations of Term Papers*

Revise draft term paper

- In class: Presentations and discussion of term papers

**Submit term papers on Blackboard** (10-15 pages plus references)

**Course Requirements and Policies**

Meetings and office hours

This class meets on Tuesdays 6-9 20 during the May 21-August 10 session

Please see me before or after class or, if you prepare, arrange an appointment by email, [sschotland@cgsh.com](mailto:sschotland@cgsh.com) or [ss735@georgetown.edu](mailto:ss735@georgetown.edu).

Participation

Your active participation in class discussions is important: it will develop your oral presentation skills, it will make class a richer and more enjoyable experience for you and for your classmates, and it will affect your final grade. Students who have concerns about oral participation should

see me during office hours and we will work together on a strategy to encourage a comfortable level of participation.

Please note that three absences will be grounds to be involuntarily dropped from the course.

### Grading

Class Participation, including regular and constructive contribution to class discussion, active engagement in the in class peer review and discussion group sessions, and contributions to course blog 15%

Film Critique Rhetorical Analysis 15%

Rhetorical Advocacy paper 20%

Literature critique 20%

Research Term Paper 30%

A=excellent, B=good, C=adequate, D=minimum passing, F=failure

A = 93-96, A- =90-92, B+ =87-89, B =83-86, B- =80-82, C+ =77-79, C =73-76, C- =70-72, D+ =67-69, D =65-66, F =below 65

### Papers

All papers should be double spaced and posted to Blackboard before class on the date due.

Please bring an extra copy of your paper to class for peer review.

Papers will be graded when they are submitted. However, in some cases I will make a discretionary upward adjustment where the revised paper reflects that the student has made a conscientious effort to improve his or her initial submission. This half-grade upward adjustment is discretionary and will only be considered when (a) the initial paper submitted was complete, timely, and polished; and (b) the revised paper shows significant improvement based on comments received.

### **Required Texts**

Lunsford, Andrea. *The Everyday Writer*. 4<sup>th</sup> Edition. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's Press 2005. ISBN-13: 9780312452803.

Williams, Joseph. *Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace*. 9<sup>th</sup> edition. New York: Longman, 2006. ISBN-13: 978-0321479358

Feel free to purchase an earlier edition of these texts if you can obtain at better prices. All other readings will be posted on Blackboard

### **Writing Center**

Students are encouraged to visit the Writing Center (<http://writingcenter.georgetown.edu>) in the second floor of Lauinger Library. Please take advantage of this service to advance your analytical writing skills.

### **Incomplete Policy**

No incomplete grades will be given in the course, barring exceptional circumstances such as death in the family or serious illness.

### **Late Policy**

The student's grade on a paper will be lowered a half grade for each day that an assignment is late, unless prior to the due date an extension has been granted.

### **Georgetown Honor System**

The university community seeks to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity, and students should be apprised of the consequences of violating these honor codes. Should the student be found guilty of plagiarism or cheating, he or she will be given an automatic "F" for the course and will receive further university disciplinary action. For information on the University's policy on academic integrity, please consult the Academic Honor System, which can be found on the Georgetown University website:

<http://library.georgetown.edu/odyssey/plagiarism.htm>.

Students are expected to follow Georgetown's honor code unconditionally. You will need to read the honor code material located at [www.georgetown.edu/honor](http://www.georgetown.edu/honor).

In particular, please read the following documents: Honor Council Pamphlet, "What is Plagiarism?"; "Sanctioning Guidelines"; and "Expedited Sanctioning Process."

Submitting material in fulfillment of the requirements of this course means that you will abide by the Georgetown honor pledge:

In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.

### **American with Disabilities Act**

Georgetown University complies fully with the ADA requirements and encourages students with disabilities to receive the extra time and/or assistance needed to complete their courses. Please see the instructor about your specific needs and take advantage of the University Services for Students with Disabilities (see <http://ldss.georgetown.edu>). If you believe you have a disability, then you should contact the Academic Resource Center at 202-687-8354 ([arc@georgetown.edu](mailto:arc@georgetown.edu)) for further information. The Center is located in the Leavey Center, Suite 335. The Academic Resource Center is the campus office responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students with disabilities and for determining reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and University policies.