Fall, 2004
3020 Topics in Writing: Hamlet

Dr. Karen Gasser
Office: TB-1, Room 6. (TB-1 is between Sewall Hall and Clare Small Gym, across from the Rec. Center.)
Office Hours: Th 9-12 – or M-F by appointment.
Mailbox: TB-1, main hallway, against the wall just past Room 113
WRTG office: ENVD 1B
E-mail: Karen.Gasser@Colorado.Ed
Office Phone: 492-2613 (includes voice mail).
Home Phone: (303) 922-8051 (Feel free to call, weekends included – before 8:30 p.m.)

Question it, Horatio (1.1.47)

Required Texts:
- Written drafts for and by the class (consider these as part of the course textbook costs)
- Articles on the Program for Writing and Rhetoric (PWR) Website or on
  Electronic Reserve, as assigned
- A CU email account that you check regularly

Required Equipment: Buy, and use, a small stapler

Recommended: Videos and DVD's on reserve at Norlin Library Media Center, including
performances by Sir Laurence Olivier, Richard Burton, Mel Gibson,
Kenneth Branagh, Derek Jacobi

Course Description: A paper is never finished; it is just due.
In this writing course, geared to juniors and seniors across the disciplines, we have the luxury of focusing,
for a semester, on Shakespeare’s Hamlet, which has been cited as the greatest work by the greatest writer in
the English language. We will begin the semester by clarifying the facts and discussing the issues presented
in this play and, throughout the semester, we will re-consider these in the light of critical essays.
The emphasis of the course will be upon the written expression of your critical thinking: that is, the aim is
to help you to develop and apply skills in critical thinking in order to write – for an audience – clearly,
forcefully, coherently, gracefully. Instruction will emphasize strategies of analysis and argument. To this
end, we will experiment with an opening paragraph which introduces the need for your paper (its occasion),
its thesis, and its projected organization (i.e. an outline of reasons supporting your thesis), with body
paragraphs that launch and develop points from the projected organization, and with a conclusion which
addresses your work’s significance. You will thereby learn to empower your point through creating and
supporting a necessary and interpretive (as opposed to factual) thesis; shaping the interrelationships
among that thesis, the need for it, and the support for it; and demonstrating, in depth, why your quotation or
eample helps support it. In the process, you will unleash a creativity which will equip you to produce
cutting-edge work. You will thus equip yourself to excel at standards required for writing across the
disciplines and in the corporate and civic as well as the academic world.

Course Work
1. Reading and rereading of Hamlet
2. Short analyses of Hamlet + assessments of critical articles – designed to develop skills required for
   two papers of about five pages each. The first major paper will examine the play (or a portion of
   the play) analytically; the second major paper will argue against, or expand upon, another critical
   viewpoint. Expect to revise extensively.

   How much rewriting do you do?
   Hemingway: It depends. I rewrote the ending of Farewell to Arms, the last page
of it, thirty-nine times before I was satisfied.

   Was there some technical problem there?
   What was it that had stumped you?
   Hemingway: Getting the words right.
   (Paris Review Interview)
3. Critiques of classmates' drafts, prepared outside of class. The class will be conducted as a workshop where discussion will focus on the best ways to develop and improve paragraphs and papers. I may collect written comments without prior announcement.

4. Quizzes on reading, peer drafts, and grammar/style. These may be made up only in an emergency situation.

   *It is the enjoyment of every step in the process of doing; everything, not only the isolated piece we label art. If accomplishing is the only goal, all that it takes to reach that goal is too slow, too fatiguing – an obstacle to what you want to achieve. If you want to rush to the accomplishment, it is an inevitable disappointment. Then you rush to something else. The disappointment is reaped over and over again. But if every step is pleasant, then the accomplishment becomes even more, because it is nourished by what is going on.*  
   — Sue Bender, Plain and Simple

**Requirements:**

1. **Turn in Drafts and Final Papers On Time.** **Staple** all drafts with my written comments to the back of the latest copy you turn in to me.

   Although ungraded, each of your drafts is necessary for class discussion and necessary to each stage of your own writing. Therefore, all papers must pass through the workshop process in order to receive a grade.

   Late, incomplete (including not having the required number of drafts for your classmates and me), or underdeveloped drafts for the major papers will cause the final grade of the paper to be reduced by one-third for each instance (B+ to B, for example) and will not be reviewed, in class or in office hours, until after your turn comes up in the next workshop rotation.

   **When you turn in my copy of each draft, you will need to staple the back all previous draft with my comments for that assignment-in-progress.**

   - As a rule, a late final essay will not be accepted; those accepted may receive a lowered grade.

   **Plan ahead.** Develop your own strategies for revising each draft in time for its next workshop.

   Provide for absences: have a classmate bring work due to class or deliver it to my mail slot in the main hall of TB-1 by 7:45 a.m. the day of that class period.

   **Because your draft is necessary for class discussion and your classmates', as well as your own development, each draft received after the beginning of class will result in a deduction of your grade on the final essay.** Because your classmates' downloading capacities are variable, and because your classmate may not own a personal computer, **emailing late drafts does not count.**

2. **Use the Following Format:**

   - All work must be printed from word processors or typed: use 10- or 12-point font.
   - Number the pages of your draft.
   - My copies: double space/one-inch margins (top, bottom, sides)/one side only.
   - Staple pages (before class)
   - **Heading:** Place identifying information (name, course section, **current** date) in the upper right-hand corner.
   - My copies (2 for each assignment): staple all previous drafts with my comments to back of one of these copies.

3. **Attend, punctually** (*Ninety per cent of success in life is just showing up. Woody Allen*)

   Because this is a workshop class, punctual attendance is mandatory. If you arrive late, you miss important announcements and you disrupt the workshop. **Late arrival or early departure from class on three separate occasions will constitute an absence.** You are allowed **three absences**, with no explanation required. Six or more absences (two weeks of class) will lower your final grade by one full letter (ex: B+ to C+); more than six absences will cause you to fail the course unless you provide me with a well-documented excuse. I do not distinguish between "excused" and "unexcused" absences. Absences just before and just after fall break and Thanksgiving are especially to be avoided. **If you must miss class, you are responsible for getting any missed material, even if you are sick. Go to my box in TB-1 to obtain copies of your classmates' drafts in time to have these prepared for the next class hour.**
Documented, extenuating circumstances, such as hospitalization, will be assessed and accommodated on a case-by-case basis.

4. Participate
A workshop is collaborative. Your written and spoken participation is as important as your attendance. You will be graded on your willingness and ability to expand beyond your personal strengths and weaknesses in writing: that is, on your maturing ability to attend to the writing of your classmates as if it were your own. It can be difficult to give and accept public feedback of your, and your classmates’, writing-in-progress, but by committing to developing and applying criteria to careful consideration and appraisal of each others’ work, you will find that as you sharpen your ability to analyze the writing of others, your own writing will improve.
We all start at the same point: you can, and are expected to, demonstrate that you have absorbed the concepts and standards presented in class as the course progresses.

“Thoughtful” consideration is not evaluative – as in “good work.” It is, instead, analytical: we will learn to discern the logic, organization, and expression of the draft before you and to make suggestions for clarification and development. The focus will always remain on the writing, not on the writer. Remember this when it is your paper we are reviewing; defensiveness will not only undermine the benefits you can reap from the workshop format, it is unrealistic. All professional writing gets reviewed and revised before publication.

5. Stay in touch
You are expected to act upon written comments for all drafts. Failure to respond to comments at each stage – i.e. on each draft – will lower the final paper grade. If clarification is needed, it is your responsibility to e-mail or phone me: misunderstanding is no excuse.
Check e-mail: From time to time, you will receive class update announcements via e-mail.
University policy requires that you check for such updates.

Plagiarism: In cases of suspected plagiarism, I comply with CU’s Honor Code (see CU web site http://www.colorado.edu/academic/honorcode). Papers submitted by any student, written in part or in whole by someone other than that student, shall be considered to constitute fraud under the University Honor Code. Your work may, at my discretion, be evaluated through TurnItIn.com, a plagiarism service provided to all faculty members at CU-Boulder: this service retains a copy of the submitted work for future comparisons. If you submit the ideas of others as your own through failure to document exact words or a paraphrased sequence of ideas, or by any means whatsoever -- at any stage, including drafts – your work will receive an automatic F for the assignment and/or for the course, and the matter will be reported to the Dean. Ignorance is no excuse.

Grading (The race goes not always to the swift but to those who keep running): Will allow for time to grow in the skills needed to produce your best possible short assignments and full-length papers. Because your participation is crucial not only to the workshop but to your own growth as a writer, it will count 15% of your final grade.

Grading Scale for Papers (85% of final grade)
Late work, insufficient copies for the entire class, and incorrect formatting incur, for each failure, a 1/3-letter deduction of the final paper grade.

A Exceptional in content, organization, style, and mechanics; insightful and developed in depth.
B Well above average in development and style; command of mechanics (grammar, punctuation, spelling) and organization; needs further depth.
C Merely correct, adequate at best; needs further depth, clearer organization, and/or work on mechanics (C+ is a decent grade; C- suggests major areas for improvement).
D Deficient in content, poorly organized; contains too many distracting mechanical errors
F Incoherent, disastrously flawed, or not turned in when due
Grading Scale for Class Participation (15% of final grade)
You are all responsible for the following participation:
1) Arrive in class on time (unless you inform me ahead of time of any problem).
2) Submit your own work on time, with all elements required (such as number of copies requested/ multi-page drafts already stapled/ pages already numberd/ previous drafts with my comments already stapled to back of latest draft).
3) Revise, make corrections for each of your own drafts as noted or seek timely help.
4) Read and mark your colleagues’ drafts before you come to class: be ready, at the beginning of class, to comment on their occasion, thesis, major supporting reasons, line of argument, and development by analysis of supporting evidence. Guidelines will be presented and reviewed: you and your peers are expected to thereby equip yourselves to contribute insightfully to each draft in progress.
5) If you have been absent, pick up your classmates’ drafts from the class file in my box. Have these prepared before you return to class.
6) Civility: refrain from private conversations. Your questions, thoughts will benefit the entire class.
(Note: those who are uncomfortable speaking in class can still contribute significantly by (1) submitting drafts which demonstrate commitment to the course goals and (2) submitting thoughtful written comments on your peers’ drafts.)

Special Note to Students with Special Needs:
- If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. (303-492-8671, Willard 322, www.Colorado.edu/disability services.
- If you speak English as a second language, please contact me before the third class meeting so that I can better assist you, and/or refer you to appropriate services on campus or to ESL sections of this course.

Prospectus (subject to tweaking):
Week 1 (Aug 23-27)
Introduction to course and overview of Hamlet. Diagnostic grammar quiz and short written work
Discussion of Hamlet: short written work

Weeks 2-4 (Aug 30- Sept 17)
Sept. 6: Labor Day Holiday
Continue discussion of Hamlet: short written work
Sept. 8: Deadline for dropping course

Weeks 5-9 (Sept.20-Oct 22)
Oct. 1st: Fall Break
Begin Workshop: Analysis Essay
Oct 22 (week 9) – Analysis Essay due: Groups A and B
Oct 25 (week 10) – Analysis Essay due: Groups C and D

Weeks 9 – 11 (Oct.20-29)
Discussion of critical readings: short assignments
Begin Argument Essay

Weeks 12-16 (Nov.1 – Dec. 8)
Workshop Argument Essay
Dec. 8 – Argument Essay due

Please feel free to visit during my office hours or to set up appointments with me at other times.
Final Thoughts: Creativity springs unsolicited from a well-prepared mind. This is a skills class. It takes consistent practice, over time, to realize results. Creativity cannot be taught: it is a God-given ability. Our goal is to develop the well-prepared mind — through an emphasis on fundamental skills and concepts, continual practice and gentle building of concepts over time — that will enable your innate creativity to take flight. Above all, remember that writing well is lonely and hard, and that all writers are vulnerable and tense — but try to enjoy yourself. (William Zinsser, On Writing Well)