SPRING, 2005
3020 TOPICS IN WRITING: HAMLET

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Question it, Horatio (1.1.47)

Required Texts:
- Written drafts for and by the class (consider these as part of the course textbook costs)
- The Elements of Style, Strunk and White, 4th Edition
- 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, 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.
Instruction will emphasize strategies of analysis and argument: 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.
With audience in mind, 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 interpretative (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 example 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 and 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.
   (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 to the back all previous drafts 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.

2. **Plan ahead.**

1) Develop your own process for _ongoing revision_ of each draft.

2) Have alternate strategies for word processor/print-out/delivery _emergencies_. Use your nearest Kinkos (28th and Pearl or the Basemar Shopping Center) – for both word processing and copying failures elsewhere. Always keep a hard-drive and a backup copy.

3) 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_.

3. **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:**
  - upper right-hand corner
  - single space
  - name, course section, current date

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_ to or _early departure_ from class on three separate occasions will constitute one 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 _spring break_ 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/great job.” 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.

Classroom behavior: students and faculty at CU each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Students who fail to adhere to behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Faculty have the professional responsibility to treat students with understanding, dignity, and respect; to guide classroom discussion; and to set reasonable limits on the manner in which students express opinions. See policies at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html and at http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html/student_code

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.

All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. In addition to plagiarism, violations of this policy may include cheating, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-725-2273). Students found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Additional information on the Honor Code can be found at
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. Emphasis will be placed upon your progress toward analyzing, as opposed to praising/ denouncing (i.e. evaluating), your classmates’ work in progress.

Grading Scale for Papers (85% of final grade: 80% for combined major papers/ 5% for short analyses)

Late work, insufficient copies for the entire class, and incorrect formatting incur, for each infraction, a 1/3-letter deduction of the final paper grade.

A     Insightful and developed in depth. Excellent organization, style, and mechanics.
B     Well above average in content, style, and 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.
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 on time (unless you inform me ahead of time of any problem).
2) Submit your work on time, with all elements required (such as number of copies requested/ multi-page drafts already stapled/ pages already numbered/ 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, making notes on personal calendar, etc. Your questions, thoughts, and attention 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.)

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.
-Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams or assignments. In this class, the attendance policy of three excused absences includes religious holidays. See policy details at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fue_relig.html.
Prospectus (subject to tweaking):
Week 1 (Jan. 10 - 14)
Introduction to course and overview of Hamlet.
Discussion of Hamlet: short written work, diagnostic grammar quiz.

Weeks 2-4 (Jan. 19 - Feb. 4)
Jan. 17: Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday
Continue discussion of Hamlet: short written work

Weeks 5-9 (Feb. 7 – Mar. 11)
Begin Workshop: Analysis Essay
Mar. 11 (week 9) – Analysis Essay due: Groups A and B
Mar. 14 (week 10) – Analysis Essay due: Groups C and D

Week 10 (Mar. 14 – 18)
Discussion of critical readings: short assignments
Begin Argument Essay

Week 11 (Mar. 21 – 25): Spring Break

Weeks 12-16 (Mar. 28 – Apr. 29)
Workshop Argument Essay
May 2 - 4 – 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)

My words fly up, my thoughts remain below.
Words without thoughts never to heaven go.
Hamlet 3.3.96-7