WRTG 3020: TOPICS IN WRITING
READING AND WRITING CULTURE

Instructor: Dr. Lynda McNeil
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Hours: MWF 2-3 and by appt.
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Bonnie Stone Sunstein and Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater. FieldWorking: Reading and
Research Portfolio: a 3-hole spiral notebook (9 x 11)
A good, college-level dictionary (recommended)
Copies of student drafts in hard copies or in e-mail doc. attachments.

Course Description: The primary purpose of this course is to help you develop critical thinking
skills by writing clear, interesting, and well-organized essays for an academic audience. The course
will focus on two principal modes of academic discourse: analysis and argument. To approach
these types of discourse, you will first write an ethnographic essay (analysis) about an American
culture or subculture. The course begins with a focus on close observation, critical reading of
ethnographic essays, and the writing process involved in crafting an analysis of your selected
subculture. Next, your main writing project will entail academic research about the same
subculture or a new cultural topic, in writing a Research Essay that takes an argumentative
position on a problem or debated issue. Throughout the course, you will keep a Research Portfolio,
a part of which will be submitted for a grade at the end of the course. Because workshopping
student papers will be a central part of this course, you will be asked to act as a reader/respondent
for fellow students’ work, as well as to accept constructive criticism from them. Be prepared not
only to write in and out of class, but also to revise. While background knowledge in anthropology
or sociology may be beneficial, it is not a prerequisite.

CLASS POLICIES

1. Attend and Participate. You will be allowed three excused absences during the
semester. You may take them for any reason whatsoever, including illness, and all
absences, no matter their cause, will be counted toward the allowed number. Absences
four and beyond will lower your final grade one increment (A to A- to B+, etc.) for each
absence unless you provide me with a well-documented excuse (hospitalization, family
death, etc.) Missing six or more classes may result in automatic failure. Classes begin
promptly and I will take roll at the beginning of each class; if you miss roll, it’s your
responsibility to remind me after class to mark you present. Any two tardies will count as
one absence, so endeavor to be on time.

2. Turn in Assignments. If you don’t bring papers to class, we can’t critique them. All
assignments done outside of class must be typed, double-spaced, stapled and paginated. Hand-
written papers will not be accepted. Your papers should have your name, the date, the course and
section number, and the paper and draft number, for example:
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Annie Donnelly  Brodie Winter
WRTG 3020-300  April 1, 2000
February 23, 2000  WRTG 3020-300

You will, on occasion, be expected to provide xerox copies or e-mail doc. attachments of drafts (save as doc. only) to the other members of the class for discussion; see the syllabus for scheduled copies of drafts due. Always bring a few extra hard copies when e-mailing in case someone didn’t get your attachment. It is important to attend class for the distribution of drafts when due, as well as for their workshopping in class. Drafts will not be graded; however, you must turn in each draft on time. Failure to do so will impact your class participation grade. Late Final Drafts will not be accepted except under extraordinary circumstances.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. You will be writing and revising two fairly short papers in this course: an Ethnographic Essay (analysis) and a Research Essay (academic argument). In addition, you will be required to keep fieldnotes and homework writing assignments in a Research Portfolio. For the Research Essay, you will learn how to find scholarly sources, electronic and in print, on a subculture of your choice. We will hold class in Norlin Library for a Library Seminar and for an Archive Seminar.

2. Most writing assignments will require some in-class workshopping and revision of preliminary, ungraded drafts. All graded papers must undergo in-class workshopping with copies provided to the class in hard copy of electronically in an e-mail doc. attachment. You will be scheduled to be a critical reader for workshops; critical readers complete a Peer Response Sheet that is returned to Dr. M, who grades it (check-plus-minus) before returning it to the author. Please note, changing topics for the final draft of a paper is unacceptable; every paper submitted for a grade must undergo in-class workshopping and peer response. (See Workshopping Policy handout.)

3. You are required to keep a Research Portfolio (a 3-hole spiral binder, 9 x 11) for collecting and reflecting upon fieldnotes and for homework critical reading writing assignments. I will collect a part of this portfolio with a reflective essay at the end of the semester.

4. You will have reading assignments during the course of the semester. When a reading assignment is noted in bold-faced type as “due,” you are responsible for knowing the content of those readings. In addition, I will give two reading exams, one at midterm and one at the end of the course. (See the syllabus for specific dates.)

5. Note that because all revision will take place before the final draft is due, it may be crucial to your success to meet with me for a conference before submitting the final draft. In conferences, I prefer discussing drafts that I have had time to read at least a day or so ahead of time.

6. Spelling and grammatical errors should be corrected by the final draft of all papers. This is not a grammar class; consequently, it is your responsibility to clear up grammar and sentence expression problems. However, I will be happy to answer any grammar-related questions you may
have outside of class and/or refer you to PWR Writing Center tutors. See the PWR web site for the list of tutors.

GRADES

Half of your grade (50%) will be based on Final Drafts of the Ethnographic Essay (20%) and Research Essay (30%), The Research Portfolio, including the final reflective essay, is worth 15%. The midterm and final Reading Exams are worth 10% each (20%). Oral and written participation in whole class, library seminar, and peer response groups will account for the remaining 15% of your course grade.

Grading Scale for Papers:

A excellent in form and content; clean, clear style, no mechanical errors.
B a good, interesting paper with no major flaws.
C adequate, reasonably competent; a mixture of strengths and weaknesses.
D poor in content, form, or mechanics.
F incoherent, disastrously flawed, or not turned in when due.

Grading Scale for Participation:

A always prepared for class; participates without being called on; criticisms of other student papers show insight, close reading; comments clear, succinct, and helpful.
B generally prepared for class; occasionally participates without being called on; criticisms of other student papers demonstrate mastery of the course goals; comments generally clear and helpful.
C sometimes prepared for class; only participates when called on; mastery of the course goals generally evident, but criticisms of other student papers, although somewhat helpful, demonstrate a less than thorough reading of the paper.
D inadequately prepared or never participates unless called on; criticisms of other student papers demonstrate a superficial or inaccurate reading, at best; comments demonstrate a failure to master the course goals.
F disruptive to class (talking off topic or off task, continual tardiness, etc.); unprepared when called on; unable or unwilling to participate in class discussions.

Student with disabilities: I encourage students with specific physical, psychiatric, or learning disabilities to discuss with me after class or during my office hours appropriate accommodations. You will need to provide documentation of your disability to the Diability Services Office in Willard 322 (303-492-8671).

Plagiarism: Submitting another student's work as your own or failing to properly credit another writer's words or ideas will result in an automatic "F" for the course and possible, broader disciplinary action on the part of the university, such as expulsion. See CU's Honor Code at www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode. This is not to say that you can't seek or follow the verbal advice of a fellow student, but you must write the papers yourself. Seek guidance from Writing Center tutors; guidance from friends may be misleading.
ASSIGNMENTS:

August 22  
*Introduction to the Course*: What is ethnographic writing?  
Distribute syllabus and course policies. Complete the “Self-Evaluation Survey” (handout).  
Assign:  
Reading Assignment (RA) 1: *FieldWorking* (FW), Ch. 1, pp. 1-51.  
Kindly send an e-mail greeting to Dr. M for our class e-mail list.

August 24  
In-class ice-breaker and discuss results of “Self-Evaluation Survey.”  
Due:  
Hand-in “Self-Evaluation Survey.”  
Assign:  
Read and bring a copy of “Body Ritual Among the Nacirema,” FW, 10-16 and complete Action item in Box 2, p. 15.

August 26  
*II. Understanding Cultures*. Stepping in and out: “Body Ritual Among the Nacirema,” FW, 10-16.  
Due:  
Bring the assigned reading and action item in Box 2, p. 15.  
Assign:  
(RA) 2: *The Curious Writer* (CW), Ch. 2-3, pp. 37-91 on “Reading as Inquiry” and “Ways of Inquiring.” For next class: read and be prepared to discuss “Church Opens Doors to Vietnamese” in FW, p. 17.

August 29  
Taking an Ethnographic Perspective and Posing Questions. Discuss “Church Opens Doors to Vietnamese” and small group work identifying the “cultural moment” in news article (handout).  
Due:  
Read and bring “Church Opens Doors to Vietnamese.”  
Assign:  
Continue RA 1-2 (due Sept. 9).

August 31  
Continue small group work identifying the “cultural moment” in news article (handout).  
Due:  
Complete and hand-in small group ethnographic exercise.  
Assign:  
Read FW, pp. 43-45 on the Research Portfolio and bring your portfolio to next class.

September 2  
Discuss the Research Portfolio course requirement, including reading responses and fieldnotes for the Ethnographic Essay.  
Due:  
Bring FW text to class and your Research Portfolio.  
Assign:  
For Sept. 7, read pp. 24-41 on “An Ethnographic Study: Friday Night at Iowa 80” (handout questions for discussion).
September 5  
**Labor Day Holiday. No Class.**

September 7  
Whole class discussion and small group work in reading “Iowa 80” as inquiry.  
Due: Be prepared to discuss “Iowa 80” and to work in small “reading as inquiry” groups.  
Assign: RA 3: CW, Ch. 1, pp. 1-35 on “Writing as Inquiry,” Ch. 10, pp. 389-417 on “Writing an Ethnographic Essay,” and pp. 410-415 on generating ideas; also see FW, pp. 57-58 on brainstorming about sub-cultures. Make a list of ideas for your Ethnographic Essay in your Research Portfolio.

September 9  
Continue discussing “Iowa 80” reading and small group work.  
Due: Be prepared to discuss “Iowa 80” and to work in small “reading as inquiry” groups.  
Assign: Visit the Boulder History Museum, the CU Heritage Center (Old Main), the Henderson Museum OR another place on campus or in downtown Boulder with ethnographic potential) and choose one to describe with chart in CW, no. 2 on p. 407. Make chart for your Research Portfolio.

September 12 
**II. Ethnographic Essay (Analysis).** Discuss ideas for Ethnographic Essay and your chart from CW, p. 407, no. 2. FieldWords “Jeopardy” quiz.  
Due: Finish Reading Assignments 1-2. Bring your Research Portfolio with list of ideas for your Ethnographic Essay assignment.  

September 14  
Discuss “I See Me As You See Me” and your responses to the 3 questions under “Evaluating the Essay,” p. 434.  
Due: Read and bring “I See Me As You See Me” (CW, pp. 428-434) and bring Research Portfolio with response to the 3 questions under “Evaluating the Essay,” p. 434.  
Assign: RA 4: FW, Ch. 2, pp. 55-101 on exploratory writing about a subculture. In your Research Portfolio, write the Action item for Box 4, p. 63 and begin writing Fieldnotes for your Ethnographic Essay subculture.
September 16
Due:
Assign.
Continue close reading and analysis of "I See Me As You See Me." Same as for 9/14.
Read CW, 415-417 on posing questions and FW, 59-62; 83-86; complete the Action item in Box 6 on pp. 83-84 in your Research Portfolio.

September 19
Due:
Assign.
Sharing your initial Fieldnotes (Action item in Box 6 on pp. 83-84) in small group workshop.
Bring your Research Portfolio and be prepared to share your Fieldnotes and to receive feedback from your group.
Begin writing your Ethnographic Essay draft for next week's workshops.

September 21
Due:
Assign.
"Ethnographers and Informants" exercise and collaborative writing.
In-class exercise
Small groups work on a collaborative ethnographic sketch.
Read CW, pp. 418-426 on sketch to draft and pp. 669-691 on student workshopping responsibilities.

September 23
Due:
Assign.
Continue "Ethnographers and Informants" collaborative writing.
In-class writing a collaborative ethnographic sketch.
Finish writing your Ethnography Essay draft for next week's workshops. Follow workshop schedule: Group 1 sends drafts to class by e-mail (24 hr. rule).

September 26
Due:
Assign.
Ethnographic Essay whole class workshop (Group 1) with assigned critical readers.
Group 1 sends drafts to class by e-mail (24 hr. rule).
Group 2 sends drafts to class by e-mail (24 hr. rule).

September 28
Due:
Assign.
Ethnographic Essay whole class workshop (Group 2) with assigned critical readers.
Group 2 sends drafts to class by e-mail (24 hr. rule).
Group 3 sends drafts to class by e-mail (24 hr. rule).

September 30
Due:
Assign.
Ethnographic Essay whole class workshop (Group 3) with assigned critical readers.
Group 3 sends drafts to class by e-mail (24 hr. rule).
Read CW, pp. 550-59 (using sources); 559-593 (MLA style)
October 3
Independent research assignment to prepare for Library Seminar (Oct. 5).
Due: Complete the research techniques assignment.
Assign: RA 5: CW 507-532 on research techniques and “writing in the middle.” Next class meets in Norlin E303.

October 5
Due: Bring your completed research techniques assignment.
Assign: Prepare for your Midterm Reading Exam (on RA 1-4): a fill-in-the-blanks and short essay test.

October 7
Due: Be prepared to take the Midterm Reading Exam (RA 1-4).

October 10
Due: Bring the reading in CW and answers to questions 1-4 on p. 447.
Assign: Ethnographic Essay final draft (to be graded) due Oct. 12.

October 12
Discuss Research Essay as a form of argument.
Due: Ethnographic Essay final draft (to be graded).
Assign: Read CW, student essay, “We Need the Sun,” pp. 497-504 and answer questions 1-4 on p. 505 in your Research Portfolio.

October 14
Fall Break. No Class.

October 17
Discuss “We Need the Sun,” pp. 497-504 and answer questions 1-4 on p. 505 in your Research Portfolio.
Due: Be prepared to discuss “We Need the Sun” and answers to questions 1-4 on p. 505.
Assign: Read CW, pp. 476-484 on focusing questions, pp., 481-83 on a researchable question, and pp. 487-495 on writing: sketch to draft.
October 19  
Writing the Research Essay: in-class writing on focusing questions for research essay argument.  
Due: Be prepared to discuss the readings on research questions.  
Assign: The next class meets in Norlin Archives (basement level).

October 21  
Archive Seminar. Class meets in Norlin Archives (basement level).  
Due: David Hays, Norlin Archivist and historian, will lead the seminar.  
Assign: Write a 2-page proposal for your Research Essay (one copy) for oral presentations next week. Group 2 presents on Oct. 24.

October 24  
Proposal for Research Essay oral presentations (5 min. each):  
Due: Group 2 presents; one hard copy for Dr. M.  
Assign: Group 2 members each present (5 min each).  
Group 3 prepare to present on Oct. 26.

October 26  
Proposal for Research Essay oral presentations (5 min. each):  
Due: Group 3 presents; one hard copy for Dr. M.  
Assign: Group 3 members each present (5 min each).  
Group 1 prepare to present on Oct. 28.

October 28  
Proposal for Research Essay oral presentations (5 min. each):  
Due: Group 1 presents; one hard copy for Dr. M.  
Assign: Read CW, pp. 491-495 on workshopping, revising, and polishing the draft. Group 3 prepares for workshopping the partial draft, Oct. 31; send a copy to the class list (24 hr. rule).

October 31  
Whole class workshopping partial drafts (2-3 pages) of Research Essay. Group 3 workshopped.  
Due: Group 3 provides partial drafts (e-mailed, 24 hr. rule).  
Assign: Group 1 prepares for workshopping the partial draft, Nov. 2; send a copy to the class list (24 hr. rule).

November 2  
Whole class workshopping partial drafts (2-3 pages) of Research Essay. Group 1 workshopped.  
Due: Group 1 provides partial drafts (e-mailed, 24 hr. rule).  
Assign: Group 2 prepares for workshopping the partial draft, Nov. 2; send a copy to the class list (24 hr. rule).
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November 4
Whole class workshopping partial drafts (2-3 pages) of Research Essay. Group 2 workshopped.
Due: Group 2 provides partial drafts (e-mailed, 24 hr. rule).
Assign: RA 7: Read CW, Ch. 13, pp. 549-593 on using and citing sources.

November 7
Discuss using and citing sources (MLA style documentation).
Due: Be prepared to discuss the above.
Assign: Begin to review for Final Reading Exam on RA 5-7 (Nov. 11).

November 9
Review for Reading Exam on RA 5-7.
Due: Be prepared to ask questions about RA 5-7.
Assign: Prepare for Reading Exam on RA 5-7 (Nov. 11).

November 11
Final Reading Exam on RA 5-7.
Due: Be prepared to take RA 5-7.
Assign: Write your full draft for Research Essay workshopping next week.

November 14-18
Research Essay full draft small group workshops all week.
Due: On Nov. 14, bring copies of the full draft for your group and for Dr M. Decide in your group who will be workshopped on each day.
Assign: Bring materials you will need to do in-class revising of your full Research Essay draft next week.

November 21-23
In-class revision of your full Research Essay draft.
Conferences held both in and out of class.

November 25
Thanksgiving Holiday. No Class.

November 28-30
Style and Clarity. In-class self-editing and polishing of your Research Essay full draft.

December 2
Research Essay final draft (to be graded). Discuss Writer's Portfolio assignment (due Dec. 7 in office in ENVD)

December 5
FCQs administered in class. Oral presentations (5 min. each) Related to your Research Essay learning and writing process.

December 7
Oral presentations (5 min. each) related to your Research Essay learning and writing process. Portfolio assignment due.
Last class. No final exam.