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
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

REQUIREMENTS

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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You will, on occasion, be expected to provide xerox copies or e-mail doc. attachments of drafts (save as doc. or rtf,) 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, for homework critical reading writing assignments, and for workshop drafts and peer response sheets. 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.
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 field notes 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 Disability 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 possibly, broader disciplinary action on the part of the university, such as expulsion. See CU's Honor Code at [www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode](http://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:

January 18  
*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.*

January 20  
In-class ice-breaker and discuss the “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.

January 23  
**I. 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.*

January 25  
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 2/6).

January 27  
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.

January 30  
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 Feb. 1, read pp. 24-41 on “An Ethnographic Study: Friday Night at Iowa 80” (handout questions for discussion).
February 1
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.

February 3
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.

February 6
II. Ethnographic Essay (Analysis). Discuss analysis and ideas for Ethnographic Essay and your chart from CW, p. 407, no. 2.
Due: Finish RA 1-2. Bring your Research Portfolio with list of ideas for your Ethnographic Essay assignment.

February 8
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, using the double-entry format.

February 10
Ethnographic Essay: description (data) and analysis of data.
Due: Write action item for Box 4, p. 63 and begin writing Fieldnotes.
Assign: Read CW, 415-417 on posing and responding (thesis) to questions and FW, 59-62; 83-86; complete the Action item in Box 6 on pp. 83-84 in your Research Portfolio.
February 13
Using your Fieldnotes (Action item in Box 6 on pp.83-84) to write your Ethnographic Essay.
Due: Bring your Research Portfolio and be prepared to discuss your Fieldnotes and to beginning data description and analysis.
Assign: Begin writing your Ethnographic Essay draft for next week’s workshops.

February 15
“Ethnographers and Informants” (data and analysis) exercise and collaborative writing.
Due: In-class ethnographic data analysis activity.
Assign: Small groups work on a collaborative ethnographic sketch.
Read CW, pp. 418-426 on sketch to draft and pp. 669-691 on student workshop responsibilities.

February 17
Continue “Ethnographers and Informants” collaborative writing.
Due: Finish RA 3-4. In-class writing a collaborative ethnographic sketch.
Assign: 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).

February 20
Workshopping Week: Ethnographic Essay whole class workshop (Group 1) with assigned critical readers.
Due: Group 1 sends drafts to class by e-mail (24 hr. rule).
Assign: Group 2 sends drafts to class by e-mail (24 hr. rule).

February 22
Ethnographic Essay whole class workshop (Group 2) with assigned critical readers.
Due: Group 2 sends drafts to class by e-mail (24 hr. rule).
Assign: Group 3 sends drafts to class by e-mail (24 hr. rule).

February 24
Ethnographic Essay whole class workshop (Group 3) with assigned critical readers.
Due: Group 3 sends drafts to class by e-mail (24 hr. rule).
Assign: RA 5: CW, pp. 507-532 on research techniques and “writing in the middle”; CW, pp. 550-59 (using sources); 559-593 (MLA style)

February 27
Discuss research assignment to prepare for Library Seminar (March 1).
Due: Work on the research techniques assignment in class.
Assign: Next class meets in Norlin E303.
March 1  

March 3  
**Midterm Reading Exam:** fill-in-the-blanks and short essay. Be prepared to take the Midterm Reading Exam (RA 1-5). Finish revising your Ethnographic Essay (due March 6). **RA 6:** CW Ch. 11 on Research Essay, pp. 439-444; "We Need the Sun," pp. 497-504 and answer questions 1-4 on p. 505 in your Research Portfolio; 459-460 on academic research essay (read sample pp. 461-474; 476-484 on the writing process.

March 6  
**III. Research Essay (Argument).** Discuss how to develop an argument (from analysis, etc.).

**Due:** Ethnographic Essay final draft (to be graded).

**Assign:** Bring the reading in CW and answers to questions 1-4 on p. 505. Ethnographic Essay final draft (to be graded) due Oct. 12.

March 8  
Discuss "We Need the Sun," CW, 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:** **RA 7:** CW, pp. 476-484 on focusing questions, pp., 481-83 on a researchable question, and pp. 487-495 on writing: sketch to draft.

March 10  
Writing the Research Essay: in-class writing on focusing questions and debated issues for research essay argument.

**Due:** Be prepared to discuss the readings on research questions.

**Assign:** The next class meets in Norlin Archives (basement level).

March 13  
**Research Proposal:** discussion and in-class writing.

**Due:** Be prepared to begin writing the Research Proposal in class.

**Assign:** Write a 2-page proposal for your Research Essay (one copy due March 20). Read a selected article (TBA) and answer questions (handout) for in-class rhetorical analysis.

March 15  
Rhetorical analysis of a selected academic article (TBA)

**Due:** Finish **RA 5-7.** Be prepared to discuss your answers to handout questions.
Assign: Bring an academic article you found to next class and be prepared to respond to the handout questions.

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March 17
Due: Rhetorical analysis of an academic article that you found.
Assign: Be prepared to discuss and write your responses to the handout questions.

March 20
Due: Students discuss their Research Proposals (whole class).
Assign: Complete Research Proposal (final drafts), due March 20.

March 22
Due: Rhetorical Analysis of a peer-reviewed (scholarly) article you chose for your Research Essay and identifying debated issues.
Assign: RA 8: CW, pp. 491-495 on workshopping, revising, and polishing. Workshopping the partial draft, April 10-to the class list (24 hr. rule).

March 24
Due: Read and evaluate sample research essays (handouts).

March 27-31
Due: Spring Break. No Classes.
Assign: Research Essay: Discuss Intro. and Body paragraphs (exercises).

April 3-5
Due: Group 2 partial drafts workshopped, whole class. E-mail doc. attachment by April 9 (24 hr. rule).
Assign: draft in

April 7:
Due: Style and Clarity (I): using sources, paraphrasing, etc.
Assign: Complete the Style and Clarity (I) exercises.

April 10
Due: Whole class workshopping Research Essay partial drafts (2-3 pages) of Research Essay. Group 2 to be workshopped.
Assign: Group 2 provides partial drafts (e-mailed by April 9).

April 12
Due: Everyone else prepares for workshopping the partial draft
Assign: 12 in small groups (e-mail to group only by April 11).

April 12
Due: Small groups complete workshopping Research Essay partial drafts (2-3 pages) of Research Essay.
Assign: Partial drafts to be workshopped.

Assign: Complete the Style and Clarity (II) exercise for next class.
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April 14  
**Style and Clarity (II).** In-class writing and editing your Research Essay full draft. Conferences held outside of class time for next week.

Due: Complete Style and Clarity exercises (handout).
Assign: Finish writing your Research Essay full draft.

April 17-21  
Workshop full drafts in small groups this week. **Everyone’s draft is due on Monday, April 17 in order to get Dr M’s feedback.**

by April 24  
Assign: Study for Reading Exam on RA 6-9 on April 24.

April 24  
**Reading Exam II (RA 6-9).**
Due: Be prepared to take Reading Exam II.
Assign: Revise your full draft for Research Essay, if necessary (due May 1).

April 26-28  
Conferencing regarding Research Essay full drafts (due on May 1) and discuss assembling Research Portfolio.

Assign: Prepare for informal oral presentations (5 min each) on regarding your Research Essay findings and conclusions.

May 1  
Due: FCQs administered in class. Oral presentations (5 min. each).

**Research Essay** (graded final draft), Appendix (optional), and All Cited Materials (pages used only)—all clipped together.

May 3  
Due: Informal oral presentation of research findings and conclusions.
Oral presentations (5 min. each) related to your Research Essay learning and writing process.

May 5  
**Last class. No final exam. Research Portfolio due.**