FALL, 2006
3020 TOPICS IN WRITING: HAMLET

Dr. Gasser
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Question it, Horatio (1.1.47)

Required Texts:
- Written drafts for and by the class (consider copies of these as part of the course textbook costs)
- The Imaginative Argument, Frank L. Cioffi, Princeton and Oxford 2005
- 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:
- The Elements of Style, Strunk and White, 4th Edition
- Videos and DVD's, including performances by Sir Laurence Olivier, Richard Burton, Mel Gibson, Kenneth Branagh, Derek Jacobi, on reserve at Norlin Library Media Center
- Video of Sir Laurence Olivier's Hamlet in my office

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 work 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. This process is explained at length in the article "Form and the Essay," which you can access at http://www.colorado.edu/pwr/occasions/intro.html. It will be still further explained on assignment sheets distributed throughout the semester.

You will thereby learn to empower your point through creating and supporting a necessary and interpretative (as opposed to factual) thesis; through shaping the interrelationships among that thesis, the need for it, and the support for it; and through demonstrating, in depth, why your quotation or example helps support it. In the process, you will unleash a level of 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 major 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: the workshop is not evaluative but, rather, _analytical_. 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 reapplied 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.

   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. Drafts will be marked “sufficient,” “insufficient,” or “zero.” Late, incomplete (including not having the required number of drafts for your classmates and me), or underdeveloped assignments of any nature will reduce the final course grade. Missing, late, or insufficient 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 such drafts will not be reviewed, in class or in office hours, until after your turn comes up in the next workshop rotation.

   _Nota bene:_ 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. Without these previous drafts with my comments, your draft will be marked “incomplete.”

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

2. **Plan ahead.**
   - Develop your own process for _ongoing revision_ of each draft.
   - Have alternate strategies for word processor/print-out/delivery emergencies. Use your nearest Kinkos (28th and Pearl –24 hours/day – or the Baseman Shopping Center – 7am – 10pm D) – for both word processing and copying failures elsewhere. Always keep a hard-drive and a backup copy.
   - Provide for absences: have a classmate bring work due to class or deliver it to my mail cubby 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:**

   - Print all work from word processors, or type it
- Use 10- or 12-point font.
- Submit no assignment, regardless of length or apparent significance (even a single sentence is significant), in handwriting.
- My copies: double space/one-inch margins (top, bottom, sides)/one side only.
- Put numbers on the pages of your draft. (Handwritten page numbers are acceptable).

- Submit at least 2 copies for each assignment, regardless of the nature of that assignment — i.e. each assignment is indeed significant. Work requiring more than 2 copies will be specified on written assignment schedules.

- Staple together each individual copy of a draft/exercise of more than a page (before class).
  Do not staple two copies to each other.
- Staple all previous drafts with my (not classmates’) comments to back of one of these copies. I will collect this as one of my two copies.

- Heading:
  - upper right-hand corner
  - single space list of name, course section, current date

4. 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.
   - I allow three absences. I make no distinction between excused and unexcused absences.
   - Have strategies for weather/traffic/computer/printer emergencies/minor illnesses/family reunions/off-campus events: it is your responsibility to see that these occur no more than three times during the semester.
   - In the case of an extraordinary situation — death in the family, prolonged illness, injury, your participation in the model UN — I make exceptions to those with written documentation so long as absences remain manageable. If you inform me early in the semester, I also make exceptions to religious holidays.
   - Absences before and after Fall Break-Thanksgiving are strongly discouraged.

   - I take attendance at the beginning of class. If you are late, come in quietly and explain to me after class or you will be marked absent. Except for extraordinary circumstances, frequent tardies will lower your final grade.

   If you must miss class, have a strategy for getting drafts to class on your workshop due dates.
   If your classmates’ drafts are being workshopped, turn in to me, and to the writers, your typed “5th Reader” critiques for drafts workshopped the day you are absent. Furthermore, go (or have someone else go) to my box in TB-1 to obtain copies of your classmates’ drafts for the following class hour in time to have these prepared: that is, in time to contribute to the next workshop the analysis you would like to receive regarding your own drafts.

5. Participate
   A workshop is collaborative. Your written and spoken participation is as important as your attendance. You will be graded on your willingness and your maturing ability to attend to the strengths and weaknesses of your classmates’ writing as if it were yours — that is, on your willingness and growing ability to expand beyond your personal writing concerns.
   It can be difficult to give and accept public feedback of your, and your classmates’, writing in-progress. This course therefore fully reviews the criteria for judicious, sensitive consideration and appraisal of each others’ work. We will all start together at the same point: you can, and are expected to, assist each others’ writing by demonstrating that you have absorbed the concepts and standards presented in class as the course progresses. We will learn to discern the logic, organization, and expression of the draft at hand 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.
You will find that as you sharpen your ability to analyze the writing of others, your own writing will progress.

Nota bene: “Thoughtful” consideration is analytical, not evaluative. Evaluative comments, such as “good work/ great job,” leave the writer clueless as to what to reinforce or revise. Therefore, such lazy written (or spoken) comments will lower your participation grade.

Highest credit will be given for comments which gauge a piece of writing-in-progress against the criteria discussed in class. This in turn tests your own understanding of these criteria. If, for example, you find that a draft exhibits a strong thesis, be prepared to explain, in detailed terms of what this course teaches about “thesis,” how/ why/ in what way that thesis is strong.

6. 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.

Citizenship: Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Students who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Faculty have the professional responsibility to treat all students with understanding, dignity and respect, to guide classroom discussion and to set reasonable limits on the manner in which they and their students express opinions. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student’s legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. See polices at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html and at http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code

The University of Colorado at Boulder policy on Discrimination and Harassment (http://www.colorado.edu/policies/discrimination.html, the University of Colorado policy on Sexual Harassment and the University of Colorado policy on Amorous Relationships applies to all students, staff and faculty. Any student, staff or faculty member who believes s/he has been the subject of discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. Information about the ODH and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be obtained at http://www.colorado.edu/odh

Integrity
All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, 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 who are 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). Other information on the Honor Code can be found at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html and at http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honor/code/
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 http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html and at http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/.

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
75% for combined major papers; 10% for short work and quizzes; 15% for participation.
Except for quizzes, if you consistently put forth your best effort, starting with Week 1, I will not average your grades. Your final grade will reflect your command of the course objectives as of the end of the semester. In addition to giving your best effort in responding to classmates’ drafts, your best means of earning a high grade is to revise your drafts according to recommendations I give during the workshops. “A” work goes still further: it demonstrates your own abilities as a writer and thinker and the degree of effort you put into your work.
If you slack off in the beginning because shorter work counts only 10%, I will in the end average all your grades for the final grade. The same applies if you receive a zero for failing to turn in any work. With extraordinary exceptions, quizzes may not be made up, and under no circumstances may drafts be workshopped late.

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; developed in detail; analyzed in depth.
    Excellent organization, style, and mechanics

B   Well above average in insight, content, style, and command of mechanics (grammar, punctuation, spelling) and organization. Few errors.
    Needs detail and/or deeper analysis of details

C   Merely correct, adequate at best
    Lacks insight, detail, depth; needs 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

"Participation" includes the following demonstrations of workshop citizenship:
1) **Arrive on time**
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.
7) Those who are uncomfortable speaking in class can contribute significantly in the following ways:
   1) submitting drafts which demonstrate commitment to the course goals
   2) submitting thoughtful written comments on your peers' drafts
   3) paying close attention to class discussion. When you give your full attention, you contribute positive energy.
   4) communicating and seeking help for any concerns which arise

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. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact: 303-492-8671, Willard 322, and www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices

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, assignments or required attendance. In this class, inform me at the beginning of the semester of such an upcoming commitment. See full details at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html

- **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/fac_relig.html.

Final Thoughts
- Please feel free to visit during my office hours or to set up appointments with me at other times.

Creativity springs unsolicited from a well-prepared mind. This is a skills class. It takes consistent practice, over time, to realize results. 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.

*My words fly up, my thoughts remain below.*

*Words without thoughts never to heaven go.*

*Hamlet 3.3.96-7*

*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*)