Topics in Writing: Issues in Higher Ed.

In this course, we will discuss and write about a wide variety of topics relevant to the subject of higher education. We will begin by examining various philosophies of education, thinking about the role of colleges and universities in our society. Since this is itself a writing course at a university, we will consider our own continuing relationship to these institutions of higher learning, with a particular emphasis on issues of authorship and intellectual property.

Over the course of the semester, we will also look at various literary works (films, novels, stories, essays, etc.) that explore the subject of higher education. This will be a seminar-style course, where the students and student writing help determine the trajectory of our class from day to day.

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2009 COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1: INTRO / PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION
Aug. 24: Introduction
Aug. 26: Emerson, “The American Scholar”
   Worksheet #1 Due (e-mail before class)

WEEK 2: THE UNIVERSITY
Aug. 31: Freire, From Pedagogy of the Oppressed
   Berube, From What’s Liberal About the Liberal Arts
Sep. 2: Film: Good Will Hunting (watch on your own prior to class)
   Worksheet #2 Due (e-mail before class)

WEEK 3: NARRATING THE COLLEGE EXPERIENCE
Sep. 7: NO CLASS
Sep. 9: Kidd, The Cheese Monkeys (pp. 1-93)

WEEK 4: NARRATING THE COLLEGE EXPERIENCE
Sep. 14: Kidd, The Cheese Monkeys (pp. 96 - 210
Sep. 16: Kidd, The Cheese Monkeys (pp. 211 - 274, “After-words”)
Sep. 20: Creative Non-fiction Opening Paragraph Due (e-mail by midnight)

WEEK 5: THE STORY AND THE AUDIENCE / WORKSHOPPING
Sep. 21: Opening Paragraph Workshop
   Hoy, “The Disarming Seduction of Stories”
   Elbow, “Closing My Eyes as I Speak: An Argument for Ignoring Audience”
Sep. 23: Creative Non-fiction Essay Workshop
   Bring 4 Copies of Creative Non-fiction Draft to Class
Sep. 27: Creative Non-fiction Essay and Writer’s Letter Due (e-mail by midnight)

WEEK 6: AUTHORSHIP
Sep. 28: Foucault, “What is an Author?”
   Barthes, “The Death of the Author”
Sep. 30: Mann, “Who Will Own Your Next Good Idea?”
   CU Policies on Intellectual Property (click here) (here) (here) (and here)

WEEK 7: PLAGIARISM
Oct. 5: Park, “Rebels Without a Clause”
   Blum, From My Word!: Plagiarism and College Culture
   CU Policies on Plagiarism
Oct. 7: Hynes, Publish and Perish (pp. 191-265)

WEEK 8: WRITING AND THE UNIVERSITY
Oct. 12: Hynes, Publish and Perish (pp. 266-335)
Oct. 14: Film: Wonder Boys (watch on your own prior to class)
Oct. 18: Close-reading Due (e-mail by midnight)

WEEK 9: ACADEMIC WRITING / WORKSHOPPING
Oct. 19: Close-reading Workshop
Oct. 21: Analytical Essay Workshop
   Bring 4 Copies of Analytical Draft to Class
Oct. 25: Analytical Essay and Writer's Letter Due (e-mail by midnight)

WEEK 10: THE DOCUMENTARY ESSAY
Oct. 26: Film: High School (will watch in class)
   Documentary Essay (TBA)
Oct. 28: Discuss Storyboarding
   Filmmaking Essay (TBA)
   Groups Submit Topics and Readings

WEEK 11: MORE ISSUES IN HIGHER EDUCATION
Nov. 2: Group #1 Leading Class Discussion
Nov. 4: Group #2 Leading Class Discussion
Nov. 8: Annotated Bibliography Due (e-mail by midnight)

WEEK 12: MORE ISSUES IN HIGHER EDUCATION
Nov. 9: Group #3 Leading Class Discussion
Nov. 11: Group #4 Leading Class Discussion
Nov. 15: Storyboard Due (e-mail by midnight)

WEEK 13: MORE ISSUES IN HIGHER EDUCATION
Nov. 16: Group #5 Leading Class Discussion
Nov. 18: Group #6 Leading Class Discussion

WEEK 14: THANKSGIVING BREAK
Nov. 23: NO CLASS
Nov. 25: NO CLASS

WEEK 15: WORKSHOPPING
Nov. 30: Workshop Final Projects (Details TBA)
Dec. 2: Workshop Final Projects (Details TBA)

WEEK 16: FINAL PROJECTS
Dec. 7: Final Project Screening (Groups 1, 2, 3, 4)
Dec. 9: Final Project Screening (Groups 5, 6)
   Final Writer's Letter Due (e-mail by midnight)

“Language shows itself plain in the contours and bulges of the body. It is not something we choose to inhabit, but something that seizes us, or does not, and determines the transformation of our physical form.”
   ~ Pat C. Hoy II
DESCRIPTION: Writing is a practice and a process, thus the “-ing” on the end of the word. In this class, we will focus on the inventing, the doing, and the revising--and not as much on the finishing, not on the being done. Nor will we emphasize the tried and true methods of writing (though we will keep our eyes and ears turned to grammar and style as necessary); instead, we will be called upon to invent writing as we do it.

Since writing is more a medium and less a subject matter in and of itself, we will narrow our focus on a specific set of topics as we proceed throughout the semester, establishing a common ground for us as a community of authors by using our writing to ask and answer a series of related questions. Thus, in this course, we will discuss and write about issues relevant to the subject of higher education. We will begin by examining various philosophies of education, thinking about the role of colleges and universities in our society. Since this is itself a writing course at a university, we will consider our own continuing relationship to these institutions of higher learning, with a particular emphasis on issues of authorship and intellectual property. Over the course of the semester, we will also look at various literary works (films, novels, stories, essays, etc.) that explore the subject of higher education. This will be a seminar-style course, where the students and student writing help determine the trajectory of our class from day to day.

CCHE CRITERIA: The Colorado Commission for Higher Education (CCHE) is a division of the Colorado Department of Higher Education, and part of its purpose is to make sure that general education courses at colleges across the state are based on similar criteria in terms of content knowledge and skills. Writing courses fall under the content area of “Communication” and include skills in written communication, reading, and critical thinking. The following “Course Objectives” have been adapted from the CCHE requirements for an Advanced Writing Course, which WRTG 3020 is considered.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

• Rhetorical knowledge. We will make informed choices as we adapt our writing to the needs of our readers. Thus, we will work in various genres, always conscious of the context, purpose, and audience for our work. While we will be thinking mostly about written texts, we will also discuss and utilize visual rhetoric, thinking about the various ways that words and images interact.

• Writing process. We will work through the various stages of the writing process in a deliberate and reflective way, using workshopping, revision through multiple drafts, and self-evaluation. This will require a good deal of collaboration as we both write together and respond to each other’s writing.

• Writing conventions. As the course proceeds, we will examining the real effects grammar, syntax, and punctuation have on readers. We will think carefully about the choices we make as writers in all the different sorts of writing that we do with the goal of writing clear compositions and honing our own individual style.

• Content knowledge. As we work on each of the assignments of the course, we will discuss the issue of audience, thinking about how to make our writing clear and effective to both specialized and general readers.

TEXTS AND FILMS: All of the texts of the course have been chosen with several purposes in mind: (1) to serve as representative examples of the various sorts of work we’ll be doing ourselves; (2) as fodder for our own adventures in literary and rhetorical analysis; (3) because they are germane to the various subjects at hand, particularly writing, audience, authorship, and higher education.

Hanson, Wonder Boys (2000)
Hynes, Publish and Perish: Three Tales of Tenure and Terror (1997)
Van Sant, Good Will Hunting (1997)
And several short works you’ll download from this site and short films (or film clips) we’ll watch in class.

ATTENDANCE AND CLASS PARTICIPATION: Since this is a collaborative course, focusing heavily on
discussion and workshop, you have a responsibility to yourself and your classmates to show up for class on time and prepared. The class will be a cooperative learning experience, a true intellectual community. And so, you and your writing are, in a very real sense, the primary texts for this course. Because of this, participation will be a very large component of your final grade. Thus, it follows that more than three absences during the semester will directly affect your grade. Also, in order for the class to work together as a community, it is important that you complete all assigned work before each class session. If you are going to miss class or can’t finish the assigned work for any reason, just let me know in advance either in person or via e-mail. Also, I’m required to say that students who miss the first week of classes will be dropped from the course.

OFFICE HOURS: I have scheduled regular office hours and I’m also available by appointment. If you’d like to meet with me in person, I’d recommend chatting with me in advance to set up a time. I’m always happy to meet with you (to discuss the course or just to chat). This is the most effective way for me to give you individual attention and get to know you better. I encourage you to meet with me as early in the semester as possible, especially if you have any particular questions or concerns. I’m also very easy to reach by e-mail. In fact, e-mail is (by far) the best and quickest way to contact me. You can send an e-mail with questions or comments to me at Jesse.Stommel@colorado.edu.

E-MAIL: The University now requires that every student have an active e-mail account that they check regularly. E-mail is an important component of this course. I will be sending regular announcements to you via e-mail, so if you do not check your e-mail regularly, you will miss crucial information related to the course.

ONLINE CONTENT: There are numerous links on this webpage that will take you to various assignments and readings that we will be doing throughout the semester. You can access e-texts of some of the readings via this web page—just click on the title in the schedule. My advice: if you make this web site your friend, you’ll have no trouble completing all the reading and assignments for the course. As we proceed, I will be uploading additional content, including more course notes, activities, and assignments, so keep checking for updates.

COLLABORATION: Writing does not happen in a vacuum and usually involves the work of the writer, co-writers, editors, publishers, etc., so it is important that we not think of writing as a solitary act. In addition to the peer review workshops we’ll do throughout the semester, I encourage full collaboration on any of the worksheets or blogs, and you will be required to collaborate (in a group of 3) when you lead class discussion and on the final project. If you have questions about the various ways collaboration can work, feel free to chat with me at any point.

THE WORK OF THE COURSE:
• Class Participation. This includes your attendance, involvement in class discussion, in-class assignments, workshops, and other small-group work. As I mentioned, this is (by far) the most important component of the course.

• Blog. This is an offshoot of class participation. Starting the third week of the semester, you will be posting short responses each week to the course blog on this site. Unlike journaling or response papers you’d submit only to me, this will give you a chance to practice your writing in a more social forum. Like journaling, though, this is meant to be an informal outlet, so you shouldn’t worry about this writing being scrutinized or evaluated. Just make sure your ideas can be understood. Some of these responses will be more structured (i.e. a response to questions I give to you), while many of them will be more flexible, allowing you to respond to any aspect of what we are studying. Responses should be as collaborative as possible. In other words, don’t just throw your ideas into a vacuum. Instead, ask questions of each other and use the other responses as a jumping off point by answering questions, amplifying or complicating ideas, etc.

• Worksheets. As a tool to help focus our discussions and help you generate ideas for your longer papers, there will be a number of short worksheets due during the semester. There are two scheduled during the first weeks, but I may add more. Please refer to the schedule for worksheet due dates. You will submit your worksheet answer(s) via e-mail to me at Jesse.Stommel@colorado.edu. Please don’t use attachments, just the text of your answer(s) in the body of an e-mail.

• Leading Class Discussion. On one day toward the end of the semester (Nov. 2, 4, 9, 11, 16, or 18), you will work in a small group to help lead class discussion. This is, by no means, a formal presentation. Your group (of 3) will be responsible for approximately 1 hour of our class session. You are welcome to divvy up the class amongst your group, so that each member is responsible for 20 minutes, or you can coordinate the entire class together. The class will be focused on the same subject you work with for your final project, and you will choose one or two essays that the class will read in preparation for the discussion. I will offer a list of recommended topics with associated readings, however your group is also welcome to choose its own topic and/or reading (as long as you discuss this in advance with me).

While I would encourage you to get creative in thinking about how to lead discussion, here is one example of how you might plan your class: 1) Spend the first 15 minutes presenting to the class about your subject. I would suggest making this as interactive as possible, perhaps doing an activity or brainstorming about your subject with the large group. 2) Break the class into 3 groups for further discussion with each leader facilitating the discussion in one of
these small groups. I would suggest having a short handout with discussion questions about the assigned reading and/or overarching subjects it raises. 3) In the last 5 or 10 minutes, come back together as a whole class and have each small group report about one or two interesting things that came up during their discussion.

As you are leading class discussion, I will be mostly silent, moderating the discussions to some degree but primarily acting as a member of the group w/ my own questions, comments, etc.

- **Creative Non-Fiction Essay.** Your Creative Non-Fiction Essay will be derived from your own experience as a university student. The more engaging the experience(s) you choose to describe, the better your writing will be. Don’t forget the details. Don’t just catalogue a series of events. The more sensory details you include, the more your reader will feel as though they are right there with you. Even the most grammatically correct writing falls flat if it doesn’t come alive for the reader. Make sure you consider carefully the implications of your narrative. One of the things that distinguishes creative non-fiction from other sorts of narrative writing is that you’re not only telling a story but also reflecting upon it in some significant way. Don’t just tack a moral on the end. Instead, try to insert your own reflections on the events of the story throughout, moving back and forth between offering vivid details and discussing why those details are important to you and your reader. The final paper should be around 3-5 pages.

- **Analytical Essay.** You’ll begin preparation for this paper by writing a short close-analysis paper, which you’ll expand into a full analytical essay. You will offer a critical reading of one of the texts we’ve discussed in class, choosing either a policy statement, an essay, or a literary text. If you choose a literary text (such as a film or novel), you would approach this paper by choosing a topic or theme that interests you and presenting an analysis of what the text is attempting to do with relation to that theme. If you choose to work with an essay, you would offer a summary of the essay’s major points, close-analyzing several of them, and then you would offer your own responses. If you choose to work with a policy statement, you would close-analyze several lines from the policy, discussing the various implications, and then you would offer your own thoughts on why the policy is successful or how it could be improved. The final paper should be of an adequate length to explore your critical reading fully, or around 4-6 pages.

- **Multimedia Documentary Essay.** You will work in groups of 3 for this final project, which will be the culmination of everything you’ve done in class thus far. The main component of this project will be a short documentary film, a multimedia essay that partially relies on visual rhetoric to make its points. The goal of this essay is to investigate an important topic related to higher education. I will provide a list of recommended topics, however you are welcome to work on a topic of your group’s choosing (as long as you discuss your idea with me). This assignment will have several components, an annotated bibliography, a storyboard, a 5-8 minute documentary film, and a written essay of around 6-10 pages. Your work should be argumentative (not just illustrative), so make sure that both your written and visual elements support and contribute to a clear argument about your topic. I will post more details about each aspect of the project well in advance of the due dates. As you collaborate, you can certainly divvy up tasks, but make sure that each person in your group is at least somewhat involved in every aspect of the final product (i.e. don’t have one person just do the visual part and another just do the written part). This final project takes the place of a final exam.

**GRADING:** While you will be receiving a grade at the end of the semester, I will not be putting grades on individual assignments, but rather questions and comments that truly engage with your work rather than simply evaluate it. Throughout the semester, you will also be responding to your own work and each other’s work in a similar fashion. The intention here is to help you focus on working in a more organic way, as opposed to working as you think you are expected to. I hope that this process will give you (and me) a partial liberation from letter grades, but if it ends up causing more anxiety than it alleviates, feel free to see me at any point to confer about your performance in the course to date. If you are worried about your grade in the class, your best strategy should be to attend class, join the discussions, do the reading, and complete all assignments. Click here to see the sort of self-evaluation you will complete at the end of the semester. You will complete something similar following each of the major papers. This will give us a chance to check in with each other at several points as the semester proceeds, so if you have concerns about how you’re doing in the course, we will have many chances to address them.

**PLAGIARISM:** First, I will say that if you are unable to complete an assignment for any reason, it is in your best interest to discuss the situation with me. Authorship is a hotly contested topic in the academy. At what point do we own the words we say and write or the images we create? Among authors and filmmakers, creative influence, collaboration, and a certain amount of borrowing are acceptable (even encouraged). So, what sort of statement or warning about plagiarism would be appropriate in this class? Let me go out on a limb and say: in this class, I encourage you to borrow ideas (from me, from the authors we read, from the films we watch, from your classmates). However, even more, I encourage you to really make them your own—by playing with, manipulating, applying, and otherwise turning them on their head. In the end, it’s just downright boring to rest on the laurels of others. It’s altogether more daring (and, frankly, more fun) to invent something new yourself—a new idea, a new way of thinking, a new claim, a new image. This doesn’t give you license to copy something in its entirety and slap your name on it. That’s just stealing. Instead, think very self-consciously about the way that you are influenced by your sources—by the way knowledge and creativity depend on a sort of inheritance. And think also about the real responsibility you have to those sources.
DISABILITIES ACCOMMODATION: If you have any physical, psychological, or learning disabilities that need accommodations, please let me know early in the semester. If you have questions or concerns, you can also contact the Disability Services Office in Willard 322 (phone 303-492-8671). Their website is available at www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES: Please let me know if the observance of religious holidays conflicts in any way with class assignments, attendance, etc., and I am happy to work with you. The CU-Boulder campus policy is available at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_religion.html.

HONOR CODE: 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). See http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html and at http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/.

DISCRIMINATION AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT: 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. For information and campus resources see http://www.colorado.edu/odh.