

Rationale, syllabus and curriculum for the E110 class:

Mary Kay Valentine

“Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man.”

---Sir Francis Bacon

Having the power of the “word” is a divine gift that allows us to better know our fellow humans, our worlds, and ourselves. If each one of you could understand how powerful your own voices are, together you would move mountains. This class explores exactly what power the word holds, and how you may use that power for yourself and how others might use that power against you. Developing a meta-cognitive sense of language allows us to be conscious of our creative use with language and how that controls our perspectives of the surrounding world.

To begin, I want you to know that we are and are not our voices. I want us to be conscious of the “monkey mind” and the “voice” because language is just the medium by which we express who we are, what we believe, what we know, and why we “are.” Having an objective control of language as a tool is to know that we are not the tool; we are the one who wields the tool and so this class serves to better understand how to improve this tool to express what we believe and know.

To see language objectively, we must see the abstraction of words, the malleable syntax, the building of ideas, the agreed upon conventions, and the sense that language is a living organism, unique to each culture. The readings and lectures begin with the understanding of our voices in our heads and our use of language as a tool. These understandings come from experiential exercises we will do together in class. Then we will become conscious of language’s structures and changes, as a matrix in which we are born and help to continue. Once we see we are fish swimming in language, you realize that every culture is a school of fish swimming in the matrices of their languages. This knowledge allows us to look upon language as a construct that can be changed for different purposes and expressions. This understanding leads to an understanding that genres are an outgrowth of those cultural and technological changes, and so we will explore to what extent language affects our thinking and cultural perspectives and how such awareness will make us conscious of the power language holds.

We are hardwired for language. Everybody can think and feel; everybody has ideas; everybody can express. But similar to riding a bike, having a writing teacher, such as myself, hold on for a bit and then let go at the right moment, can help a mind to soar. But with such practice comes falling, a lot, and my job is to point out where the fall occurs and suggest ways to avoid such misbalances in the future. If practiced enough (which includes falling down repeatedly), then eventually you will soar away on that bike and never look back. I want to help you write as if you were riding a bike, fluently without staring at the pedaling words, but

looking forth and charting a course because you understand how your “bike” works; you’ll even be doing tricks with that “bike.”

To practice this “bike riding,” students will maintain a journal in the manner described by Natalie Goldberg in *Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within*, which all students will read throughout the year. If you keep your pen moving on the page without lifting to think, you can fill a single page: ten minutes a page for 30 days (the length of the quarter term is 45 days) will fill a spiral notebook with 30 pages. You are welcome to write more, but the idea is to make writing a habit of mind for curiosity and introspection while also hearing both voices of the “monkey mind” of details at the moment and the deeper voice that surfaces every now and then. This journal will be scored solely for filling 30 pages without breaking “the spirit of intent” to be clarified in class.

The other part of this course is learning to research, which requires a certain mindset to ferret out information in unusual places, take fresh perspectives on common experiences, and show others and ourselves new ways of seeing an idea. Language can be used as a tool to manifest understanding or share an understanding. It both enlightens and informs, and the more we write, the more we experience this divine power to create from nothing and realize the power and responsibility of our own voices.

By doing the song research paper, you will explore the power of a song over an audience and how such powerful songs help to construct our “realities.” To find this “power,” you must first explore the lyrics and what they mean to you. Then you must research what the words meant to the band or singer, followed by the motivation for such expressions, including biographical and social contexts. You must explore the monetary power and public awards bestowed upon such songs and ask “why?” Taken altogether, the information gathered should reflect an interesting aspect of our culture. Songs, especially platinum songs, say much about who we are as a people, and if listened to closely, where we are headed as a people.

The second research project for the second semester is one that speaks to your heart, a topic of your own choosing. But for this project, you are to experience the entire research process: the essential questions being explored, the search for research already done upon the topic, the evaluation of what is and is not known, the choice to pick a different approach to the material on hand, and the ability to chase down new “leads” and ways of thinking so that you can express all that you have found and the significance of your new understandings upon these questions. Your topics may be of personal interest, career oriented, or service driven, so long as you are personally invested in learning about the topic because your research and writing will help you to be exact in how you perceive the issues.

My job is to help you consider approaches to research and then ways to make sense of the knowledge you have discovered. I coach the process and teach editorial skills so that you may become your own writing coaches and editors. You will learn

to research well enough to see an entire issue clearly and understand how many people are involved in fact-finding. You will learn that research is to further push our understandings of “Reality,” not regurgitate what has been discovered for the sake of repeating but to find new perspectives and angles that take the information in new directions, thereby expanding our abilities to explore further.

Because your voices are valued and worth money, you are to come up with a publishing plan for your research papers in the world of publishing. You must know possible publishers who might be interested in your research findings, you must know your audience, required word count, required documentation methods, and your responsibilities to these writing communities. You must know to whom you would send your materials and under what conditions. You are to know that you have the power to be paid for your voice: an article about kayaking for someone who loves to kayak or how to restore cars or whatever. We all have gifts and skills that can be shared through our writings. We are all capable of being good writers when we write about our passions—as long as we are conscious about how language works as a tool for us.

The flip side of understanding language’s creative powers is also the understanding of language’s power to obscure and hide our surrounding realities. With linguistic awareness, you will question commercial claims that provide no context, news reports without facts, public claims without evidence, sly sidestepping of responsibilities, abridged quotes that imply a different sense, and other manipulations that coerce certain perspectives. For these reasons, you will also study advertising claims of a “new and improved” world. Exploring advertising campaigns offers even greater insight into linguistic powers. Your “buy-ins” to the surrounding texts in your worlds will come from choice and not trickery. Being conscious of how language is used allows greater discernment when dealing with other people’s words.

Also tied to this research project will be an opportunity to shift your text into other forms of media, which would include visuals, music, and new ways to present the information digitally: YouTube video, PowerPoint, website blog, and others. This project is to show how the medium structures the message and the message directs the choices within the medium.

So that you may visually see how much you have worked on your use of language, so that you understand that quality comes from the thoughtful labor of writing, and that the assessment of this class is built upon your participation and quality products, all students must maintain a 30 page journal per quarter scored solely for filling pages and a portfolio of your work. From this portfolio, you will assess yourselves as writers: how far you have come, how far you believe you can go, and how well this class’s structure and assignments have led you towards your own personal goals as effective writers and editors.

Ultimately, I hope you understand that your voices create the world in which we live. Your future employee reviews, Facebook comments, work reports, customer complaints, songs you sing, movies you watch, speeches you appreciate—all of your words together build our worlds, for our worlds are made from words. You consciously control that world of words and, thereby, control your realities.

E110: University of Delaware Class Policies and Goals

This class will follow all University of Delaware policies and goals. Please see link: <https://onehundredten.org/english-110-at-ud/program-policies/>

ALL SUBMISSIONS FOR PEER EDITING AND COLLECTED DRAFTS ARE TO BE DOUBLE-SPACED, TYPED, 12 POINT FONT, WITH NUMBERED PAGES.

Methods of teaching:

Because we are a participation class rather than a lecture class, we will be flipping the classroom, so that work is done in advance of coming to class with written blogs already posted about thoughts on readings assigned and three discussion questions of interest from the readings prepared in advance. So assigned students will read assigned readings at home (different groups will be assigned different readings) and then do the following:

- Respond in a blog post, minimum 200 words; each will be worth 15 points.
- Respond to two other students' responses within the classroom (may never respond to the same person more than once until having responded to all students at least once, same for twice, thrice, and so on), minimum 100 words; each response will be worth 10 points.
- Come prepared to class with three discussion questions pertaining to the readings upon which notes will be taken and shared at the end of class. Students earn 5 points a day for active participation for a total of 225 points.

Classroom time will be used for discussion, demonstration, brainstorming, peer thinking and sharing, peer editing, research gathering and discernment, peer proofreading, and performances and/or presentations with a few lectures sprinkled throughout. You must be prepared to share your work with your peers. Choose topics accordingly.

Free-writing practice will continue outside of class to be completed at your own pace, but 30 journal pages completely filled with handwritten thoughts will be turned in for a completion grade at the end of each quarter. This journal may be used for personal concerns or brainstorming for class work. It will not be read unless requested by you. I will only verify the page count and your following of instructions. Each page is worth 5 points for a total of 150 points per quarter.

Appointments outside of class to discuss writing one-on-one will be available, which I highly recommend, but **ONLY AFTER** the paper has been reviewed by two peers and you come with concrete questions for discussion. No written comments

can ever replace a one-on-one conference, but the written comments from peers help to set up a good teacher conference. *All grammar grade improvements must be made during one-on-one conferences.*

Class Assessments:

Because the art of writing is the art of communicating, we need to practice with many audiences. We will be using peer editing which will require writing done on time to maintain the class schedule. This frequent practice and feedback will be part of your participation assessment, which is key to this class, so much so that semester grades will be based on a 40% combination of participation in class with 40% quality evaluation of final products, and the 20% final self-assessment of one's writing skills and the course; quarter grades will be based on 50% participation and 50% quality evaluation.

Participation Grade:

To foster a sense of comfort to "fall down a lot," participation grades are based on pass/fail by doing the following:

- Meeting deadlines and doing assignments in the spirit they were meant to be done. LATE HOMEWORK will automatically earn 25% for one day late, 50% for two days late; zero points earned thereafter. If you are not able to complete an assignment on time, you must email me at least 24 hours before the assignment is due. All homework must be done prior to the beginning of class.
- Showing respect during discussions,
- Actively participating in discussions, peer editing and lectures with sharing, listening and note taking.
- Turning in all requested class participation materials according to instructions.
- Checking your own grades and email daily to keep communication channels flowing. Many of my comments on work may be sent through email. You must respond and acknowledge emails so that I know we have connected.
- So that I may better plan participation within the class, any absences must be communicated in advance, no later than 8:15 am the day of the missed class.

Quality Grade:

We must, however, eventually master the effective writing basics, so quality evaluation grades will look closely at convention usage (correct diction, syntax, punctuation, etc.) and development of your ideas, ability to cite evidence, and correct use of documentation methods on final products and performances.

- Idea development includes building interest in the topic through intriguing explorations, good evidence that is well explained and chosen, seamless transitions that weave ideas, a building climax to an important point (epiphany, even if the epiphany is only one's mom cooks well), and then

- explaining the significance of that point to the reader—why was the time spent reading well spent? This process of idea development will go through feedback from teacher and peers in multiple drafts that is part of the participation grade. Major “final” papers are worth 100 points each for effective content development.
- Correct use of documentation includes citing internally all borrowed information correctly and concisely, formatting a bibliography and Works Cited correctly (knowing the difference), and evaluating good sources. “Final” documentation earns 100 points for each assignment for accuracy and consistency.
 - Grammar grade will always be one point off for each error on “final” draft assignments (out of a possible total of 25 or 50 depending upon the assignment) with the ability to meet in a one-on-one conference and earn half of the points back by explaining the error and its correction.

Any plagiarism implies a total misunderstanding of the course and will result in a zero for each assignment plagiarized in ANY way. A pattern of plagiarism is an automatic removal from the course and a failure listed on the transcript.

Writing prompts and assignments to further understand objectives:

Completed Essays/Papers: unless designated otherwise, each “final” product is worth 100 points for content, 100 points for documentation, and 25 or 50 points for grammar; all other drafts count towards the participation grade.

FIRST SEMESTER

This semester will focus on clarifying basics in writing and research with three researched essays and one extended research analysis with documentation.

Due dates for completed journals are on Wednesdays as follows: November 2 and January 11.

Developing a meta-cognitive sense of language and writing:

Weeks one through five

“This is How I Learned to Read and Write” as suggested by Joy Shipka.

Two drafts due mid September and early October

Understanding the epistemic values of writing

Weeks six through ten

“I Believe” An Essay of Belief as suggested by Howard Tinberg.

*Two drafts and a **final oral reading** due in the last two weeks of October*

Personal Peer Student Profile, as suggested by Howard Tinberg.

Three drafts due first two weeks of November

Understanding research as a communal search for meaning:

Weeks eleven through eighteen

Class documentation bank developed, ongoing

Works Cited and Annotated Bibliography for Song Research paper.

Three drafts due throughout December

Song Analysis Research paper: 1,500 words content, multiple drafts

Three drafts due mid December through early January

SECOND SEMESTER

This semester will apply understandings of language, research and writing to a greater understanding of how writing and research illuminate better ways of working within society or with a social issue with one major research project split into two mediums: the classic research paper and then a digital format for “The Proposal and Possible Solution for a Trend/Community Concern” as suggested by Howard Tinberg. Much peer editing and class time will be used for these projects.

Due dates for completed journals are on Wednesdays as follows: March 29 and May 24.

A class created document bank about researching trends to be used for class discussion

Due last week in January

Publishing analysis of audience for trend/community service research paper with minimum three publishers and their requirements:

Due first week of February.

Works Cited and Annotated Bibliography

Three drafts due from mid February through mid March

A research paper of one’s own choice analyzing a trend, 3,000 words content, multiple drafts

Three drafts due from end of February to end of March

A digital project of students’ choice utilizing visuals, music, and text:

PowerPoint, YouTube video, Website design with sample blogs, magazine article, collection of slam poetry to be performed, graphic essay, academic journal, etc.

Three drafts due from early April to mid May

MID-TERM AND FINAL EXAMS

You will provide a portfolio of all drafts, responses, assignments, peer feedback, teacher feedback, final products, and self-assessment essay written during the two-hour exam block that looks at improvements in writing skills and understanding of the writing process with evidence pulled from the portfolio. The final exam will also include a course evaluation letter to be sent to administration. This letter will be marked as “done” and not scored for quality or content and then that participation score will be added to the score of the self-evaluation letter.

Readings to be used for discussion and assignment models:

PLEASE NOTE:

Natalie Goldberg’s text Writing Down the Bones will provide the majority of readings for the blog posts and will therefore require each student to have a copy, which will be

supplemented with the following articles from either class handouts or on-line articles as topics arise:

- Brooks, Arthur. "Choose to Be Grateful. It Will Make You Happier." *The New York Times*. Sunday Review. 21 Nov. 2015: SR4. Web.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/22/opinion/sunday/choose-to-be-grateful-it-will-make-you-happier.html?r=0>
- Carr, Nicholas. "Is Google Making Us Stupid: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains." *The Atlantic*. July/Aug. 2008. Web.
<http://www.uio.no/studier/emner/matnat/ifi/INF3700/v12/undervisningsmateriale/Is%20Google%20Making%20Us%20Stupid.pdf>
- Contrastive Analysis between English and Chinese Grammar. Assignment to be handed out in class..
- Engel, Elliot. *A Light History of the English Language*. Expanded Version. Dec. 2009. 46 minutes. DVD. To be watched in class. Worksheet to be provided.
- Franz, Robert N. *The Stigma of the Mentally Ill: Bob Does Everything Backwards, by a man who writes himself out of an illness*. 2015. Print. Excerpt will be presented in class.
- Flexner, Stuart Berg. "From 'Gadzooks' to 'Nice,' the Language Keeps Changing." *U.S. News & World Report*. 18 Feb. 1985. 59. Print. Handout coming from class.
- Goldberg, Natalie. *Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within*. Shambhala: 2016. Print. **Text supplied by student**.
- *Wild Mind: Living the Writer's Life*. Bantam: 1990. Print.
- Haussamen, Brock, et al. "How Are Other Languages Different from English?" *Grammar Alive: A guide for Teachers*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2003. Print. Handout coming from class.
- Joyce, James. "Yes, Penelope." *Ulysses*. Shakespeare and Company, 1925. Print. Handout coming from class.
- Lederer, Richard. "Stop the Presses." *Anguished English*. 71-81. Print. Handout coming from class.
- Lents, Nathan H. "Koko, Washoe, and Kanzi: Three Apes with Human Vocabulary." *The Human Evolution Blog*. 28 July 2015. WordPress.com. 27 June 2016. Web.
<https://thehumanevolutionblog.com/2015/07/28/koko-washoe-and-kanzi-three-apes-with-human-vocabulary/>
- McCrone, John. "From Baby Talk to Strong Language." *The Ape that Spoke: Language and the Evolution of the Human Mind*. New York: William Morrow and Co., 1991. 143-175. Print. Handout coming from class.
- - - - - "Strange Voices in the Head." *The Ape that Spoke: Language and the Evolution of the Human Mind*. New York: William Morrow and Co., 1991. 176-209. Print. Handout coming from class.
- McCrum, R., et. all. "The Loss of Inflections within English." *The Story of English*. Faber & Faber and BBC Publications. 1986. Print. Handout coming from class.
- Rightmyer, Jack. "The Power of Words." *Writing*. Feb. 1996. 18-19. Print. Handout

coming from class.

- Shipka, Joy. "Beyond Text and Talk: A Multimodal Approach to First Year Composition." *First Year Composition: Form Theory to Practice*. Deborah Coxwell-Teague & Ronald F. Lunsford, eds. South Carolina: Parlor Press, 2014. 211-235. Print.
- Tannen, Deborah. *You Just Don't Understand: Men and Women in Conversation*. New York: William Morrow and Co., 1990. Print. Handout coming from class.
- Tinberg, Howard. "Working Through Theory in a Community College Composition Course." *First Year Composition: Form Theory to Practice*. Deborah Coxwell-Teague & Ronald F. Lunsford, eds. South Carolina: Parlor Press, 2014. 236-256. Print.
- Vajda, Edward. "History of the English Language." *Linguistics 201*. Western Washington University: Professor Edward Vajda's Homepage. http://pandora.cii.wwu.edu/vajda/ling201/test3materials/history_of_english.htm Web.
- Van Oech, Roger and George Willet. "To Err is Wrong." *A Whack on the Side of the Head: How You Can Be More Creative*. Grand Central Publishing. 88-93. 2008. Print. Handout coming from class.
- Writer's Market: Where and How to Sell What you Write*. F+W. 2016. Web. <http://www.writersmarket.com/>

Also to be shared with the class for discussions:

- Critical reviews and other research relating to song artists and their songs found by students to be shared in a class created document bank
- Articles found by students to share about their interest topics to be shared in a class created document bank.