

## ENWR105 College Writing I: Intellectual Prose Acting out Culture

[Individual Instructor Information: name; office location and hour; email address; section number and semester identifier)

### Texts

Hacker, Diana. *A Writer's Reference*. Montclair State University edition. 2009.

Miller, James. *Acting out Culture: Reading and Writing*. 2009.

### Websites

Course Blackboard: <http://blackboard.montclair.edu>

First Year Writing: <http://www.montclair.edu/writing/firstyearwriting/>

### Why College Writing I? (Course Objectives)

David Foster Wallace, a well-known writer, has taught writing at several colleges, and has had plenty of experience with the kinds of problems college students tend to have when they come up against the culture of higher education. During a college graduation speech he said:

The liberal-arts cliché about ‘teaching you how to think’ is actually shorthand for a much deeper, more serious idea: ‘Learning how to think’ really means learning how to exercise some control over how and what you think. (Kenyon College Commencement Speech, 2005, [http://www.coplac.org/liberal\\_arts/Wallace.htm](http://www.coplac.org/liberal_arts/Wallace.htm))

And since, when it comes to higher education, thinking and writing are inseparable, the purpose of this course is not to teach you how to write (or how to spell, punctuate, use a word-processing program, etc.), but rather it is to teach you how to exercise greater control over how and what you write. Moreover, the control you’re meant to be learning is of a very specific kind: it concerns the things that writers need to control in order to write successful, persuasive arguments. Again, you probably know something about making a persuasive argument, and that knowledge may still be useful to you *outside* of the University. But making persuasive academic arguments (the kind that are valued *inside* the University) is a specialized skill, and that’s what you’re here to learn. As with the learning of all specialized skills, this involves discipline. If it were easy, you wouldn’t need a college course in order to learn it. The University recognizes this, and expects you to do so, as well.

Those of us who teach college writing do realize that students may not be interested in learning to make persuasive arguments in the way that serious scholars do. I will try during the semester to make the case for why you should be interested, because I don’t think that your interest is something that I can take for granted. But please bear in mind that the standard for success (and for excellence) in this course is the quality of your writing as persuasive academic argument.

### Expectations

Course expectations are articulated in the prefatory chapter (the chapter that precedes the “first” chapter) of the Montclair State University edition of *A Writer’s Reference*. Please read this chapter very carefully as it is an essential supplement to your syllabus. Here are a few points of elaboration.

### **Attendance and Class Participation**

If you miss more than two classes your final grade will be discounted; for each additional absence beyond the two that are allowed your grade will be lowered a half grade (e. g., C+ to C). Additionally, come to class prepared and on time. You must always bring the assigned text (and there will always be an assigned text to bring). If I see that you don’t have yours, you will receive a zero for the daily participation grade. Also, you must always be prepared to submit your discourse analysis notebook for review. No excuses, please. Finally, participate. The reason for coming regularly, on time, and fully prepared is so that you can take an active part in advancing the work. There will be plenty to talk about, and we will all find the class more interesting if everyone contributes to the conversation. Most importantly, by speaking up you alter your relationship to the learning process: shifting from the passive role of the observer to taking an active role in the shaping of your own education. The classroom will be a safe place for ideas, and I promise that no one will be punished or humiliated for giving voice to an unusual question or interpretation.

### **Grades**

See the first chapter of *A Writer’s Reference* for grading rubric (what is expected) as well as descriptions of A, B, C, D and F essays.

### **Course Requirements**

Daily Participation	Required
Reading Notebook	15%
4 Interpretive Essays	50%
Documented Essay	20%
Writing Portfolio	15%
Writing Exercises	Required

### **Explanation of Course Requirements**

#### **Daily Participation**

Participation includes questions about the texts, responses to others’ questions, interpretations of the texts, and connections between the assigned texts and other texts that have been assigned in the past. Any contribution that is recognizably analytic, interpretive, reflective, or comparative will qualify, provided that it is tied directly and specifically to an assigned text. (No points are afforded to this area because it is a baseline expectation; if you are not achieving in this area your grade will be lowered.)

#### **Reading Notebook (15%)**

For each assigned reading, you are required to make a notebook entry in response to a question or prompt included in the assignment; also, each entry should include a brief definition exercise. I will

collect notebooks in class, without prior warning; zero credit will be assigned for each ungraded entry in the event that a notebook is not available when I call for it. Please note that the penalties for plagiarism apply to notebooks as well as to writing assignments and essay drafts.

#### 4 Interpretive Essays (5%, 10%, 15%, 20%)

Each of these essays will develop an argument derived from your analysis of a combination of texts. Each essay will undergo revision and rewriting, with the assistance of peer review and instructor feedback (quality of both revision & peer review will be factored into the final grade for each essay). All essays will adhere to MLA format for research papers (including documentation). There will be penalties for late essays.

#### Documented Essay (20%)

You will develop your own research project for the final paper, and you will write an essay based on your findings. I suggest that you consider the kinds of questions that our class reader, *Acting out Culture* raises. You may also use one essay from *Acting Out Culture*, though it may not be one of the essays that I have assigned for another unit. I will provide you with a formal description of the Documented Essay later in the semester, but I recommend that you not wait until then to think about possible topics for the project.

#### Writing Portfolio (15%)

You will submit a portfolio of your writing at the end of the semester. This will include a selection of the exercises and essays you will have written over the semester. I will provide you with a detailed description of how to assemble and organize the portfolio, well in advance of the due date. **Important: save and carefully label each piece of work as a separate data file for the Portfolio; do not “write over” any existing files when drafting, and be sure to BACK UP your work each time you type.**

#### Writing Exercises

Writing exercises are not graded separately, since you don't get to revise or rewrite them, and I want you to feel free to take risks and make mistakes with these assignments. So, as long as you submit them on time, showing that you have made a good-faith effort to follow the instructions (which will always include a minimum required length), they will be accepted as being in support of the writing of whichever essay happens to be upcoming.

## Schedule of Reading & Writing Assignments

### 👉 IMPORTANT 👈

This schedule is subject to minor change. Refer to the Blackboard Assignments page for the actual assignment.

“Read” and “write” activities listed for each day are to be completed **FOR** that day. Thus, for example, on Week Two, Day One, students need to write a second draft of essay 1 and read the essay by William Henry.

### Unit 1: What is The Purpose of Higher Education?

#### Week One

##### Day 1

Read: selection from Horace Mann, “The Report of the Massachusetts Board of Education”; Kelly Field’s “A Year of College for All”; and the Ford Foundation report, “Reaping the Benefits: Defining the Public and Private Benefits of Going to College.” (Note: this assignment was sent to all incoming first-year students in August; students have been given access to the readings and the accompanying assignment.)

**Write: Draft 1 of Essay 1 due**

#### Week Two

##### Day 1

Read: William Henry’s “In Defense of Elitism” (Bb).

Write: In light of discussion and activities from the first day and from reading and reflecting on William Henry’s article, revise – rewrite – your essay for submission of **Draft 2 of Essay 1**. **NOTE: Be sure to bring in TWO HARD COPIES of your essay. Additionally, place one copy in the Assignment section of our Blackboard class community.**

**Please Note:** Your paper will serve two purposes: learning and assessment. One copy will be reviewed to verify that you are appropriately placed into ENWR105. If a faculty review committee determines that you will benefit from taking ENWR100 before taking ENWR105, you will be contacted directly, by email, and have your class switched. If this switch occurs, you will take this essay with you to ENWR100, and after successful completion of that course, enroll in ENWR105 in the spring. For more questions, please see the following website: [www.montclair.edu/writing/](http://www.montclair.edu/writing/)

The second copy will be reviewed by me and returned to you on the third day of class with commentary to direct further revision for final submission (and evaluation) next week.

In-Class: Peer Review

### Unit 2: Seeing Is Believing?

**Unit 2 Essay Question:** In this unit our writers reflect on the effect of an increasingly visual world, one in which we, as viewers, are regularly presented with “the truth” by visual images. For this paper, take on the question of whether or not the increased availability of visual evidence-gathering technologies – webcams, video cell phones, reality television, etc. – is enabling us to see truth more clearly or less clearly. Are the

presence of these technologies and their current mode of use enabling us to see more or less? Draw on at least two of the readings to make your argument.

Day 2

**Write: Draft 3 (final) of Essay 1 due at beginning of class.**

In-Class: Review prefatory chapter from Hacker's "A Writer's Reference." Instructor will answer questions on the Program, course expectations, grading, and plagiarism policy.

In-Class: Introduce Unit 2; read and discuss Brooke Knight's "Watch Me! Webcams and the Public Exposure of Private Lives" (150-7).

### Week Three

Day 1

Read: Daniel Harris' "Cuteness" (134-43).

Write: Exercise 1

Day 2

Read: Michael Eric Dyson's "Frames of Reference" (123-33) and "Patriarchy Gets Funky" (114-22).

Write: Exercise 2

### Week Four

Day 1

Read: Anne-Marie Cusac's "Watching Torture in Prime Time" (109-13).

Write: **Exploratory draft of Essay 2 due**

In-Class: Loop Writing and Peer Review

Day 2

**Write: Draft 2 of Essay 2.**

In-Class: Activity on Argument and Claim; Self-Evaluative Review of Essays

**Thursday by 4 pm: Submit papers by email to instructor for feedback by Friday at 5 pm.**

### Week Five

Day 1

**Final Draft of Essay 2 due**

Editing Lesson

## **Unit 3: How We Talk – Putting It into Words**

**Unit 3 Essay Question:** At issue in this unit is the question of the extent to which language and speech conventions (traditions, habits, sometimes rules) shape the way in which public discussions about issues are shaped. Choose a public, controversial issue and using at least two articles published within the last three years and consider whether or not the writer has been shaped by public discourse conventions which are variously described as "argumentative" (Tannen), "angry" (Miller), and "demonizing" (Nunberg). In addition to citing the articles you have found, use one of the class readings to support your analysis.

Day 2

Read: Deborah Tannen's "Fighting for Our Lives" (572-94) and Stephen Miller's "The Ways We Don't Converse Now" (594-606)

Write: Exercise 4

In-Class: Brainstorm and identify a controversial issue.

### Week Six

Day 1 Read: Geoffrey Nunberg’s “Trashing the L-Word” (607-615) and Elliott Carl’s “The Perfect Voice” (644-53).  
Research: Locate and bring in two articles (or more) on your controversial issue.  
Write: Exercise 5

Day 2 **Exploratory Draft of Essay 3 due**  
Read: “Rule Maker...Rule Breaker” (570-1)  
  
In-Class: Discussion and peer review

#### Week Seven

Day 1 **Revised Draft of Essay 3 due**  
In-Class: Peer Review, Editing Workshop, Conferences.

Day 2 Formal Class Canceled – Conferences Continue

#### Week Eight

Day 1 **Final Draft of Essay 3 due**

### **Unit 4: How We Eat**

**Unit 4 Essay Question:** One of the most long-standing and ingrained scripts in our culture has to do with what is often called the “myth of self-reliance”: the expectation that, no matter what obstacles are put in our way, we are all ultimately and personally responsible for what befalls us (good or bad). Drawing upon three of the writers from the readings in this section of *Acting out Culture*, take a stand on this myth in respect to the issue of food and eating in contemporary America (adapted from *Acting out Culture*, 262).

Day 2 Read: Michael Pollan, “Big Organic” (174-96); Francine Prose, “The Wages of Sin” (197-203);  
Write: Exercise 6

#### Week Nine

Day 1 Read: Jason Fagone’s “In Gorging, Truth” (204-16), Caroline Knapp’s “Add Cake, Subtract Self-Esteem” (217-31), and Loretts Schwartz-Nobel’s “American’s Wandering Families” (249-62).  
Write: Exercise 7

Day 2 **Exploratory Draft of Essay 4 due**  
In-Class: Peer Review

#### Week Ten

Day 1 **Revised Draft of Essay 4 due**  
In-Class: Exercise 8 for Documented Essay

Day 2: Write: Peer Review for Two Classmates  
Library Research Day: Location TBA

#### Week Eleven

Day 1            **Final Draft of Essay 4 due**  
In-Class: Proposal for the Documented Essay

### **Unit 5: The Documented Essay**

Day 2            Read Hacker chapter on Research Writing  
Write: Exercise 8 (Summary and selective quoting from two sources)  
Peer Review of Exercise 8; individual conferences

#### Week Twelve

Day 1:           Write: Annotated Bibliography  
Individual conferences

Day 2:           **Exploratory Draft of Essay 5 due**  
In-Class: Peer review; individual conferences

#### Week Thirteen

Day 1           Middle Draft Due  
Peer Review

Day 2           Thanksgiving – NO CLASS

### **Unit 6: Portfolio**

#### Week Fourteen

Day 1           Portfolio Introduction  
In-Class: Portfolio Planning

Day 2           Final Draft of Essay 5 due  
In-Class Portfolio Work

#### Week Fifteen

Portfolio Work Week: Work through revisions through peer review, guided revision exercises, and teacher-conferences. Share draft of “Me as a Writer” essay to classmate for review.

Portfolio due at final exam day (in lieu of exam).