

WR121: Introduction to College Composition Version “1.0”

Course Information:

Meetings: MWF
10:00-10:50
209 Deady Hall
CRN: 27021

Instructor Information:

Name: Shane Hall, Graduate Teaching Fellow
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Office: PLC 243
Office Hours: Tues: 10-11:30, Wed: 2-3:30

Course Description

This is a course about critical inquiry and ethical argumentation. Writing 121 is a course designed to help individual students develop their abilities to *reason in writing*. This course is designed to help you use writing as a way of discovering, exploring, and testing ideas—your own ideas and the new ideas you are being exposed to in college. This is why we write so many essays, regardless of our major, throughout our education. We can start by defining “written reasoning” as a process of finding the best available reasons for one's ideas. This also means, in part, becoming familiar with the conventions of written communication in the university. In Writing 121 you'll work through specific ideas and skills which will help you generate, evaluate, and hone complex arguments and counterarguments by drafting and revising three essays. To be successful in this course requires you to do substantial reading and writing, and requires you to participate vigorously in class discussions.

While every UO student (eventually) takes WR 121, I thank you for signing up for this experimental version of the course that has been organized by the Center for Ecological Leadership, the Office of Sustainability, Environmental Studies Program, and Composition Program. As the school's experimental guinea pigs, we'll be testing out the new *Sustainability Casebook* and will have opportunities to make suggestions for its final edits before more classes use it. We're also the first composition class that has been intentionally formed around a single topic with students from residential communities and a single major. So while we learn written reasoning, we'll also periodically reflect how we're learning and use these observations to help UO improve its composition courses.

Course Objectives

If you enthusiastically and critically engage in this class and complete each assignment you will...

1. Employ critical reading and thinking strategies to evaluate ongoing debates around the concepts of “sustainability,” “environmental crisis” and “social justice.”
2. Use written reasoning to generate and evaluate arguments through three essay “cycles.”
3. Develop a journal that chronicles your critical reflections and learning process throughout the course.
4. Practice various composition and revision strategies.
5. Present your original arguments in front of the class in small group assignments.

Required Texts

- *The Little Seagull Handbook*, Richard Bullock and Francine Weinberg¹
- *The UO Sustainability Casebook*, various authors²
- Optional: *The Shape of Reason*, John Gage

Overall Expectations:

What to expect from your instructor: You can expect me to work hard to help you learn and succeed in this course. Specifically, I'll be available to help you in and outside of class. I will communicate clear expectations, criteria, and feedback for your efforts, and demonstrate the value of course activities and requirements (always feel free to ask about why we're doing each activity or assignment), and guide you in the completion of tasks in a timely manner so you can demonstrate your achievement. I teach this course because I believe that our education, at its best, should help us understand and act meaningfully in the world we live in. What social and environmental problems challenge us to question what it means to be "sustainable"—and is this slippery concept a useful goal to pursue? I love talking about all the issues we'll be exploring in our writing over the next few weeks and I am here to help facilitate your investigations. If I don't know answers to your questions that you're asking, I'm positive that I can help you find those answers.

What your instructor expects from you: You are expected to be present for every class, complete class readings and assignments on time and in the manner required, check Blackboard announcements and your email regularly, and participate vigorously and often in class discussions and activities – meaning you will share your ideas openly, relate course concepts and skills to your interests and real world experiences, and work to synthesize information from a variety of sources. In addition, you are required to comply with the course policies (page 3-4) and ask me questions when things get confusing (and I guarantee they will, because confusion is the first step towards learning anything useful).

All of us are expected to respect everyone's voice; listen to, read, reflect upon, and comment appropriately on each other's contributions; challenge each other to clarify our ideas; and encourage each other to deepen our mutual learning. We'll discuss other, specific, strategies for going about all this during this course.

Important Dates:

Jan 13: Last day to drop class with no "W"

Feb 23: Last day to drop class (with "W")

¹ Books available in the Duckstore and perhaps in used bookstores in town. Make sure to get the "UO" edition.

² Articles available as PDF files on the Blackboard site for the course under "Course Readings." You must bring a printed copy of each essay cycle's readings to class each day.

Course Policies: the “FAQs”

Attendance

Your ability to learn and ability to earn a successful grade in this course is compromised by missing class. You're first two absences don't carry a grade penalty, however, each additional absence will result in a 1/3rd letter grade reduction from your final grade. For example, if a student who otherwise has earned an 89% (B+) and has missed three classes, that student's final grade will drop to a B. *Any* absence or repeated tardiness may affect your other grades. Please notify me ahead of time if you must miss class, be late, or leave class early. You are responsible for anything you miss if you are not in class. Any absence after two full weeks of missed class may result in course failure. Any absence after three full weeks of missed class will result in course failure.

Academic Honesty

All work submitted in this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly documented. Please consult *The Little Seagull* for a definition of plagiarism and information on documentation and refer to the summary of the Code of Student Conduct on the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards website. In cases where academic dishonesty has been clearly established, the award of an F for the final course is the standard practice of the Composition Program. Please see me if you have any questions about your use of sources.

Access

The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me in the first day or two of class if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You may also wish to contact the Accessible Education Center in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uoaec@uoregon.edu.

A General Note on Communication

Due to the short, brutish nature of a ten-week course, we are all expected and required to perform at a 'high-octane' level. That being said, we are human. If you are struggling with material, faced suddenly with a crisis, succumb to the flu, are stalked by rogue nutria, etc. **please communicate with me** via email or in person so we can coordinate and ensure you are able to access fully a positive learning experience (and pass the class). Coming to me a week *after* an assignment is due to tell me that your house burnt down is an awfully long time to wait to talk about an extension. So promptly communicate, communicate, communicate.

Late Work

Late work will not be accepted unless you seek and receive permission from the instructor **prior to the assignment's deadline in the syllabus.**

Electronics in the Classroom

Laptops and tablets can be powerful tools inside a classroom, but these can also be distracting and otherwise detrimental to group discussions. With great power comes great responsibility: if you would like to use one of these tools in class please send me an email explaining the ways you intend to use electronics in the classroom.

Registration

The only way to add this class is through DuckWeb. The last day to add this or any writing class is the Friday of Week One.

Prerequisites

A satisfactory SAT-verbal score is required for placement in WR 121. Students who enroll in a course for which they have not met the prerequisites will be notified and dropped by the English Department. It is recommended that international students who have been placed into the AEIS writing courses complete those courses in their entirety before enrolling in WR 121. Academic advisors can assist students who have questions about WR 121 placement. See also the University of Oregon General Bulletin.

Incompletes

The Director of Composition must approve requests for the grade "Incomplete" in advance of the end of the quarter. Such approval will be granted only in cases when some minor but essential aspect of the course cannot be completed by students through unforeseen circumstances beyond their control.

Brief Description of Graded Assignments:

How Your Grade is Evaluated: (full descriptions of assignments on BlackBoard)

1. Essay Cycle 1.1/1.2: **15%**
2. Essay Cycle 2.1/2.2: **25%**
3. Essay Cycle 3.1/3.2: **30%**
4. Classroom Citizenship and Course Portfolio: **20%**
5. Online Course Journal: **10%**

A = 94-100	C+ = 77-79
A- = 90-93	C = 74-76
B+ = 87-89	C- = 70-73
B = 84-86	D+ = 67-69
B- = 80-83	D = 60-66

Essay “Life” Cycles (70%):

You earn the majority of your grade in this course (70%) by composing and revising three essays. Just like organisms have “life-cycles” so too will your essays. This means that they are submitted first in an early version, commented on, revised, and submitted again in a second version. Details on each step of this process can be found in the “Assignment Description” folder on Blackboard.

In each essay cycle, we will read and discuss assigned readings to collaboratively discover what “questions at issue” (those ideas we find most important, controversial and vital) we need to work through and address in our essays. After you have submitted the final version of each essay you will complete a self-reflection on both the content and process of the essay cycle. Please refer to the “Annotated Assignment Descriptions” in the “Assignments” section of our BlackBoard site for details on each step in your essay’s “life cycle.”

Classroom Citizenship and Course Portfolio (20%):

You will prepare a course portfolio in a three-ring binder that reflects your engagement with the course readings, in-class lectures/discussions, and the field trip. This portfolio will include, among other materials, homework assignments and in-class notes. **Breakdown of Classroom Citizenship and Portfolio Grades: Class discussion participation and “five minute argument” presentation: 5%. Short Writing Assignments and notes: 10%. Peer Reviews: 5%.** We’ll discuss what good classroom citizenship means, and how to excel as a classroom citizen, in class. An important part of this term-long assignment will be your “Five Minute Argument,” which each student will present on a particular, assigned date (more on this later in Week One).

Online Course Journal (10%):

In weeks 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10, you will write an online journal entry in response to a number of questions I pose through the course BlackBoard site. These questions will ask you to reflect on your learning process, fundamental course materials, implications of classroom discussions, or any other aspect of the course we feel is meaningful at that time (I may ask you to generate your own prompts for this assignment at times).

Schedule of Class Topics, Readings and Assignments³:

Note: Bring all readings assigned *printed* to class each day. Come prepared with questions about the material. While we may not discuss all readings in class, each offers important perspectives that you will be responsible for in your writing.

Date	In-Class Writing Topic	Readings for Discussion	Assignments Due (in class, printed; journals submitted via Blackboard) Homework Specifics Announced via BlackBoard
Essay Cycle One: Arguments of Definition and Interpretation What is “Sustainability?” Are We Sustainable?			
1.1, 6 Jan MON	Introductions, review of syllabus	Review Syllabus and Blackboard <i>after</i> class.	
1.2 8 Jan WED	Lecture and Discussion: Overview of WR121 key terms and concepts	Required: <i>The Little Seagull (LS)</i> v-viii, 1-13 Optional: <i>Shape of Reason (SOR)</i> chapter 4 <i>LS:</i> 63-65	Introductory Survey (print or hand-written)
1.3 10 Jan FRI	Discussion of Readings	R: Jansen and McMillen, <i>As the World Burns</i> Rockstrom et al, “A Safe Operating Space in Nature”	Introductory Essay (print)
2.1 13 Jan, MON	The Reasoned Thesis	R: Heinberg, “What is Sustainability?” City of Eugene, “Envision Eugene: Executive Summary” <i>LS:</i> 32-37	Homework Assignment

³ Dates of specific lessons and readings subject to change. The due-dates of assignments are, however, relatively set in proverbial stone.

		O: <i>SOR</i> chapter 2	
2.2 15 Jan, WED	Critical & Sympathetic Reading:	R: Bring all readings to class for discussion. <i>LS:</i> 77-80, 82-92 O: <i>SOR</i> chapter 2	“Shitty First Draft” (print)
2.3 17 Jan, FRI	Discussion of Readings	R: bring readings to class.	Online Course Journal Entry #1 (BlackBoard) by Midnight Schedule out-of-class conference for Week 3
3.1 20 Jan, MON	Martin Luther King Jr. Day: Class Cancelled	O: <i>Little Seagull</i> 6-13	Essay 1.1 (Safeassign, email) – bring 2 copies (print) to class Wed.
3.2 22 Jan, WED	Written Reasoning: Reasoned Thesis Workshop OR Peer Review	O: <i>SOR</i> chapter 8	Bring 2 copies of 1.1 to class
3.3 24 Jan, FRI	Reasoned Thesis Workshop OR Peer Review	R: Bring all readings to class	
4.1 27 Jan, MON	Reflections on Cycle One		Essay 1.2 (Safeassign, email) – bring 1 copy (print) to class.
Essay Cycle Two: Arguments of Value and Consequence			
What are the Costs of Environmental Crisis? Whose Crisis Is This, Anyway?			

4.2 29 Jan, WED	Discussion of Readings	R: Hardin, “Lifeboat Ethics: the Case Against Helping the Poor” Bell, “Hey, Stop Breeding Up There!”	Homework Assignment
4.3 31 Jan, FRI		R: Shiva, “Globalization and Poverty” <i>LS:</i> 80-82	Online Course Journal Entry #2 Homework Assignment
5.1 3 Feb, MON	Finding Counterarguments, Incorporating Evidence	O: <i>SOR</i> chapter 8	Essay Cycle 2 SFD (print)
5.2 5 Feb, WED	Incorporating Counterarguments	R: LaDuke, “Visions of White Earth” <i>LS:</i> 262-266	Complete Midterm Survey (BlackBoard)
5.3 7 Feb, FRI	Group Revision	TBD	Essay 2.1 (Safeassign, email) – bring 3 copies (print) to class. Schedule Team Conference for week 6
6.1 10 Feb, MON	Mechanics and Style and the End of the World	<i>Little Seagull</i> (262-279)	
6.2 12 Feb, WED	Mechanics and Style OR Discussion	<i>Little Seagull</i> (282-311)	
6.3	Introduction to		Online Course Journal Entry #3

14 Feb FRI	new cycle		(Blackboard) by Midnight
Essay Cycle Three: Arguments of Re-Definition and Action What Should We Do? Is Sustainability Possible, or Even Desirable?			
7.1 17 Feb, MON	Cycle Reflections and Discussion:	R: White Jr., “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis”	Essay 2.2 (Safeassign, email, print)
7.2 19 Feb, WED	Discussion and Writing Workshop:		
7.3 21 Feb, FRI	Discussion and Writing Workshop	R: Klein, Simpson, “Dancing the World into Being”	Homework Assignment
8.1 24 Feb, MON	Discussion and Writing Workshop	R: Jones, “The New Green Deal”	Homework Assignment
8.2 26 Feb, WED	Written Reasoning V	Bring essay cycle 2 readings for discussion.	
8.3 28 Feb, FRI	“Flex-day” – TBD for class goals.	Bring essay cycle 2 readings for discussion.	Learning Objective Online Journal Entry #4 Essay 3 “Shitty First Draft” (Optional)
9.1 3 Mar, MON	“Flex-day” – TBD for class goals		Essay 3.1 (emailed and Safeassigned)
9.2	“Flex-day”—TBD		

5 Mar, WED	for class goals		
9.3 7 Mar, FRI	Class Canceled for Team Review Sessions		
10.1 10 Mar, MON	Revision III	<i>Little Seagull</i> Readings TBD	
10.2 12 Mar WED	TBD- class decision	TBD- class decision	
10.3 14 Mar, FRI	TBD- class decision	TBD- class decision	Classroom Citizenship Course Portfolio Online Course Journal Entry #5
Final Exam Period: Mar 18, 10:15 AM	Portfolio Submission		<i>Final Portfolio due at meeting in hard copy. Must follow all instructions posted on BB. Essay 3.2 due via Safeassign, email, and hardcopy. Final reflection due in portfolio.</i>