Finding Your Place

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Course Inquiry: “A Place is Part of Who We Are”

When you find the place where you are, practice occurs.
- D GEN

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.
- T.S. Eliot, “Little Gidding”

You have a paper due next week and it’s time to start writing. You sit down at your dorm room desk, a table at The Chocolate Bar, a fourth-floor carol at O’Neill, or outside under an oak. You open your laptop. Power on. Maybe you take out a pen and notebook. You check your email. Then Facebook. Then your cell phone. Outside, the sun is dropping and a cold front is moving in from the north. Inside, your stomach is protesting because you haven’t eaten much today and have already downed two cups of coffee.

Wherever you write, you are always writing in a place. Well, many places actually. You are in your dorm room, but you are also back home, in the place or places where you grew up. You are in the cafeteria, but you are also in the town of Newton, the city of Boston, the state of Massachusetts. You are at the library, but
you are also in the books that crowd around you. You are under that oak tree, but
you are also part of a specific ecosystem. Even while checking your Facebook
profile you are in a place. And whether or not you are aware, all these places are
constantly shaping you, and you, as a writer, are constantly shaping and re-shaping
those places.

So the question: How do we write and how do we live, in the many places which
make up our world? I have designed this course hoping that working together we
will generate some answers.

Objectives

My objectives in this class are that by the end of the semester you will be stronger
writers and more confident thinkers, and along the lines of our shared inquiry, will
come to a new understanding of how writing affects place and place affects
writing. Specifically, I expect that by experimenting and taking chances in writing
for different audiences and for a variety of purposes (e.g. inquiry, exploration,
learning, creation, and communication), by learning to place your writing in a
variety of rhetorical situations and genres, and by understanding writing as an open
process in which revision leads to both clearer writing and clearer thinking, you
will develop both the skills to help you through your career at Boston College and
beyond and a keen awareness of your own writing and thinking processes.

Required Texts and Materials

- Fresh Ink: Papers from Boston College’s First-Year Writing Seminar 2008.
- Documents online on Blackboard.
- A journal/notebook (This can be any size, any shape, any color, definitely lined,
  but please make sure its only use will be writing for this class).

Grading and Required Work

Breakdown of Required Work:

While this course will be both reading and writing intensive, the primary focus will
always be on the production of your own texts. Over the semester you will:

(1) Be an active and contributing member of our classroom community.
(2) Write and revise four papers, producing at least two drafts of each.
(3) Keep a writing journal—making entries at least once a week.
(4) Contribute writing posts to our course blackboard site.
(5) Complete in-class writing exercises.
(6) Provide written and oral feedback on your classmates’ writing
(7) Compile a final portfolio that includes a “best-of” sampling of the writing you have already produced as well as an extensive revision/rewriting of one of your earlier papers and a process reflection on your growth as a writer and thinker over the course of the semester [More information on the requirements of the final portfolio will be provided later in the semester, but for now make sure to save ALL your writing].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2nd draft of Paper #1</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd draft of Paper #2</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd draft of Paper #3</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd draft of Paper #4</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Portfolio/Final Project</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journal entries/In-class exercises/Online posts/Responses to peer work</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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To pass this course you must complete ALL the required work.

Journal entries, reading response posts, and other low-stakes writing will not be graded on an A-F scale. If you adequately complete all these assignments there is no reason you shouldn’t receive a full 10% for that part of your final grade.

**Some Grading Principles:**

- Grades are based on a norm of “C.” Work done competently and adequately is “C” work. A “B” represents work which goes beyond the requirements of the assigned task and an “A” represents superior achievement well above the norm.
- In grading, a teacher has several obligations: 1) To the individual student – to assess the student’s work fairly and accurately. 2) To other students in the class – to maintain standards so that excellence is properly recognized. 3) To the school – to maintain standards of excellence that reflect the school’s credibility, which ultimately reflects the student’s credibility. 4) To potential employers or graduate schools – to indicate accurately the student’s abilities and achievements.
- In my grading of your work, I will strive for fairness and clarity and attempt to meet the obligations outlined above.

**Classroom Policies**

Conferences:
Meeting for conferences is mandatory.
Because the course only meets twice a week for class discussion, meeting consistently for individual or group conferences is imperative to developing your skills as writers and thinkers. We will meet individually at least twice every three weeks. The conferences will be held in my office in Carney unless otherwise noted and will last approximately fifteen minutes. At the beginning of the semester each of you will sign up for a conference time that will remain the same throughout the semester. We will sometimes have group conferences which will be arranged on an as-needed basis and which will last approximately a half hour. I consider conferences equal to if not more important than our class discussion meetings. Therefore missing a conference will be considered the same as missing a class meeting.

Attendance:

Because this is a small discussion and workshop based course which meets only twice a week I will enforce a strict attendance policy. Each of you is an integral part of this course; when you are absent you are not only letting me down but your classmates as well. That being said, I understand that there are occasionally extenuating circumstances which will prevent you from coming to class. Therefore, I will allow each of you two absences without penalty. I consider missing a conference the same as missing a class. Additionally, coming to class late is disrespectful to both me and your classmates, and if it becomes a recurring pattern, each tardy will count as an absence.

More than two missed meetings (classes or conferences) will lower your final course grade by a step and each additional absence will lower the grade additional steps (A to A-, A- to B+, etc). More than five missed meetings may result in your failing the course. If an emergency arises that might result in a prolonged absence please let me know immediately and contact Dean David Quigley in Carney 418, david.quigley.1@bc.edu, to discuss the problem.

Late papers:

All written work is due by the beginning of class on the date listed on the course schedule (or by midnight the night before for online posts). For every day that work is late, the potential grade will drop a step (B to B-, B- to C+, etc). Work more than a week late will be counted as a zero. If you are having difficulty completing an assignment please let me know as soon as possible so that I can help you.

Participation:
Ten percent of your course grade will be determined by your participation over the course of the semester. Participation includes completing assigned readings, contributing to class discussions, bringing all materials to class (most importantly drafts of papers on workshop days!), and providing detailed and meaningful feedback to your classmates during conferences and workshops.

**Cell phones/other electronic devices:**

When you are in class you are in class and no place else, and I expect you to turn off your cell phones. While they are great for connecting us to people and places all around the world, cell phones and other technology often disconnect us from the place where we are and the people we are with in the moment.

**Plagiarism:**

According to the BC Policy on Academic Integrity, “Plagiarism is the act of taking the words, ideas, data, illustrations, or statements of another person or source, and presenting them as one's own. Each student is responsible for learning and using proper methods of paraphrasing and footnoting, quotation, and other forms of citation, to ensure that the original author, speaker, illustrator, or source of the material used is clearly acknowledged.” Please review Boston College’s policies on cheating and plagiarism at [www.bc.edu/integrity](http://www.bc.edu/integrity) and contact me anytime you have questions or are unsure how to use and document sources. Any violation of the plagiarism policies will result in serious consequences, including but not limited to failing the course. FYI: Under B.C.’s policies, submission of the same work in more than one course without prior written approval from the instructors involved is considered a form of cheating.

**Campus Resources Available to You**

**Connors Family Learning Center (CFLC):** Located in 200 O’Neill Library, the CFLC is a place where you can go for one-on-one writing tutoring. A tutor won’t “fix” a paper but can be a great resource if you’re feeling stuck or if you’d like the feedback of another reader. To schedule an appointment call 2-0611.

**Campus Technology Resource Center (CTRC):** Located in 250 O’Neill Library, this is a place to access a computer and print documents. However, remember that you need your student ID card to access the printers.

**Counseling Services:** Located in 108 Gasson Hall. If things seem tough for you or if you’d just like someone to talk to (about feeling homesick, having trouble fitting in, or feeling depressed or overwhelmed), there are many great people available to listen and help through the University Counseling Services. Call (617) 552-3310 to
set up an appointment or stop in any of their offices at Gasson 108, Fulton 254, or Campion 301. It’s free to all students.

**Communication**

One of the goals of our writing and class discussions is to communicate with each other more effectively. I strongly encourage you to communicate with me so that I can be in a position to understand your goals, questions, frustrations, and successes. If you are feeling particularly unsure of your work, I want to know about it. And if you ever find my comments on your papers confusing or inconsistent, I want to know about it. If you are having difficulties (either in this class or outside it) that affect your work, confidence, or concentration, I want to know about that too. Each of you is beginning a new academic quest in a brand new place; please feel free to use me as both a resource and guide. We will be meeting in conferences at least two out of every three weeks, but that does not mean we can’t meet more often if you feel it would be a help.

**Schedule**

Readings and writing assignments must be completed in time for the class day that they are listed. Blackboard posts should be posted by midnight the night before the class it is due. All changes to this schedule will be announced in class; you are responsible for any updated deadlines and requirements. [NOTE: WP=Writ Places, BB=Documents online at Blackboard site]

**Week One**

September 2 (T)            Introduction, course objectives, in-class writing exercise.

September 4 (TH)
  Reading Due: Student essay
  Writing Due: Journal Entry—

**Week Two [CONFERENCE WEEK]**

September 9 (T)
  Reading Due: Selections from *Fresh Ink*
  Writing Due: Blackboard post—reading response

September 11 (TH)
  Reading Due: Selections from *Fresh Ink*, cont…
  Writing Due: Journal Entry—

**Week Three [CONFERENCE WEEK]**
September 16 (T)
  Reading Due: Anne Lamott “Shitty First Drafts” (BB), Handout on peer workshopping.
  Writing Due: First draft of textual analysis essay (Bring THREE copies to class for WORKSHOP DAY!)

September 18 (TH)
  Reading Due: Catherine Black “The Joy of Mud” (WP), Tim Lindgren “On Being from Fargo” (WP).
  Writing Due: NONE

Week Four
September 23 (T)—campus observation day! (Hope for sun)
  Reading Due: [Selections from B.C. newspapers/flyers/website/etc.]
  Writing Due: NONE

September 25 (TH)
  Reading Due: Emily Keane “Structure Chaos” (WP). Example of co-authored writing.
  Writing Due: Second draft of textual analysis essay.

Week Five [CONFERENCE WEEK – group conferences]
September 30 (T): NO CLASS [Rosh Hashanah]

October 2 (TH)
  Reading Due: Derek Owens “Where I’m Writing From” (WP), Ron Fletcher “By Dawn’s Early Light” (WP), “Notes on Interviewing” (WP).
  Writing Due: Blackboard Post—update on exploring place/collaborative project.

Week Six [CONFERENCE WEEK- schedule group conferences on Wednesday or Friday]
October 7 (T)
  Reading Due:
  Writing Due: First draft co-authored essay

October 9 (TH): NO CLASS [Yom Kippur]

Week Seven
October 14 (T)
  Reading Due: Matthew Dudley “The Dope on Head Shops” (WP).
  Writing Due: Journal Entry—
October 16 (TH)
Writing Due:

Week Eight: [CONFERENCE WEEK]
October 21 (T)
Reading Due: E.B. White “Once More to the Lake” (BB).
Writing Due: Second draft co-authored essay

October 23 (TH)
Reading Due: Selections from Fresh Ink (personal essays)
Writing Due: Journal—brainstorm places/topics for reflective/narrative essay

Week Nine: [CONFERENCE WEEK]
October 28 (T)
Reading Due: David Sedaris “The Ship Shape” (WP).
Writing Due: First draft reflective/narrative essay (Bring THREE copies to class for WORKSHOP DAY!)

October 30 (TH)
Reading Due: Jonathan Lethem “Speak, Hoyt-Schermerhorn” (BB).
Writing Due: NONE

Week Ten [CONFERENCE WEEK]
November 4 (T) LIBRARY DAY!!
Reading Due: Selections from B.C. Libraries website
Writing Due: Second draft reflective/narrative essay

November 6 (TH)
Reading Due: Rodney Rothman “My Fake Job” (WP).
Writing Due: Journal entry —

Week Eleven [CONFERENCE WEEK]
November 11 (T)
Reading Due: Eric Schlosser “On the Range” (WP).
Writing Due: First draft research proposal & annotated bibliography

November 13 (TH)
Reading Due: Selections from Fresh Ink (examples of researched essays),
Writing Due: Blackboard post—reading response
Week Twelve [CONFERENCE WEEK]
November 18 (T)
   Reading Due: Stephen Doheny-Forina “Virtual Vermont” (WP), Chori Santiago “The Flavor of Hope” (WP).
   Writing Due: NONE.

November 20 (TH)
   Reading Due: NONE.
   Writing Due: Second draft research proposal & annotated bibliography [Be prepared to share your proposal/ideas with the class].

Week Thirteen
November 25 (T)
   Reading Due: David Foster Wallace “Consider the Lobster” (BB)
   Writing Due: Journal Entry—
                  Start working on Final Project!

November 27 (TH): NO CLASS – Thanksgiving Break!

Week Fourteen [CONFERENCE WEEK]
December 2 (T)
   Reading Due: Alain de Botton “On Traveling Places” (BB).
   Writing Due: First draft of final project (Bring THREE copies to class for WORKSHOP DAY!)

December 4 (TH) Last Class!
   Reading Due:
   Writing Due: Continue work on final project

Week Fifteen [OPTIONAL CONFERENCE WEEK]
Because of the University study period there will be no class this week. However, we will meet during our assigned examination period during finals week to share our writing, eat food, schmooze, and reflect on the semester.

Completed portfolios are due in my office by Noon on Thursday, December 11.