

*English 150: Argument and Research
Syllabus*

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Sec 1: MW 9 :30-10:45; CCC 232
Sec 2: TR 2-3:15 ; CCC 232
Sec 3: MW 3 :30-4:45; CCC 232
Office Hours: TR 1-2

This class has many objectives. Through a close focus on specifically argumentative texts we will explore ways to start thinking systematically about writing, and also about the principles of argument and the methods of research.

Throughout the course you will develop skills that will enable you to identify the basic components and elements that shape successful writing, such as topic, purpose, genre, and audience. Using these skills you will work to compose articulate, grammatically correct, and organized pieces of writing with properly documented and supported ideas, evidence, and information suitable to the topic, purpose, and audience. Further, you will develop skills enabling you to critique your own and others' writing and to provide effective and useful feedback to improve your and your colleagues' communication.

You will also begin to learn the accents and dialects of academic writing. Many of the things we talk about will be familiar to you; other things will be new. For many of you the most surprising thing about this class will be the realization that people can and do (and should) examine and evaluate writing this carefully and thoroughly. Accept that idea up front and engage fully with the work we do in this class and you'll find it not only profitable but enjoyable.

Our work will involve three major kinds of tasks: journaling and other short writing tasks; process-driven, longer writing tasks; and extensive evaluation of your own and your colleagues' writing culminating in informed, effective revisions. We will focus our attention on four basic areas of inquiry:

- The writing process and principles of effective composition, including practical grammar
- The principles of argument
- Research and documentation skills
- Critical reading and viewing skills

As the last item on this list suggests, one of the best ways to learn about writing is to read. Expect to do a lot of reading in this class and to watch a lot of films. In addition to writing by your classmates, we'll be reading extensively from three highly argumentative works of literature and comparing them evaluatively to multiple film versions. Critical reading and viewing involves not only passively absorbing the ideas in a film or piece of writing, but also questioning them, testing them, and writing about them. Comprehending what you read and view is an important skill, and a lot of what you read and view at the university will be very challenging. But merely comprehending an author's words or the images in a piece of film or videotape does not make you a thinker. It's our job in this class to build up the skills that will let you grapple with, challenge, and evaluate the ideas and claims your reading and viewing confronts you with. This may be the most important skill you will take away from this class. Critical reading and viewing skills are prerequisites for thoughtful writing, but they are also absolutely necessary for your survival at the university, in your career, and as a citizen in a democracy. Broadly stated, then, the goal of this class is to help you become a reader/viewer, a thinker, and a writer.

ENGLISH 150 COURSE REQUIREMENTS

We will be using the following texts:

- *Complete Novels* by Dashiell Hammett (rental)
- *Novels and Stories* by Zora Neale Hurston (rental)
- *The Complete Pelican Shakespeare* (rental)
- *Rules for Writers* 8th edition by Diana Hacker (purchase)
- Also, I strongly recommend that you set yourself up with a current hardback college dictionary.

In addition, we will view the following films either in or out of class:

- *The Maltese Falcon* (John Huston, 1940)
- *Satan Met a Lady* (William Dieterle, 1936)
- *Dangerous Female* (Roy del Ruth, 1931)
- *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (Darnell Martin, 2005)
- *Henry V* (Laurence Olivier, 1944)
- *Henry V* (Kenneth Branagh, 1989)

These films will be on reserve at the Library circulation desk for in-house use only.

Your grade in this class will be based on your continued conscientious application to the things we're reading, discussing, and writing. If you read all the assigned material carefully and thoughtfully, come to class prepared to talk and think about it and work on it with your colleagues, and strive to write journal entries and essays you feel proud of, you will enjoy spectacular, resounding success.

Specifically, I will evaluate the following tasks:

- Participation in daily workshops and discussions
- A Writing / Viewing Journal
- Three in-class essays
- A final Portfolio containing revisions of your in-class essays
- Periodic workshops and quizzes

The breakdown of your grade will work roughly as follows:

- Journal: 300 points
- Three in-class Essays: 100 points apiece
- Portfolio 300 points
- Preparation, Participation: 100 points

The math whizzes among you will already have inferred that the total number of points available is 1000. I don't award extra credit points, but you will have plenty of opportunities to earn points the regular way. Here's a breakdown of how the points available translate into the A's, B's, and C's required by the Registrar:

	100 pt. assnmt	300 pt. assnmt	Course
A+	100	300	97%
A	95	285	93%
A-	91.5	274.5	90%
B+	88.5	265.5	87%
B	85	255	83%
B-	81.5	244.5	80%
C+	78.5	235.5	77%
C	75	225	73%

C-	71.5	214.5	70%
D	65	195	60%
F	30	90	

Reading: Plan to have the reading and viewing for a given week done before the first class meeting that week. The readings and films will provide the bases for our discussions and Journal assignments, and we will very frequently be doing exercises and other activities that will require intimate knowledge of what you've read. Class will be miserable if you haven't read what we're working on, and great fun if you have. **Bottom line: Do the reading.**

Viewing: You'll be required to watch several films out of class. As with the readings, this must be done before the first class meeting that week as the films will be an integral part of class discussion. Specific versions of the films are indicated in the syllabus, and all of them are available for in-house viewing at the Library circulation desk, located on the first floor.

Journals: A Journal entry is due, **hard-copy, at the beginning of the first class each week** (unless otherwise noted), and we will be evaluating and workshopping them exhaustively in class. I will be distributing specific topics and prompts in class and electronically, and a master list exists on our D2L page under the Content tab. Journal entries must be typed, double-spaced, and must amount to at least 300 precisely-chosen, interesting, moving words (about a full typed double-spaced page). **Late Journal entries will not be accepted.**

The Journal will be the site of a large percentage of your writing in this course. In it you will reflect on things we read and view, respond to specific questions, and begin marshaling the ideas that you will later develop in your papers. The journal will also give you an opportunity to reflect on your conceptions of yourself and the things you value, and develop your own ideas and voice. The Journal is not quite as structured as the papers, and is an arena where you can express yourself honestly and openly. Nonetheless successful journaling requires careful thought and effort. **Spelling, grammar, mechanics, and strong writing are all important parts of this exercise.** Think of the Journal as prewriting or exploratory writing, writing that you work through in order to massage and refine your ideas and understanding of a subject. While you hope it will impress people, you don't necessarily expect it to wind up in a formal draft in its current form. We will (anonymously) read and evaluate Journal entries regularly in class, so put forth effort that you will feel comfortable having your classmates read. Journals are scored holistically and will typically receive a "check," "plus," or "minus." Point-wise, this translates to roughly 26.5 for a check, 28.5 for a plus, and 22.5 for a minus (basically a B+, an A, or a C).

In-Class Writing: You will draft three papers in class, closely-focused arguments in response to specific prompts stemming from our reading and viewing. Topics will be announced and discussed well in advance of due dates. You will be required to consult and cite secondary sources for each of the papers, drawing from a library of critical essays found on our D2L page under the Content tab. We'll also explore methods of literary and film research and documentation exhaustively in class. I'll evaluate and score each of these drafts, and you'll also get the chance to peer-review them. Missed in-class drafts must be made up as soon as possible under timed conditions. Specific topics, requirements, parameters, suggestions, and encouragement will be offered well in advance. You should prepare for these drafts by engaging in invention and prewriting exercises and hashing out thesis statements and outlines in advance. We will discuss this in class at length. **NO PRE-DRAFTED ESSAYS WILL BE ACCEPTED.** Do what you need to do to ensure that you can crank out a complete draft in the allotted time (roughly seventy minutes).

Target-Area Logs: On each returned essay I will note three target areas, mechanical trouble-spots that you will then undertake to clear up. For this exercise you'll identify and define the problem at hand using *Rules for Writers*, and craft clean, error-free versions of the affected sentences. To keep track of the progress of this work, you will keep a Target-area log, for which I will provide a template. Target-area logs will be turned in with the Final Portfolio. For more detailed information, see the supplemental handout (available under the Content tab on our D2L page).

Portfolios: At the Final Exam period you will hand in a Portfolio containing the following:

- Revised versions of your three in-class papers as well as all originals (the bluebooks)
- All feedback (my sheet of comments and the peer-review sheets)
- Target-area Logs for each draft

When you revise your papers you will attend to specific reading and evaluating skills that will help you locate the strengths and weaknesses in your writing and make sound decisions about improving it. You will also have the benefit of feedback on your drafts from your colleagues and from me.

A revision is an opportunity to take a paper farther than you originally had the time or insight to. **As such, it represents a significant departure from the original, and must involve substantially more than merely correcting mechanical errors.** We will discuss strategies for revision exhaustively in class. **Further, you will be required to consult, quote, and cite an additional secondary source for each revision.**

All revised papers must be typed double-spaced on one side of the page, with an inch of margin all around. Do not use report covers or title pages: indicate name, date, class and section number, and assignment on the upper left-hand corner of the first page. Observe the conventions of the MLA style for all documentation. **Always title your papers.**

Email: All of you, as you know, are assigned an email account when you arrive. **Get to know it and get into the habit of checking your email every evening.** I will frequently send reminders, copies of assignments, and other important stuff via email, and it's your responsibility to make sure you get it.

A note on attendance: Attendance is mandatory. I allow you three absences for the semester with no questions asked. Beyond this, **excuses notwithstanding**, I will begin reducing your grade by 25 points for each absence. If you know you'll need to be absent at some point during the semester—whether for extracurricular activities like sports or personal obligations like weddings—plan to spend your three absences on these. In-class essays missed due to absence must be made up under timed conditions as soon as possible. Quizzes and workshops cannot be made up. Also please note that I cannot re-teach the class by email: if you miss class, contact another student to find out what you missed. Of course, I'll be happy to send any handouts you miss, and you're always welcome to show up at my office hours to go over anything.

Plagiarism: Do not shortchange yourself and mislead your colleagues by presenting the work of another as your own. Plagiarism is **THE** cardinal academic sin, and I take it very seriously. Proof of this offense will result at the very least in failure for that assignment, and the penalties can get much more serious very quickly. Think your own thoughts, do your own work, and broadcast it proudly. Know too that plagiarism is always easy to detect and prove, and that, frankly, it's less work to do your own work than to craft a convincing piece of plagiarism. For more information on university standards of academic conduct, follow this link: <http://www.uwsp.edu/centers/rights/RRBOOKLET8-2005-06.pdf>.

CALENDAR

Wk 1 (1/22-1/25)

- Introduction
- Introduction to Library Research
- Read RW 91-111 on argument

Wk 2 (1/28-2/1)

- Begin *The Maltese Falcon* (get through chapter V)
- Read RW 395-430 on research and 445-457 on working with sources; also, note the existence of RW sections 53-62 on documenting sources
- Introduction to Documentation; Documentation exercise (**bring RW!**)
- Journal #1 due on Day 1

Wk 3 (2/4-2/8)

- *The Maltese Falcon* continued (get through chapter XIII)
- Journal #2 due on Day 1 (Monday/Tuesday)

Wk 4 (2/11-2/15)

- *The Maltese Falcon* continued
- Read RW section 55 on integrating sources
- Quoting exercise (**bring Hammett!**)
- Journal #3 due on Day 1

Wk 5 (2/18-2/22)

- *The Maltese Falcon* continued
- Analogies exercise (**bring Hammett!**)
- Journal #4 due on Day 1

Wk 6 (2/25-3/1)

- Day 1 (Monday/Tuesday): **Draft Paper #1 in class**
- Day 2 (Wednesday/Thursday): Peer Review Exercise

Wk 7 (3/4-3/8)

- Day 1: Peer Review Draft #1
- Day 2: Read Hurston's "How it Feels to be Colored Me" (on our D2L page under Content)
- Begin *Their Eyes were Watching God*
- Journal #5 due on **Day 2**

Wk 8 (3/11-3/15)

- Read Boyd on Hurston in Haiti (on our D2L page under Content)
- *Their Eyes were Watching God* continued
- Journal #6 due on Day 1

Spring Break! 3/16-3/24

Wk 9 (3/25-3/29)

- *Their Eyes were Watching God* continued
- Journal #7 due on Day 1

Wk 10 (4/1-4/5)

- *Their Eyes were Watching God* continued
- Day 2 (Wednesday/Thursday): **Draft Paper #2** in class
- Journal # 8 due on Day 1

Wk 11 (4/8-4/12)

- Day 1: Peer Review Exercise
- Day 2: Peer Review Draft #2

Wk 12 (4/15-4/19)

- Begin *Henry V* (get through acts 1 and 2)
- Watch Branagh's *Henry V* in the library
- Journal #9 due on Day 1

Wk 13 (4/22-4/26)

- *Henry V* continued (punch out acts 3 and 4 and stop whining)
- Watch Olivier's *Henry V* in the library
- Journal #10 due on Day 1

Wk 14 (4/29-5/3)

- *Henry V* continued (act 5)
- Day 2: **Draft Paper #3** in class
- Journal #11 due on Day 1

Wk 15 (5/6-5/10)

- Day 1: Peer Review Draft #3
- Day 2: Conclusions; discuss Portfolios

Final Exams (5/13-5/17)

Our Exams:

Section 1: Monday, May 13th, 12:30-2:30 pm

Section 3: Wednesday, May 15th, 8-10 am

Section 5: Wednesday, May 15th, 12:30-2:30 pm

