

English 120-C, Persuasive Writing Fall Semester 2007



Instructor: Daniel de Roulet
Office & Hours: Smith, second floor (in the English Department);
MW 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. and F 11:00 a.m.
Email: dderoulet@vanguard.edu
Class meets: MWFs from 12:00 to 12:50 p.m. in Heath 101
Required texts: *Blue Like Jazz* (D. Miller)
Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense (N.T. Wright)
Nickel and Dimed (B. Ehrenreich)
Films

DESCRIPTION:

This course uses three non-fiction books as the context for discussing and writing about issues that matter to us. It stresses critical thinking, persuasion, creativity, evaluation, and writing as skills central to being a living, breathing, Christian human being.

COURSE FORMAT:

The course will commence *promptly* at 12:00 and end at 12:50 pm in Heath 107 on every Monday, Wednesday and Friday of the fall term, except as noted in the course schedule. Class sessions typically consist of a combination of discussions, reflective writing and other in-class work.

READING:

Blue Like Jazz: Donald Miller's book reflects the first kind of writing we will be approaching in the course. Miller crafts personal essays that both help him to make sense of his experiences and offer insight to others who are in similar places. The first section of the class, "writing your life", emphasizes writing as a tool of reflective thinking; Miller's essays will be used as models for this kind of writing.

Simply Christian: The second kind of writing the course takes up is analytical writing in the context of critical thinking. N.T. Wright makes an analytical argument for the "sense" of Christianity, but does so in a writing style that appeals to a contemporary reader. We'll use this section of the course to discuss meaningful argument (better thought of as conversation) in a culture that does not converse well.

Nickel and Dimed: Barbara Ehrenreich writes about what it is like to be a member of the working poor in America—that is, those employees you might see in Target, a maid service, or the cafeteria who depend on that job (and often a second job) as a primary source of income but can barely make ends meet. This kind of writing is invested research—writing based on personal and academic research that addresses something about which you are passionate. Invested research will be the third section of writing in English 120-C.

COURSE GOALS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES (WHAT YOU SHOULD BE LEARNING AND PRACTICING IN THE COURSE):

So, given the reading and the course format listed on the last pages, what are the goals of this course?

1. Anyone participating in the course should come to understand that writing is a key part of thinking well and deeply. Writing is a method of pausing to define, reflect, refine and deepen our own thoughts.
2. Writing should therefore be understood as a way of better understanding ourselves.
3. The combination of reading and reflective writing—probably the most used skill in college courses—should deepen and personalize our understanding of subjects—some of which we may have thought did not effect us.
4. Invested research should be understood as research you do, not because you have to, but because you have a compelling reason to do so.

The English department has established own learning outcomes for its students, some of which specifically affect Core Curriculum courses such as English 120-C. We will concentrate on the following department objectives throughout the work of this course:

Students demonstrate essential critical reading competence.
Students demonstrate writing and revision competence.
Students master research techniques, including integrating research into compositions.
Students are competent in identifying syntactical elements of English.

UNIVERSITY EDUCATIONAL TARGETS AND GOALS:

Vanguard University has six established Educational Targets and Goals (ETGs) for its academic programs. We will concentrate on three of these ETGs in this course; in parentheses next to each ETG is the area of the course where these university goals are most evident.

Intellectual Engagement: (discussions, journals, formal writing assignments)
Aesthetic Expression: (appreciating the essays and films)
Socio-cultural Responsiveness: (looking at arguments of cultural critique)

ASSIGNMENTS (HOW THESE LEARNING OUTCOMES ARE PRACTICED AND MEASURED):

The course requires you to take notes on assigned readings and discussions and to keep a portfolio of your writing assignments.

- Essays: 75% (15%, 20%, 20%, and 20% each)
- Reading Journals & Quizzes: 15%
- Attendance and Participation: 10%
- Revision (one essay) replaces original grade

PREREQUISITES AND RELATIONSHIP TO CURRICULUM:

No other courses are required prior to enrollment; at least a C- in the course is required for graduation.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

SHARED EXPECTATIONS: Everyone enrolled in our course should attend without fail (see statement on attendance on the next page of this syllabus), do the reading in time for class and complete all of the assignments on time, and participate. Class discussion is just that: discussion. This means listening and speaking with respect to others. I'll call on anyone not expressing civility to the other participants and, if the problem is not resolved, I'll ask them to leave the course.

STATEMENT ON LATE WORK: Students must complete and submit all examinations and written assignments on-time; late work is penalized. If you know that you will a due date for written work, it is your responsibility to schedule your exam for an earlier date.

QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, DISCUSSIONS: My office is on the second floor of Smith—the main administrative building at the Newport Avenue entrance to campus. Leave me a note or send me an email if I'm out. The Writing Center, described in some detail at the end of this syllabus, is a great place to go for writing assistance as well.

STATEMENT ON ATTENDANCE: Discussing writing works better in communities, so I pay attention to attendance and class participation. Attendance is non-negotiable; the first two unexcused misses are worth two points each, and each miss after that equals a loss of five points. The university policy for attendance in lower-division classes is that students who miss more than one fifth of the scheduled class meetings in a course receive an "F" as a course grade. In our class, that means that anyone who misses six or more class meetings fails the course.

STATEMENT ON PLAGIARISM: The following is excerpted from the Vanguard *Student Handbook*, and is applied rigorously in this course:

Academic dishonesty, either cheating or plagiarism (presenting as one's own, the words or opinions of others), is regarded as a serious violation of both the academic and moral standards of VUSC. Dishonesty in a minor class assignment or test can result in loss of credit for the assignment, test, or even the entire course. Dishonesty in a major assignment or examination can result in immediate loss of credit for the course and referral to the Vice President for Student Affairs....

A student commits plagiarism if submitted as his/her work:

- *Part or all of an assignment copied from another person's assignment, notes or computer file*
- *Part or all of an assignment copied or paraphrased from a book, magazine, pamphlet or website*
- *A sequence of ideas transferred from another source which the student has not digested, integrated and reorganized, and to which he/she fails to give proper acknowledgement*

Plagiarism is simply not worth the risk. It opposes your purposes—spiritual and intellectual.

COURSE FLOW

FIRST COURSE SESSION

Before taking on the study of writing, we'll have an introductory section in which we go through the syllabus and course requirements, and in which you will complete an in-class "pre-test" consisting of a brief essay and a grammar test. Although neither are part of your course grade, the grammar exam determines whether you will be required to enroll in English 111, a one-unit course that emphasizes grammar skills needed by students to succeed at the college level. If you are required to take English 111 (and about 10% of all students enrolled in Persuasive Writing across the university do have to take the course), then you will need to pass English 111 in order to get a passing grade in English 120-C.

SCHEDULE OF CLASS MEETINGS

Date	Topic	Due
W, 8-29	Introduction	In-class writing and grammar exam
F, 8-31	Autobiographical writing	<i>Blue Like Jazz</i> : author's note, chs. 1 & 2
W, 9-5	Writing with detail and style	<i>Blue Like Jazz</i> : author's note, chs. 3 & 4
F, 9-7	Distilling ideas	Journal check
M, 9-10	Writing with a point	<i>Blue Like Jazz</i> : author's note, chs. 5 - 7
W, 9-12	Changing content	Rough draft due—essay 1
F, 9-14	Changing style and clarifying	<i>Blue Like Jazz</i> : ch. 8
M, 9-17	1 st assessment; trying again	First Essay
W, 9-19	Importance exercise	<i>Blue Like Jazz</i> : 9-10
F, 9-21	Entering into discussion	<i>Blue Like Jazz</i> : 11-12
M, 9-24	1 st assessment; trying again	<i>Blue Like Jazz</i> : 15; rough draft—essay 2
W, 9-26	Importance exercise	<i>Blue Like Jazz</i> : 18-20
F, 9-28	Entering into discussion	Second Essay
M, 10-1	The cultural disadvantages of argument	
W, 10-3	Audience: talking to ourselves	Importance exercise, round 2
F, 10-5	Audience: talking to others	
M, 10-8	Visual conversation, part 1	<i>Stranger than Fiction</i> (film)
W, 10-10	Visual conversation, part 2	
F, 10-12	Writing to the "others"	<i>Simply Christian</i> : Part 1
M, 10-15	Midterm pause	In-class assessment
W, 10-17	Bringing others across the bridge	<i>Simply Christian</i> : Part 2
M, 10-22	Writing for personal growth, part 2	<i>Simply Christian</i> : Part 3
W, 10-24	Intellectual argument for growth	Essay 3, rough draft
F, 10-26	Polishing thoughts	
M, 10-29	What is real research?	Essay 3

W, 10-31	Experience and Research	<i>Nickel and Dimed</i> : Introduction
F, 11-2	Research topics and citation format	
M, 11-5	The effects of arguments of experience	<i>Nickel and Dimed</i> : Serving in Florida
W, 11-7	Personal experience exercise	
F, 11-9	Analysis of today's reading	<i>Nickel and Dimed</i> : Scrubbing in Maine
M, 11-12	Topics discussion	Topic worksheet
W, 11-14	Bringing research into persuasion	
F, 11-16	Research discussion	Research Worksheet
M, 11-19	Thesis discussion	Thesis paragraph and outline
W, 11-21	Grammar/punctuation self-assessment	
M, 11-26	Writing ion-class essays	
W, 11-28	Editing a longer paper (part 1)	Rough draft, Essay 4
F, 11-30	Editing a longer paper (part 2)	
M, 12-3	1st assessment; trying again	Essay 4

Why the Writing Center Can Save Your Life

The following information has been taken from the Vanguard Writing Center Web Page:

Appointments

Writing Center consultants work with Vanguard students one-on-one at any stage in the writing process. Students should bring in writing projects they're creating, such as expository essays and researched writing. We help students organize notes, develop outlines, revise thesis statements, and work on various aspects of atomistic and holistic revision. Our Christ-centered, collaborative learning environment offers constructive feedback with the long-term goals of improved writing skills and critical thinking. Our friendly staff is available to answer questions Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Schedule an appointment and come visit us. You may call extension 426 or make your appointment in person. The Writing Center is located on the 2nd Floor of Scott Academic Center inside the English Department.

Critical Thinking & Writing

The Writing Center's "Critical Thinking & Writing Unit" offers a series of PPT slideshows and worksheets to help students develop their ideas on paper. Several writing exercises challenge students to practice their analytical abilities and fine-tune their organizational skills. Handouts on peer-editing, writing article summaries, and evaluating secondary sources are also available to supplement this unit.

Grammar

In addition to offering informed consultations for writing projects, the Writing Center offers one-hour guided sessions for specific sentence-level problems called Grammar Bugaboos. Professors may refer students for Grammar Bugaboo appointments by printing and filling out the Grammar Bugaboo Check Sheet, and students may also refer themselves. The Bugaboo Bee Points (a numbered rubric for faculty response assessment) and the Bugaboo Bee Key (glossary for the numbered rubric) are additional resources for enriching writing skills across the curriculum.

Grammar Bugaboos include apostrophes, commas, commonly confused words, fragments and clauses, modifiers, pronouns, subjects, verb forms, subject-verb agreement, run-on sentences (comma-spliced and fused), and sentence combining (concision, phrasing, variety). The sessions are based on the Writing Center's handouts and supplemented by interactive grammar activities using Blue Pencil software available in the Writing Center's Computer Lab.

Location, Location, Location

The Writing Center is located on the 2nd Floor of Scott Academic Center inside the English Department.

Student Information Sheet

Your name: _____ Name I should call you: _____

Living on or off-campus? _____ Home in California or somewhere else? _____

What's the last book you read that you liked, and why did you like it?

What's the last movie you saw that you liked and why did you like it?

What were your writing classes in high school like? Were they good or bad experiences, and why?

Would you consider yourself a skilled or unskilled reader? A fast or a slow reader?

How's your writing anxiety level? High? Medium? No problem?

What can I be keeping in prayer for you this semester?

Beginning-of-Term Writing Sample

Your name: _____

Please use the space available below the printed passage and on the back of the page to respond to **ONE** of the C.S. Lewis passages below. Use what you have learned about essay structure and grammar to write your response. You may use personal experience and write in the first person.

(1) “To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket- safe, dark, motionless, airless--it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable.”

or

(2) “If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this.”