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WRIT 101.03C: College Writing I

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Syllabus
Writ 101 (sections 02C, 03C, 08C, 11C, 50C)
Fall 2018
Bridget Carson

THE SYLLABUS

Welcome to this writing course. I'm excited to spend the next fifteen weeks with you. This journey will be a bit intense as it challenges you to work on multiple drafts of 4 writing projects and to learn some new concepts. It is highly interactive and you'll have opportunities to learn from your peers as well as me. It's not a lecture-based course, and it is not a work-at-your-own-pace kind of course. The deadlines set in this course are important to ensure its interactivity.

Here are some ideas that have influenced the design of this course:

Words are, in my not so humble opinion, our most inexhaustible source of magic, capable of both inflicting injury and of remedying it.

— Albus Dumbledore, Headmaster of Hogwarts

"He is not an easy person to interview. His academic habits of analyzing prose and speech make him self-conscious about the act of communication, so that, as he talks, he runs a commentary on himself, and adds digressions and asides, and tentative propositions that are subsequently amended, and footnotes and parenthetical remarks..."

The habits described here, the ones that so captivated me at such an early age and made me think of Delaney as something more than an ordinary person, are not merely academic. They should not live only in a classroom or the pages of an esoteric journal. We should all be "self-conscious about the act of communication," because to be anything else—to be complacent—is to relinquish power and opportunity and to give in to the ocean of expression that threatens ever and again to drown us. The running commentary, the digressions, the asides, the tentative propositions, the amendments, the footnotes, the parenthetical remarks are breakwaters, and there is an honesty to them that is absent from the slicker, less thoughtful, more propagandistic waves of words that we encounter every day.

— Introduction to *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw: Notes on the Language of Science Fiction* by Samuel R. Delaney



There are these two young fish swimming along and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way who nods at them and says, “Morning boys, how’s the water?” And the two young fish swim on for a bit and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and goes, “What the hell is water?” ...The point of the fish story is merely that the most obvious, important realities are often the ones that are hardest to see and talk about... The really significant education in thinking that we’re supposed to get in a place like this isn’t really about the capacity to think, but rather about the choice of what to think about. If your total freedom of choice of what to think about seems too obvious to waste time discussing, I’d ask you to think about fish and water and to bracket for just a few minutes your skepticism of the value of the totally obvious.

— David Foster Wallace, commencement speech to Kenyon College’s 2005 graduating class

Here is a description of the course:

This college writing course offers participants tools and understandings relevant to writing in college and in a democracy, such as: the art and craft of expressing a point of view, an awareness of various rhetorical strategies, and an understanding of the power, beauty, and revolutionary potential of language. This course will offer you the opportunity to work through the writing process on four writing projects, ample opportunities to talk to other writers about writing, the chance to study and use the craft of other revered writers, and a chance to self-assess and develop your own writing process (not just your writing, but your entire process as well). To be most effective, this course will seek to establish a supportive writing community from its participants, and needs your help to do so.

The texts required:

Your writing and the writing of your fellow participants will be the main text for this course. Our other text will be a collection of essays made available online. Expect to read and discuss *at least* two essays each week. (A recommended, optional, text is *The Norton Field Guide to Writing* by Richard Bullock, any edition... if you took our Writ 095, you probably have this book).

Attendance policy:

You cannot pass this course if you miss more than 6 class meetings.

Here is how to get an A:

To get an A, you need only to fulfill the "Contract for an A." I will use your input from the "first assignment" (handed out on Day 1) to produce a draft of the Contract for an A. You will then, as a whole group, have a chance to approve of the draft or request alterations. The important thing to know about the Contract for an A is that it will be formed around a set of goals that are shared by the group, as well as the outcomes already defined for this course. There is one part of the Contract that I have already established and which I can share with you now:

In order to most effectively support your writing development, this course needs to create a supportive writing community. Therefore, this course will grant you an A for participating in this effort to create a supportive writing community. In specific terms this means:

- Enthusiastic and meaningful participation in weekly class meetings.
- Giving and receiving generous feedback.
- Striving to develop as a writer by engaging in the process of crafting 4 accepted* writing projects.
- Being open to new possibilities presented by this course in readings and discussions.
- Being willing to share your insights, struggles, fears, and victories in writing with others in this course.

The key ingredient of a supportive writing community is equal risk. If everyone is willing to risk jumping in, the space we jump into will be safe. If someone holds back, it affects the feeling of safety in the space. So think about your willingness to jump in before you go forward in this course... for the sake of all involved. And if you choose to go forward, you are guaranteed to walk out of this course a stronger writer with more confidence. And an A to boot.

* Each piece of writing will be accepted by me, your editor, if you will, when it meets a set of minimal requirements that will be outlined in the guidelines for that particular writing project. You can revise your work as many times as needed to get it accepted.

The other thing that the Contract for an A means is that your writing will not be graded. This is intentional, as it gives you the whole semester to develop your writing and time to try out things you might not be willing to try if you were being graded.

What to expect each week:

Each week, this course will provide you with some ideas or tools of interest to writers, as well as readings that offer food for thought and interesting examples of writing. You'll have a chance to discuss these ideas, try out these tools, and ask questions. In other words, interact with them. You can check Moodle to find out what you need to do and/or bring to class each week, and find what you missed if you miss class. In addition to what goes on in class, you'll be working on one or more writing projects and sharing your process in class.