

English 200: The Craft of Researched Writing
Spring 2000
ENGL 200-052/TR 800-9:15/BUS 1108

INSTRUCTOR:

Charity Fowler, Hibbs 408-I, Phone: 828-1331

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30-11:00 *and by appointment*

Email: methosgirl@hotmail.com (this is the best way to reach me)

Required Texts: (available at Carriage House Books, 404 North Harrison)

Gutkind, Lee. *The Art of Creative Non-Fiction*

Cooper and Hodges. *A Guide to Composition and Rhetoric, 1999-2000*

Hacker, Diana. *A Writer's Reference, 4th ed.*

Supplies:

An email account—either through VCU or a private service.

A three ring binder with section dividers for your Writer's Notebook.

Floppy disks (for downloading the essays online and Internet materials and backing up drafts)

A good collegiate dictionary

Blue and/or Black ink pens

Highlighters, a stapler and staples (important), and a hole puncher

Course Requirements:

Eng 200 will ask you to write a lengthy, lucid, researched essay, a documented, academic essay in which your own voice and authority are informed and enriched by the ideas, examples, and methods of others. Your essay will be shaped by your goals as a writer as well as by the nature of the content, and it will include a variety of sources. The course will:

- Encourage experimentation with a variety of writing processes;
- Emphasize substantial revision of the sort that teaches you about yourself as a writer
- Ask you to write a variety of other, shorter pieces in you Writer's Notebook.

Your full, thoughtful, participation in class is expected and you will be evaluated and graded on it, so come to class prepared, having read the material and done the writing. I'm asking you, however, to go beyond simple reading and writing and learn to ask questions. One thing I want you to develop in my class is a healthy curiosity about life and the world around you. Question the things I give you to read. Look at them closely and examine how they hold up in your own world view and how they force you to perhaps look at things differently.

Writing is not the difficult task many of you have perhaps imagined it to be. It is merely an extension of your own creativity and curiosity as you explore the world, physical, mental and spiritual, around you. Have fun!

Weeks 1-4, Search for topic, direction, preliminary goals

January

1/11 Introduction to Course

1/13 Read Ch 1 in the *Guide*; Gutkind 8 and 9, jot down questions you have and areas you'd like to talk about

1/18 Read Ch 2 in the *Guide*; we will work on finding and developing ideas for subjects—listing topics and brainstorming

1/20 Work on finding and developing subjects continued—looping

1/25 Gutkind, Ch 1-3, as well as the first three essays in Appendix 5, p1910185—How might these pieces be expanded through research? What research angles could you go off on into research?
Continue looping exercises.

1/27 Read Ch 4 in the *Guide*.

Read Jake Page's "The Life—and Legend—of Billy the Kid" Before you read: What do you know about Billy the Kid? What are your expectations as you start to read this piece? What do you think prompted Page to write this? Think about how much research he had to do to write such a short piece. Compare that kind of in depth research with what you have done in the past. What are you curious enough about to sustain this level of research? What grabs your attention in what you have written already in your Notebook? What do you think is interesting in Page's essay? How does he integrate the research into the narrative?

Also due: 3 proposals for essay topics—at least 250 words each. Each proposal should state the topic, explore what draws you to it, and delve into *what you already know or think you know*, including your biases. In addition, each proposal should consider some questions you would want to ask, pursue, research; reflect on the feasibility of finding answers to those questions, including some of the possible people or sources you might consult; signal any related issues that come to mind and mention any concerns that you have.

February

2/1 Proposals returned. We'll discuss various ideas about how to choose which of the three to write your essay on and talk about what is expected for Thursday.

Read John McPhee's "In Search of Marvin Gardens." What kinds of research has he done in order to write this essay? How has he used research to help him make his points? Mark four places in the essay where something about the writing stands out to you and find a way to describe why this is. What can you learn from it? How does the essay match up with the description at the beginning of the course essay assignment. Annotated bibliography assignment introduced.

2/3 **Writing Workshop I:** Read Ch. 3 in the *Guide*. Bring two copies of 5-7 pages of discovery draft. Draft to collect *everything* on paper that you know, think you know, feel,

believe, find interesting about your topic. As you write, if you find yourself with very little to say, you may well be discovering that your subject is not a good one at this time. Your group work with this discovery draft will focus on the potential successfulness of your topic, the depth and reasons for your interest, potential directions you might go with the topic and potential audiences. I will collect one of your drafts and read with attention to these same points. Your attendance, preparation, and punctuality are crucial to the success of writing workshops.

Weeks 5-8, Beginning work on doing and handling of research

2/8 Read “Killing Wolves.” Respond according to the instructions for reading responses in the syllabus. Study the evaluation criteria for English 101 and 200; bring your questions. Returned—Discovery draft with responses that make observations and ask questions about content, potential directions, goals and context.

2/10 Continue discussion of “Killing Wolves”: What is Simpson accomplishing in each of the nine sections of this essay? How would you characterize the ways she closes each section? Locate places in the text that you would characterize as “Simpson reflecting” on her subject matter: how do these places move the essay forward? Look at places where you would describe her meaning as made difficult by how she has chosen to express it: what, as readers, do we do with those places and why, as a writer, might she have chosen to make her meaning challenging to get at? Study her conclusion: where does it leave us? How do the writerly choices she has made in this essay point to her goals with readers? **Annotated bibliography 1 due. Read Ch. 5 in the *Guide*.**

2/15 We will work on web searching

2/17 Library Day: Meet in the classroom across from the reference desk in Cabell. Be punctual. Give me a list of any questions about web searching stimulated by our meeting on 2/15.

2/22 Further web searching. Give me a list of questions about archival searching raised by our meeting on 2/15. **Annotated bibliography 2 due.**

2/23 Read Faludi’s “Figuring out Feminism” (hand out) first, then read Sommers’ “Figuring out Feminism” (online). Compare the two pieces. Is anything the same? What is different? What does Sommers say about Faludi? Do you agree? What light does the second essay shed on the first? What discrepancies are there? What can you extrapolate from this and apply to research in general? What lessons can you learn and can you take from this lesson and apply to your own writing? Can you see the pitfalls that are lurking in the research process?

2/29 Return to library. We will meet in the lobby and proceed to the stacks to look at research and the bound journals. Be punctual. **Annotated bibliography 3 due.** Midterm evaluations handed out.

March

3/2 **Writing Workshop II:** Bring three copies of 8-10 pages reporting on your relevant research findings to date. What kinds of trails have you been finding? What potential focuses are you considering? How does what you have been reading connect with what you were thinking about your subject when you began? (Review your first discovery draft.) What is your story about how you are thinking about what you are finding? These drafts will be returned during 30 minute conferences Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Don't miss your conference time and be punctual.

March 3 is the last day to withdraw from class without penalty.

3/7 and 3/9—no class. Conferences.

Weeks 9-11, Further Research, Framing, Anticipating Audience, Clear Goals.

3/14 In Gutkind, Chapters 4-7. **Annotated bibliography 4 due.**

3/16 Continue discussion of Gutkind, Ch. 4=7. Bring *A Writer's Reference* for discussion of documentation.

3/21 Bring 3 copies of a draft, 10-12 pages, which is now a draft of an essay incorporating both your knowledge or interest or view of your subject matter and relevant research to date. Please include a **detailed** writer's memo.

3/23 **Writer's Workshop III:** Readers: How would you describe the writer's presence in the draft? How would you rate the effectiveness of that presence and what would you suggest to make it stronger? (Ask yourselves questions like these: Has the writer gotten lost in the research? Do you know what the writer's interests and point of view are? Is the writer having a conversation with outside sources or reporting them? Are the outside sources brought in gracefully and usefully? Does the writer's voice remain constant throughout the essay?) Writers: With our first two workshops, your writing was foremost a gathering and contemplating information/data, yours and others'. These drafts should be a solid coming together of your work to date into an essay. You should be thinking, as you write, about your content, your goals with writing about that content, and your goals with your presentation of that content. You should be sure you are owning your essay. As you write this draft, think about what we've talked about regarding our readings to date and our discussions of Lee Gutkind's advice. **Annotated bibliography 5 due.**

3/28 Read Chapters 10-13 in Gutkind. A question to consider: How could you include field research into your essay? **Complete ranked annotated bibliography due.**

3/30 Read Oliver Sack's "An Anthropologist on Mars." Discussion of research modes and documentation.

Weeks 12 to 15, Final Drafting and Crafting

April

4/4 Read Lytle and Davidson's "Invisible and Visible Worlds of Salem" from online readings. How would you describe Lytle and Davidson's handling of the outside sources they use in this essay? What are their goals with their audience? If you made a guess, what kind of book would you say this essay came from? In what ways is this essay more academic than other essays we've read to date? Discussion of documentation. Complete section 3 of journal due.

4/6 **Writing Workshop IV:** Bring 3 copies of a revised draft to distribute to your group. This draft should be 12-15 pages and include a bibliography. You must also include a detailed writer's memo. Writers: Talk to your group about specific issues you feel you need to address and about specific parts of the essay that need more work. Readers: Imagine yourselves as the primary audience for the essay. What more do you want the writer to do with content (development of ideas, support of ideas, clarity of ideas)? What specific suggestions do you have for the writer regarding the presentation of content (style, voice, logic of thinking)? How about craft: does the essay's structure work effectively? Explain why it does, specifically to the writer. Is the language appropriate (diction, level, range of voice)?

4/11 Writing Workshop continued; in class work on drafts, discussion with me. At the end of class, you will pass your drafts onto a fresh set of readers.

4/13 Writing Workshop: Drafts 18-20 pages—for this workshop you will try your essays out on a fresh audience.

4/18 Writing Workshop continued.

4/20 Portfolio work. Discussion of documentation questions. In class work and mini conferences.

4/25 Portfolio work continued.

4/27 **Final portfolios due in my office by noon:** The contents required in the portfolio include: all drafts of essay, with my comments on them, final draft and final reflective letter.