

WRITING-BASED INQUIRY SEMINAR
COURSE THEME: LOCAL COLORS AND AMERICAN REGIONS

SPRING 2008

Dr. Bergoffen
bergoffe@uwosh.edu
M W 12:45 – 1:45 and by appt.
Radford 303

English Department: www.english.uwosh.edu
WBIS Program: www.english.uwosh.edu/wbis
Writing Center: www.english.uwosh.edu/wcenter
wcenter@uwosh.edu 424-1152

“I write entirely to find out what I’m thinking, what I’m looking at, what I see and what it means.”
Joan Didion

Course description

Writing effectively takes time, effort, and dedication as well as a lot of practice. This class will be structured as a reading and writing workshop: you will write in most class meetings, give other students feedback on ideas and drafts, gain research skills, and reflect on your writing. Each of us can improve as writers, no matter what our background may be or what our high school English teachers told us.

We will read a texts that examine diverse notions of landscape in the American experience. The following questions will guide our discussions: In what ways do people identify with specific regions? Do the readings challenge or reinforce our assumptions about a given place? What history or social conditions or point of view do authors try to convey through a “local” lens?

Goals

The primary goal of this course is for you to become better prepared to write, here at UWO and in your life beyond college. The WBIS website outlines general goals. In addition, I expect you will:

- gain confidence and ability in your writing;
- build your communication skills, writing more clearly and effectively;
- learn to identify your own strengths and weaknesses and improve your writing;
- learn to ask questions and make suggestions, to become a careful reader;
- acquire prewriting and revising skills, pushing yourself to think and reflect;
- engage with texts, synthesize ideas, and generate thesis statements;
- generate thoughtful analysis.

Required texts

Available at the campus bookstore, Reeve Union (424-0277)

A Writer’s Resource, Eds. Elaine Maimon, Janice Peritz, and Kathleen Blake Yancey

Population: 485, by Michael Perry

Most of the required readings for this course are *free* through Electronic RESERVES

Go to www.uwosh.edu/library/, E-Reserves, and look for Bergoffen, WBIS 188

A copy of this syllabus is available through E-Reserves.

Required supplies

Two folders with pockets

A notebook with sections

A college-level, standard dictionary of your choice (including electronic access)

Assignments and Grading

Essay 1	100 pts
Essay 2	150 pts
Research Project	250 pts
Quizzes	100 pts
Portfolio Review	50 pts
Participation (peer response, in-class writings, attendance)	100 pts

I will distribute detailed handouts for all major assignments.

Total possible points: 750

To determine your grade at any time during the semester, divide the points you've earned by the total possible points (for assignments completed). Use the following grading scale to calculate the percentage.

100—94% = A 93—90% = AB 89—84% = B 83—80% = BC 79—74% = C 73—70% = CD 69—64% = D

All drafts, revisions, and feedback must be included in final packets to receive a grade. You must save ALL your work—in-class writings, essays, quizzes, HANDOUTS—all semester and bring it all with you (along with your handbook) to class EVERY DAY. Keep all these materials in one of your folders, with pockets.

Policy on Attendance and Participation

Our workshop format requires everyone to participate in each class meeting. Since you cannot make up workshop participation, absences can negatively affect your participation grade. You may not make up quizzes unless you notify me *and* we discuss the situation *prior to the absence*. You are allowed no more than three (3) absences before your final grade will drop by half a letter-grade per absence. Six (6) absences may result in failure of the course. If you miss class, you are responsible for completing the readings, getting notes from other classmates and/or handouts from me. If something comes up during the semester and you miss classes, please get in touch with me.

I assess your participation using the following criteria: completing in-class writings and assignments; giving feedback to other writers in your peer response group; contributing to class discussions; attending class meetings; and contributing *positively* to the classroom environment.

Policy on Classroom Environment

In order for us to make the most of our class meetings, I insist that you observe the following policies:

BE ON TIME: Chronic lateness is disruptive and will be counted as absences.

BE PREPARED: Come to class with assignments completed and ready to work.

BE ON TASK: Follow directions and complete in-class assignments. Do not distract other students from completing their work.

LISTEN TO OTHERS: Do not whisper, pass notes, take out your planner or other homework during class time. Such behavior is disrespectful and distracting to me and other students.

SHOW RESPECT: Do not get up and walk out in the middle of class, except for emergencies.

Policy on Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

This is important: You are responsible for knowing and understanding the university's policy regarding academic honesty. This policy includes plagiarism: the use of someone else's ideas as your own. You may use the ideas and language of others in your writing, but you **must acknowledge the source** (using in-text citations and a Works Cited page). Plagiarism applies to published material and unpublished material, such as another student's writing, or information found on the internet. Any *undocumented* use of someone else's ideas, no matter the length or degree, is considered intellectual theft. Plagiarism can result in failure of the course and further action by the university, such as suspension, whether you intend to plagiarize or not. We will discuss plagiarism as a class, but if you are uncertain or have questions regarding documentation or the use of someone else's ideas, please ask.

Conferences, Office Hours, and the Writing Center

You are *required* to meet with me for *at least* one conference during the semester. I've set aside several class meetings for conferences. Failure to meet for a conference will lower your participation grade. In addition to conference time, I encourage you to speak with me during my office hours *at any time during the semester* if you have questions or concerns about the class, your writing, or an assignment.

On the first page of the syllabus, I've provided the contact information for the **Writing Center**. The tutors at the Writing Center are students trained to help you with your writing—from brainstorming ideas to providing feedback on drafts. They will not edit/proofread your work, but will help you with specific writing issues. Be sure to bring the assignment handout with you to appointments. All writers benefit from working with others, so don't think that only "weak" writers go to the Writing Center for help. Every piece of writing benefits from an additional set of eyes.