

English, Composition I: Honors Semester Syllabus

Class meets on: Mondays and Wednesdays 2:30PM - 3:45PM

Instructor: Kathryn Starzec

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Office Number: D113

Office Hours: Posted under Course Information on Blackboard

Course Materials:

- Required book: *Watchmen* by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons. DC Comics. 1986.
- You will also read several handouts I provide via Blackboard consisting of articles, essays, short stories, and excerpts from full-length books. I did not assign any particular MLA guide since this material is readily available online free of charge. If you would feel more comfortable using a print copy of a MLA guide, contact me and I will suggest the best, cost-friendly option.

Course Objectives:

In the college catalog, the description of English 121 reads as follows: “This course is designed to help students develop their competence in college-level writing and in the analysis of texts so they can enter the dialogue of the academic community. This course includes the analysis and practice of argument and the use of critical thinking to read, analyze, and produce college-level texts” (“English 121”). To meet these goals, you will be asked to read a variety of texts, discuss your ideas in class, conduct research, cite outside sources following MLA (Modern Language Association) guidelines, edit the work of other students, and write a variety of essays.

Increasingly, media literacy has also been central to critical thinking in academic settings. Fittingly, this course is designed to explore a variety of texts potentially ranging from the written word, to graphics, music, television, film and video, social media, etc.

Course Evaluation:

Attendance: You must be in class to fulfill the requirements. You will be penalized ten points for your second, third, fourth, and fifth absences. Upon your sixth absence (comprising about one fourth of the total in-class course time) your ability to retain passing status in this class will be revoked. It is worth note, however, that missing numerous classes--up to five--may also render you ineligible to pass due to an accumulation of lost points in other areas of class, missed

material, and falling behind. In addition to absence, lateness and leaving class early require prior instructor clearance.

Discussion Participation/Minor Homework Assignments (60 points): You are capable of gaining sixty participation points for your participation and completion of all non-essay/presentation homework assignments. In order to gain these points, it is imperative that you stay alert, follow instructions, meet deadlines, and constructively contribute to class discussions.

Essays: You will be assigned four essays/papers and three proposals. Points for these essays will break down as follows:

- **Paper #1 Process: 50 points**
Your first Draft is worth 15 points, your workshop participation is worth 15 points, and your final Draft is worth 20 points.
- **Paper #2 Process: 50 points**
Your first draft is worth 10 points, your workshop participation is worth 15 points, and your final Draft is worth 25 points.
- **Paper #3 Process (utilizes research): 100 points (First Draft, Workshop, Final Draft)**
Your first draft is worth 10 points, your workshop participation is worth 20 points, and your final draft is worth 70 points.
- **Paper #4 100 points**
This paper is a one-draft-only assignment.

Total number of points possible for all essays combined: 300

Quizzes (140 points): You will take a quiz for almost every reading assignment. You will be given a short amount of in-class time (between 15 and 20 minutes) to complete your work. You are expected to have carefully studied reading assignments by the time you take your quiz.

The grading scale functions as follows:

- A: 500-450 points
- B: 449-400 points
- C: 399-350 points
- D: 349-300 points
- F: 299 points or less

The process of writing each of your essays will follow the same pattern. First, I will collect your paper topics by having you fill out a worksheet. You cannot change your topic without consulting with me first. **Be careful: I will not accept a paper written on a topic of which I did not previously approve.**

Also note, **late work will not be accepted in this class barring emergency situations.**

The Writing Process

Outlines: Later, you will turn in a typed outline of your essay (one full page, double spaced, 12 pt. font) in which you map out the basic structure of your essay, including specific points of evidence and/or reasoning.

Draft Workshops: After the outline, the next step in the writing process is the draft workshop. One these days, you will bring in your rough draft of the essay along with two xeroxed copies of that draft. The class will break into groups of three or four, and you will read your draft aloud to the group as they use the copies to follow along. Your group will then critique your paper, providing written feedback, highlighting problems and suggesting revisions. Your participation in workshop will account for a significant number of points towards your final grade for the paper. **I reserve the right to withhold workshop points if the class time is not used in a productive manner.**

Revisions: Once you have turned in your final draft, you have one more chance at revision. If you are not happy with a grade you receive on a final draft, you may revise it with the following guidelines:

- You must turn in your revision within one week after I pass it back.
- If you improve your grade, the higher score will replace the previous mark.
- You will not be able to make up points lost during the first draft and workshop stages of the writing process. You may only affect the points allotted to your final draft.
- You are not guaranteed a higher grade, but your grade cannot go down.
- You cannot rewrite Essay #4.

Most assignments will be graded and given back to the class one week after they are turned in. Rewrites sometimes take longer than a week to grade; please be patient, and I will get them back to you as soon as possible.

Formatting of Assignments: All assignments must be typed; in-class work is the only exception. The final draft must be double-spaced, with one-inch margins (the rough draft can be single-spaced). If you indent the first line of each paragraph, do not add extra spaces between paragraphs. No title pages or plastic binders. At the top of the first page, include your name, name of the class, and the date, and please number the pages.

You may e-mail me assignments as long as I get them before class begins on the due date. If you send me an assignment by email and I do not respond to you, assume that I did not receive your email. It is vitally important that you activate your CLC email account and that you check it on a daily basis. Legally, I cannot discuss the class using non-CLC emails, although I can receive emails from non-CLC sources.

I encourage you to include photos or visual aids whenever they are appropriate (although they will not count toward the page requirements). **Never turn in the only copy of a paper or assignment; always have a back-up. Keep all graded work until the semester is over.**

Plagiarism: In order to complete this course, you must learn how to conduct research and cite outside sources without committing plagiarism. Plagiarism occurs anytime you use another writer's words, data or ideas without citing them in a clear and proper manner. This includes (but is not limited to) the following:

- using specific words, phrases or sentences without putting them in quotes (even if you cite the work from which you took the material)
- using an author's specific idea without citing the source
- buying a paper (from the internet or other source) and trying to pass it off as your own
- having someone (friend, family member, etc.) write all or portions of your essay.

In class, we will discuss how to determine what is "common knowledge" and what is the intellectual property of a specific writer. In any case, it is important that you err on the side of caution when using outside sources; if you are not sure whether or not you should cite a source, please check with me. **It is your responsibility to make sure that you do not commit plagiarism.**

Plagiarism will be punished according to the situation and severity. The instructor and appropriate administrators will determine the punishment. Possible consequences include the following:

- The student rewrites the plagiarized essay and corrects the problem.
- The student writes an entirely new essay on a new topic.
- The student receives a "F" for the essay
- The student receives an "F" for the course.
- The student is expelled from the class
- The student is expelled from the college.

CLC has begun to document all cases of plagiarism. If I encounter a case of plagiarism, I will report it, as will other teachers at CLC. Repeat offenses will be treated with increased severity.

The final essay (Essay 4) will be treated as a kind of final exam, testing to make sure that you know how to use and cite an outside source without committing plagiarism.

Class Protocols:

It is necessary that you observe these rules during class discussions/lectures.

- Respect class discussion and whoever is talking at the moment.
- Come to class prepared to discuss the reading and take notes.
- Wait until class is dismissed to pack up your books and materials.
- Wait until class is dismissed to throw away trash.
- Turn off cell phones. If you have to keep your phone for any reason, please make me aware at the beginning of the class.
- No text messaging, web surfing or game playing in class.
- I reserve the right to restrict laptop usage if I feel that a student's use of a laptop is disrupting class or if the laptop is being used for non-class purposes.

If you have any questions or concerns about these policies (or any policy described on this syllabus or in class), please talk to me as soon as possible.

The Writing Center:

The **Writing Center** (located on the first floor of the library) is a great resource for students who need assistance with their writing. Tutors can help you get started with a given writing assignment, help you articulate the content of a paper, or provide you with strategies you can use to strengthen your writing.

Students with Special Needs:

If you are a student with a documented disability and may need academic accommodations such as extended time for exams and/or an in-class note taker, please present documentation to the **Office of Students with Disabilities** in L112 at the Grayslake Campus. To schedule an appointment, please call (847) 543-2474. If you have already contacted the Office for Students with Disabilities and have completed the Instructor Notification Form, please schedule a time to meet with me and discuss your needs.

Student FAQs:

I am an excellent writer? If I complete “A” level essays, shouldn’t I get an “A” in this class?

While writing is an integral facet of this course, submitting well-written essays constitutes roughly 40% of your total grade. In other words, even if you were to receive an “A” on all essay assignments, you could feasibly fail the course. To avoid failure, you must also focus on attendance, participation in class discussions, critical reading, and quiz performance. This course is about writing, reading, and communicating ideas during class time. The various elements are equally important.

What types of reading assignments will we have in this class?

You will read a variety of relatively short pieces as well as excerpts from long works, both nonfiction and fiction, and one full-length comic book series. All assignments are relevant to the writing you will be doing as well as the critical concepts covered in this class. It is important to note, that some of the reading, as well as the screenings (films, television, internet clips, etc.) might be considered objectionable to certain audiences. In other words, the texts used in this class might contain controversial language and/or subject matter. You are expected to respond to controversial texts as a critical thinker and professional adult. If you have a specific concern about a given reading assignment, due to its content, please keep the lines of communication open with me so that the issue is addressed in a professional manner.

Does perfect attendance count as participation?

You will not receive participation points if you opt to sit silently during class. In other words, you must be engaged in discussions by volunteering input. If you are confused, ask questions. If you have ideas, express them. It is impossible to receive an “A” in this class without accruing participation points.

I am not familiar with college level expectations and etiquette. In general terms, how should I conduct myself in this class?

You are expected to maintain academic professionalism in a setting comprised of adult learners. If you behave as though you are disengaged, bored, distracted, or disrespectful, you risk being asked to leave. Treat your classmates and your instructor with utmost respect.

*That said, constructive, intellectual debate/disagreement is absolutely encouraged in this course.

I find English boring. How do I cope with coursework that is not interesting to me?

Your feelings about the material covered in this class should be irrelevant to your performance. This is a class where analytical reading and writing are required. You must study and understand the concepts covered herein. In much the same way you would be expected to work with math in an algebra class, you are expected to critically read, think, and communicate in an English class. If you find the subject matter boring, it would behoove you to keep that fact to yourself.

How do you deal with disruptive behavior in your classroom?

As mentioned previously in the syllabus, disruptive behavior includes but is not limited to cell phone use, sleeping, tangential conversations, disrespectful comments, and resistance to activities and assignments. I will absolutely ask disruptive students to leave my class.

What if I have a difficult time understanding a given reading assignment?

Read carefully. Read thoroughly. Read assigned work multiple times if necessary. If you have read a given piece three or more times and still find it confusing, be prepared to ask questions so that your confusion might be addressed during class.

Why are your late work and attendance policies so rigid? Do you make exceptions for emergency situations?

As a student at CLC, you are expected to rise to the challenge of meeting college level standards. It is impossible to meet high standards, if you fail to attend class and turn your work in on time. Meeting deadlines is a fundamental requirement. Failing to do so will result in a failing grade for the assignment.

As for attendance, during this class, you will build knowledge progressively. If you miss an essential lecture or multiple lectures, you will not be able to effectively participate in related activities and assignments.

Exceptions to my policies have been made in the past amidst rare, emergency circumstances. However, it is important to understand that certain emergencies obstruct your ability to complete

all your work in a timely manner and adeptly participate in discussions and activities. Especially grave situations often warrant a withdrawal from this course.

It is also important to note, that no emergency will be excused if you make a habit of absence, disengagement, and failure to complete assignments. For instance, you will not be excused for an emergency, no matter how dire, upon your fourth or fifth absence in this class.

What is your best advice for me pertaining to your class?

Find a way to be passionate and fearless. This class is about both expressing yourself as well as understanding others' perspectives to the very best of your abilities. Pay careful attention. Maintain curiosity. Listen. Never be afraid to express ideas.