



Spring 2006
ENGL 102.023 (MWF 10-10:50)
ENGL 102.036 (MWF 11-11:50)

Dr. Myra Seaman
ECTR 116
ECTR 212

Building on the foundation established in ENGL 101, this class will focus on further developing your college-level reading, writing, and critical thinking skills; to that end, careful oral and written analysis of an array of poems, plays, and films will equip you with tools for interpretation which are in turn vital to effective academic thinking and writing.

The class is intended to offer you new ways of seeing the act of writing as well as numerous and varied opportunities to practice writing, an activity that, like many others, improves with experience. Above all, the class will encourage you to see writing as an ongoing process that can be enhanced through analysis, revision, and exercise, rather than as a one-time event that magically works for some but not for others.

Writing is fundamentally about communicating, involving not only a writer but also an audience. We will concentrate our efforts on developing skills that aid in communication: using effective grammar and mechanics, presenting clear explanations and examples, and constructing convincing arguments. We will study the elements of effective writing not simply to produce correct sentences or refined paragraphs but to be able most powerfully to communicate ideas to an audience.

The subject of our study for the first month will be language itself, especially as it is employed in the powerfully condensed setting of the poem. Then we will move to a thematically focused exploration of the American Dream, with specific attention to capitalism and its influences on the development of the individual in 20th-century America. Films and plays will direct this investigation in the final two months of class.

Week 1

M 1-9 Introduction to course: goals and methods

Session 1: Living – and Dying – Poetically

W 1-11 Stafford, "Traveling Through the Dark" (*Poetry* 276)
Rich, "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers" (*Poetry* 340)
"An Anecdote," "Speaker, Listener, Context," and "Lyric, Narrative, Dramatic" (*Poetry* 1-11)
"What is Literature?" (*Short Guide* Chapter 1)

Homework question: What do Aunt Jennifer's Tigers represent in Rich's poem?? How do you know? Do you think their significance changes, in the course of the poem?

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- F 1-13 Song, "Stamp Collecting" (*Poetry* 438)
Dickinson, "Because I could not stop for death" (*Poetry* 180)
Kees, "For My Daughter" (*Poetry* 280)
"The Language of Poetry" and "Figurative Language" (*Poetry* 11-21)

Homework question: Why, do you think, does Dickinson include the focus on the fly in this poem? What does the presence of the fly, the buzzing of the fly, seem to suggest?

Week 2

- M 1-16 **No class:** Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

- W 1-18 Williams, "Spring and All" (*Poetry* 226)
Millay, "What Lips My Lips Have Kissed" (*Poetry* 249)
"Two Forms of Criticism: Explication and Analysis" (*Short Guide* Chapter 4)
"The Writer as Reader: Reading and Responding" (*Short Guide* Chapter 2)

Homework question: Perform short versions of each of these two forms of criticism: write an explication of the first 8 lines of Millay's poem, and then write an analysis of those same 8 lines.

- F 1-20 Stevens, "The Snow Man" (*Poetry* 219)
Hardy, "Neutral Tones" (*Poetry* 189)
"The Reader as Writer: Drafting and Writing" (*Short Guide* Chapter 3)
"Other Kinds of Writing About Literature" (*Short Guide* Chapter 5)
"Allegory and Symbol," "Tone of Voice" and "Repetition" (*Poetry* 22-29)

Homework question: What do you think the title of Hardy's poem is referring to, within the poem itself? Look up both "neutral" and "tone" in a dictionary, and consider the various possible meanings of that title. Don't limit yourself to the denotations of the words, but consider their connotations, especially as those are evoked within the poem.

Week 3

- M 1-23 "Writing About Poetry" (*Short Guide* Chapter 12)
"Literature, Form, and Meaning" (*Short Guide* Chapter 6)
Paraphrase workshop

Homework question: Write a paraphrase of Robert Hayden's "Those Winter Sundays" (*Poetry* 274) to bring to today's class for the workshop, and then to hand in.

- W 1-25 "Style and Format" (*Short Guide* Chapter 14)
Keats, "When I Have Fears" (*Poetry* 137)
Fenton, "God, a Poem" (*Poetry* 415)
Thomas, "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" (*Poetry* 277)

Homework question: What sort of attitude toward dying and death does Thomas respond to? How would you describe his tone?

F 1-27

Draft of Essay 1 due

Week 4

M 1-30 Draft workshop

Homework question: What new ideas have you come up with for revising your draft?

W 2-1 **No class:** Student-Professor Conferences

F 2-3 **No class:** Professor away at conference

Week 5

M 2-6

Essay 1 due

McGrath, "In Fiction, a Long History of Fixation on the Social Gap" (WebCT)

"Writing a Research Paper" (*Short Guide* Chapter 14)

Research workshop

Session 2: Selling (out)

W 2-8 "What is Interpretation?" (*Short Guide* Chapter 7)

Sentence review

Homework question: What do you think the definition offered in the first sentence of the chapter means? Paraphrase it, paying special attention to the phrase "setting forth" – what does this mean, in this context?

F 2-10 *Dogtown and Z-Boys*

Homework question: Write a description of the documentary as a film genre. Don't simply work from your own understanding of the term, though; do some quick online research to see what you can learn, then write your response. Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org) is a great place to *start*. Think especially about the purpose and audience of documentaries. Be sure to indicate your sources for your material.

Week 6

M 2-13 *Dogtown and Z-Boys*

Homework question: Head over to the *Dogtown and Z-Boys* website (at <http://www.sonyclassics.com/dogtown/>), which was created back when the documentary was first released. How does the website "represent" the documentary? What aspects of its subject, its production, its marketing and reception, are emphasized here? Did you learn anything you didn't already know?

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W 2-15 *Dogtown and Z-Boys*

Homework question: Stacy Peralta, who wrote and directed the documentary, was one of the key “players” in the events that are the subject of the documentary. (He also wrote the screenplay for the movie version we will watch next.) How does his “insider” status affect your response to the documentary? Bear this question in mind as you watch the movie, too.

F 2-17 *Lords of Dogtown*

Homework question: Think about the way the movie represents the background that is given in much more detail in the documentary. Most moviegoers wouldn’t have seen the documentary first. What does the movie seem to say about these “facts” that are given much more significance in the documentary?

Week 7

M 2-20 *Lords of Dogtown*

“Writing About Drama” (*Short Guide* Chapter 10)

Homework question: Choose one character or event in the movie and compare/contrast the way it is represented here to how it was represented within the documentary.

W 2-22 *Lords of Dogtown*

Homework question: Do you think the movie and the documentary similarly emphasize the sociocultural aspects of the story? In other words, how are the “history of skateboarding” and the social (especially class) dynamics of Dogtown used by the movie, and by the documentary?

F 2-24 *Dogtown* analysis

Homework question: How is the experience of watching the movie different for you than the experience of watching the documentary was? What sort of “effect” does each have on you?

Week 8

M 2-27 **Draft Essay 2 due**

W 3-1 Draft workshop

F 3-3 “The Internet/World Wide Web” and “Evaluating Sources on the WWW” (*Short Guide* pages 332-38)

Homework question: Find a resource on the web that would be helpful in thinking about your paper. Identify and describe the source and explain how it might be valuable to your essay.

SPRING BREAK

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Session 3: Selling (to) America

Week 9

M 3-13 Scott, "The American Tragedy is a Family Affair" (WebCT)

Homework question: Which recent critically-acclaimed film does Scott see as most exemplary as an American tragedy? Why does he deem this film more "tragic" than some others to which he contrasts it?

W 3-15

Essay 2 due

Annotated bibliography workshop

F 3-17 *Death of a Salesman* Act 1

Homework question: Describe the relationship between Willy and his two sons. How does he talk to and think of Biff? of Happy?

Week 10

M 3-20 *Death of a Salesman* Act 2 and Requiem

Homework question: On page 81, Willy's long speech tells us a lot about what he values, and why. Based on this speech, what does he value? Do his actions throughout the play support his claims?

W 3-22 *Death of a Salesman*

Homework question: Look back at pages 111-121 and determine which portions of this passage are set in the past, which in the present. Why do you think Miller intermingles them this way?

F 3-24 *Death of a Salesman*

Homework question: The play seems to focus so much on Willy and his family, perhaps more than on Willy's salesmanship. Do you think the play would or could have a similar meaning if Willy were not a salesman?

Week 11

M 3-27 *American Beauty* (pp. 1-50)

Homework question: What do you think of Lester Burnham, the hero of the play, at this point? Describe him, and your personal assessment of or response to him.

W 3-29 *American Beauty* (pp. 51-100)

Homework question: What, in your reading of him, has happened to Lester through the second half of the play?

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F 3-31

Annotated bibliography due

Week 12

M 4-3 *American Beauty*

W 4-5

Draft of Essay 3 due

F 4-7

Draft workshop

Week 13

M 4-10 *Glengarry Glen Ross* Act 1 (pp. 11-51)

Homework question: How does Roma go about selling to Lingk, in Scene Three? How does this compare to the way Moss sells his idea to Aaronow?

W 4-12

Essay 3 due

Glengarry Glen Ross Act 2 (pp. 52-108)

Homework question: Where do you think our sympathies are supposed to lie, in this play? Is there any character you would consider a hero? Why or why not?

F 4-14

Glengarry Glen Ross

Homework question: The *New York Times*, on January 4, 2005, reported the following: "Tom Wopat. . . will join the cast of the new revival of David Mamet's 'Glengarry Glen Ross' this spring, joining Alan Alda, Liev Schreiber, Jeffrey Tambor, Frederick Weller and Gordon Clapp. . . . He will play James Lingk, the unwitting investor who falls prey to the master salesman Ricky Roma. The revival of 'Glengarry,' staged by Joe Mantello, will begin performances on April 8 at the Royale Theater on West 45th Street, and open on May 1." What do you think of this description of Lingk's character?

Week 14

M 4-17 *Glengarry Glen Ross*

Homework question: Think about this play in relation to *Death of a Salesman* and *American Beauty*. They all, to some extent, deal with the life of a salesman. How do you think *Glengarry Glen Ross* relates to the other two?

W 4-19

Glengarry Glen Ross

F 4-21

Draft of Essay 4 due

Week 15

M 4-24 Draft workshop

W 4-26

Essay 4 due

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Texts:

The following texts will be used in this class. You may purchase them at the College Bookstore on Calhoun or at University Books on King St. between Calhoun and George Street. Buy them all in the next few weeks, because the bookstore will get rid of all unpurchased texts after the first month or so of class. The first three items are sold as a money-saving bundle in both bookstores. Two of our texts for the course will be films, which you may choose to purchase for yourself (I recommend shopping online for these, especially the 2001 film). Otherwise, you will need to review them in the library, outside of class (or rent them from a video rental store), when you are working on writing the related essay. Those two texts are listed here as “recommended.”

Required:

- Barnet, Sylvan and William E. Cain, eds. *A Short Guide to Writing About Literature*. 10th ed. NY: Longman, 2003. (0-321-33073-0)
- Gwynn, R. S., ed. *Poetry: A Pocket Anthology*. 4th ed. NY: Longman, 2001. (0-321-08720-8)
- Ball, Alan. *American Beauty: The Shooting Script*. NY: Newmarket Press, 1999. (1-557-04404-X)
- Mamet, David. *Glengarry Glen Ross*. NY: Grove Press, 1982. (0-802-13091-7)
- Miller, Arthur. *Death of a Salesman*. Penguin Plays. NY: Penguin Books, 1979. (0-140-48134-6)

Recommended:

- Dogtown and Z-Boys* (2001)
- Lords of Dogtown* (2005)

Student Responsibilities:

Attendance is expected of every student at every class. If you can't make it to class because of illness or accident, let me know as far in advance as possible by e-mail (preferably) or by phone. If you miss a class, you are still responsible for that day's work, including understanding homework assignments and getting the gist of class discussion. *You should exchange phone numbers or e-mail addresses with at least one other student in the class, on the first or second day of class, to contact in case of absence.*

Five absences are permitted, no questions asked (I make no distinction between excused and unexcused absences); after **six** absences, you will lose 5% of your final grade per absence, and you may be dropped from the class. Tardiness detracts from the classroom experience of all students, so make sure you are in class, ready to begin discussion, at the top of the hour.

Read the assigned material before class and come to class prepared to discuss the reading: this means you should not only have read it casually but should have considered in some detail your responses to the reading. Our class will consist mainly of discussion, so the success of the class depends upon your preparation *and* participation. For most reading assignments you will need to write a one-page response to the reading before you come to class; you will find questions to guide this writing on the schedule. These questions are often actually a series of questions; you don't need to “answer” each question separately, but rather consider all of them before writing your own cohesive response, which may focus on one or another of the smaller questions. Homework responses will be accepted only at the beginning of class, and they serve as a record of your attendance.

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In addition to the reading, you will be producing your own texts for class discussion throughout the semester. You will **write** four essays outside of class, ranging in length from 4 to 6 pages each. Because revision is fundamentally important to successful writing, each of these four essays will be due in **draft** form before the final copy is turned in so that you may receive both peer response and instructor feedback. On the due date for a paper draft you should bring to class **two copies** of your draft, one for in-class discussion and notation and a separate one for me to take with me after class. Ten percent of your grade for a given paper depends upon your turning in a draft *and* participating in peer review; if you do not come to class with an acceptable draft on the due date, you will be able to receive, at best, a grade of 90% for that paper. All essays (including drafts) must be kept, after they have been graded and returned, to be submitted to me during the semester as requested.

Papers must be typed, double-spaced, with one-inch margins; citations must follow MLA conventions. Papers will be graded for grammar, style, structure and content; I'm always happy to discuss your rough drafts, revisions, research, and any general or specific questions about your writing, during my office hours. Make use of the Writing Lab (located, along with the other learning labs, in the Center for Student Learning on the first floor of Addlestone Library), as well. Since the deadlines for written work are so clearly spelled out in the syllabus, **late papers** will not be accepted except in *very* extraordinary circumstances. In order to receive course credit, you must complete all four formal essays.

All students, needless to say, must follow the College of Charleston's academic integrity policy, which forbids cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism. Any student found guilty of any of these offenses will receive a failing grade *for the class*. Part of our work in this class involves discerning ways to avoid unintentional plagiarism.

Special Revision Policy:

You **MUST** produce an additional **revision** of any paper earning a grade of C- or lower. You **MAY** revise a paper receiving a grade of C or higher. The revisions should be substantial, in either case, resolving not simply grammar mistakes but, especially, larger issues of structure and argument. You must re-submit revisions to me **within a week** after graded papers are *returned to the class*. Whenever you revise a paper, please see me to discuss it so that your work is not done in vain. The final grade for any revised paper is determined by averaging the grade of the original paper and the grade of the revision.

Grade Breakdown:

Essay 1 (Paraphrase & Explication)	15%
Essay 2 (Documented paper)	20%
Annotated bibliography	10%
Essay 3 (Documented paper)	20%
Essay 4 (Analysis)	15%
Participation, informal writing assignments, required conferences	20%

The following grade scale will be used in grading individual assignments: A = 94-100; A- = 90-93; B+ = 87-89; B = 84-86; B- = 80-83; C+ = 77-79; C = 74-76; C- = 70-73; D= 60-69; F = 0-59.

The following grade scale will be used in determining final grades: A = 90-100; B+ = 86-89; B = 80-85; C+ = 76-79; C = 70-75; D= 60-69; F = 0-59.

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