

ENG 101—College Composition
Spring 2007
Rm. 105, Mohegan Campus
F 9:00 – 11:45 AM

Instructor: James Patrick Gorham
Phone #: (401) 323-6990
email: jgorham@trcc.commnet.edu
Office Hours: by appointment

“Rethinking and Revising America’s Cultural Myths”

REQUIRED TEXTS

Rereading America: Cultural Contexts for Critical Thinking and Writing, 6th ed.. Eds.
Gary Columbo, et al. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2004.

Hacker, Diana. A Writer’s Reference, 5th ed.. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2003.

Reynolds, Nedra. Portfolio Keeping: A Guide For Students. Boston: Bedford/St.
Martin’s, 2000.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, you will think critically about some of the most prevalent cultural myths of America, such as the notion that it is the “great melting pot”, the “land of opportunity”, and the “land of the free”. After engaging in dialogue, you will transform your critical thinking into written formulations as you reconsider your interpretations of the myths and then offer your own unique responses to them. In order to accomplish this, we will proceed in two basic stages. First, we will read samples written by thinkers who question, explore, and challenge these myths. Then, through active class discussions, in-class writing assignments, group exercises, and reflection papers, we will develop and explore our own critical stances. In this process, we will also hone our writing skills as we focus on revision strategies for improvement in the following five areas: development, concision, focus, flow, and grammar/syntax. All of this work will culminate in a final research project, in which you formally answer a question raised by the course by writing a paper that argues a thesis, employs research, and correctly documents sources, using the MLA style of citation. At the end of the course, you will complete a portfolio that contains polished revisions of your best work from the semester, and will offer your reflections on improvements made over the duration of the course.

REQUIREMENTS

- Completion of all projects or other assignments on due dates;
- Completion of a portfolio of revised, edited, and polished documents with supporting materials and a reflective introduction;
- Active reading of all assigned texts, including annotation (i.e., taking margin notes, writing down questions, keeping a writing journal, vocab building, etc.)
- Active and consistent participation in small group work and peer review;
- Preparation for each class and thoughtful contributions to class discussion;
- Regular attendance and communication with instructor.

DEADLINES or DUE DATES

All work produced outside the classroom is due at the beginning of the specified class meeting, according to the course schedule. **Unless I have authorized special arrangements, you will receive a zero for any work not turned in by that date.**

If you have a documented disability that prevents you from turning in assignments in a timely fashion, please contact me ASAP so that we might accommodate your needs.

ATTENDANCE AND TARDINESS POLICY

In order to be successful in the course, each student should expect to attend each and every class. Students are responsible for any work they miss. **Any absences not specifically excused by the instructor will result in letter grade deductions to the final participation grade.** As we meet only once a week, **more than 2 unexcused absences will result in significant reductions in your overall final grades.** Also, be warned that *any absences, excused or unexcused*, will surely hinder your ability to succeed in the course. Finally, **any instances of unexcused tardiness (coming to class more than 10 minutes late without a valid excuse) will be penalized as unexcused absences.** With all of this in mind, please inform me well in advance (24 + hours) if you think for any reason that you might be late or might miss class.

FORMATTING PAPERS

All drafts should be generated with a word processing program and saved on a hard drive or disk. Please submit all of your work on white letter-size paper, using black ink. Last-minute corrections may be made neatly in pen, using black ink. Unless otherwise noted, please use 1-inch margins, double spacing, and 12-point Times New Roman font. Please staple all pages. Each paper must also begin with a left-justified, single spaced heading that includes your name, the date, the course number, and my name.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

All submitted written work must be your own. If you consult other sources (class readings, websites, articles, library books, etc.) these sources **MUST** be properly documented, using the MLA style described in the Hacker Handbook. Any unattributed submission of the words or ideas of others, or any failure to cite your sources, will result in a charge of plagiarism and an F on the given paper, if not in the course as a whole. If you need more help understanding whether or not information should be cited, or in figuring out how to properly cite this information, **PLEASE ASK WELL IN ADVANCE.**

WRITING CENTER AND ADDITIONAL HELP

The work in this course can sometimes be complex or challenging. As such, you may find that you need additional help as you compose your ideas in writing. You are therefore encouraged to meet with me or write to me should you need further suggestions for improvements. Also, in Rm. 106 of the Mohegan Campus, TRCC has a Writing Center that can assist you with these challenges! There, on a walk-in basis, you may make an appointment to meet with an experienced tutor who can help you with all stages of the writing and revising process. For more information, please see their website at:

http://trcc.commnet.edu/ed_resources/writing_center/index.htm

GENERAL CLASS POLICIES

- **Plan to attend for the duration of the class, and avoid scheduling appointments or other obligations for our scheduled class meeting period.**
- **Avoid walking out of the classroom at any times other than scheduled breaks. While personal emergencies may require a quick exit, I soon notice when these departures become excessive or disruptive.**
- **Always be respectful of others, using respectful language, and providing positive, constructive criticism when necessary.**
- **Be prepared for each class with readings completed, and books, notes, drafts, paper, and writing utensils in hand.**
- **Please be courteous to others and shut off all disruptive electronic devices.**

GRADING SCALE & DISTRIBUTION OF GRADES

Reflection Papers/Homework/Group Exercises/In-class Writing.....	20%
Peer Review/Self-Assessments.....	15%
Research Paper.....	15%
Writing Portfolio.....	35%
Participation/Citizenship.....	15%

- All homework, reflections, peer review sessions, self-assessments, and miscellaneous in-class activities will be graded with a $\sqrt{+}$ (100%), $\sqrt{}$ (75%), $\sqrt{-}$ (50%), or a zero. Completed assignments that demonstrate thorough and thoughtful development of ideas and critical thinking will receive a " $\sqrt{+}$ "
- The research project will be graded on a letter system (A, A-, B+, etc.). An "A" paper should demonstrate the following characteristics: 1) a high level of thoughtfulness, engagement of the texts, and critical thinking; 2) above-average proficiency in development, concision, focus, flow, and grammar/syntax; and 3) correct use of MLA documentation of sources, following Hacker's guidelines. It will be approximately 5-8 pages in length, and will include reference to at least three scholarly sources (books or peer-reviewed journals), and a works cited page.
- The writing portfolio will also be graded on the letter system. A "A" portfolio should demonstrate the following characteristics: 1) sincere and active engagement in the processes of revision and reflection, as demonstrated in particular by the introductory reflective essay; 2) above average proficiency in the aforementioned categories (development, etc.); 3) significant overall improvement in writing skills and quality of written work; and 4) neatness and professional presentation of finished work. It will be about 14-20 pages total.
- Your participation and "good citizenship" in class will be graded subjectively with a letter grade. Consistently strong effort and thoughtful participation in class discussion and activities will be rewarded at the end of the semester.
- Please note that a C (73%) is considered by some to be the "average grade" for any given assignment and for a college course in general. However, this does not mean that a C will necessarily *be* the average grade (mean or median) for our course, nor it is considered by the instructor to be a satisfactory performance. As a result, you will be encouraged and expected to perform at an above-average level for the course (B or higher).

COURSE CALENDAR (subject to revision)

WEEK ONE: Introductions

1/19 IN CLASS: BEFORE BREAK: Introductions, In-Class Writing Assignment #1, Discussion of Cultural Myths
AFTER BREAK: Discussion of Syllabus and Course Expectations.

HW: Read Reynolds, pp. 1-30. Read "Thinking Critically, Challenging Cultural Myths", in Rereading America (pp. 1-15). Then, in RA, read "Land of Liberty: American Mythology in New World Order" (pp. 703-8), D'Souza, "America The Beautiful: What We're Fighting For" (pp. 716-26), and Hertzgaard, "The Oblivious Empire", (pp. 728-39). Do Reflection Paper #1.

WEEK TWO: "The Land of Liberty"

1/26 DUE: Reflection Paper #1, and completion of last week's readings with annotations, along with possible discussion questions.

IN CLASS: BEFORE BREAK: Discussion of Reynolds, readings from "Land of Liberty", and Reflection Papers.
AFTER BREAK: Workshop on Development.

HW: In RA, read Andreas, "The War on Terrorism" (pp. 741-50) "Reading Images of America's Meaning in a New World Order" (pp. 763-8), and Gitlin, "Under the Sign of Mickey Mouse & Co." (pp. 782-92). Make your own "visual portfolio" and then write Reflection Paper #2.

WEEK THREE: "The Land of Liberty" (cont.)

2/2 DUE: Reflection Paper #2 and visual portfolio, and completion of last week's readings with annotations, along with possible discussion questions.

IN CLASS: BEFORE BREAK: Group Exercise #1, Discussion of Andreas and Gitlin, Visual Portfolios, and Reflection Papers.
AFTER BREAK: Workshop on Concision

HW: In RA, read "Money and Success: The Myth of Individual Opportunity" (pp. 294-6), Alger, from *Ragged Dick* (pp. 297-302) and Dalton, "Horatio Alger" (pp. 303-9). Then do Reflection Paper #3. If time allows, skim through Hacker guide, getting a good sense of its basic organization of information.

WEEK FOUR: "The Land of Opportunity"

2/9 DUE: Reflection Paper #3, and completion of last week's readings with annotations, along with possible discussion questions.

IN CLASS: BEFORE BREAK: In class writing assignment #2. Discussion of Alger and Dalton and Reflection Papers.

AFTER BREAK: Using Hacker's Writer's Reference, Workshop on Grammar and Syntax

HW: In RA, read Ehrenreich, "Serving in Florida" (pp. 317-29), Mantsios, "Class in America: Myths and Realities" (pp. 331-46), Garland, "Good Noise: Cora Tucker" (pp. 353-63), and "Reading Images of Individual Opportunity" (pp. 375-9). Make your own "visual portfolio" and then write Reflection Paper #4.

WEEK FIVE: "The Land of Opportunity" (cont.)

2/16 DUE: Reflection Paper #4 and visual portfolio, and completion of last week's readings with annotations, along with possible discussion questions.

IN CLASS: BEFORE BREAK: Group Exercise #2 and Visual Portfolios
AFTER BREAK: Discussion of Ehrenreich, Mantsios, Garland, and Reflection Papers.

HW: In RA, read "Created Equal: The Myth of the Melting Pot" (pp. 629-32), and Wachtel, "Talking about Racism: How Our Dialogue Gets Short Circuited" (pp. 613-27). Do Reflection Paper #5.

WEEK SIX: "The Melting Pot"

2/23 DUE: Reflection Paper #5, and completion of last week's readings with annotations, along with possible discussion questions.

IN CLASS: BEFORE BREAK: In class assignment #3 and discussion of Wachtel and Reflection Papers.
AFTER BREAK: Workshop on Focus

HW: In RA, read "Reading Images of the Melting Pot" (pp. 629-32), and Steinhorn and Brown, "Virtual Integration: How the Integration of Mass Media Undermines Integration" (pp. 646-59).
Make your own "visual portfolio" and then write Reflection Paper #6.

WEEK SEVEN: "The Melting Pot" (cont.)

3/2 DUE: Reflection Paper #6 and visual portfolio, and completion of last week's readings with annotations, along with possible discussion questions.

IN CLASS: BEFORE BREAK: Group Exercise #3 and Visual Portfolios
AFTER BREAK: Discussion of Steinhorn and Brown and Reflection Papers.

HW: In RA, read Liu, "Notes of a Native Speaker" (pp. 660-73), and Alexie, "Assimilation" (pp 674-87). Do Reflection Paper #7.

WEEK EIGHT: "The Melting Pot" (cont.)

3/9 DUE: Reflection Paper #7, and completion of last week's readings with annotations, along with possible discussion questions.

IN CLASS: BEFORE BREAK: Discussion of Liu and Alexie,
and Reflection Papers.
AFTER BREAK: Workshop on Flow.

HW: In RA, Read Michael Moore, “Idiot Nation”, pp. 153-70. Do Reflection
Paper #7.

WEEK NINE: Exploring American Myths Through Film

3/16 DUE: Reflection Papers, and completion of last week’s readings with
annotations, along with possible discussion questions.

IN CLASS: BEFORE BREAK: In class screening of Michael Moore’s *Roger and
Me*
AFTER BREAK: Discussion of Film, Moore, and Reflection Papers.

HW: Write down 5 questions that Michael Moore’s film raises about any of
the “American Myths” discussed so far in the course. Then, go back
through all of your own writings for this class, and think about questions
that you yourself have raised. Identify at least one question that interests
you that you would like to further research, explore, develop, and
answer. You will bring your questions about Moore’s film, along with
your *own* question(s), to class on the Friday after Spring Break.

WEEK TEN

3/23 NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK

WEEK ELEVEN: Developing Topics For Research Paper

3/30 DUE: Film questions and a question of your own that you would like to
further develop.

IN CLASS: BEFORE BREAK: Workshop on Developing Topics and Questions and
Transforming Topics into Theses
AFTER BREAK: Group Exercise #4.

HW: Based on suggestions from our discussion and workshop, and those
provided in the Hacker Handbook, transform your question/topic into a
more specific, developed preliminary thesis statement. Then do a brief
“free write” in which you brainstorm some possible ways of arguing
your thesis. Write at least one or two handwritten paragraphs in which
you argue your thesis. You will bring your thesis statement and your
freewritten paragraphs to class on the Friday following Spring Recess.
You must also schedule a conference appointment with me via e-mail.

WEEK TWELVE

4/6 NO CLASS – SPRING RECESS

WEEK THIRTEEN: Performing Academic Research

4/13 DUE: Conference Appointment Scheduled, Preliminary Thesis
Statement, and brief Free-Write.

IN CLASS: BEFORE BREAK: Group Exercise #5.

AFTER BREAK: Workshop on Performing Academic Research

HW: Begin to do some preliminary research related to your topic/thesis, using internet databases and/or TRCC library databases for help. Find at least 3 possible sources that you think might help you to argue your thesis in your final project and write them down according to correct MLA format (see Hacker for help with this). Then, create a preliminary typed “works cited” page, following the MLA format provided by Hacker, and including all of the sources that you found.

WEEK FOURTEEN: Improving Organization of Information and Citation of Sources

4/20 DUE: Preliminary Works Cited Page

IN CLASS: BEFORE BREAK: Workshop on Organizing Information, and Creating Outlines and Cluster Diagrams
AFTER BREAK: Workshop on MLA Citation of Sources, Brief Group Exercise (if time allows)

HW: Write a first draft of your research paper (at least 3 double spaced pages). Make three copies of your draft to bring to next week’s class.

WEEK FIFTEEN: First Drafts

4/27 DUE: Three copies of first draft of Research Project

IN CLASS: BEFORE BREAK: Workshop on Revision Strategies (Adding, Deleting, Moving, and Changing). Drafting vs. Editing vs. Proofreading. Final Portfolios Assigned and Discussed.
AFTER BREAK: Peer Review Sessions

HW: Do Self-Assessments (see handout). Then, based on suggestions from workshop and peer review, write a second draft of the Research Project, in which you incorporate these suggestions.
Make three copies of this new revised draft to bring to next week’s class.

WEEK SIXTEEN: Second Drafts

5/4 DUE: Self Assessments, Second draft of Research Project.

IN CLASS: BEFORE BREAK: Peer Review Sessions
AFTER BREAK: Review, Discussion of Introductory Reflective Essays, Choosing Pieces for Portfolio.

HW: Write Reflective Introductory Essay and complete Final Portfolios, according to the handouts provided. Complete a final draft of the Research Project.

WEEK SEVENTEEN

5/11 DUE: Final Research Papers and Portfolios. ALL FINAL PORTFOLIOS AND RESEARCH PAPERS WILL BE DUE ON THIS DATE—NO EXCEPTIONS!

IN CLASS: Course Evaluations, Wrap-Up and End-of-the-year Celebration!