

Syllabus: Writing Intensive
Clemente Program at F&M
Instructor: Marci Nelligan
Fall 2009

Course Overview

In this class, we will learn *academic writing*, a discipline which is probably a lot like other writing you've done, and a bit unique as well. This kind of writing engages with ideas in a conversation, where the writer deals with the viewpoints and theories of other thinkers, while putting forth her own theories and ideas. In order to develop as academic writers, we will be doing a number of things. First, we will review basic writing and grammar. Then, we will delve into strategies for handling this new and very specific task of academic writing. This class will require you to write *something* every day—think of it as way of getting your writing muscles back in shape. Because one of the key components of being a good academic writer is being a good reader, you will also have in-class and take-home reading assignments.

Objectives

This class should prepare you for your Clemente experience, giving you a solid foundation for approaching the work that lies ahead. **The first four class sessions will determine your eligibility to participate in the rest of the program. For this reason, it is essential that you attend all of the writing classes, hand in all of the required assignments, and let me know as soon as possible if there's any way I can help you.**

Assignments

You will be asked to keep a **Writing Journal** for the duration of the Clemente Program. This is a space for you to do freewrites and to generate questions about the texts you're reading for this class, and others, if you wish.

You will be asked to write something every day, even if it is only a sentence. This is an ambitious goal, but it's a good way of practicing and improving your writing skills. The Writing Journal will be handed in three times during the program: Sept. 18th, December 10th, and April 8th. I will NOT be grading the journals on the basis of their CONTENT (the subject matter or ideas), but on the basis of the effort you've made, and your progress as a writer. *20% of final grade.*

Short **writing projects** will be assigned at the end of each class, to be handed in at the next class. I will comment on these assignments and hand them back to you. These will receive a letter grade. *40% of final grade.*

Your **final project** will be a three-stage revision of a paper you're already working on in your other classes. However, I will ask to see three drafts—a rough draft, a second draft, and a final draft, which should follow the structure we'll be learning in class. Each draft should show considerable work and editing. *30% of final grade.*

Class participation will count for an additional 10% of your grade. This means showing up on time, actively engaging in the class, and showing serious commitment to and effort in class.

Assessing Your Work

In order to continue in the Clemente Program, you will need to successfully pass the first stage of the writing class (the first four classes). Passing this segment means that you:

- Attend all sessions
- Complete all assignments
- Participate in class discussions
- Try hard, even though you may still have some more work to do on your writing

Texts

“They Say, I Say,” Gerald Graff, Cathy Birkenstein

Strunk and White, “Elements of Style”

Dictionary and Thesaurus

Other readings provided by instructor

Important Dates

Monday, September 18th: Hand in Writing Journals.

November 23: Bring draft of paper you’ll be using for final project to class.

December 10: Hand in Writing Journals, hand in revised draft of paper for final project.

January 20th: Hand in final project (three drafts of your paper)

April 8th: Hand in Writing Journals.

Overview—Class Sessions

Please read

“Entering the Conversation,” pgs. 1-14, in *They Say, I Say (TSIS)* **BEFORE** our first class.

Thursday, September 3rd: Introduction and Overview

- Becoming fearless—an excerpt from “Bird by Bird” (handout)
- Freewrites
- The Open-ended Writing Process (Peter Elbow, Chapter 7, (handout))
- Asking questions of the text

In this first session, we will consider a few strategies and techniques for approaching writing throughout the course.

In-class exercise

Freewrite about accomplishments

Assignment, due on Sept. 10th:

Read Sojourner Truth's Speech, "Ain't I a Woman?"

Use Truth's speech as the example text in assignment #1 on pg. 13, *TSIS*

Read: Getting Started— *TSIS* , 17-27

Read: Writing a summary—*TSIS* , 28-38

Thursday, September 10th: The Nitty-Gritty of Language/Writing Summaries

I. Grammar and technique

- The sentence
- The paragraph
- Transitions

II. Writing Topics

- Getting Started— *TSIS* , 17-27
- Writing a summary—*TSIS* , 28-38

III. Writing exercise

Choose one of the exercises on page 38 of *TSIS* . Due Sept. 14th.

Reading for next class:

TSIS , Pages 51-73

Monday, September 14th: Common Writing Problems/Developing Your Own Analysis

I. Writing: Difference between Summarizing and Analyzing

- Overview of analysis/key terms
- Difference between analysis and summary
- Similarities/overlap between analysis and summary
- *TSIS* , Pages 51-73

Assignment:

Please do Assignment #2, *TSIS* , page 63, using "Don't Blame the Eater," from the "Readings" section (starting on pg. 136). Please keep your essay short, and use the templates to help you! Due Wed. Sept. 17th.

Reading: *TSIS* , pg. 39-47

Wednesday, September 17th: Quotations/using evidence from the text/common grammar mistakes

- I. Writing: Using Quotations from *TSIS* pg. 39-47
- II. In-class exercises on using quotations

Reading for next class:

TSIS , pg. 88-97

Peter Elbow, Page 89 (handout)

Peter Elbow, pg. 92 (handout)

Monday, October 12th:

- I. Review “Saying Why it Matters,” *TSIS* pgs 88-97
- II. Grammar Workshop
 - Sentence Combining exercises
 - Sentence Fragment Workshop
- III. Moving Ahead: Brainstorming on writing for Art History and Philosophy

Reading: Peter Elbow, More Ways to Revise (handout)
TSIS , pgs. 101-114

Assignments for next class: *TSIS* , pgs. 113-114, #1, #2

Monday, November 23rd: Revision Workshop

I. Sentence Combining, Finessing Your Grammar

II. Using Peter Elbow and Strunk and White, we will do an in-depth class on catching errors in your own work and progressing from rough to final drafts. This class will incorporate some things we’ve already covered, but because revision is one of the most difficult aspects of writing, we’ll spend more time with this topic.

III. In-class exercise

Please bring a paper you are working on, which we will be revising together in class.

Assignment: Using our work on your paper in class, please bring a revised version of your paper, along with the earlier draft to our next class.

Reading: Elbow, Chapter 14 (handout))

Wednesday, December 9th:

- I. Strategies for organizing your thoughts in writing

II. Refresher: common grammar mistakes

III. In-class group work—looking at your revisions and going to the next level

Break Assignments:

Work on a **Final Draft** of the paper you've been revising (even if you have done this for another class). Prepare to hand in THREE drafts when you return: the rough draft, the first draft, which we went over in class, and the final draft.

Reading (which we won't cover until Jan. 25th):

StoryCorps Reading (handout)

TSIS, pgs. 115-122

Wednesday, January 20th: Getting back in the saddle

I. Warm-up exercises

- Writing rengas
- The six-word autobiography
- Grammar review
- Sentence workshop

III. Strategies for writing about works of literature

IV. In-class Assignment: Read Theodore Roethke's "My Papa's Waltz" and work on group assignment, to be handed out in class.

Reading:

StoryCorps Reading (handout—if you haven't read it already)

TSIS, 115-122 (if you haven't read it already)

FINAL PAPERS DUE

Monday, January 25th: Say it Loud: Your Words, Your Voice

- I. Using readings from StoryCorps, we will consider various ways a writer can tell his or her story. We will look at a few different techniques and stylistic approaches, and then, as an in-class assignment, begin telling a story of our own. This story can be written as creatively as you like and can be told in the form of an interview with an imagined interviewer, a poem, an essay, a song, or creative non-fiction.

In-class assignment on voice based on *TSIS*, Exercise #1, pg. 122

Writing Assignment: Complete a draft of your story for the next class, 1-3 pages.

Reading: Peter Elbow, Power in Writing

TBD

Monday, February 22nd: Finessing your Papers—the Final Touches

I. Using Peter Elbow, Chapter 26, and an in-class reading (TBD), we will look at the importance of voice in writing.

II. In-class exercise

Begin to write about something you really believe in, as a 15-minute freewrite.
Share this freewrite in small groups.

Writing assignment: Turn your freewrite into a short essay, 1-3 pages, due on March 23rd.

Wednesday, April 7th: Review and Wrap-up

Class content to be determined, with review of topics students will need particular assistance with going forward.