JUNIOR WRITING:
WRITING FOR CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS
STPEC 393A

Thursdays, 4-6:30
Machmer E-10

Ethan Myers
cc.myers@yahoo.com
Machmer E-27
Tuesdays, 1:30-3:30

This course has two overarching goals: to gain fluency and agility in written expression, and to consider the power and politics of language. Although these two goals may at times seem to trip over each other, I believe that graceful and powerful writing comes from understanding language on both syntactical and political levels. Throughout the semester, we will evaluate writing – our own work as well as formally published work; we will consider our political roles as writers; and we will examine our roles as writers in shaping and creating meaning. I hope that as we evaluate writing, we will name for ourselves what we believe constitutes both good writing, and good writing.

TEXTS
Texts for this course are available in Amherst at Food For Thought. I strongly encourage you to patronize your local bookstore before going shopping on the internet. Food For Thought is a wonderful workers’ collective – a labor model directly in-line with STPEC’s curriculum – and they really need our financial support.

We will read and discuss all of the required texts. Since books are fundamental to your educational experience, skimping on the required texts is probably not the best way to save money.

Feitlowitz, Marguerite. A Lexicon of Terror: Argentina and the Legacies of Torture.


Spurr, David. The Rhetoric of Empire.

Strunk, William and E.B. White. The Elements of Style (any edition will do)

Recommended:


*I may make selections of James and Marcus available. It’s a must-read for graduate programs in the humanities and social sciences.

**We won’t draw directly on Zinsser’s book this semester, but it’s one that has helped my own writing enormously. You can find it in the library or at a used bookstore.
Late assignments are not accepted. If you are having trouble, or a personal emergency has come up, let me know as soon as possible. Extensions are rare, but if you would like one and feel that you have a compelling reason, speak with me at least 24 hours before the due date. **Be prepared to show me your work and have a sound case for an extension.** Assignments in this class are spaced intentionally to correspond with readings and discussions, and to allow time to work on them. One late assignment causes a train wreck of overdue papers further down the line. It’s best to stay on top of your work. Incompletes are possible in extreme cases only and will never be granted automatically by the instructor.

**PEER REVIEW**
We will spend a considerable amount of time reviewing each other’s writing. Peer Review can often be a frustrating experience, but I believe it has wonderful potential for building community, helping us to develop as writers, and decolonizing the classroom. In order for the process to be effective, everyone must participate enthusiastically. I encourage you to peer review papers for your other courses as well.

**SPARK: Weekly Writing**
My hope is that we can enlist Spark as an open and structured forum where we can practice our writing, share ideas, collaborate, and respond to one another.

Your work for each week will include an assigned weekly writing. Generally, the weekly writing will be a 2 page response to the readings, but sometimes we may develop weekly writings more relevant to your major essays. The weekly writings can be somewhat informal, but should articulate your thoughtful reactions to the text or texts at hand. **Please do not summarize the reading.** Post the Weekly Writing to Spark on the **Tuesday** prior to class by 11:59 p.m. You may miss two Weekly Writings without detriment to your grade.

**ESSAYS**
You will write several essays for this class. Some will be 6-8 pages; others, 2-3 pages. The emphasis of all essays is on sound writing and strong content, not on length. Think of the shorter papers as opportunities to generate ideas, and the longer papers as opportunities to explore those ideas.

All papers should be written at the college level. Proper grammar and appropriate citations are a given. Never turn in an essay of any length without a works cited page. All essays must be stapled, with pages numbered, and margins adjusted to one inch. Typos are unacceptable: you’re in college, people.

To receive a grade and the benefit of my feedback, all papers must be handed in by the due date. I will not grade emailed papers. No exceptions.

**PARTICIPATION**
Come to class, arrive on time, be prepared, turn your work in on time, participate in class discussions and Spark assignments. Participation is worth 15% of your final grade, which should be helpful, not punitive.

**GRADES**

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PROJECTS
Long Essays (2) 25% each
Short Essays (3) 10% each
Weekly Writing 5%
Participation 15%

MAJOR DUE DATES
Feb 9: Short Essay 1  April 12: Short Essay 3
March 8: Long Essay 1  May 4: Long Essay 2
March 29: Short Essay 2

January 26 Introductions

February 2 George Orwell, “Politics and the English Language” (on-line)
Strunk and White, The Elements of Style

February 9 David Spurr, The Rhetoric of Empire
Due: Short Essay 1

February 16 David Spurr, The Rhetoric of Empire

February 23 Writing Conferences with Ethan

March 1 Rhetorics of Resistance, or...

March 8 DUE: Long Essay 1

March 15 June Jordan, “Nobody Mean More to Me than You and the Future Life of Willie Jordan” (handout)
Asa Hilliard, “Psychological Factors Associated with Language in the Education of the African-American Child” (handout)

March 22 SPRING BREAK

March 29 Marguerite Feitlowitz, A Lexicon of Terror
Due: Short Essay 2

April 5 Marguerite Feitlowitz, A Lexicon of Terror

April 12 Kuper, et al, Working
Due: Short Essay 3

April 19 Conferences with Ethan

April 26 LAST DAY OF CLASS

Friday, May 4 DUE: Long Essay 2