

English 103, Section 4016: Composition & Critical Thinking

Fall 2013 Meeting Time: W 6:45-10pm in GC 150

Instructor Information

Dr. Stella Setka

Office: N/A

Office Hours: M 12-2 via gChat

e-mail: professorsetka@gmail.com

& setkasn@wlac.edu

"If we are to create a culture that lives in harmony with the earth, if we are to overcome our alienation from nature, we all need to find our path toward becoming true inhabitants of place."

- David Landis Barnhill

Course Description: English 103 meets the transfer critical thinking requirement, and is designed to develop critical thinking, reading, and writing skills beyond the level achieved in English 101. Accordingly, the assignments in essay writing, rhetorical analysis, and critical reading are rigorous. Based on non-fiction writings, the course will focus on the development of logical reasoning and analytical and argumentative writing skills.

Thematic Content: This course is structured around two fundamental questions: How does *place* (social, cultural, natural) influence one's sense of self, and what does it mean for us to be "civilized" humans in the natural order? Together, we will explore the interrelationships between a writer's identity, space, and audience as a means of understanding how the writing act can both foster and resolve conflict. To aid us in this journey of discovery, we will cover a wide variety of perspectives, themes and writing styles, from the nature writing of Henry David Thoreau to the ecocriticism of Gary Snyder and the Holocaust memoir of Primo Levi. The broad scope of this course will guide you toward an understanding of the interconnectedness of all things—both in terms of the life of the mind and the life of the earth.

Student Learning Outcomes: At the end of the course, the successful student will be able to research, evaluate, and cite outside sources for use in the student's own writing. Through extensive writing, revision, reading, research and discussion, the student will also explore and develop the following thinking, reading, and writing skills and competencies:

- Read and critically evaluate college-level material from a variety of sources;
- Identify and analyze the structure of arguments underlying the texts read;
- Evaluate the validity and soundness of arguments; recognize and avoid logical fallacies;
- Draw sound inferences from data given in a variety of forms;
- Distinguish factual statements from judgmental statements and distinguish knowledge from opinion;
- Develop and practice the inductive and deductive skills needed for close reading and lucid writing;
- Demonstrate continued development in writing correct and sophisticated college-level English prose; use appropriate MLA citations/works cited;
- Identify some of the deliberate abuses and manipulations of rhetoric so that they can identify them in general occurrence and avoid them in their own writing.
- Use writing to construct and community meaning as critical thinkers and responsible citizens.
- Learn to write effectively for different audiences and purposes, with an emphasis on argumentation and academic writing.

Prerequisites: Completion of English 101 with a grade of a "C" or better.

How to Succeed in English 103:

- ❖ **Always be prepared.** You are in control of your education and learning process, which means that in addition to attending class, you need to learn how to *learn on your own*. Although I will be imparting new information in class, the work you do outside of class will directly reflect on the discussions that occur in the classroom. If you fail to come to class prepared—which means not having completed all reading and/or writing assignments—you will be doing yourself a disservice. It is my hope that this course will challenge you to think critically not only about the texts we read, but also about the narratives we construct as a culture and as a nation.
- ❖ **Annotate!** In other words, you should be an *active reader*, taking the time to highlight and write in your books. You will be required to read a substantial amount of material before each class, so get into the habit of highlighting important passages, jotting down your thoughts in the margins, or even taking the time to define and/or note words you don't understand; these practices will help you remember and understand the text. In fact, locating crucial words and key passages is an important part of analyzing a text.

- ❖ **Devote the necessary amount of time to preparing for each class session.** In addition to regarding this course as a means of expanding your intellectual capabilities, you should also think of it as a way to exercise the coveted skill of time management. As I note above, this course has a substantial reading load. I don't anticipate that all of you are speed readers, but I do expect that you will budget your time outside of class wisely, giving yourself ample time to complete—and comprehend—the course texts. Don't expect to succeed by skimming or turning to online resources for plot summaries.
- ❖ **Participate in class discussions.** Although I will lecture occasionally to introduce new texts and key concepts, this is largely a discussion-based course. Your informed participation is not only vital to your individual success, but also to the success of the course as a whole. The more you engage, and the more fun you have sharing and debating ideas, the more you will get out of the class.
- ❖ **If you need help, just ask.** I institute strict policies and implement a rigorous reading and writing schedule for your benefit. My standards are high. However, my goal as an educator is to help you meet those standards by helping you in any way that I can. If you need help, contact me during my virtual office hours, email me, or schedule an appointment. There are also multiple services on campus that can help you navigate the challenges of reading and writing. Composition courses are not easy, and this one is no exception. To further your success in this course, I encourage you to visit the Student Success Center (C Building), where you can enroll in Writing Center and Reading Center tutoring as well as Learning Skills. In addition, free non-credit courses are available. If you are interested in these, sign up in Non-Credit (3rd floor of ST Building).
- ❖ **Buy hard copies of the course texts.** I do not allow laptops or Kindles in my classroom (unless you have a documented disability that requires you to use these forms of technology in class). The course texts should be available at the bookstore in the next few weeks. However, should you decide to purchase your books online, 1) make sure that you obtain the editions listed below, and 2) make sure to opt for speedy shipping.

Required Course Texts:

1. *Into the Wild* (2007 film) available on Netflix InstantView (I believe they have a trial membership) or YouTube (in 10 parts)
2. *They Say, I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*, 2nd Edition, by Gerald Graff & Cathy Birkenstein (ISBN: 039393361X)
3. *At Home On the Earth: Becoming Native to Our Place, A Multicultural Anthology*, ed. David Landis Barnhill
4. (ISBN: 0520216849)
5. Short stories and poems on our **Blackboard** site, to be downloaded, printed, read, and brought to class.

Recommended Course Materials:

- **MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 8th Edition
- *A USB memory stick
- * Regular access to a computer and printer
- * A notebook with perforated pages or loose-leaf paper
- * A pen

Class Policies and Expectations:

- ❖ **Attendance:**
 - **Regular attendance and prompt arrival to class is mandatory.** We are creating a community of scholars, readers, and writers. Sporadic attendance signals, among other things, that you don't take your membership in this community seriously. If you are consistently late to class, your grade will be affected. If you sleep, email, IM, or text in class, you will be counted absent. If you appear inebriated, you will be asked to leave and will be marked absent. Note that the WLAC website indicates that No-Shows on the first day of class will can be dropped from the course.
 - **My policy on absences is firm.** When conflicts or absences can be anticipated, such as for college-sponsored activities and religious observances, you should inform me of the situation as far in advance as possible. Because this class only meets once per week, missing more than one class will be detrimental to your grade

Disclaimer: Note that course policies and/or assignments may be subject to adjustment. You will be notified of any substantive changes both in class and via email.

because you cannot make up in-class assignments, quizzes, or peer review sessions. If you miss more than two classes, I reserve the right to drop you from the class.

- **Adds/Drops:** You are responsible for monitoring and being aware of add/drop dates, your attendance, participation, and status in the course. If for some reason you need to withdraw from the class, you must handle this through the registrar and be conscious of the deadlines and of the consequences for not meeting these deadlines in a timely fashion.
- **Assignments and Notes.** If you miss a class, **do not** ask me for missed work during the following class. You may contact me during my office hours or at another arranged time. During the third week of class, I will ask you to locate two “homework partners” and exchange contact information with them. That way, if you miss a class, you can check with one of your homework partners for the day’s notes. This is your responsibility, not mine.

❖ Participation:

- **Homework:** To ensure that you are prepared for class discussion, I will generally give you discussion questions or themes to keep in mind while you are reading in advance of the day on which the reading is due. I may call on you in class to share your thoughts about the readings or to respond to them in an in-class assignment or on a quiz, so it’s important to be prepared. I don’t expect you to have detailed observations, but I do expect you to engage with the text as you read it. You’re also encouraged to develop and share thoughtful questions.
- **Attendance is not the same as participation.** Perfect attendance will not earn you an “A” for participation. If you have difficulty speaking in front of large groups, see me as soon as possible so that we can arrange an alternative method of participation. Otherwise, only those who participate consistently and substantially in class will earn an “A”—perfect attendance and silence will earn you a “D.”
- **Be courteous.** I don't expect everyone to have the same reactions to the literary texts we will read; in fact, it makes a class much more interesting and lively if there are serious intellectual debates. I do expect, however, that everyone's questions, comments, and views will be treated respectfully during our discussions. You may expect consideration and respect from me in return.
- **Online readings.** There will be a few readings posted to our **Blackboard** site. On the days that you are assigned to read an online text, you **must print out hard copies** (1 copy per student) and bring these copies to class. Failure to do so will affect your participation grade. You **may not use laptops** in class to access the articles online.

❖ Assignment Guidelines:

- I will always give explicit submission instructions for each individual assignment. Some assignments will be submitted online through Blackboard; these must be submitted **before class** on the day that they are due. All other assignments will need to be printed out, stapled, and submitted at the start of class. Assignments submitted after class on the day they are due will be penalized one-half a letter grade. Rest assured that each assignment sheet will list due dates/times and submission methods. I do not accept emailed assignments.
- Late assignments will be penalized **one letter grade per day they are late**, up to four days. I will not accept late assignments after four days unless you have arranged for an extension with me in advance.
- If you must request an **extension**, you have to do so in writing **at least one week** in advance of the due date.
- **Note that all formal writing assignments must adhere to MLA format** (this includes in-text citations and Works Cited). Guidelines for MLA format can be found here: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>. All documents should be typed and double-spaced using Times New Roman font, size 12. Please use one-inch margins, a proper heading (see OWL guide), and never right justify or adjust font or size to fulfill length requirements. Note that failure to follow MLA guidelines will likely result in a grade reduction.

Disclaimer: Note that course policies and/or assignments may be subject to adjustment. You will be notified of any substantive changes both in class and via email.

- **I will not review full drafts of your papers unless such review is stipulated in the relevant assignment sheet.** However, I am happy to meet or correspond with you to discuss your paper in progress and to aid in the development of your thesis statement. Be sure to manage your time wisely so that you can take advantage of the resources available to you on campus.
 - **Computer/technology excuses will not be accepted.** Computers crash, printers break, and backpacks get mysteriously stolen the night before an assignment is due. Back up your work (I do so using both online and physical backup systems. Try Dropbox: <https://www.dropbox.com/>).
 - **Academic Dishonesty:** I follow the LACCD student code of conduct as it relates to student dishonesty (Board Rule 9803.28): "Violations of academic integrity of any type by a student provides grounds for disciplinary action by the instructor or college. Violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, the following actions: cheating on an exam, plagiarism, working together on an assignment, paper, or project when the instructor has specifically stated students should not do so, submitting the same term paper to more than one instructor, or allowing another individual to assume one's identity for the purpose of enhancing one's grade. For more on the Standards of Student Conduct, refer to the college catalog available in hard copy and online at www.lattc.edu."
- ❖ **Open Communication:**
- **Check your WLAC email daily** for important updates and information.
 - **Students with disabilities** who need any assistance or accommodations should contact the instructor and the **Office of Disabled Student Programs and Services (DSP&S)** Heldman Learning Resources Center (HLRC), Room 119 | (310) 287-4450. West Los Angeles College recognizes and welcomes its responsibility to provide an equal educational opportunity to all disabled individuals. The Office of Disabled Students Programs and Services (DSP&S) has been established to provide support services for all verified disabled students pursuing a college education. DSP&S students may qualify for: priority registration, registration assistance, special parking permits, sign language interpreters and assistive technology (WLAC College Catalog).
 - In the event of a **major campus emergency**, course requirements, deadlines, and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances. You can get information about changes in this course by contacting me via e-mail.

Assignment Overview:

- ✚ **Into the Wild Film Reflection:** We will not be meeting in class on Wednesday, September 4 because I will be observing a religious holiday. To compensate for this lost time, I'm charging you with the task of locating & watching the 2007 film *Into the Wild*, which tells the true story of one man's decision to immerse himself in nature. After viewing the film, you will write a typed 250-word essay responding to a prompt that I will distributed in class. **Due in class on September 11.**
- ✚ **Informative Abstract** (200-300 words) summarizes the tone and scope of the edited collection we will be reading this semester, *At Home on the Earth*. To do this, you will need to read the introduction of the text to ascertain the author's purpose for writing. You will also need to evaluate the general contents and/or organizational structure of the book. More detailed information to follow. **Due in class on September 25.**
- ✚ **Article Analysis** (350-500 words): you will select an article from one of the four I've posted to our BB site and write a concise analysis of the author's argument. In your analysis, make mention of the writer's purpose, the writer's audience, assumptions the writer makes about his/her topic and/or audience, and the evidence the writer uses (i.e. map out the rhetorical situation). More detailed information to follow. **Due in class on October 9.**
- ✚ **Environmental Policy Paper:** This paper, which we will workshop in-class, will give you the opportunity to explore the theoretical concepts we've learned in class in the context of your own interests. You will 1) identify a local

Disclaimer: Note that course policies and/or assignments may be subject to adjustment. You will be notified of any substantive changes both in class and via email.

environmental issue, 2) explain its causes, and 3) try to suggest a workable solution. I will want you to conduct research to meet the first two components of this assignment, but I encourage you to be creative in developing a solution to the problem (although you can certainly “stand on the shoulders of giants” by drawing from outside sources here as well). This paper should be 4-7 pages in length, and will be subject to peer review in class. More detailed information to follow. **Rough draft must be emailed to peer groups by October 20. Final draft due via email by 6pm on October 23.**

- ✚ **Avatar Film Analysis:** This 250-500-word paper will analyze the 2009 film *Avatar* in relation the theoretical concepts we will learn over the course of the semester. More detailed information to follow. **Due in class on December 4.**
- ✚ **Personal Reflection Paper:** This 250-word paper will offer students a space in which to reflect on the concepts they have learned in the class, and will ask them to make a connection to one of the course readings. More detailed information to follow. **Due via email by 10pm on Wednesday, December 11.**
- ✚ **In-Class Writing:** These will be comprised of brief responses to the readings or to related discussion material, and you will often be asked to share what you’ve written with the rest of the class. Although I do collect and evaluate these assignments to assess the level of your engagement with the course material, I do not assign them a grade. Rather, these count toward your participation.
- ✚ **Quizzes:** I will issue a total of 10 reading quizzes throughout the semester to ensure that you are reading and processing the course texts. There will be no final exam in this course.

Grade Dispute Policy: If you wish to dispute your grade on an assignment, you must submit via email a written appeal detailing your reasons within 1 week after receiving the graded piece. If I am persuaded by your argument, I may offer you the opportunity to revise the assignment with the understanding that the revised grade will be an average of the initial and revised drafts.

Grades:

Your grade will be calculated in the following way:

Film Reflection (based on viewing notes & related in-class assignment)	5%
In-Class Writing & Participation	15%
The Informative Abstract	10%
The Article Analysis	10%
Environmental Policy Paper & Peer Review	25%
Environmental Policy Presentation	15%
Quizzes	10%
Personal Reflection Paper	10%
Total	100%

The grading scale is as follows:

93%-100%	A	73%-77%	C
90%-92%	A-	70%-72%	C-
87%-89%	B+	67%-69%	D+
83%-87%	B	63%-67%	D
80%-82%	B-	60%-62%	D-
77%-79%	C+	Below 59%	F

Grading Scale: The following is the grading scale for papers/projects:

90-100 (A) – Your work is both excellent in content and form. There are no grammatical or structural errors, and your writing demonstrates excellent organizational and analytical skills. Further, your writing demonstrates a superior and creative engagement with the text you are discussing.

80-89 (B) – You did what the assignment asked of you at a high quality level, but your work lacks the policy and ingenuity of an A assignment. Work in this range needs little revision, is complete in content, is organized well, and shows special attention to organization and critical thinking. This is still an excellent grade.

Disclaimer: Note that course policies and/or assignments may be subject to adjustment. You will be notified of any substantive changes both in class and via email.

70-79 (C) – You did what the assignment asked of you. Work in this range tends to need some revision, but is organized and complete in content. The style is straightforward, but does not demonstrate the creativity and polish of A and B papers. Keep in mind that a C in this class implies average, but not unsatisfactory, work.

60-69 (D) – You fulfilled the minimum requirements of the assignment. Work in this range tends to need significant revision. The content is often incomplete and the organization is hard to discern. Organization and critical engagement with the assignment prompt style are often non-existent or chaotic. This grade is given to work that show very little effort and poor quality.

Below 60 (F) – Any assignment deserving an F has not achieved the minimum standards for an assignment (this includes papers that do not meet the minimum page or word count). If you feel you put in your best effort and still received an F, you might consider dropping the class.

Disclaimer: Note that course policies and/or assignments may be subject to adjustment. You will be notified of any substantive changes both in class and via email.