

Sweetland Writing Center
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
Fall 2000

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English 125

WRITING AND CRITICAL THINKING

Tuesdays and Thursdays 7-8:30 PM
2448 Mason Hall

This course will introduce students to college-level critical thinking and writing. Students should be aware from the outset that English 125 designates a large number of very different college-level writing courses. This section will use texts and problems drawn from history, philosophy, and the social sciences, and its focus will be the question of what it means to be a modern American. Students enrolled in the course should expect to read, write about, and discuss a number of challenging, provocative books and articles. Among those texts will be a classical philosophical dialogue, a modern romantic novella, a memoir from early twentieth-century America, two recent works of social and cultural criticism, and four contemporary popular political science essays.

Course meetings will consist of seminar discussions and small-group workshops, as indicated on the following schedule. At seminar meetings, we will analyze and evaluate the readings together. Some days, I will lead the seminar; other days, students will help to initiate and lead our discussions. In the small-group workshops, students will read and discuss essays written by students in the course – with an eye towards helping to improve those essays. Participation in seminar discussions and small group workshops will be noted and will influence course grades. Readings should be completed before our class sessions, and they should be brought to class for use in our discussions.

Regular, timely attendance is mandatory. Unexcused absences and tardiness will be noted and will affect grades negatively. Course meetings are few and brief, so be there and be on time. Expect to stay for the whole period, focusing on coursework throughout. As a courtesy to all, please turn off pagers or telephones while in class.

Note that this entire syllabus is subject to revision at the instructor's discretion.

Written Requirements

Course requirements include the following, in addition to the above:

- Four polished essays.
- Thesis statements, abstracts, outlines, drafts, and peer reviews for each paper, with some to be posted on-line.
- Twelve 1-page summaries of and reactions to the readings.

The polished essays will be given letter grades. All the other writings will be graded minimally (plus, check, minus, or their numerical equivalents). For more information on the assignments and grading, see the last page of this syllabus.

Required Readings

The following books contain most of the required readings. They are available for purchase at Michigan Book & Supply, the Michigan Union Bookstore, and Ulrich's Bookstore. Please use editions by the same publisher and translator – different publication dates are fine. All readings are also on reserve at the Shapiro Undergraduate Library.

Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. Watts (Penguin Classics, 2000)
J. W. von Goethe, *Sorrows of Young Werther and Selected Writings*, trans. Hutter, (NAL/Signet, 1987)
Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull-House: With Autobiographical Notes* (Signet, 1999)
Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (Viking, 1986)
David Brooks, *Bobos in Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There* (Simon & Schuster, 2000)

Recommended:

Diana Hacker, *A Pocket Style Manual*, 3rd spiral ed. (Bedford Books, 2000)

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS, TOPICS, AND ASSIGNMENTS

Note: The reading and writing assignments listed are to be completed *before* coming to class. The on-line assignments are to be completed during the period indicated.

Thurs., 7 Sept. Introduction: Writing, Modernity, and Critical Thinking

I. TO BE OR NOT TO BE: CLASSICAL AND MODERN IDEALS

Tues., 12 Sept. Boethius' Troubles and the Classical Philosophical Tradition

Reading: Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Books 1-2, pp. 35-77.

Writing: *1-page Boethius summary and reaction due in class. **Bring 2 copies.***

Thurs., 14 Sept. The Good Life and the Philosophical Struggle

Reading: Boethius, *The Consolation*, Books 3-4, pp. 78-146.

Writing: One copy of your summary and reaction will be returned after class.

****FIRST PAPER TOPICS DISTRIBUTED****

Tues., 19 Sept. Why Reason? What Is Human Life Meant to Be? / Small Group Workshops

Reading: Boethius, *The Consolation*, Book 5, pp. 147-69.

Writing: *A second 1-page summary and reaction, with thesis statement, due in class. **Bring 4 copies.***

Groups: Small groups meet to discuss your Boethius summaries, reactions, and theses.

Thurs., 21 Sept. Computer Workshop and Peer Review – Meet in a computer lab (location to be announced).

Reading: No new assignment.

Writing: ****FIRST PAPER DRAFTS DUE IN CLASS**** **Bring an electronic copy (on disk) and 3 printouts.**

On-Line: *Post your drafts to your small group in class. Then comment on the drafts of other members of your small group by noon, Saturday, 23 Sept. The quality of your comments will affect your course grade!*

Post a 1-page Goethe summary and reaction by 10 pm, Monday, 25 Sept. One small group will elaborate on its comments in class discussion on Tuesday, 26 Sept.

- Tues., 26 Sept. Werther's Inner Truths and the Revolts of Modernity
(add/drop deadline)
- Reading: J.W. von Goethe, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, Book 1, pp. 23-71.
- Writing: ****FIRST PAPER DUE ON-LINE AT 5 PM** Post an electronic copy and then bring one printout to submit in class.**
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- Thurs., 28 Sept. Romanticism and Dangerous Freedoms
- Reading: Goethe, *The Sorrows*, Book 2, pp. 72-131.
- Writing: ****SECOND PAPER TOPICS DISTRIBUTED IN CLASS****
- Post a second 1-page Goethe summary and reaction by 10 pm, Monday, 2 Oct. One small group will elaborate on its comments in class discussion on Tuesday, 3 Oct.*
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- Tues., 3 Oct. Why dwell on feelings? Is human life essentially emotional? / Small Group Workshops
- Reading: Goethe, "Reflections on Werther," in *The Sorrows*, pp. 132-55.
- Writing: **THESIS STATEMENT AND ABSTRACT DUE IN CLASS. Bring 4 copies.**
- Groups: Small groups meet to discuss your Goethe summaries and reactions, and your paper theses and abstracts.
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- Thurs., 5 Oct. Small Group Workshops
- Reading: No new assignment.
- Writing: ****SECOND PAPER DRAFT DUE ON-LINE 5 PM** Post an electronic copy and bring printouts for your small group to read in class.**
- On-Line: *Post a 1-page Addams summary and reaction by 10 pm, Monday, 9 Oct. One small group will elaborate on its comments in class discussion on Tuesday, 10 Oct.*

II. A VERY SHORT AND IDIOSYNCRATIC HISTORY OF MODERN AMERICA

- Tues., 10 Oct. The Struggles of Young Jane
- Reading: Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, preface and chs. 1-4, pp. 17-74.
- Writing: *Begin revising your second paper.*

- Thurs., 12 Oct. Personal Ethics in the Gilded Immigrant Society
- Reading: Addams, *Hull-House*, chs. 5-8, pp. 75-132.
- Writing: *Post a second 1-page Addams summary and reaction by 10 pm, Monday, 16 Oct. One small group will elaborate on its comments in class discussion on Tuesday, 17 Oct.*
- Tues., 17 Oct. A Civic Ideal: Is This America?
- Reading: Addams, *Hull-House*, chs. 11, 14-15, pp. 169-85, 219-56.
- Writing: ****SECOND PAPER DUE ON-LINE 5 PM** Post an electronic copy and then bring one printout to submit in class.**
- On-Line: *Post a 1-page Postman description and reaction by 10 pm, Wednesday, 18 Oct. One small group will elaborate on its comments in class discussion on Thursday, 19 Oct.*
- Groups: Small groups meet to discuss your Addams summary and reaction.
- Thurs., 19 Oct. American Writing and Thinking in Retrospect
- Reading: Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*, chs 1-4, pp. 3-63.
- Writing: ****THIRD PAPER TOPICS DISTRIBUTED****
- Tues., 24 Oct. Losing Enlightenment in the Media Society
- Reading: Postman, chs. 5-8, pp. 64-124.
- Writing: *Post a second 1-page Postman description and reaction by 10 pm, Wednesday, 25 Oct. One small group will elaborate on its comments in class discussion on Thursday, 26 Oct.*
- Thurs., 26 Oct. The End of Critical Thinking (or, Who Remembers Enough to Vote?) / Small Group Workshop
- Reading: Postman, chs. 9-11, pp. 125-63.
- Writing: **THIRD PAPER ABSTRACT AND OUTLINE DUE IN CLASS. Bring 4 copies.**
- Groups: Small groups meet to discuss your Postman summaries and reactions, and your paper theses and outlines.
- Tues., 31 Oct. Small Group Workshop
- Reading: No new assignment, but it would be wise to start the Brooks reading.
- Writing: ****THIRD PAPER DRAFT DUE ON-LINE 5 PM** Post an electronic copy and bring printouts for your small group to class.**

III. CHOICES IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICA

- Thurs., 2 Nov. The Purchases of Young Brooks
- Reading: David Brooks, *Bobos in Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There*, introduction and chs. 1-2, pp. 9-102.
- On-Line: ***Post a 1-page Brooks summary and reaction by 10 pm, Monday, 6 Nov. One small group will elaborate on its comments in class discussion on Thursday, 7 Nov.***
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- Tues., 7 Nov. A Media Star on Money and Thought
- Reading: Brooks, *Bobos*, ch. 3 and selection from ch. 4, pp. 102-50, 171-88.
- Writing: ****THIRD PAPER DUE ON-LINE 5 PM** Post an electronic copy and bring one printout to submit in class.**
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- Thurs., 9 Nov. No class – Enjoy!!
- Reading: Brooks, *Bobos*, ch. 5, pp. 189-217.
- On-Line: ***Post a second 1-page Brooks summary and reaction by 10 pm, Monday, 13 Nov. One small group will elaborate on its comments in class discussion on Tuesday, 14 Nov.***
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- Tues., 14 Nov. American Pleasures - Civic Disconnect? / Small Group Workshop
- Reading: Brooks, *Bobos*, ch. 6, pp. 218-76.
- Writing: ****FOURTH PAPER TOPICS DISTRIBUTED****
- Groups: Small groups meet to discuss your Brooks summary and reaction.
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- Thurs., 16 Nov. An American Dilemma?
- Reading: Robert D. Putnam, "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital," *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 6, no. 1 (Jan. 1995): 65-78.
Note: See "Resources" on the course website for a copy of this essay.
- On-Line: ***Post a 1-page Putnam summary and reaction by 10 pm, Monday, 20 Nov. Posted comments will be discussed in class on Tuesday, 21 Nov.***
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- Tues., 21 Nov. The Uncivilizing Process?
- Reading: Robert D. Putnam, "The Strange Disappearance of Civic America," *The American Prospect*, no. 24 (Winter 1996).
Note: See "Resources" on the course website for a copy of this essay.
- On-Line: ***Post a second 1-page Putnam summary and reaction by 10 pm, Monday, 27 Nov. Posted comments will be discussed in class on Tuesday, 28 Nov.***

Thurs., 23 Nov. **THANKSGIVING—HOLIDAY!**

Tues., 28 Nov. A New Progressivism? / Small Group Workshop

Reading: Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (Simon & Schuster, 2000), chs. 23-24, pp. 367-414.
Note: See “Resources” on the course website for a copy of these chapters.

Groups: Small groups meet to discuss your Putnam summary and reaction.

Thurs., 30 Nov. Small Group Workshop

Reading: Re-read your first two papers.

Writing: **THESIS STATEMENT, ABSTRACT, AND OUTLINE OF YOUR
FOURTH PAPER DUE IN CLASS. Bring 4 copies.**

Tues., 5 Dec. Small Group Workshop

Reading: No new assignments.

Writing: ****FOURTH PAPER DRAFTS DUE ON-LINE 5 PM** Post an electronic copy and bring printouts for your small group to class.**

Groups: Small groups meet to discuss your fourth paper drafts.

Thurs., 7 Dec. Small Group Workshop

Reading: No new assignments.

Groups: Small groups meet to continue discussing your fourth paper drafts.

Tues., 12 Dec. Conclusion

Reading: No new assignments.

Writing: ****FOURTH PAPER DUE ON-LINE 5 PM** Post an electronic copy and bring one printout to submit in class.**

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Written Assignments

Course requirements will include four polished essays, each of which will be drafted in stages:

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| 1. Boethius essay: | 1-page summary and reaction | Tues., 12 Sept. |
| | 1-page summary and reaction, plus thesis | Tues., 19 Sept. |
| | First draft | Thurs., 21 Sept. |
| | Peer reviews of small group drafts | Sat., 23 Sept. |
| | Final version | Tues., 26 Sept. |
| 2. Boethius/Goethe essay | 1-page Goethe summary and reaction | Mon., 25 Sept. |
| | 1-page Goethe summary and reaction | Mon., 9 Oct. |
| | Thesis statement and abstract | Tues., 3 Oct. |
| | First draft | Thurs., 5 Oct. |
| | Final version | Tues., 17 Oct. |
| 3. Addams/Postman essay | 1-page Addams summary and reaction | Mon., 9 Oct. |
| | 1-page Addams summary and reaction | Mon., 16 Oct. |
| | 1-page Postman summary and reaction | Wed., 18 Oct. |
| | 1-page Postman summary and reaction | Tues., 25 Oct. |
| | Abstract and outline | Thurs., 26 Oct. |
| | First draft | Tues., 31 Oct. |
| | Final version | Tues., 7 Nov. |
| 4. Brooks/Putnam essay | 1-page Brooks summary and reaction | Mon., 6 Nov. |
| | 1-page Brooks summary and reaction | Mon., 13 Nov. |
| | 1-page Putnam summary and reaction | Mon., 20 Nov. |
| | 1-page Putnam summary and reaction | Mon., 27 Nov. |
| | Thesis statement, abstract, and outline | Thurs., 30 Nov. |
| | First draft | Tues., 5 Dec. |
| | Final version | Tues., 12 Dec. |

Grading

Assignments will be weighted as follows:

Essay 1 (Boethius, 3 pages)	10%
Essay 2 (Boethius/Goethe, 4-5 pages)	15%
Essay 3 (Addams/Poster, 5-6 pages)	20%
Essay 4 (Brooks/Putnam, 6-8 pages)	25%
Seminar discussion	4%
Workshop participation	4%
Summaries	12%
Drafts	6%
Theses, abstracts, outlines, peer reviews	4%

Unexcused absences and tardiness will lead to deductions, according to the following formula:

After the second unexcused absence:	minus ½% per absence
After the fourth tardiness:	minus ½% per tardiness

Office Hours/Communication

I will hold regular office hours on Wednesdays from 5-5:30 pm and Thursdays from 4-4:30 pm., in my office, 1148 Angell Hall (just outside the Sweetland Writing Center and near the door to Tisch Hall – if you enter Angell Hall from State St., turn right on the first floor – go to the end of the hall and turn left – it's there, on the left). My telephone, 763-1230, has voicemail. Notes can be left for me in my mailbox at the Sweetland Writing Center, 1139 Angell Hall. E-mail messages can also be sent to me at:

eng125-dennismc@umich.edu