

Writing in English – FF Spring 2017

“Imagine every passing idea as a stranger worthy of following through a crowded street not out of curiosity but out of boredom. Now, imagine every street as a passing idea and yourself as the stranger. Art is what happens when someone else begins to follow you.”

—Noah Eli Gordon

Welcome! In this course, you'll:

- Develop a daily (or at least weekly) practice of reading and writing in English across a variety of academic and creative genres
- Broaden your awareness of different writing styles in English
- Build an understanding of writing as a continuous process of revision
- Learn concepts and vocabulary for thinking about and talking about your own and others' writing process
- Design and implement your own unique writing project

Here are some of the main questions (topics) we will take up in this course:

1. What is considered "good" writing style in English, and what are some practical ways to get better at doing this type of writing?
2. How can I recognize "bad" writing in English, and how can I avoid doing it in my own writing?
3. How can I think and write in ways that will help me reach my intended audience?
4. What are some tricks and tips for revising my work?
5. How "creative" can I be when I am writing for school (and what are the differences/similarities between academic and creative writing)?
6. How can I improve my reading skills in English?
7. How can I talk about whether or not I like a piece of writing in English in an academically acceptable way (not just saying "I like it" or "It's boring")?
8. Is good writing dangerous?

As the course goes on, I will expect you to bring your own questions to discuss.

Your grade for the course is based on three things:

1. Attendance and active participation at the weekly seminars (20%).

For this class to function well, we all need to be here, sharing our work and ideas. You can miss two classes without penalty (although I would like you to let me know in advance if you plan on being absent). You'll be penalized 5% for each class you miss after the second.

2. Short weekly reading and writing assignments which will be submitted to me and/or shared with your classmates (40%).

Every week, we'll do some writing in class, and for homework I'll assign some reading and writing, which we will discuss the following week. Sometimes you'll turn these writing assignments in to me, sometimes you will share them in class, and sometimes both. If you come to each class prepared, you'll get full credit.

3. A writing project which you will develop individually (with guidance from me), and which will be worked on in several stages over the course of the semester (40%).

You'll design your own writing project in the first few weeks of class. What you do is basically up to you, but it should be something useful and interesting for you, and it should show a serious engagement with a target audience. You'll turn in a first draft of your project around midterm, a second draft toward the end of the term, and a final draft on a date we decide together. You'll get feedback on these drafts from me and your classmates.