GSTR 110, Writing Seminar I: Critical Thinking in the Liberal Arts
FALL 2010: Section D (10-10:50 MTWF)

Randall Roberts: Office: Draper 102 C; Office phone: 985-3359
Office Hours: MTWF 8:30-10:00 & MWF 3:00-3:30. Other hours by appt.

Catalog Description:
This course is designed to help students with transitions from their past experiences to the challenges of college academic life and culture, emphasizing writing, reasoning, and learning as foundations for continuing academic success in General Education and beyond. Each section of the course involves explicit, continuing attention to writing, reasoning, research, and reflective engagement with various texts, written and non-written. All sections initially address questions about the nature of education, liberal arts education, and links to lifelong learning and living.

Section Course Description: Nature and Human Nature:
Readings, discussions, and writing in this course will foster a broader understanding of the complex issues that involve the interconnectedness of life on this earth. We will think critically about such questions as “What is our proper relationship to and place within nature? What is our responsibility to the environment and to other humans? Where do these responsibilities conflict and intersect?”

Readings will include Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein, Ernest Gaines’s A Lesson Before Dying, and Wendell Berry’s collection of essays What Are People For? Frankenstein raises concerns about human intervention in natural processes and our responsibility to one another, which can be linked to current scientific issues such as genetic engineering and cloning. A Lesson Before Dying continues the exploration of human nature and relationships in an agrarian community and also confronts continuing racism in our society. What Are People For? explores local and global responses to environmental concerns and the relationship between agriculture and communities. We will also discuss selected essays and readings, convocations, and films that confront these issues. Students in this course will also have the opportunity to explore the creeks, lakes, waterfalls, fields, hills and pinnacles in the Berea College Forest.

Student Learning Outcomes:
1) to develop, compose, and complete college-level essays that are documented, that engage and use various kinds of texts, and that are expository (i.e., develop reasons, evidence, support for a thesis);
2) to identify and use properly some common modes of reasoning (e.g., analogy, argument), patterns of reasoning, and basic critical thinking concepts such as consistency, ambiguity and vagueness, and general criteria in thinking well about a variety of topics and texts;
3) to learn to use resources for learning (Hutchins Library facility, the Library Home Page and library web resources, the Learning Center, the Computer Center) and to develop useful ideas and habits for learning;
4) to research, read, and evaluate a variety of sources, to assemble an appropriately diverse bibliography, and to appreciate how different types of sources can work together;
5) to understand how preparation, engaged attentiveness, reflection, and thinking with appropriate criteria leads to learning from experiences beyond the formal classroom;
6) to develop oral communication, close reading, and listening skills.
Texts and Materials:

Wendell Berry, What Are People For?
Ernest Gaines, A Lesson Before Dying
Mary Shelley, Frankenstein
Selected Essays
Selected Readings from Walden, Pilgrim at Tinker Creek, A River Runs Through It, Small Wonders, and As You Like It
Journal and writing folders

Computer Policy:
Since this course has a discussion format, students will rarely need computers in class, except for days scheduled for library research or peer review workshops or in case a student wants to use the computer for a presentation. Students may take notes on the computer if their use is not distracting to others and does not interfere with their own engagement in class discussion. Students may not be networked during class except for on-line research sessions. Students who play computer games or engage in other computer activities not related to the current class activity will lose the privilege of opening their computers during class.

Writing Requirements:
1) Reader’s Journal: Students will write directed responses to their readings. Entries might include the following: a) questions about the readings, b) important issues the readings raise, c) comparisons between texts, d) responses to ideas or questions raised in class discussion, or e) observations about personal experiences that resonate with a particular passage or event. Some journal entries will also explore convocations and campus activities, especially as they relate to course themes. I will make specific assignments, and students will be asked to read their journal responses during class discussions. Entries should be legible and dated.

2) Exams: Students will write essay midterm and final exams.

3) Essays: Students will write four essays that deal with specific topics and aspects of the texts we read. The writing process is important as well as the final product; preliminary writing, multiple drafts, peer review workshops, and a presentation copy will be required for each essay assignment. Students will also write their own nature essay, due at the end of the semester.

4) Writing folders: Students should keep all written work in a folder after it is graded and returned. At the end of the term, each student will submit this folder with revisions as well as graded essays and also a letter of reflection about processes, difficulties and achievements in writing.
Other Requirements:
1) Students will participate in library assignments that familiarize them with research strategies and resources of Hutchins Library, including library web resources.

2) There will be two required conferences with the instructor for review of the student’s work. The first should be between Sept. 8 and Oct. 1, and the second should be between Oct. 20 & Nov. 17. (Specifics and requirements of these conferences will be announced in class.) I also encourage students to stop by my office early in the semester to share ideas and concerns about the readings and assignments, campus life, life in general, and to workshop assigned writing. Throughout the semester, students are encouraged to confer with me during office hours.

3) Students are required to attend the following five convocations and to write a two-page, typed journal response that is due on Monday’s class following each convocation: A) December 2; B) Two of the following: Sept. 9, Sept. 30, Nov 4, & Nov. 18; C) Two of the following: Sept. 16, Oct. 14 & Nov. 11.

Attendance and Class Participation:
This course will follow a discussion format. Participation in small group and class discussions will be evaluated on the willingness to share ideas with others and the quality and thoughtfulness of listening and responding. Since participation is an integral part of this course, attendance and careful preparation for each class meeting are essential. A student who must miss class because of illness or a family crisis should contact me as soon as possible and may make up work missed. Students who miss a class for any reason are responsible for all material covered. Missing more than three classes will result in the final grade being lowered, and missing more than six classes will result in automatic failure.

Students with Disabilities:
Students with disabilities that may prevent them from fully demonstrating their abilities should contact Carol Barnett, PhD, LCSW, the Disability Services Coordinator, at (859) 985-3212 to discuss accommodations necessary to ensure full participation in this course.

Grading Policies:
Your grade for this course will be based on a combination of class participation, small group work (research and presentations/discussions), quizzes, formal and informal writing, two exams, and your final portfolio. Late assignments will be penalized. Students must complete all major course requirements (essays, exams, and presentations) to pass the course. College-wide definitions of grades are as follows:
A: excellent work;  B: good work;  C: competent work;
D: poor work which is still worthy of credit;  F: failing work which is unworthy of credit.
Grades will be averaged using the following percentages:
Class participation 5%
Quizzes, journal entries, & typed, revised journal entries 15%
Group library research assignments, oral presentations, & response paper 20%
Four essays (process and product) and course folder 40%
Midterm exam 10%
Final exam 10%
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(Assignments should be read by the date noted.)

Aug.
27 F  Introduction to course and texts and William Wordsworth, “Tintern Abbey.” Assign journal entries #1 & #2.


Sept.
1 W  SMH, journal entry #3 is due in response to Bok’s essay (161). Review chapters 46, 47, 50, 51: “Punctuation.”

3 F  SMH, Part 3. Introduction to “Research and Documentation” (MLA documentation); in-class course writing folder workshop.

6 M  SMH, Chapters 5, 6, & 7—the writing process, sample student essay, paragraph development, and linking paragraphs. Introduce small group work with Nature Narratives.

7 T  SMH, Chapter 11, “Constructing Arguments” and sample student essay. Journal entry #4 is due—compare and contrast the 3 student essays in SMH pp. 106, 164, & 205. “Advising chat.”


10 F  Wendell Berry, What Are People For? “The Pleasures of Eating,” and “Waste.” Journal entry #6 is due. In-class we will read “What Are People For?”


15 W  Review SMH, Chapters 31, 33, 38, 39 & 41-45, “Sentences.” Typed, revised journal entry is due.

20 M Packet of Selected Essays: Joseph Bruchac, “The Circle is the Way to See” and Diane Ackerman, “Why Leaves Turn Color in the Fall.” Journal entry #10 is due. Assign essay #1.

21 T Landscape Paintings. Meet in Rogers Art Bldg., room TBA. Typed, revised journal entry is due.

22 W Packet of Selected Essays: Annie Dillard, “Heaven and Earth in Jest” and “Total Eclipse.” Journal entry #11 is due.

24 F Packet of Selected Essays: Selections from Neihardt, Black Elk Speaks. Journal entry #12 is due.

27 M Meet in library with librarian, room 107—to be prepared for this class, read SMH chapters 4, 8, 10 & 25.

28 T Peer group workshop of essay #1. “Advising chat.”

29 W Presentation copy of essay #1 is due. In-class review of SMH, chapters 4, 8, 10 & 25.

Oct.
1 F In-class—work in small groups with your selected nature narratives. This is preparation for next week’s presentations and discussions.

4 M Small group readings: discussions/presentations: Thoreau, Walden; Dillard, Pilgrim at Tinker Creek; MacLean, A River Runs Through It; Kingsolver, Small Wonders; and Shakespeare, As You Like It.

5 T Small group discussions/presentations, continued. 2-page response paper is due.

6 W Mountain Day; no classes

8 F Small group discussions/presentations, continued. 2-page response paper is due.

11 M & 12 T Midterm Reading Period; no classes

13 W Out-of-class midterm exam is due. Introduction to Mary Shelly’s Frankenstein.

15 F Mary Shelley, Frankenstein, letters 1-4 and chapters 1-3. Journal entry #13 is due.

18 M Mary Shelley, Frankenstein, chapters 4–10. Journal entry # 14 is due.
19 T  Review SMH, selected chapters; bring journals and course writing folders to class. “Advising chat.”

20 W  Mary Shelley, Frankenstein, chapters 11-17. Journal entry #15 is due.

22 F  Mary Shelley, Frankenstein, chapters 18-24. Journal entry #16 is due.

25 M  In-class small group discussions/presentations (ideas and issues from Frankenstein).

26 T  In-class small group discussions/presentations (ideas and issues from Frankenstein).

27 W  Peer review workshop of essay #2.

29 F  Presentation copy of essay #2 is due.

Nov.

2 T  In-class film, Akira Kurosawa’s Dreams; in-class writing (begin journal entry #17).

3 W  Ernest Gaines, Lesson Before Dying, chapters 1-6. Journal entry #18 is due.

5 F  Ernest Gaines, Lesson Before Dying, chapters 7-16. Journal entry #19 is due.

8 M  Meet in library; library research day. Typed, revised journal entry is due.

9 T  Ernest Gaines, Lesson Before Dying, chapters 17-26. Journal entry #20 is due.


12 F  In-class writing to create a draft of essay #3.

15 M  In-class small group discussions/presentations (ideas and issues from Lesson Before Dying).

16 T  In-class small group discussions/presentations (ideas and issues from Lesson Before Dying).

17 W  Presentation copy of essay #3 is due. Assign essay #4 on Environmental Crisis/Issues.

19 F  What Are People For? “Economy and Pleasure.” Journal entry #21 is due.

22 M  Meet in library; library research day.
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>23 T</td>
<td>In-class film, <em>An Inconvenient Truth</em> by Al Gore. Typed, revised journal entry is due.</td>
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<td>24 W &amp; 26 F</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Holiday</td>
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<tr>
<td>29 M</td>
<td>Meet in library; library research day.</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 T</td>
<td>In-class writing and review of research for essay #4.</td>
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<td>3 F</td>
<td>In-class writing.</td>
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<td>6 M</td>
<td>Presentation copy of essay #4 is due; in-class discussion of research topics.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 T</td>
<td>Continued discussion of research topics. Bring course writing folder.</td>
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<td>8 W</td>
<td>In-class film, Barry Lopez, <em>Rediscovery of North America</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 F</td>
<td>Review for final exam. Bring “Tintern Abbey” and course writing folder.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 M</td>
<td>Reading Period; no classes</td>
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**FINAL EXAM:** Friday, December 17, from 3:00-5:00 (Submit course writing folders and journals.)