

Course Syllabus

This course provides a chance to improve your writing of personal and critical essays. We will be reading essays on a variety of topics and writing personal essays, professional book reviews, and scholarly articles. Concentrating on the close readings of texts (prose and poetry), you will learn how to come up with an original thesis and a workable development based on careful reading and research; however, the main objective is to develop your confidence in your voice so you can create a personal prose style that is flexible and resourceful enough to incorporate current research, to apply critical theories, and to quote sources elegantly. At the end of the course you should feel comfortable and confident writing under most any circumstance.

Course Materials

Truss, Lynn. *Eats, Shoot, and Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation*. 3rd ed. Gotham Books: New York, 2006. [ISBN 978-1-592-40203-8]

Zinsser, William. *On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction*. 30th anniversary ed. HarperCollins: New York, 2006. [ISBN 978-0-06-089154-1]

Selected readings available on Blackboard.

A recently published novel of your choosing.

Assignments

Personal narrative essay (20%): 2,000 words in which you relate the events of an important and interesting moment in your life. While attempting to tell a good story, you will also need to justify the significance of that story.

Profile narrative essay (20%): 2,000 words in which you relate the events of an important and interesting moment in the life of one of your classmates. While attempting to tell a good story, you will also need to justify the significance of that story.

In-class essays (10%): Two short essays analyzing a given text or passage. You will be given the assigned text at the beginning of the class and will have sixty minutes to write your analysis.

Book review (20%): 1,000 words. A professional review of a recently published novel of your choosing (but approved by me). After submitting the book review for a grade, you will revise it and prepare it to submit to an appropriate publication.

Wikipedia article (25%): 2,000 words. A professional encyclopedia article on a topic of your choosing (but approved by me). After submitting the article for a grade, you will revise it and prepare it to post on Wikipedia.

Participation (5%): Based on a variety of small assignments and in-class work, as well as your focused involvement in the class itself.

You must successfully complete *all of the above* in order to pass this class. Unless otherwise noted, work written outside of class and submitted for a grade should conform to professional

standards. Assignments should be cleanly typed and free of spelling, mechanical, and grammatical errors. Papers suffering from excessive problems will be returned without a grade.

Grading Scale

Excellent	A	93-100 %	Good	✓+	3 pts
	A –	90-92 %			
Good	B +	87-89 %	Adequate	✓	2 pts.
	B	83-86 %			
	B –	80-82 %			
Adequate	C +	77-79 %	Inadequate	✓–	1 pt
	C	73-76 %			
	C –	70-72 %			
Inadequate	D +	67-69 %	<i>Please consider that simply meeting the basic requirements on any assignment will never get you better than an adequate grade. Good and excellent work goes well beyond the expectations.</i>		
	D –	60-62 %			
Unacceptable	D	63-66 %			
	F	0-59 %			

Revisions

You are strongly encouraged to revise your writing assignments as often as you wish: the more you revise, the better your semester grade will be and the better writer you will become. In order to revise an assignment, you must meet with me outside of class to discuss it first. If you effectively improve the assignment, I will change your grade. Even though I will never lower the original grade, your submission of a revision in no way guarantees an improved grade. No revisions will be accepted after *Friday 20 November*. Assignments that originally received a zero for any reason may not be revised.

Late Work

In-class writing and other participatory work cannot be made up, regardless of the excuse. Assigned work is due by the beginning of the class on the designated due date. All major writing assignments will be submitted through Blackboard. Talk to me if you anticipate difficulty meeting a deadline. Do not presume to turn in an assignment late without my consent.

Academic Honesty

As students of Xavier University, you are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. Behavior that violates the standards described on page 15 of the University Catalog is not acceptable and shall be grounds for disciplinary action. *Plagiarizing and cheating will not be tolerated in this class*. See the *Plagiarism Statement* on Blackboard for further explanation.

Before you can turn in any major assignment for a grade, you must submit it to SafeAssign on Blackboard to evaluate it for originality and intellectual integrity. If the results of this a review suggest academic dishonesty, further action may be required.

Attendance

Enrollment in this class implies a commitment to attend regularly and punctually. Attendance means you are in your seat when the class begins and you remain in your seat until the class ends. If you are not present when I take attendance at the beginning of class, you are absent. Any deviation from this definition is at my discretion.

Writing Center

You are strongly encouraged to make use of the services provided by the Writing Center in Administration Annex 105, where peer tutors and professional instructors offer individual assistance on a full range of writing strategies and concepts. Students with particular difficulties in their writing may be required to attend sessions at the Writing Center.

Decorum

Free discussion and inquiry are encouraged in this class. Classroom behavior is unacceptable when it interferes with either my ability to instruct the class or students' ability to learn from that instruction. Unacceptable behavior during class includes but is not limited to entering late or departing early, using cell phones, Blackberries, iPods, or other electronic devices, bringing guests, talking while another person holds the floor, and arguing in a way that crosses the line of civility. Students whose behavior disrupts the class will be removed from the class.

Blackboard

For this course we will rely heavily upon Blackboard, Xavier's e-learning system, to share ideas and information. Students enrolled in this course automatically have access to its Blackboard site at <<http://blackboard.xula.edu>>. You are responsible for checking this site regularly and following any directives provided. If you cannot access Blackboard, contact the ITC Helpdesk.

Emergency Preparedness

Moreover, *in the event of an emergency closure of campus or an evacuation of the city*, once you have reached a safe and secure location, you will need to log into this class's Blackboard site for further instruction. As per University policy, the closure of campus does not necessarily entail the cancellation of classes. This course will continue as best as it can during the closure.

Students with Disabilities

Students requiring special assistance or consideration in order to meet academic requirements should advise their dean's office to the nature of their disability upon admission to Xavier or as soon as the need for assistance is known to exist. Students should also contact the ODS Office to arrange access to services available.

Expectations

While the last two pages have explained what I expect of you for this class, you have a right to expect the following from me as your professor:

- To teach useful and effective ideas and concepts in an interesting and compelling way;
- To be open to questions and discussion in and out of class;
- To provide useful and timely grades and feedback on all coursework;
- To gladly assist you in becoming a better and more confident writer, reader, and thinker.

Please come speak to me any time you have a question or concern about this course. If you can not make it to my listed office hours, speak to me after class or send me an email, and we will schedule a time to meet.

Schedule

8/25: Introductions; Syllabus; Major ass'ts

Zinsser, ix-xiii, 95-99, 132-146

8/27: Telling stories; Literary journalism; [Personal narrative ass't]

Orwell, Shooting an Elephant; cummings, I Begin a Pilgrimage

9/1: Orwell/cummings discussion; Telling your own story; Voice

Didion, In Bed & On Going Home; Zinsser, 3-23

9/3: Didion discussion; Clarity and specificity

Draft personal narrative; Zinsser, 24-45

9/8: **Draft of personal narrative essay due**; Workshop/Conferences

Zinsser, 67-91; Revise personal narrative

9/10: [Wikipedia editing ass't]

Revise personal narrative; Read Wikipedia editing pages

9/15: **Personal narrative essay due**; Writing on demand; [Book review ass't]

Identify WikiEdit topic

9/17: **Wikipedia editing topic due**; Writing on demand

9/22: **In-class writing: Close reading #1**; [Profile narrative ass't]

Talese, Frank Sinatra Has a Cold; Zinsser, 100-115

9/24: Talese discussion; Telling someone else's story; Voice

Mitchell, Professor Seagull; Zinsser, 49-66

9/29: Mitchell discussion; Zinsser discussion

Complete WikiEdit ass't; Kidder, Flying Upside Down; Talese, Joe Louis; Zinsser, 231-260

10/1: **Wikipedia editing ass't due**; Kidder/Talese discussion; Zinsser discussion

Draft profile narrative; Zinsser, 261-280

10/6: **Draft of profile narrative essay due**; Workshop/Conferences

Revise profile narrative

10/8: **In-class writing: Close reading #2**

Revise profile narrative; Zinsser, 295-303; Updike, Introduction

10/13: No class

Finish reading your selected novel

10/15: **Profile narrative essay due**; [WikiFormat ass't]; Updike discussion; Summary writing

Sample book reviews; Read Wikipedia formatting pages; Identify WikiFormat topic

(10/19: Midterm grades, calculated using all of the above in bold, will be posted.)

10/20: **Wikipedia formatting topic due**; Book review discussion

Truss, xi-xiv, xvii-xxvii, 1-34

10/22: What do editors want from a book review; Truss discussion

Draft book review

10/27: **Draft of book review due**; Workshop/Conferences
Revise book review; Complete WikiFormat ass't; Truss, 35-67

10/29: **Wikipedia formatting ass't due**; Truss discussion
Revise book review

(Friday 30 October: The last day to drop a course.)

11/3: **Book review due**; [Wikipedia article ass't]
Truss, 68-102

11/5: Truss discussion
Identify Wikipedia topic

11/10: **Wikipedia article topic due**; Article planning; Research; Documentation
Truss, 103-131

11/12: Truss discussion
Truss, 132-176

11/17: Truss discussion
Truss, 177-204

11/19: Work day
Draft Wikipedia article

(Friday 20 November: The last day to submit any revised essay.)

11/24: **Draft of Wikipedia article due**; Workshop/Conferences
Revise Wikipedia article

11/26: No class
Revise Wikipedia article

12/1: Final preparations for book review submission
Revise Wikipedia article

12/3: **Wikipedia article due**; Final preparations for Wikipedia article submission