

WRITING 111.05: Life Writing

Fall 2016

T-Th 11:00 – 12:30 p.m.

Patterson Hall 205

There is no way of writing well and also of writing easily.
~Anthony Trollope

*The art of writing has for backbone some fierce
attachment to an idea.*
~Virginia Woolf

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Office Hours: Weds. & Fri. 2:00-3:30
and by appointment

Required Texts:

- Cisneros, Sandra. *The House on Mango Street*. New York: Vintage, 2004.
- Cohen, Samuel, ed. *50 Essays: A Portable Anthology*. 4th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2014.
- Doctorow, E.L. *Ragtime*. New York: Random, 2007.
- Purdue University's Online Writing Lab, available through D2L

Course Description:

Writing 111 develops a primary skill—the ability to write clearly and interestingly. Moreover, this course develops and refines your critical thinking and reading skills, both of which are essential to good writing. Together we will explore the functions of writer, audience, and purpose and will come to understand writing as an ongoing, organic process of reading, re-reading, thinking, re-thinking, drafting, and revising. We will focus on developing and supporting interesting claims in analytical and creative essays. Throughout the semester, these and other varied assignments will help you gain confidence, independence, and sophistication as a writer.

Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of Writing 111, students will

1. know and consistently apply the rules of English grammar and usage
2. write clear, concise, logical sentences
3. construct coherent, unified, well-developed paragraphs that include specific supporting details
4. recognize and write effective thesis statements
5. demonstrate an understanding of audience and purpose by choosing appropriate style and diction
6. demonstrate enhanced critical reading and thinking skills
7. incorporate and document source material in an ethical, thoughtful, focused, stylistically correct manner
8. construct engaging, cohesive essays that include fully developed introductions, body paragraphs, and conclusions
9. understand what constitutes plagiarism and adhere to the College's policy on academic integrity

We will pursue these outcomes through the following course assignments. —→

Course Requirements:

70% Course Papers

You will receive detailed instructions for each of these assignments.

- ✓ **Paper 1:** Personal Narrative & Analysis (3-4 pp.), worth **10%** of overall course grade
- ✓ **Paper 2:** Compare & Contrast (4 pp.), worth **15%**
- ✓ **Paper 3:** Rhetorical Analysis (4 pp.), worth **20 %**
- ✓ **Final Project**, worth a total of **25%**, consisting of
 - Creative Assignment & Analysis (15%; 6-7 pp.) and
 - Biographical Source Analysis (10%; 3-4 pp.)

15% Reading Quizzes

Good writers must first be good readers. As such, there will be six reading quizzes throughout the semester. The first five will be unannounced and generally will consist of a mix of several objective questions and one mini-essay on the day's reading(s). The final (sixth) quiz will address the film we'll watch at the end of the semester. Each quiz will be worth 10 points and will constitute 3% of the overall course grade. I will drop your lowest score. I will not repeat quiz questions for students who are late to class.

5% Error Log

This assignment, which falls between Papers 2 & 3, asks you to identify and correct errors in your graded assignments. It aims to help you learn to recognize your problem areas and understand how to revise them independently.

5% Final Presentation

During our final period, you will briefly explain your Final Project topic and read an excerpt from your creative or analytical work. Details forthcoming.

5% Participation

Your active participation is central to the learning process in any college course. "Active participation" means that you arrive to class on time with the assignment thoroughly completed. It also means that you remain engaged and make a concerted effort to contribute to class discussions and activities. While I will do *some* lecturing, we will spend much of our class time in writing workshops and large or small group discussions. The basis for your participation grade will thus be your attendance percentage, which will then either be enhanced or reduced by your level and consistency of **thoughtful speaking and engaged listening**. Please note that inappropriately chatty students, cell phone users, and sleepers cannot earn full credit.

GRADING SCALE*

100% - 94% = A	89% - 88% = B+	79% - 78% = C+	69% - 60% = D
93% - 90% = A-	87% - 84% = B	77% - 74% = C	59% - 0% = F
	83% - 80% = B-	73% - 70% = C-	

* **NOTE:** All papers should follow MLA style and format. They should be typed in 12-pt. font and double-spaced. Points will be deducted from papers not meeting these standards.

* **IMPORTANT:** *You must earn at least a C- in Writing 111 to meet the College's writing requirement. You must meet the writing requirement to graduate.*

Policies & Expectations:

- ✓ **Attendance.** Come to class. Every day. Excessive absences will directly affect your grade. You may miss two classes. After these two, you risk losing 1/3 of a letter grade for each additional class you miss (e.g., an A- course grade can change to a B; a B+ course grade can change to a B-). Absences will be excused only in emergency situations, with appropriate documentation. Please be aware that “self-reported sick in room” notices from the Student Health Center will not change an absence from unexcused to excused. I reserve the right to mark text-messagers and sleepers absent.
- ✓ **Preparedness.** Come to class prepared and ready to discuss the day’s reading assignments. All readings should be completed before the class during which they will be discussed. Similarly, all writing assignments should be submitted on time. Late papers will be penalized 10% per day late, including the first day and weekends. Computer problems do not justify late or shoddy work. Know that technology tends to fail us at the most inconvenient of times. Be prepared, backup your work, and you will have no problems.
- ✓ **Honesty.** The lasting reward of academic integrity is a good character and the ability to learn on your own. See the Academic Integrity Policy available online and in the Undergraduate Catalog. Note that failure to demonstrate academic integrity has serious consequences in the short term (grades) as well as for the rest of your life.
- ✓ **Respect.** Maintain a respectful attitude toward the course, your fellow students, and me; in turn, I will do the same for you. Know that disrespectful behavior—online or in class—can negatively affect your participation grade.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- **ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT:** Westminster College actively strives for the full inclusion of all students. Students with disabilities who require access solutions for environmental or curricular barriers should contact Faith Craig, Director of Disability Resources, located in 209 Thompson-Clark Hall. Phone: 724.946.7192; e-mail: craigfa@westminster.edu.
- **ATHLETICS & EXTRACURRICULARS:** If you are involved in College athletics or other extracurricular activities and will miss class meetings because of games or performances, please notify me in advance of any class sessions you will miss. All work is to be submitted prior to the excused absence.
- **CELL PHONES** should be kept out of sight and out of mind. If you are texting, facebooking, tweeting, etc., I count you absent because you’re not really here, are you? Please let me know if you are accessing course materials via smartphone so that I do not assume the worst.
- **LEARNING CENTER:** Westminster’s Learning Center is located in McGill Library and is staffed by upper-class undergraduate tutors who offer help with writing assignments. While the Center will not proofread your paper(s) for you, its staff can help you with larger-order issues, including thesis statements, clarity, organization, development, source integration, etc. Call 724.946.6700 to schedule an appointment. Please prepare specific questions before going to the Center so as to ensure the value of your session.
- **PAPER DRAFTS:** I encourage you to visit me during office hours so we can discuss your writing. You may also e-mail me specific questions about an assignment. In each case, though, please allow sufficient time for the drafting process (“sufficient time” = one week before paper is due).

Schedule of Assignments:

*Schedule is subject to change at any time. Page numbers for reading assignments appear in parentheses after text titles and are to be read before class, by the date listed to the left of each entry. "Cohen" stands for *50 Essays*, ed. Samuel Cohen, just as "Cisneros" stands for that author's book, *The House on Mango Street*, etc.

T 30 Aug Welcome to Writing 111: Course overview and in-class exercises.

UNIT ONE: Writing Vivid, Concise Descriptions

Th 1 Sep **Begin Cisneros:** "The House on Mango..." through "There Was An Old Woman" (pp 1-30). We'll do an in-class writing activity, and I'll distribute your first paper assignment.

T 6 Sep **Cisneros:** "Alicia..." through "Born Bad" (pp. 31-61)
Purdue OWL: Descriptive writing; word choice (see link in D2L / Content)

Th 8 Sep **Purdue OWL:** Verbs, adjectives, and avoiding cliché (see D2L). **In-class writing workshop:** Bring laptops to class (see Paper 1 assignment for details).

T 13 Sep **Finish Cisneros:** "Elenita..." through "Mango Says Goodbye" (pp. 61-110). We'll spend the latter half of class discussing the qualities of a good thesis statement.

****Paper 1 due to D2L by midnight on Tuesday, September 13****

UNIT TWO: Developing Ideas Coherently

Th 15 Sep **Cohen:** Jefferson, "The Declaration of Independence" (190-98) and Stanton, "Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions" (390-93).

Purdue OWL: Paragraphs and transitions. I'll distribute your Paper 2 assignment, and we'll practice setting up & supporting thesis statements. We'll also begin signing up for next week's conferences. I'll assign experts for Tuesday's readings.

T 20 Sep **Cohen:** Baldwin, "Notes of a Native Son" (pp. 50-70) and Sedaris, "A Plague of Tics" (360-72).

Purdue OWL: selections from Sentence Accuracy, Clarity, and Variety (see D2L).

Th 22 Sep **NO FORMAL CLASS: Individual conferences in my office.** Paper 2 partial draft due (see assignment for details)

T 27 Sep **NO FORMAL CLASS: Individual conferences in my office.** Paper 2 partial draft due (see assignment for details)

Th 29 Sep **Cohen:** Kingston, "No Name Woman" (227-39) and Tan, "Mother Tongue" (417-23). In class sentence-level revision exercise.

****Paper 2 due to D2L by midnight on Thursday, Sep 29****

UNIT THREE: Representing Ideas Ethically

- T 4 Oct** **Cohen:** Douglass, "Learning to Read and Write" (pp. 118-24).
Purdue OWL: The Rhetorical Situation (see link on D2L). I'll distribute the Paper 3 assignment. We'll assign experts for Thursday's readings.
- Th 6 Oct** **Cohen:** Ephron, "The Boston Photographs" (pp. 152-58) and Mairs, "On Being A Cripple" (pp. 259-71). Media clips. We'll practice setting up a Paper 3 argument.
- T 11 Oct** **Purdue OWL:** Punctuation (link on D2L). We'll do some punctuation exercises, followed by an **In-class Error Log Workshop:** Bring laptops to class.
- Th 13 Oct** **Cohen:** Carr, "Is Google Making Us Stupid?" (pp. 91-101); also, please come to class ready to discuss your choice of blog, social media, etc. We'll continue working through **OWL** topics from Tuesday. **Error Log due to D2L by midnight tonight**
- T 18 Oct** **NO CLASS: FALL BREAK!**
- Th 20 Oct** **Purdue OWL:** Avoiding Plagiarism (link on D2L). We'll do an in-class activity, followed by an **In-class writing workshop:** Bring laptops to class. See Paper 3 assignment for details.

UNIT FOUR: Synthesizing Source Material

- T 25 Oct** **Cohen:** King, "Letter from Birmingham Jail" (pp. 203-19).
Purdue OWL: Sentence Accuracy, Clarity, and Variety, ctd. (link on D2L)
- Th 27 Oct** **Begin Doctorow**, chapters 1-6 (pp. 3-40). Film studies overview; film clips. We'll review style and punctuation.
- **Paper 3 due to D2L by midnight on Thursday, October 27****
- T 1 Nov** **Doctorow**, chapters 7-13 (pp. 41-105). I'll distribute your Final Project assignment, and we'll discuss sample topics.
- Th 3 Nov** **Doctorow**, chapters 14-22 (pp. 109-73) Film clips. We'll take a look at a model creative assignment.
- T 8 Nov** **In-Class Workshop:** Bring laptops, along with (at least) two potential sources for the biographical analysis paper. See assignment for details. I will talk with each of you about your project topic before you leave class today. We'll also begin signing up for next week's conferences.
- Th 10 Nov** **Doctorow**, chapters 23-31 (pp. 174-240). In-class sentence-level revision exercise.
- T 15 Nov** **NO FORMAL CLASS: Individual conferences** in my office. See Final Project assignment for details. On D2L, review the model project documents.

Th 17 Nov **NO FORMAL CLASS: Conferences** in my office. See Final Project assignment for details. On D2L, review the model project documents.

UNIT FIVE: Channeling Creativity

T 22 Nov **Finish Doctorow**, chapters 32-40 (pp. 241-320). Film clips. **Biographical Analysis due to D2L by midnight tonight**

Th 24 Nov **NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING BREAK!**

T 29 Nov **In-class creative assignment workshop:** Bring laptops to class today (see assignment for details)

Th 1 Dec Biopic overview and begin film: *Walk the Line* (dir. James Mangold, 2005)

T 6 Dec Continue biopic, *Walk the Line*. I'll distribute the grade proposal essay assignment, which counts toward your overall course participation grade. **Creative assignment due to D2L by midnight tonight**

Th 8 Dec Finish *Walk the Line*; final quiz due (handwritten is fine) at the end of today's class. **Begin final project presentations**

Th 15 Dec **FINAL PERIOD, 8:00-10:30 a.m. Finish project presentations. Grade Proposal Essay due to D2L by 8:00 a.m. today.**