

Syllabus 2 — ENG 101: Community-Based Writing

(Courtesy of Dr. Jonathan S. Cullick, Department of Literature & Language, Northern Kentucky University; abridged)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will help you become more successful in the writing you will do as a college student and beyond the university. The course guides you from writing about your personal experiences toward writing that responds to the ideas of others. You will write and revise many drafts, and you will receive feedback on your writing in workshops and conferences. As a member of this class, you will present one of your papers to everyone in the class for a general discussion.

OBJECTIVES

This course will give you practice in the following skills:

- Writing for a particular audience and purpose
- Creating and organizing your ideas
- Reading sources to identify an author's audience, purpose, claim, reasons, and evidence
- Locating popular sources, evaluating their usefulness, and using them effectively and ethically
- Considering how your writing affects a reader and revising to improve that effect
- Editing and proofreading for a polished final product

COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING

Let's say you were given \$4,000 and told you that you could do anything with it you want. One condition applies: you must use it to do something good for someone other than yourself. What would you do?

Our writing class is being sponsored the Campus Connects Student Philanthropy Project, which exists to teach students about community needs. Generously funded by Cincinnati philanthropist Roger Grein, the Campus Connects Project is administered by the Kentucky Campus Compact.

The Campus Connects Project is giving us \$4,000 to donate to our community. Deciding how to invest this money will be the responsibility of our class, and doing this will help you become a better writer. You will work independently and in groups to identify community needs, research local agencies, evaluate applications from agencies, award grants, and write reports. You will be required to visit one agency and interview the administrator. In a researched, persuasive essay, you will try to convince the whole class to invest some or all of the \$4,000 to the organization of your choice. At the end of the semester, you may participate in a ceremony to give checks to the organizations we have selected to invest in.

As you can see, the goal of this course is to help you to improve your writing skills by giving you something very important to write about. With your writing, you have the opportunity to help others make changes in their lives.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

- *Writing and Community Action* by Thomas Deans, Longman Publishing.
- *A Writer's Reference* by Diana Hacker. Keep this book for reference through all your college years. You will need it for ENG 291 and other courses.

- NKU Email Account and Computer Access: You will need computer access for reading articles on the Internet, corresponding by email, and word processing all assignments. Computer labs are located throughout the campus.
- Travel, Telephone, and \$15.00+. Be prepared to make a field trip on your own or with your group to a local agency in the Cincinnati/NKY area. Be prepared to spend about \$15 on purchasing newspapers, printing articles from the Internet, photocopying articles from the library, and photocopying one of your drafts for every member of the class.

COURSE OUTLINE

Short Assignments

WRITTEN RESPONSES: Quizzes over assigned readings; out-of-class writing; responses to agency presentations

Writing Projects

ENGAGEMENT AUTOBIOGRAPHY: A narrative of your experience as a member of a community

COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH: An exploration of an issue in the Northern Kentucky-Cincinnati areas, using local newspapers and on-line sources for research

AGENCY PROFILE: A report describing a community agency, using your personal visit and interview as research

FUNDING PROPOSAL ARGUMENT: A proposal to your group to convince them to invest in the agency of your choice

REFLECTION: A reflection on how you can use civic engagement in your major field

Presentation Portfolio

FINAL PORTFOLIO: Submitted for your final course grade, this portfolio will include two components: (1) all major writing projects; (2) a cover letter explaining the contents of your portfolio and describing how you have revised your work done during the semester. There is no final exam in this course. This final portfolio takes the place of a final exam.

COURSE POLICIES

Submission of Assignments: Save all work that leads up to an essay (plans, notes, research, drafts, professor comments, workshop comments). When you submit an essay, you must include all of these items in a folder to show the process you went through to write the essay. All of these assignments must be submitted on schedule throughout the unit. Neglect of these directions can result in a significant grade reduction or even a failing grade for the essay. To ensure that I receive your work, give me your assignments personally. Never leave an assignment in my mailbox. Keep electronic copies of all your work.

The Class Workshop: Presenting one of your essays to the whole class or to your group in a workshop is a requirement. Please rest assured that the workshop is really not as intimidating as it sounds. In fact, most students want to present more than one paper once they discover how useful this practice is. You can also depend on me to keep the discussion about your essay positive, so you need not fear any embarrassment.

COURSE GRADES

The Portfolio Method: This course will be conducted on the Portfolio Method. When each essay is due, you will put it in a folder with all supporting materials. This is called a Working Portfolio. You will submit each working portfolio to me for a reading, but it will not receive a grade. I will give you written comments, or you and I will meet in conference to discuss the draft so you can

improve it. Once a working portfolio is returned to you, it is your responsibility to decide how much effort and time you want to invest in revising it.

At the end of the semester, you will submit all of your essays in a Presentation Portfolio. *It is this final, presentation portfolio that I will grade.* The final version of each essay (right pocket) must be accompanied by its original evaluated draft with my written comments (left pocket). So remember: *Save all drafts and comments. The portfolio grade will be lowered by one letter for any rough draft missing. Every essay must be completed and included for a presentation portfolio to be eligible for a passing grade.*

Short Assignments: Short assignments will include written responses to readings, quizzes, workshop responses, process writing, oral presentations, and any other daily or weekly work. *Short assignments will not be accepted late, nor can any of them be made up at the end of the semester if they are missed.* They will be graded as Meeting Expectations (check) or Not Meeting Expectations (check-minus), with some counting double or more.

At the end of the semester, you will receive one grade for all of these short assignments based upon how many of them you completed at the level of Meeting Expectations (that is, how many of them received checks): 90% or more receiving checks = A; 80-89% receiving checks = B; 70-79% receiving checks = C; 60-69% receiving checks = D; <60% receiving checks = F

Workshops

Presenting a draft in a workshop is a basic course requirement, the absence of which will lower the course grade one letter. To receive credit for the workshop, the draft must be complete and show serious effort, and you must be in class on the day you schedule yourself for a workshop.

Computation of Course Grade

Final Portfolio = 80%. Short Assignments = 20%. All major portfolio assignments must be completed and submitted for a student to be eligible to pass the course. The workshop is a basic course requirement. Attendance, participation, and overall engagement with the course will determine borderline grades.

Portfolio #1: Engagement Autobiography

Purpose and Topic of Essay: Personal narrative is a good first assignment for a new college student. You have probably written about yourself at some point, so this kind of writing might feel comfortable to you. At the same time, this assignment challenges you to go beyond just telling a story. Your task is to discover and communicate what readers might learn from the story you tell.

Your Assignment: Turn to page 27 of the Deans textbook and follow the directions in the box, "Personal Essay Assignment." For this assignment, we will read and discuss some of the information from Chapter 2 (Writing Your Life) of the textbook *Writing and Community Action* by Thomas Deans.

Research: You have only one source for this essay: yourself! Your discoveries will be based in your personal experiences.

Requirements and Grading Criteria: The essay should be about 1000-1400 words (about 3-4 pages in Times New Roman font). Sources must be cited correctly. We will talk more about

expectations, but for general criteria, see the grading standards sheet on the writing program website (<http://www.nku.edu/~nkuwip>).

Due Dates: Draft portfolio due FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 3. Conferences with professor: Thursday and Friday, September 2 & 3 (a signup sheet will be passed around next week). Conferences will be in Dr. Cullick's office, LA 545. Conferences on Friday will take place instead of our regular class period.

Portfolio #2: Community-Based Research

Purpose and Topic of Essay: This class decision about which organizations to donate the Campus Connects money to will depend upon what you, as a group, think the important issues are. So it is time to find out what problems exist in our region.

Your Assignment: Write an essay describing a problem in the Greater Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky areas. What is one major problem in our region? What is the extent of the problem? What are some examples of that problem? What organizations are doing something to resolve this problem? Your task is to find out what people in our community need. This is an opportunity to find out and let others in the class know about problems in our community that we might address by donating money through the Campus Connects Project.

This project corresponds to Chapter 7, Writing About the Community, in the Thomas Deans textbook, Writing and Community Action. Specific pages will be assigned. This essay will give you practice in using detail to describe a situation, and it will teach you the basic research skills of summarizing, paraphrasing, quoting from, and citing a source.

Research: Your essay should make use of newspapers. You must have at least two relevant newspaper articles. Read local newspapers on paper and online to find out what problems need to be addressed in this region. Check the local sections of those papers. If you do not read newspapers, now is the time to start! Local newspapers include The Cincinnati Enquirer, The Campbell County Recorder, and any other newspaper in your town. You can find these newspapers in the NKU library, your local public library, and in convenience stores and grocery stores. The Enquirer is available online.

Cut out or print every article you locate and put those articles into your portfolio folder. Be sure to write the following information about each article: author, title of article, title of newspaper, date of newspaper, page number(s) of article. You should also do Internet research to learn what nonprofit organizations exist in the area to address the problems that you have identified through the newspaper.

Finally, remember that you are still a source. Use any experiences and observations from your life, school, home, church, or other community you belong to. This is where the skill of personal narrative, which you practiced in your Portfolio #1 Engagement Autobiography, starts to pay off.

Guidelines: The essay should be about 1000-1400 words (about 3-4 pages in Times New Roman font). Sources must be summarized, paraphrased, quoted, and cited correctly.

Due Date: Draft portfolio due MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 20. It is now time to get a new folder for this unit. Newspaper articles, Internet printouts, drafts, notes, and all other assignments should be in the left pocket of the folder. Your draft should be in the right pocket.

Portfolio #3: Agency Profile Report

Purpose and Topic of Essay: A basic purpose of research and writing is simply to find out what the facts are and communicate them to someone else.

Your Assignment: Visit an agency and interview one agency representative in person, get as much information about that agency as you can from the interview and other sources, and write a report describing the agency. Your purpose in this assignment is not to persuade anyone to donate money to these agencies. Your interviews should not go into questions about donating money. Just get the facts about the agency.

Instructions: In the next few days, contact an agency, explain the Campus Connects Project and your assignment, set up an appointment to visit them, and then take a field trip to the agency and interview the director or other administrator.

Visit only an agency you feel comfortable visiting. You may do this visit in pairs or threes with one or two other members of your Community Board. To ensure that your group learns about several agencies, no more than three people from the same group may visit the same agency. Complete the Agency Site Visit Proposal.

I am giving you a “letter of introduction” that you can use when you contact the organizations. Don’t read it to them over the phone, just use it so you will know how to introduce yourself and describe your assignment. When you visit the agency, give them a copy of this letter.

To write the essay, follow the directions on page 275 of the Deans textbook. Get as much information as possible from the interview and from the agency’s brochures and website. In your essay, remember to use as much detail as possible and incorporate quotations from the interview.

Research: An interview is called a “primary source,” a source you go out and get on your own rather than in a library or website. In class, we will brainstorm interview questions. We will discuss how to use and document interviews. Take good notes as you interview. During each interview, you can ask the agency representative to repeat a statement, or you can repeat his/her statements aloud and ask him/her to confirm that you have written the quotation accurately.

Expectations: The essay should be about 1000-1400 words (about 3-4 pages in New Times Roman font). Sources must be cited correctly. Please note that we are beginning a crucial period of the semester when you must make group decisions. Attend class every day; avoid absences for any reason.

Agency Site Visit Proposal

1. In the next few days, I, _____ (sign your name), will personally visit the following community organization and interview the administrator in person:

Name of Organization _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

2. I will do this site visit and interview
 - a. ___ individually

- b. ___ with one or two other persons in my Community Board. Names of other students:
-

3. ___ I confirm that no other members of my Community Board except any named above are visiting or writing about this agency.

Why can only one person or pair from each group visit a particular agency? It is essential that our class interview as many organizations as possible. Therefore, your group should be contacting a variety of organizations. By submitting this form to your professor, you are certifying that, to the best of your knowledge, no other members of your Community Board are visiting or writing about this agency.

Note Concerning Academic Honesty: You must personally visit the agency, do the interview yourself, and take your own notes. You may not rely on a group member to do a site visit for you, to do an interview for you, or to take notes for you. This is not only a requirement to receive credit on the essay; it is also a requirement of the NKU Student Honor Code.

Portfolio #4: Funding Proposal Argument

Purpose of Essay: As a conscientious citizen, you can write to influence your world. The purpose of this assignment is to introduce you to a type of writing that attempts to convince or negotiate with others about how to solve problems. Your audience is this class. The other students you are writing to care about the topic, but they do not necessarily agree with you. How will you “build a bridge” to them? Your task in this assignment is to suggest a solution. To be successful, you must understand and address the arguments against your opinion. I’ll show you a couple of ways you can organize a persuasive essay.

Topic of Essay: Which agency or agencies in the Campus Connects Project most deserve funding? Think not only about this class, but about the agencies in general. Remember that the purpose of the Student Philanthropy Project is not only to fund a few agencies, but to show you ways you can donate your time and money to your community long after this semester is over. Where should other students in this class donate their time and money now and in years to come?

Workshops: The purposes of this essay are to inform, negotiate, and persuade. As a result, the key component is sharing your findings and opinions with others. You will be sharing your drafts with other students in the class. *It is absolutely essential to have your draft on the day it is due, because other students in the class will be depending on you.*

Sources: Your main sources will be as follows: Newspaper and magazine articles about the issue or problem that the agency addresses; any information you have about the problem in the NKY-Cincinnati area, such as newspaper articles, agency website, etc.; other websites about the issue or problem; the RFP; your notes and responses to the agencies’ presentations; your interview notes and drafts; other materials from the agency, such as any pamphlets or brochures they distributed in class.

All sources must be cited consistently and correctly within the essay and in a works cited page. You are fully responsible for using your handbook, *A Writer’s Reference*, to cite articles, websites, interviews, pamphlets or brochures, and lectures or presentations.

To cite RFPs, use the name of the organization as the author, the RFP as the title, and the date of their submission, like this: American Cancer Society. Request for Funding Proposal. 12 August 2003.

Expectations: We will talk more about the structure of a proposal (see Deans textbook, Chapter 9, pages 390-395). This essay will be about 1400-2100 words (about 4-6 pages in Times New Roman) and graded according to:

1. **MESSAGE:** the quality of the sources you use and how well you use them to make a well-developed, organized argument.
2. **AUDIENCE:** how you treat your audience. You must treat them as sincere and intelligent, even though they disagree with you. You must be respectful and sympathetic to them.
3. **WRITER:** how you present yourself. You must come across as credible and knowledgeable about the topic. The style, grammar, and overall presentation of your writing will communicate your credibility.

Presentation Response

Instructions: Respond to each agency presentation in writing. These responses will be useful to you as you write a paper arguing for funding certain agencies. You can answer each question individually or address all questions at once in a paragraph. These responses are part of your overall short assignment grade. Responses will be graded pass/no-pass according to how detailed they are.

Type your response and write in complete sentences. Head each response with four lines: (1) your name; (2) agency name; (3) name and title of representative; (4) date of in-class presentation.

Due Dates: Each response is due the next class period immediately following each presentation. Sorry, late responses will not be accepted.

Questions to Answer:

1. What did the presentation tell you about this agency that you did not know before?
2. Based upon what you heard in the presentation, what beneficial work is the agency doing in the NKY/Cincinnati area?
3. Assess the effectiveness of the presentation. How did the agency representative describe the organization? How did he/she present the agency and its work to you? Was the presentation prepared and organized? (Spend some time thinking about and answering this question.)
4. What are your thoughts about funding this agency in comparison to other agencies? (Again, spend some time thinking about and answering this question.)