

WRITING IN ENGLISH 150, FALL, 2004

English 150 is a writing-intensive proseminar in literature. We will devote almost as much attention this semester to writing as to reading. I expect to work with you on your writing in class, in my comments on your papers, in tutorials, and in conferences with you in my office.

In all you will write four essays during the term, in addition to those you write on the midterm and final examinations. Their topics and due dates are listed on the next two pages. Your essays will each be three to four double-spaced pages long and must therefore make their points succinctly.

Each essay assignment requires that you explicate a work or a portion of a work. To explicate is to explain what the work or passage means and how its meaning is created. Among the elements by which authors create meaning are rhyme, meter, rhetoric, diction, and figurative language. The "Questions to Ask When Reading a Work of Literature," which I will distribute during the first week of class, are useful aids to explicating poetry, and I will demonstrate explication in class.

In writing the essays you are to rely upon your own intelligent reading of the text; you are not expected to consult any text other than those required or suggested for the course, and I ask you specifically not to use critical essays or outline notes to get your ideas. In advanced courses in English or other literatures you will read literary criticism, but your present task is to develop your own independent critical abilities.

You should write for a reader who is intelligent and familiar with the work you are writing about -- for example, you might imagine that you are writing an essay to be read by other members of the class. In fact, your essays will sometimes be read by other members of this class.

Essays 2 and 3 will be tutorial essays. The class will be divided into groups of three or four students who will read one another's essays and comment extensively on them. After your tutorial you will have 48 hours or more to revise your own essay before you turn it in for a grade. Further instructions for preparing the tutorial essays and participating in the tutorials will be given during the week of September 20.

I will copy at least one example of Essay 1, chosen more or less at random, for discussion in class. Copies will be distributed in class on September 13, and

you will be expected to read the essay to prepare for a discussion at the following meeting.

When you are working on a paper for this course, I encourage you to discuss it with other students or to have a friend or roommate read over your essay and make comments or suggestions. Both the Hamilton Honor Code and common courtesy require that you acknowledge any help you receive. Any member of the class who is frequently and specifically acknowledged by classmates as a source of such help will receive extra credit in this course.

I encourage you to have a first-draft conference with a peer tutor in the Writing Center on any of these essays. On Essays 2 and 3, which are tutorial essays, it might be a good idea to have the conference between your tutorial and the time the paper is due. Make your appointment a week or more in advance to be sure of getting it: the Writing Center is often busy.

After each essay is returned to you, correct the errors I have marked in its margins and return it to me at the following class meeting to be checked.

You may rewrite any essay on which you receive a grade of D or F. If you choose to do so, you must first have a conference with me; the rewritten essay must differ in conception, not just in style or mechanics, from the original. We must have our conference five to ten days after you receive your the essay back, and in the conference you and I will agree on a new due date for the revised essay. The new essay will receive a grade, and your grade for the essay will be the average of the two. I do not guarantee that the result will be higher than your grade on the original essay. You may not rewrite an essay if your grade on the first version was the result of neglect of work or ignoring instructions.

I expect all papers for this course to be submitted in neatly word-processed copy. They should follow the standard format and forms of documentation described in the Department of English circular "Information about Essays," which I will distribute in class.

Always back up your papers on a Zip disk, Jaz disk, CD ROM, or other removable medium. Always keep a hard copy of every paper you write for this or any other course. If your paper is misplaced you can readily supply another copy.

I plan to have a conference with each member of the class during the semester. I will sometimes use my comments on one of your essays to request a conference with you, and you are always welcome to arrange one with me. If neither you nor I have initiated a conference by the time we have finished

tutorials on Essay 3, please make an appointment. My office hours are listed below, but if you cannot see me at these times, we can make an appointment for another time.

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