

Eng 401/G Advanced Composition Fall 2009 Web Course

"I write entirely to find out what I'm thinking, what I'm looking at, what I see and what it means. What I want and what I fear."
(Joan Didion, "Why I Write")

INSTRUCTOR

Professor Judith Szerdahelyi
Office Location: Cherry Hall 16B
Phone: (270) 745-5765
Fax: (270) 745-2533
E-mail: Judith.Szerdahelyi@wku.edu

MAILING ADDRESS:

Dr. Judith Szerdahelyi
Department of English
Western Kentucky University
1906 College Heights Blvd
Bowling Green, KY 42101



LEARNING SITES

Blackboard: <<http://ecourses.wku.edu>>

Instructor's Homepage: <<http://www.wku.edu/~judith.szerdahelyi>>

401/G Course Site: <<http://www.wku.edu/~judith.szerdahelyi/NewWebsite/401web/401online.html>>

Video Syllabus: <http://www.wku.edu/~judith.szerdahelyi/NewWebsite/401web/401web_syllabus.html>

Course Wiki: <<http://eng401ga71.pbwiki.com>> I will add all students to the wiki, but use "creative401" as your password/Invite Key if prompted.

Online tutoring service with shrink-wrapped *The Fourth Genre*: <mycomplab.com>

HELP SITES

IT Helpdesk: <<http://www.wku.edu/infotech/index.php?page=100>> For technical problems, ask the IT consultant for a "remote." The magic number is (270) 745-7000.

Blackboard Online Support System <<http://bbtools.wku.edu/bbhelp/sindex.php>>

Video Tutorials by Information Technology <<http://www.wku.edu/infotech/index.php?page=445>>

CONTACTING YOUR INSTRUCTOR

You may find that there is probably a great deal more interaction between instructor and students in this course than in other online courses. In the interest of effective communication, please note that our time zone is **Central Time** USA, and our course language is **English**.

You have the following options to contact your instructor.

- The **Questions and Comments** forum under Blackboard's (BB) **Discussion Board** (DB). If you have questions about the course, such as assignments, course policies, deadlines, etc.; please post them in this forum. This will allow your peers to view your questions and respond to them if they have the correct information. I also check the DB frequently and get back to you within a few hours if nobody posts a response. In the worst case scenario, expect a max. 24-hour turnaround.
- Our [Course wiki](#) has been created to communicate with your instructor and your peers when Blackboard is down. The wiki is used before the semester starts and BB is not yet available. Please sign up and use "creative401" as your password/Invite Key.
- There are no office hours for this course. If you have a problem or concern, you can request a phone conference with your instructor any time under DB's Questions and Comments. Don't forget to include your (AT&T) cell phone number and the times you are available. Your instructor will call you during

- your preferred times. Please do not call the instructor's home or cell phone number without a previous arrangement.
- Optional one-on-one **student-teacher telephone conferences** at certain scheduled times. Please do not call the instructor's home or cell phone number without a previous arrangement.
 - **Video chat** using [ooVoo](#) (or [Skype](#)) at certain pre-arranged times. Please check out relevant information about these options at the [Technology Information and Advice](#) section of my [teaching page](#) and download application.
 - The instructor's **Facebook** page, by writing on her wall. Facebook, however, is not a preferred communication medium for your instructor.
 - Calling the instructor on her **office phone** (270-745-5765) is not recommended if a fast response is expected. She usually works at home and not in her office. As a result, she tends to forget to check her office voicemail.
 - **Email** communication is used in case of personal and medical emergencies. Course-related questions that belong to BB's **Questions and Comments** forum on the Discussion Board will not be answered via email. Please check out the netiquette guidelines for using email by visiting the **Additional Guidelines for Using Computers** section of the instructor's teaching page.

PREREQUISITES OF THE COURSE: English 100 and 300

CATALOGUE DESCRIPTION

Theory and practice in reading and writing various genres of non-fiction, including researched essays, cultural critique, exposition, narrative, and argument. Special attention to style, voice, arrangement and advanced writing techniques.

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE

Students will have the opportunity to enhance their writing skills by practicing writing, i.e. by constantly **drafting and revising**. The course emphasizes the writing process and the workshopping of papers, which includes giving and receiving feedback from peers and instructor and rewriting essays using that feedback. Regarding content, we will use many examples of [creative nonfiction](#), but the emphasis of the course is on writing in general. The assignments are designed to help students learn to function like working writers: they will compose their works and, at the same time, study other writers and their professional practices. As the textbook claims, the course encourages students to learn the "craft the way most successful writers have learned theirs: by reading what other writers have written, by picking up tips and ideas from writers about the way they write, and by applying specific strategies culled from the readings to their own writing" (Root and Steinberg xvii).

IMPORTANT COURSE COMPONENTS AND CONCEPTS

Rhetorical context; audience and purpose; effective writing processes; habits of writing; writing workshop; stages of revision; advice for writers; good writing criteria; myths about writers and writing; best writing practices, writing confidence; readings about the theory of [creative nonfiction](#) (CNF); reading representative examples of the genre (essays, diaries, autobiography, biographies, magazine writing, travel writing, nature writing, science writing, histories, journalism, etc., also, visit [Some examples of Creative Nonfiction?](#)); reading and writing theory; writing style; characteristics of CNF such as truth & honesty; memory & imagination, voice, narrative presence; literary devices (plot, characterization, setting, narrative technique, selectivity of detail, angle of perception or point of view).

WORKLOAD

This web course has no scheduled virtual class meetings, but it does require a fairly large time commitment for two reasons. Students are invited to immerse themselves in reading, reflecting, analyzing, responding, writing, imagining, revising, etc. All of the above are time-consuming activities, so a preparation of minimum 6+ hours per week can be expected. Also, students do not receive information from the instructor as they would in a face-to-face course, simply because there are few opportunities for live interaction. Accessing the proper information by reading, listening, or viewing course material and understanding what is required will also take time and focused attention. Most likely, this course will appeal to those students who feel passionate about writing and are serious about improving their skills.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE

- An improvement of writing skills in general; more specifically, the ability to analyze and apply effective writing techniques for creating texts;
- An awareness that good writing is an authoring and crafting process made up of numerous steps and the ability to refine these steps and utilize the ones that work best for you;
- The ability to work collaboratively on written assignments and to give constructive feedback to peers using technical language to critique works-in-progress and to use peer and instructor feedback effectively to improve writing;
- Awareness of audience expectations and a basic understanding of reading theory and how it helps composing processes;
- An enhanced writing confidence and finding your own voice;
- A willingness and ability to reflect on your own lives through the process of reading and writing about others;

INSTRUCTOR'S ADDITIONAL EXPECTATIONS

- Write the best paper(s) of your life and make your instructor famous by submitting something for publication ☺; I collect student acknowledgments—not stamps, coins, beanie babies, etc.
- Have your own individual goals, agendas, and projects that you are working towards in this class, challenging yourself all the time;
- Learn something about writing that you have not had a chance to learn until now and that you consider important to learn before you graduate;
- While experimenting with form, content, and style; be involved in self-exploration and self-discovery.
- Show the reader how your mind works.
- Never stop drafting. Get into the habit of writing something every day.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

The course is based on the [social constructivist approach](#) to instruction, which states that meaning is not privately constructed, but is generated by social interaction. Students form a knowledge-generating community and learn in collaboration with one another. They learn by reading and reflecting on the assigned texts, participating in class or group discussion, asking questions, and writing and rewriting papers. In our collaborative classroom, the instructor is only a facilitator, setting up an environment for students to work together on all stages of the writing process. Since this is a skills course, there are no lectures. The content information comes from reading the course books.

COURSE PROCEDURES

So how will this course work? What can you expect to do in this class? To put it in the most simplistic way, you read the theory, read examples of upcoming assignments, discuss the readings with your peers, draft

your own pieces using the course books' essays as your model, give and receive multiple feedback on papers, and revise papers based on that feedback for the final portfolio. The sequence will be repeated several times.

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL START OF THE SEMESTER

To be successful in this course, first you need to read the entire Syllabus very carefully! Once you have understood the logic and rhythm of the course as described in this document, you will use the **Course Calendar** as your guiding principle. Since the instructor will not remind you about assignments and due dates, you will have to follow the Course Calendar meticulously. This central document provides you with a day-to-day schedule, indicating not only which assignments need to be completed by when, but also where and how they have to be submitted for grading.




REQUIRED MATERIALS

Flash drive, ear buds or headphones so that you can listen to audio and video files when doing research for your major assignment, webcam, headset, and/or microphone so that you can use ooVoo or Skype for live videoconferencing and/or podcasting.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

DSL/broadband Internet connection for faster download times for audio and video files.

REQUIRED TEXT

	Root, Robert L., and Michael Steinberg. <i>The Fourth Genre: Contemporary Writers of/on Creative Nonfiction</i> . 4 th ed. New York: Longman, 2007.		King, Stephen. <i>On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft</i> . New York: Pocket Books, 2002.		Lamott, Anne. <i>Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life</i> . New York: Anchor Book, 1994.
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ASSIGNMENTS

This course utilizes the following types of assignments: reading assignments, writing assignments, reading responses, contribution to class discussion, peer review, and an information sheet (online quiz format) which has to be filled out but will not be part of the overall course grade. Assignments are submitted through Blackboard's (BB) Discussion Board (DB), BB's Blog, Wiki, and/or through Assignments. The Course Calendar provides information about what to post when and where. Failure to post an assignment in the appropriate format or at the appropriate virtual place will result in a failing grade on that assignment. Accurate and meaningful subject lines are crucial when posting assignments. "Assignment 1" or "Paper for Week 3" are not appropriate titles. Instead use something like this: "Gutkind: Why I Chose" or "Previous Experience with CNF." If you post to a group forum, include your last name in the subject line. Individual posts in forums and threads must be kept neat and aligned. Messy, misaligned folders/forums will result in point reduction.

Since most of the assignments are based on collaboration, students are strongly encouraged to work in close contact with their group members throughout the semester. At the end of the course, peers will submit a confidential evaluation to the instructor about their group members' performance. Students BB postings will continuously be monitored, even if the instructor doesn't leave a message in response to the posted assignment. Please note that postings will be read randomly. The quality of your posts has to be consistent. When feedback is given on major paper assignments, the instructor will read the piece carefully and provide detailed comments before scheduling an optional phone conference with students. Accommodating students with the desired conference schedule time and providing detailed feedback is a lengthy process, so some student might receive feedback ten to twelve days after their submission. Grades and feedback are accessible through BB's Gradebook. Extra credit can be earned by doing more work than required, i.e. reading optional essays, giving more feedback, doing more writing exercises than required, creating a FAQ for the course, using video and audio files for assignments (such as giving feedback on peers' papers), creating a grading rubric after thorough research, organizing the Best Practices document, etc.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

There are **two major essay assignments** in this course: one short ("Brevity") piece (500-750 words) and one longer one (2000 words). Students will prepare at least four initial rough drafts for the short paper and two for the long one. Group members will help peers to decide which one single one of the multiple drafts to revise, submit for a grade, and include in the final portfolio. During the workshop cycle, students give and receive feedback for their revision. Major papers will be critiqued only once by the instructor, but students can revise their papers as often as they like until the portfolio due date. Students are expected to communicate an idea/some meaning through their papers. Completing papers without a communicative purpose (other than getting credit to graduate) will not result in a good grade. Students are invited to take risks, leave their comfort zones, experiment with writing, and try new forms, styles, genres, and tones in their assignments. They will never be punished if something doesn't work, as long as they write something else that does.

READING ASSIGNMENTS

Reading assignments come from two major sources: (1) From required course books and other published print or electronic materials and (2) From peers' essays and DB contributions. To pass this course, students will complete all reading assignments and provide evidence that they have done so. Posting a well-composed, extensive (300-word) reading-response on the DB is the easiest way to prove this.

LIST OF CLASS REQUIREMENTS

- A short ("Brevity") piece (500-750 words) with four initial rough drafts and with substantial multiple revisions of one single piece.
- A long piece (2000 words) with two initial rough drafts and substantial multiple revisions of one single piece.
- Meaningful participation in class and group discussions and activities.
- Evidence of completing all reading assignments by extensive and insightful reading-response postings (min. 300 words) on BB's Blog and/or Discussion Board by due date.
- Short writing exercises from a list under BB's Assignments section.
- Meaningful, constructive feedback on peers' essays on BB's wiki (i.e. substantial, concrete suggestions to help peers' revision; write letter to all group members + two anonymous).
- End-of-term digital portfolio in the form of a website, wiki, or blog (with a reflective video file as the "cover letter").
- Improved technology skills to enhance your future courses, career, etc. (through a video or website project: digital storytelling with photos and other multimedia applications, video memoir, etc.)

- For graduate students, an additional (research) project.

There are no exams in this class, only due dates for reading and writing assignments. The final digital portfolio is submitted as your final exam. To pass the course, students have to complete ALL assignments and meet all course requirements. Grades will be based on the **quality** of students' work and **not on effort**. Students' work (papers, portfolio, reading-responses, feedback, etc.) will be assessed holistically; however, rubrics posted under External Links and Assignments will help guide student writing. Only major papers receive letter grades in this course. They should be considered "grades-so-far," which could improve with each revision until papers are re-graded in the final portfolio. Other assignments (such as reading-responses, short writing exercises, etc.) receive either full credit, half credit, or no credit. Students should keep track of their grades and progress in general by using the Assignment Checklist posted under Assignments. Although there are very few grades in this course, students should never have to wonder about their performance. Everybody can compare his/her work to that of others' in class by visiting others' Personal Folder on the DB and by looking at the examples provided. Please keep all documents and feedback until the end of the semester.

GRADES

Final course grades are based on the following approximate distribution:

1.	Portfolio cover letter (or reflective movie)	10%
2.	Revised Paper 1	20%
3.	Revised Paper 2	20%
4.	Participation (class and group discussions, DB postings, reading assignments and reading responses, reliability as a group member, improved technology skills, etc.)	20%
5.	Writing exercises	15 %
6.	Feedback	15 %
7.	Total	100 %

GRADING SCALE

A is excellent; B is good; C is satisfactory; D is poor but passing; F is failure.

Percentages: 90% to 100% = A; 80% to 89% = B; 70% to 79% = C; 60% to 69% = D; 59% = F

COURSE POLICIES

DEADLINES

Most of this class involves students directly in writing and responding in small and large groups. Missing deadlines might have a negative effect on peers' performance, especially during the workshop cycles when (1) students have to post their own work in time for others to critique and when (2) students have to give feedback on peers' papers in a timely manner so that peers can revise for a better grade. Missing workshop deadlines and not granting peers enough time to give or receive feedback will have serious consequences, including a low participation grade. If a student is forced to miss an assignment due to illness or an emergency, I'd rather that he/she posts a reading response late than a workshop draft or a feedback letter. Students are expected to notify both their workshop group and the instructor if "life happens" and they need an adjustment. Three late postings for reading responses are allowed without penalty as long as students keep all involved parties informed. Please note that keeping the communication channels open is crucial in this course.

CODE OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY/PLAGIARISM

This class is held in accordance with the academic integrity policy of WKU. (See [Undergraduate Catalogue p. 26.](#)) Violating this policy will result in a failing grade for the course. For Plagiarism FAQ, see [Composition Program's website](#). Scroll way down in the page.

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Student Disability Services: Students with disabilities who require accommodations (academic adjustments and/or auxiliary aids or services) for this course must contact the Office for Student Disability Services, Room 445, Potter Hall. The OFSDS telephone number is (270) 745-5004 V/TDD. Please do not request accommodations directly from your instructor without a letter of accommodation from the Office for Student Disability Services.

The Writing Center Consultants at the [Writing Center](#) can provide useful feedback on students' writing. Visiting the Writing Center at least once with each major essay is encouraged. Getting a fresh perspective on a piece or help with grammar or other writing-related issues is usually appreciated by students. Locations of Writing Centers are as follows: Cherry 123, Helm Library Reference Room, and The Learning Center DUC Annex A330. Appointments are encouraged. You may schedule your appointments by calling 745-5719 or online using the Learning Center's [TutorTrac link](#).

mycomplab.com: Students who decide to buy a shrink-wrapped copy of *The Fourth Genre* are entitled to use the online tutoring service available at [mycomplab.com](#). It is each interested student's responsibility to obtain information about how this service works and how to register for it. Using the service is optional.

REMINDERS

- Any time you have a technical question, please get info from the following sources: [IT Helpdesk](#) at 745-700 | [BBHelp](#) | or [TRC](#) at 745-3755.
- Although this class has no scheduled times to meet in person or virtually, students do not have the freedom to complete assignments randomly. There are deadlines for assignments. Please don't be a no-show at the beginning of the semester. You must demonstrate that you are an active part of this course or else you will be dropped from the course.
- For locating content information about the course, do this: (1) Check the posted info on BB by doing a "CTR F" search; (2) Check the course website using the same "CTR F" search; (3) Call or email your group members for clarification; (4) Google the concept/info you need; (5) If you are still unclear, post a message to QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS and somebody will get back to you. Be resourceful and autonomous.
- This class has numerous assignments that require a fast Internet connection (video and audio-files).
- All assignments are due by **midnight** on the due day, but I encourage you to complete assignments ahead of time and post them in the appropriate BB folder. Discuss with your group members how much earlier you want to post and discuss assignments. Don't procrastinate. Remember that students can set up their own personal course calendar and work ahead of time.
- To improve your writing skills, you have to write, write, write, and revise. Writing improves only by writing.
- When you choose your writing assignment topics, please refrain from pieces of fiction. What you write should be true and fact based.
- We emphasize the writing process in this course, i.e. papers will go through a four-stage revision process minimum. Grades you receive represent "grades-so-far." Papers will be re-graded in your final portfolio.

- Major papers are read and commented on only once before the portfolio draft is due. Papers submitted for grading have to be the best they can be.
- Please pay special attention to how you post to your Group Folder, Personal Folder, blog and wiki. Be sure to make the posted threads nice and aligned. Messy folders will lose participation points. Use an informative subject line.
- Late work is not accepted if it affects your classmates' performance. You can't miss deadlines when drafts and/or feedback letters are due.
- All assignments have to be prepared in a meaningful way. Be sure to challenge yourself, so that you learn something with each assignment. Mechanical "busy" work will not give you credit.
- If you plagiarize, you will fail the course.
- Don't double-space your assignments.
- Don't trust the spellchecker. Use your own judgment.
- Observe email etiquette. Use salutation and sign your email messages.
- When sending an email to your instructor, please specify the subject in subject line: "Eng 401/G: Sick today;" otherwise your email might be overlooked and left unanswered.
- Don't send attachments via email. Keep virus definitions up-to-date. Don't post assignments as attachments on BB unless specifically instructed to do so.
- This syllabus has been digitized. Look for hyperlinks and the "post-it" type additional information provided in the text box hovering above them.
- Play it safe and have several electronic and paper copies of your work.
- If there is a discrepancy between book chapter title and page number, please go with the chapter title.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

- This course is based on the assumption that students are responsible for their own learning. What you put in the course is what you get. It is your responsibility to make the course work for you and improve your writing skills wherever you are. If you decide to stay in this course after reading the syllabus, it is assumed that you agree to its terms, conditions, and requirements.
- The schedule and procedures in this course are living documents and subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances. Changes will be announced under BB's Announcements or via email.
- Should there be any loopholes in these rules, your instructor will decide the outcome and solution.
- I wish you an enjoyable and rewarding semester. I'm doing my best to make this course fun for you. Good luck with your studies!



Comments or questions about this document should be directed to Judith.Szerdahelyi@wku.edu.
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Page created on August 8, 2002. Last modified on Monday, August 31, 2009.