

Informed Response

Thinking, Writing, and Research (EN 1304)

Peter G. Epps, Instructor

Learning without thought is labor lost;
Thought without learning is dangerous. (Confucius)

Course Concepts

In past writing courses, including Thinking & Writing (EN 1302), you will have practiced saying what you mean and being sure your words have the effect upon your audience that you desire. Controlling both what your words say and what they do is the basic concern of all rhetoric.

None of us, however, has invented language itself; we learned it from others, who learned it from still others. None of our ideas appear “out of the blue,” either; they are responses to the words and ideas of others, our own ways of dealing with what others say and do to us.

In order to control what your words say and do, then, you must also examine the sources of your language, thoughts, and ideas. Are your views founded in a thorough and honest understanding of reliable and relevant sources? Can you honestly ask others to believe you on the basis of your current knowledge and experience, or should you seek more and better information?

Controlling the information to which you respond is the basic concern of all research. In Thinking, Writing, and Research, therefore, you will practice research methods which will help you transform your good foundation in rhetoric into excellent writing, with results which will last well beyond your college career.

Course Objectives

In this course, you will practice effective use of the English language, both for purposes of writing and of analysis; discover and refine practical skills for finding and evaluating information, including a full range of print and electronic media; use material from your research to construct clear and coherent arguments; and learn and use specific methods for representing your sources fairly and fully.

Required Resources

Guide for Freshman Composition.

The Writer's Harbrace Handbook.

Perspectives on Argument.

BearID and Bearmail (or other e-mail) account (see Moody lab)

blue or black pen and 8.5 x 11" notebook paper for in-class writing (every class session)

9 x 12" envelope to store all written work until end of semester

adequate word processing software: Word 2000, WordPerfect 9 or better

Also Strongly Recommended

a good dictionary (available in trade books section of bookstore)

the Writing Center (ground floor of Carroll Science Hall, CS G-06)

Contact Information

Office hours: MWF 10:30-12, MW 1-2 (or make an appointment)

Office location: CS 413 (4th floor of Carroll Science Hall, across from BDSC)

pgepps@gmail.com (The best way to find me!)

Course Requirements

Attendance. See the *Baylor University Undergraduate Catalog*, pages 30-31, for the official attendance policy. You will report your attendance daily, at the beginning of class. To pass this course you must not miss more than 25% of class sessions. There is no distinction between "excused" and "unexcused" absences: you must exercise your own judgment in using absences. The real price of absence or lateness will be missed in-class work, which cannot be "made up."

In-Class Work. You will write in class very often, generally for the first few minutes of the class session. Often this writing will take the form of pre-writing for your essays, but you should be prepared at any time for the possibility of a quiz over any assigned reading. At times I will expect you to finish an in-class writing out of class or will give you an extended take-home assignment. You will save every piece of writing in an envelope that I will collect at the end of the semester. In-class work counts as **20%** of your course grade.

Essays. You will write four major essays for this course. Each essay will be collected on its due date and evaluated for significance, appropriateness, content, form, and style. The final grade for each essay, however, will include the in-class pre-writing and revision work done on each essay, which will be collected at the end of the semester along with the final revision of the essay. *You must turn in all four essays in order to pass the course.* **Each** major essay is worth **10%** of your course grade.

Research Paper. You will write one eight to ten page paper, an original argument based on research done for this course. The paper will be completed in three stages: a proposal and working bibliography presented near the middle of the semester, a progress report prepared shortly afterward, and the final paper turned in near the end of the semester. The final paper is worth **25%** of your course grade, but the total process is worth much more: the progress report is one of the four major essays, so counts for 10% of your course grade, and the proposal and working bibliography count for 5%, so the research process for this one paper accounts for **40%** of your course grade.

Final Examination. The final for this class will be given during finals week as specified in the *Schedule of Classes*. Please note that you must take the final in order to pass this course. The final will be a brief essay reflecting the skills you have practiced this semester, and should not be unduly difficult if you have prepared well throughout the semester. The final makes up **10%** of your course grade.

Completion of Requirements

Readings are to be completed by the day listed, as the In-Class Writing will assume that you have read the material. It is not possible to "make up" missed In-Class Writing. Essays received after the due date will not be graded unless you notify me in advance that you will be late; any late essay will be subject to a substantial grade penalty at my discretion. Therefore, if you even suspect you will be turning the paper in late, you should contact me, so we can come to an agreement concerning the penalty and amended due date. I will consider failure to make or to keep such an agreement to be failure on the essay; failure to turn in any major essay or the research paper, even if that paper will be given a failing grade anyway, will result in failure in the course.

Plagiarism

It is very easy to find a paper on the Word Wide Web or elsewhere—almost as easy as it is for me to tell when someone whose writing I have read for an entire semester does so. Do not cheat in this or any other way. In writing, this cheating is known as plagiarism.

Writing teachers often see two basic kinds of plagiarism. The first is the deliberate misrepresentation of another's work as one's own, whether in whole or in part. If you commit this kind of plagiarism on any scale from a single phrase to an entire paper, you will fail this course and may be subject to further disciplinary action on the part of the University.

A second kind of plagiarism occurs when an inexperienced writer fails to properly attribute, paraphrase or quote a passage from another's work. As the purpose of this course is to teach you how to correctly use sources, this sort of plagiarism will also hurt your grade. As a teacher, my goal is to help you learn, not to punish you for your every mistake along the way. Failure to learn, however, will ultimately (and quite logically) result in failure in the course.

Padding Out the Page

"The reason why so few good books are written is that so few people who can write know anything."
Walter Bagehot

"A writer is a person for whom writing is more difficult than it is for other people."
Thomas Mann

"We do not write because we want to; we write because we have to." W. Somerset Maugham

"Reading makes a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man."
Sir Francis Bacon

"Read over your compositions, and wherever you meet with a passage which you think is particularly fine, strike it out."
Samuel Johnson

"Learn as much by writing as by reading."
Lord Acton

"In comparing various authors with one another, I have discovered that some of the gravest and latest writers have transcribed, word for word, from former works, without making acknowledgement."
Pliny the Elder

"There is nothing to write about, you say. Well then, write and let me know just this—that there is nothing to write about; or tell me in the good old style if you are well. That's right. I am quite well."
Pliny the Younger

"I take the view, and always have, that if you cannot say what you are going to say in twenty minutes you ought to go away and write a book about it."
Lord Brabazon

"Say all you have to say in the fewest possible words, or your reader will be sure to skip them; and in the plainest possible words or he will certainly misunderstand them."
John Ruskin

"Vigorous writing is concise."
William Strunk, Jr.

(all quotations here were found on *The Quotations Page*, www.quotationspage.com)