

Nicole Brown

English 203: Writing in Context: Discovery & Action

Syllabus

Eng 203

TR 2 p.m. – 3:50 p.m.

Prof. Nicole Brown

Office hours: TR 12 p.m.- 1 p.m. & 4 p.m. – 5 p.m. and by appointment

Course Description: People learn in all kinds of non-educational contexts and through informal experiences. Such circumstances can provide powerful opportunities and initiatives for participating in forms of social action that call upon people to unlearn dominant, oppressive discourses and learn and place into action oppositional, liberatory ones. In this section of 203, you will be asked to reflect upon and write about such moments of discovery and action in your own life and the lives of others. Through class discussions and writing projects you will explore ways to make such moments of discovery more visible through public discourse and social action.

Course Materials:

Required Text

- Julia Hill Butterfly's, *The Legacy of Luna: The Story of a Tree, a Woman, and the Struggle to Save the Redwoods*
- Lois Stalvey's, *The Education of a WASP*
- Annie Dillard's, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*
- Peter Elbow's and Pat Belanoff's, *Being a Writer: A Community of Writers Revisited*

- Additional readings (placed on library reserve)

Description of Activities & Grade Distributions:

Seminar Papers

During the course of the quarter, you will write three seminar papers (4-5 pages each). These papers will correspond with and be informed by the readings in the course, however, they will not be about the readings. What I mean is, you will not be writing in order to convey your interpretation of the readings. Instead, the writing that you will do in this course will be similar to the readings. They will call upon you to reflect upon your own processes of discovery and the steps that you have taken or plan to take in order to turn this discovery into action. Of course, writing can play an essential role in the process of discovery and action; you will be asked to utilize it and reflect upon it as such.

In this course, you will participate in the process of discovery and action by:

(1) reflecting on a moment of discovery in your life and identifying its importance to a current context and/or readings in the class, (2) researching and learning more about this discovery and

its importance in a current context and/or how it helped you to give meaning to the readings, and (3) thinking realistically about how you can fit this discovery into your life and make it visible to others.

Paper One will be a reflection on a moment of discovery in your life. In many ways, it will be similar to a memoir. In Latin, the word "memoria" means memory. But Paper One will be more than the telling of a memory. As the author, you will give this memory meaning through reflection and will unravel the experience through your current knowledge (including readings in the course) and current contexts in which this knowledge is given meaning and made relevant.

Paper Two requires you to research and learn more about the information and contexts relevant to your discovery—writings, oral histories, community groups, online social networks, etc. In Paper Two, you will report and reflect upon how your findings inform the discovery that you discussed in Paper One.

Paper Three can be a "plan of action" or an "act of action." To fulfill the requirements of Paper Three, you can: discuss how you have already turned your discovery into action, discuss how you can turn this discovery into action, or actually put your discovery into action, through writing.

You will be expected to use the writing process for each paper (planning, drafting, revising, editing). For each seminar paper, your participation in the writing process will make up 5% of your final course grade and the final paper will make up 20% of your final course grade.

Peer Responses

An important consideration for any act of writing is audience. Because the focus of this course is on turning discovery into action, the audience for your writing can take several forms: me (as the instructor of the course), other class members (as readers interested in moments of discovery and opportunities for action and as peer reviewers), as well as any other audience that might emerge out of your research and/or chosen course of action(s).

Each of you will be expected to be audiences for each others writing; you will be coaches and reviewers during each step of the writing process. In class, we will discuss what it means to be responsible readers, and you will be expected to act as such. Peer responses will be evaluated on a 0-3 scale: 0 = no response; 1 = some response; 2 = thoughtful response; 3 = response w/ recommendations. The points that you receive on peer responses will count for 10% of your course grade.

Participation

Class participation will be evaluated as follows: 0 = absent; 1 = present, but silent; 2 = some comments, 3 = active engagement.

Comments could be related to the reading but could also draw upon past experiences and other thoughts relevant to the course. Class participation constitutes 5% of your final course grade.

Reading Quizzes

A moment of discovery that I hope not to have during the quarter is the discovery that some of you are not keeping up with the readings. Having done my research, I've learned that a common means for taking action is to have reading quizzes.

Each class will focus on a discussion of the readings (for the most part). Your response to the reading(s) will be used to frame the class discussion. You can respond to the readings by:

- Summary – of the key points/arguments
- Response – a critique of certain elements of the readings
- Connections – among the texts/readings from class or other texts you have read
- Personal Narrative – how the reading effected you or the people around you
- Questions – pose questions and give tentative answers
- Fiction – write a poem or short story that encompasses ideas from the readings
- Implications – discuss the implications of the readings for culture or education
- Examples - that exemplify/amplify the readings
- Application – apply the reading to your course projects
- Identity – make connections between the readings and your professional identity

Reading quizzes, if needed, will make up 10% of your course grade.

Hour-a-Week

Because we meet on a TTH schedule, you are required by the university to participate in one additional hour of “course-related” activity each week. Please note that this hour is apart from your regular homework assignments. To meet this requirement, please choose two of the following activities in contexts of interest to you and relevant to the course and the course’s writing assignments:

- attend a conference/workshop/town meeting/lecture and write a 1-2 page summary
- write a letter, as a form of social action
- read a book and write a 1-2 page summary
- volunteer your time or get involved with an organization [online or offline] and write a 1-2 summary of your experience
- create your own activity & let me know

If chosen well, each of these activities can contribute meaningfully to your seminar papers. While you will not be graded on these activities, you will be expected to provide proof of your participation and time spent.

Grading:

The grading scale for the course is 100-95 = A, 94-90 = A-, 89-87 = B+, 86-83 = B, 82-80 = B-, 79-77 = C+, 76-73 = C, 72-70 = C-, 69-67 = D+, 66-63 = D, 62-60 = D-

Course Policies: Regular **Attendance** is required. A good portion of your grade is dependent upon class discussion and work done in the classroom. Thus, it is difficult to make up missed work. Aligned with this, you are allowed three absences, excused or unexcused. More than two absences will result in your final grade being lowered by one letter step. Also, you may not make up missed in-class assignments.

You should submit your work on time. **Late Work** will be accepted at a 10% grade reduction. If you are absent, you are responsible for handing in any assignments due on that day via a fellow class member or email. Due dates for major assignments can be found on the course calendar.

All written work must be carefully **Proofread** before it is handed in. If I receive work that contains numerous errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, it will be returned to you for correction before it is graded. People who need to improve their proofreading will be asked to sign up for tutorials at the Writing Center.

Email may be used to contact students on an individual basis. Therefore, you should have an email address on file with me where you can receive class announcements. Any emails sent to me or another class member should contain Engl203 in the subject header. Any files sent electronically via attachment should contain your last name in the file name [brown.doc]. This is important to ensure that your message is not overlooked and that your attachment is not mis-filed.