

UNIVERSITY of WISCONSIN-GREEN BAY

English Composition 105: Expository Writing
Spring 2009, 3 Credits
University of Wisconsin-Green Bay
Monday-Friday 12:00-1:30 p.m.
Sturgeon Bay High School Room 210

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Office hours: 8:15-9:30 a.m./3:10-3:30 p.m. M-F or by appointment
Room 210

Course description: This course seeks to help us take a critical look at how popular culture shapes our lives and values. We will study how semiotics is used in advertising, newspapers, movies, television, magazines, and books. Many of us take popular culture for granted. We tend to accept its images and values without question. Are we mere consumers of society, or can we achieve some critical distance and become cultural critics and producers?

This course is offered through the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay to eligible students at Sturgeon Bay High School. The university does all the testing and makes all decisions as to the placement of students. The course is coordinated and monitored by the English Composition Department at UWGB and is taught by an instructor whose experience and credentials are similar to those instructors in the writing program on campus. In all respects, this course reflects the practices, approaches, and standards of the writing courses offered on campus.

Course goals:

1. Develop fluency in writing
2. Sharpen critical thinking, writing, and reading skills
3. Hone research strategies
4. Develop awareness of semiotics
5. Produce four of the best papers you have ever written. This won't be by accident or luck. You will know exactly why they are effective and what you did to make them work.

Required Texts:

Hacker, D. (2000). *A Pocket Style Manual*. (3rd ed.). Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Maasik, Sonia and Solomon, Jack. (Eds.). (2003). Signs of Life in the USA: Readings on Popular Culture for Writers. (5th ed.). Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Writing: This class is based on the philosophy that writing is a process and that better writing comes with time and practice. **I expect your final papers to be free of common errors in punctuation, usage and grammar (such as subject verb agreement, subject pronoun agreement, fragments and run-on sentences).** **Absolutely no late work will be accepted for any reason.** If you know you will be absent when essays are due, either turn in your essay early or email it to me at hmeikle@sturbay.k12.wi.us

Plagiarism: Presenting all or part of another person's work as your own without giving proper credit (whether you copy it word for word or paraphrase) is plagiarism. Students who plagiarize may receive a failing grade for the assignment or for the course. Students who actively or passively enable others to plagiarize are equally responsible. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, contact me. I expect all of your papers to be properly cited using MLA documentation.

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Assignment Deadlines: You may (and are encouraged to) turn papers in before the deadline. You may turn in the papers in any order.

1. **April 24**

2. **May 8**

3. **May 22**

4. **June 4**

Conferences:

Three times during the term you will be expected to meet with me for a one-on-one writing conference. I will provide you with an appointment calendar. You will need to bring your rough drafts, peer critiqued drafts, and creative ideas to our meeting.

Essay Assignments: Choose 4 topics listed below to research. One paper must be 4-5 pages in length, one must be 6-7 pages in length, one 8-9 pages in length, and one over 10 pages. All papers must include a title page and a works cited page and demonstrate mastery of internal documentation. Knight Cite and Son of the Citation Machine are popular websites for easy documentation. ☺

I. Image and Attire

A. Write an expository essay in which you explore image and how it affects taste in attire. Why is image such a huge component of fashion? Why are some brands more desired than others? Why are some stores more popular than others? What is the psychology behind image and how is it used or abused in the fashion world?

Applied Readings: pp. 83, 101, 119, 400, 496

In addition to the applied readings, cite two other academic sources to support your research.

B. Write an expository essay investigating the psychology behind advertising and marketing. What type of research goes into advertising and marketing? How effective are advertisements and marketers and how can we gauge their effectiveness?

Applied Readings: pp. 91, 109, 130, 161, 178, 183, 203

In addition to the applied readings, cite two more academic sources to support your findings.

II. Gender Identity

A. Is gender identity biological or socially constructed? Research both sides of the issue and devise your own opinion based on your research.

Applied Readings: pp. 284, 439, 458, 464, 475, 486, 496, 499, 504, 513, 769, 772

In addition to the applied readings, cite three academic sources to support your thesis

III. Media Violence

A. Media violence is one of the most controversial issues in current cultural politics. Does media violence desensitize viewers to the realities of violence? Does Hollywood's depiction of gangstas glorify criminal behavior? Why are violent gangster movies so popular with white middle class teens? Write an expository essay in which you explore the popularity of media violence and its effects on American culture.

Applied Readings: pp. 284, 368, 373, 427, 433, 604

Find and cite 3 additional academic sources to support your claim

IV. Reality Television

A. Why is there a dramatic increase in the number of reality television shows? What are the social and philosophical principles that underlie reality television? What effect do reality television shows have on the American culture? Explore the popularity and concept of reality television (RTV) and its relationship with the American public.

Applied Readings: pp. 222, 229, 232, 240, 263

Find and cite four academic sources to corroborate your research

V. Consumer Consumption

A. Americans live in a material world. What drives us to buy, buy, buy? Why do some people believe they are "addicted" to shopping? How have advertisers and marketers shaped our spending habits? What does the need for material goods say about the American culture? How will materialism affect future

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generations? Explore the concept of materialism and how it affects the American culture both financially and emotionally.

Applied Readings: pp. 76, 83, 90, 91, 109, 130, 136

Use 4 additional academic sources to support your paper

VI. Free choice!

Create your own research topic regarding some aspect of American popular culture. You will need to read several essays on your topic and you will need to cite 4 academic sources for support. If you feel strongly about something affecting American popular culture, this would be a great outlet for you!

- A All papers reveal a strong, sophisticated point, in-depth analysis and development, a clear sense of purpose and audience, a well-defined focus, solid organization, and sentence-level polish and style.
- AB Papers meet most of the above criteria but fall short in one area, such as needing paragraph development, organization, or fuller conclusion.
- B Papers still need work in more than one area. For example, ideas need to be more fully developed and prose needs to be more polished for grammatical correctness and easy reading.
- BC Papers have potential, but are clearly in “draft stage.” They need substantial revision in terms of one of the following major areas: thesis, organization, analysis and focus.
- C Papers fall short in some or all of the above areas and demonstrate consistent problems at the sentence or paragraph level.
- D Work falls short in many of the above areas
- F Student plagiarizes material for papers, or major assignments are not turned in on time

Note: Research can be exhausting and frustrating but it can also be exciting and rewarding. Give yourself plenty of time to research and don't be afraid to follow leads. You may change your point of view on a particular topic after you have researched it for some time. This is okay!! Don't limit yourself and keep an open mind when reading. Your objective is to gather as much information as possible before you start writing. If you do this, when it comes time to write, your paper should virtually write itself. Research is my favorite venue of writing and I look forward to reading your well-written papers!!