ENGLISH 109: Section 02
Winter 1991

Introduction to Essay Writing

Classes: Tuesday, 6:30 - 9:30 p.m., MH 227
Instructor: Jane Krogen
Office: MH 226D  Telephone: 938-1211, ext.: 3680
Office hours: Will be set in consultation with class, and by appointment

Required Texts


Supplies

A 3-ring loose-leaf binder for your Journal and Reading Notebook
A file folder to keep all assignments and drafts—a Course File
Photocopies of drafts throughout the term for instructor and group

Brief Course Description

"Writing—writing about things that matter, writing to make sense out of experience, writing to discover new knowledge, writing to reach ethical judgments, writing to examine the problems and complexities of the world, writing in response to meaningful reading—is an activity both truly liberal and truly artful" (Knoblauch and Bremner: Rhetorical Traditions and the Teaching of Writing, 187).

In this course, we will use a reading into writing approach. You will work towards developing your critical reading skills, to help you understand how a piece of writing develops, and then apply this knowledge to your own and each other's writing. Our discussions will provide opportunities to talk, think, read, and write about many aspects of the power of language and the written word, ways in which readers respond to what they read, and how writers use language to evoke the response they seek. We'll look at how context affects writing situations, who we are writing for, and why. This course is not a basic or remedial course. Your Handbook covers in detail all the conventions governing the use of the English language. We will, however, discuss punctuation, grammar, and style throughout the term, as the need arises.

Group discussions will play a major role in our classes. You will work in groups to discuss the readings, the drafts of your essays, and to brainstorm. It's important that everyone participate actively; everyone's contribution is valued. We are striving for an atmosphere that enables a lively exchange of ideas yet fosters true co-operation. We are not necessarily looking for agreement, but we are working towards understanding other people's view of the world.
You will write on a regular basis in and out of the classroom (individually and collaboratively) and in your journals, and you will also write a series of short essays arising from the readings. The course will be quite a bit of work, but the writing practice, group work, learning about ways to approach writing assignments, and opportunities to revise drafts should give you more confidence in tackling future writing assignments.

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What I Expect of You

Regular attendance
Active participation
A commitment to complete assigned readings and writings for due dates
A willingness to share your knowledge and to learn from others
A co-operative attitude

What You Can Expect From Me

Active participation as a facilitator rather than lecturer
Quick return of assignments with, I hope, constructive comments
A willingness to accept your knowledge and to share mine
A co-operative attitude and a willingness to learn from you
Accessibility both in and out of class

Our course outline is not rigid. As we proceed, we will adopt, modify, and restructure to suit the learning needs of the class.

Those of you who prefer a more detailed reference book in addition to the Hacker manual, may like to obtain a copy of:
(I believe the used bookstore in the Campus Centre has many copies.)
ENGLISH 103 (02): WINTER 1991

Instructor: J. Koger

YOUR JOURNAL

A journal is an excellent forum for your thoughts. You may use it to discuss your reactions to the readings, to class discussions, to pair/group discussions, to raise questions with yourself, to explore new ideas, and to jot down ideas or possible papers. Your journal helps you to keep in touch with your own thoughts and concerns, your development through the course, and to record breakthroughs and discoveries. Two other devices sometimes used in journals are the keeping of lists and the writing of imaginary dialogues. As you can see, the journal opens up endless possibilities for you as a writer.

No "right" or "wrong" way exists to keeping a journal, but your entries must demonstrate a sincere effort to examine the issues you discuss. The journal provides a great way to write without worrying about grades and evaluations. I expect you to write a minimum of two pages per week in your journal, and to hand it in regularly. You'll probably be surprised at how much you find to write about, because a journal offers an informal, non-threatening way to look at many issues.

I do not correct entries for grammatical or punctuation errors. This is not the purpose of the journal. I may, however, respond to what you have written. More and more writing courses incorporate journal writing, because students can take risks without being penalized. Beginning writers usually find the journal freeing; it provides a way of finding your own "voice" and style, and helps you to identify your interests. Many professional writers keep journals, and find them invaluable as sources of ideas.

A 3-ring binder is often the best way to keep a journal, as you can just hand in current writings and keep the rest, in case you need to refer to them. A loose leaf journal also has the advantage that it allows you to remove pages if you decide to record personal thoughts and feelings that you do not wish to share with me; you can hand in only those sections you wish me to read. Late each entry, and bring your journal to class. We probably won't find time to do some journal writing in class, but this depends on how our time goes.

Feel free to share your journal and its with other group members. I may also ask you to share certain entries (not, of course, those that are strictly personal) with other members of the class, to initiate a dialogue.

In your last class, you will write a brief analysis (500 words) of how the journal helped you--whether you found it useful in sorting out ideas, in preparing for class, in understanding the readings, and so on.