

COMPOSITION—Pr. Bizzell—Fall 2009

Fenwick 210 office hours: M 1-3; T, R 11-12; W 11-3; and by appointment; phone x 2524; email pbizzell@holycross.edu

Required Texts:

Raimes, Ann. Keys for Writers. 5th ed. Boston: Houghton Miflin, 2008.

Walters, Keith and Michal Brody, eds. What's Language Got to Do with It? New York: W. W. Norton, 2005.

Course Plan:

This course aims to help you to improve your abilities to read and discuss difficult academic texts and to write analytic arguments about them—skills that are needed in many college courses. How to understand challenging reading, how to organize material, how to use evidence, and how to write correctly and elegantly are among the topics we will address. Your effort will be a key component to your success in this course.

As you practice these language arts, you will also be learning about the contemporary English language, how it has changed over time, how it has spread across the world, and how it has interacted with other languages. This knowledge should help you to understand yourself as an English language user and thus to improve your reading, writing, speaking and listening.

Assignments and Grading:

Only with frequent practice will your English language arts improve. If you play a musical instrument or participate in a sport, you know that you cannot do well if you leave all your practicing for the night before the concert or the big game. Practice must occur steadily over time for improvement to happen. And you also know that in gaining mastery of a sport or musical instrument, you engage in many activities that are not directly related to the concert or the big game. You play scales and do finger exercises, perhaps, for your musical instrument; for your sport, you run laps, lift weights, and practice individual moves that you will put together at game time. We will engage in analogous activities in this course.

Therefore, you will have reading assignments and brief (1-2 pages) writing assignments every week; they are listed in the syllabus. In addition, you will write four longer papers (5-7 pages), for which I will give you detailed instructions later. Feel free to consult me at any time about a paper you are working on for me; I will be happy to help you.

The brief writing assignments will be graded pass-fail. If you complete all of them, you will receive a grade of A for this portion of the course; your grade will go down depending upon how many of them you miss. You will also receive a grade for each of

the four longer papers, and these five grades will be averaged to arrive at your final grade.

One more optional paper (5-7 pages) will be due on the final exam date (to be announced; we are not having a final exam). If you choose this option, your grade on this last paper will be averaged with the rest and your final mark will result from six, not five grades. Please do not hesitate to ask me at any time if you have questions about how you are being evaluated.

Of course, any violation of the College's policy on academic honesty will result in an F for the assignment on which you cheated. If you have questions about this policy, please ask me before submitting the paper. I encourage you to use the Writers Workshop for help with any assignment for this course and I do not consider that to be cheating!

Syllabus

Reading assignments (almost all in the Walters and Brody anthology), and brief writing assignments (given below), should be completed by the first day of class every week unless otherwise directed. Papers are due on dates noted.

Unit I: Global Englishes

Sept. 2:

Reading: Duff-Brown, "Customer Service Calls Routed to India" (516-518); Chu, "Taiwan's Toddlers Learn English" (520-521).

Sept. 7, 9:

Reading: Tagliabue, "In Europe, Going Global Means, Alas, English" (531-533); Crystal, "Why a Global Language?" (504-514); Abrams, "Tribes Struggle to Keep Languages Alive" (267-268); Balas, "She Remembers So Others Can Learn" (269-270); Yellow Bird, "Keeping the Flame of Language Alive" (270-271).

Writing: Based on Duff-Brown, Chu, Tagliabue and (if you wish) your own experience, what can you say about the importance of English world-wide?

Sept. 14, 16:

Reading: Wallraff, "What Global Language?" (535-553).

Writing: Define the following terms according to Wallraff: native speaker, second language speaker, and foreign language speaker of English; Seaspeak; "lexical growth-areas."

Unit II: English Only?

Sept. 21, 23:

PAPER DUE Sept. 21 on "Global Englishes" unit (choice of writing questions on 553, to be discussed in class, previous week).

Reading: Miller, “English Is Broken Here” (470-473); PROENGLISH, “Making English Our Official Language” (474-475); Baron, “Don’t Make English Official, Ban It” (477-479); Tomorrow, “This Modern World” (480).

Sept. 28, 30:

NO CLASS Sept. 28: the Jewish holy day Yom Kippur. In place of the class meeting, you will see the film The Great Debaters (on reserve in the Media Resource Center, 2d floor Stein).

Reading: Nunberg, “Reimagining America” (482-500).

Writing: Comment on the uses of English in The Great Debaters (for instance, you could consider whether you hear different versions of English in the film; or think about what the debate teacher is trying to do with/to his students’ language).

Oct. 5, 7:

Reading: no new assignment—we will continue to discuss Nunberg.

Writing: According to Nunberg, what “messages are being sent”—that is, what are the intentions—of those who promote English as the official language of America, and how do you react to these messages?

COLUMBUS DAY BREAK

Unit III: Which English?

Oct. 14:

PAPER DUE Oct. 14 on “English Only?” unit, your argument on whether English should be made the official language of the United States (assignment to be discussed in class on Oct. 7 AND I will have office hours at the end of Columbus Day break, on Tuesday October 13, times to be announced [as well as my regular hours on the Wednesday this paper is due]).

Reading: Lupton and Abbot, “Period Styles: A Punctuated History” (101-107).

Oct. 19, 21:

Reading: Rosenthal, “So Here’s What’s Happening to Language” (128-131); “Policing Usage in the Comics” (109-110); Baron, “The New Technologies of the Word” (136-150); “ur2Kewl, Romeo” (157-158).

Writing: This week’s reading includes several cartoons. What’s funny about each of them? Explain briefly.

Oct. 26, 28:

Reading: PLEASE NOTE in Raimes, “Part 9: Language, Englishes, and ESL” (489-526).

Writing: At this point in the semester, what are your greatest difficulties with English language arts (reading, writing, speaking, listening)? Look back over everything you’ve written so far to help you answer this question. We will discuss in class in preparation for paper due next week.

Unit IV: English Plus

Nov. 2, 4:

PAPER DUE Nov. 2: “English and Me,” using several pieces we’ve read so far, from any of the three units, to help you discuss your own experiences with English.

Reading: Smith, “Newcomers Confront Language Melting Pot” (233-234).

Film screening: Spanglish (on reserve in Media Resource Center, 2d floor Stein).

Nov. 9, 11:

Reading: Agosin, “Always Living in Spanish” and “English” (201-206); Marquez, “Why and When We Speak Spanish in Public” (207-208); Cisneros, from “*Bien Pretty*” (210-211); “Code Switching in the Comics” (230-231).

Writing: What language issues did you see in the film Spanglish and what are your thoughts about them?

Nov. 16, 18:

Reading: Rickford, “Suite for Ebony and Phonics” (278-285); Troutt, “Defining Who We Are in Society” (289-292).

Writing: Choose either Rickford or Troutt and outline his argument. You do not need to write a formal outline with Roman numerals, etc. Just list the main points paragraph by paragraph.

Nov. 23:

Reading: Jordan, “Nobody Mean More to Me than You, and the Future Life of Willie Jordan” (314-328).

Writing: Jordan’s students need to write a public statement and they debate whether to write it in Standard English or Black English. What do you think they should have done?

THANKSGIVING BREAK

Nov. 30, Dec. 2:

PAPER DUE Dec. 2: on “English Plus” work so far; choice of topics on Spanish or Ebonics discussed in class in previous week.

Reading: The American Sign Language Fingerspelling Site (408); Moore and Levitan, “Questions and Answers from Deaf Life” (409-414); Solomon, “Defiantly Deaf” (416-442).

Dec. 7:

Reading: no new reading; we will continue to discuss Solomon.

Writing: Choice: explain the similarities and differences between being Deaf and being a member of another language minority; or, explain why you would or would not get cochlear implants for your deaf child, if you had one.

OPTIONAL PAPER DUE on final exam date (tba; no exam): expand what you wrote for this week’s class or discuss another topic of your choice with me.