ENG 101 HONORS
Standard Freshman Composition

Suffolk County Community College
Eastern Campus English Department

Cynthia Eaton

Fall 2009
CRN 95508
Mon & Wed 8:00 to 9:15 AM
Corchaug 015

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BY EMAIL
BY PHONE
BY FOOT
BY WEB

Online Office Hour
Wed. 7.00 PM to 8.00 PM
Online Students: go to D2L chat room
On-Campus Students: email me on Wed between
7 and 8, and I’ll respond within the hour
Welcome to ENG101 Honors: Standard Freshman Composition with Cynthia!

By looking through this course packet, you can see several reasons why the content and structure of this class is unique from any other section of ENG101. First and foremost, every semester, I strive to create a collaborative classroom in which every student comes to enjoy the experience, to enjoy working hard with others, and even—gasp!—to enjoy writing.

What else makes this section of ENG101 so special? A number of reasons, all of which I believe help students become stronger, more effective writers. Here’s an overview of the major aspects that make our class unique:

- Students compose five essays, each of which go through have multiple drafts (rough, mid-process, and final draft), using a collaborative process of peer response and revision.

- All essays and workshop writings are shared with the class through peer response exercises and publication of final drafts (see below), and in exchange for sharing your writing with classmates, you get the benefit of reading everyone else’s writing too; in this way, everyone will grow and improve as writers by learning from the good ideas and thinking of their peers.

- Each student must give and receive at least two peer responses on each rough and mid-process draft, using specific questions on peer response forms that move from descriptive, non-evaluative feedback early in the semester to more evaluative, constructive criticism towards the semester’s end.

- All students’ final drafts will be used as a “text” for each essay unit; that is, all final drafts will be collected and published in a class anthology. Then, everyone in class will be assigned to read everyone else’s final drafts and to comment on what they find effective, positive, and wonderful about their peers’ writing. And we hold “The Essies” to celebrate our successes in each anthology!

- I do not grade individual assignments. Instead, I respond to student work with written comments and a rubric that helps students identify not only what they should improve but also what they are doing well. At semester’s end, each student’s work is evaluated holistically, in a way that allows me to more fairly account for both process and product (see my portfolio system of evaluation page).

- Students are encouraged to not only complete the essay drafts but also to reflect deeply on their writing, to think about why they are writing, and to think about how they are writing. Throughout the semester, this comes in the form of writing process notes for each essay draft, and it culminates in the portfolio review essay at semester’s end.

- Students complete grammar mini-lessons as part of each essay unit, and students compose an informative and argumentative essays that incorporate primary, secondary, and electronic sources using proper MLA documentation.

As you may know, English professors have a wide range of ideas about how best to structure a first-year college writing course. After teaching writing courses at the college level for over ten years, the content and structure of this course reflects my understanding of how best to teach students to enjoy writing for their college courses, for their careers, and for their lives in general.

Welcome to class. I look forward to working with you!

Sincerely,

Cynthia Eaton

Cynthia Eaton (Tvelia)
• **SCCC Course Description**

ENG101 explores principles of rhetoric and stresses effective expository writing. Primarily a course in organization of ideas and development of these ideas through use of specific information. Also deals with matters of style, sentence structure, paragraph development, punctuation and vocabulary. Also introduces students to close reading of appropriate materials. By placement. To be taken prior to higher-numbered courses.

• **Departmental Course Objectives**

Upon completion of ENG101, you will:

• have worked with essay writing as a process that involves making many choices to discover what your ideas are. Some processes involved include brainstorming, making lists, outlining, keeping a journal, doing freewriting, working on preliminary drafts; focusing and working with those ideas through several drafts; and revising and editing final drafts so that they have clearly stated or implied main ideas which are developed fully.

• have completed a series of papers that will help you discover that there are different ways to organize and develop an essay, and that your choice of form depends primarily on what you’re trying to do in the paper. Some methods of development include personal experiences, examples, anecdotes, logical reasons, statistics, and references to authority.

• have written a paper which incorporates secondary material in support of your central point. The final draft will contain appropriate parenthetical documentation and a list of works consulted.

• have revised and rewritten to add specific details and facts as needed; change passive verbs to active where appropriate; improve sentence variety through sentence combining; eliminate wordiness; achieve a smooth flow of ideas through use of transitional words, phrases, or paragraphs where necessary; eliminate unnecessary shifts in verb tense and pronoun person; edit diction for level usage, connotation, specificity, and figurative language; and correct the punctuation.

• have proofread and corrected drafts and prepared legible final copies in accord with manuscript requirements.

• **Cynthia’s Course Goals & Rationale**

Three important assumptions help define the shape of this course:

1. **All of us are writers.**

   We are all—already—people who write and who have unique and interesting experiences and insights that are worth writing about. Maybe you’ve been told by others that you’re not a good writer or that you don’t write well, and maybe you believe this yourself. However, I fully believe that every single one of us is a writer. Our class will operate on this fundamental yet incredibly important assumption.

2. **We can all readily improve as writers.**

   As with other activities, writing is something we learn by doing: by writing to pursue our interests, by experimenting with new strategies, by having a receptive audience, by receiving feedback from others, and by reflecting on our own work. By practicing our writing, we can and will improve as writers.

3. **We all need to work to create a classroom community that helps us grow as writers.**

   Creating a supportive learning community depends on each of us—teacher and students alike—fulfilling our individual responsibilities, offering mutual respect to one another, and being receptive readers of one another’s writing.

   In addition to a primary, overarching goal to help you develop the abilities you need for using writing effectively in college, in your career, and in life in general, this course is also designed to help you...
develop the following abilities:

- to compose essays in which you not only narrate and explain but also interpret particulars and develop a point, moving effectively between generalizations and particulars;
- to develop your ideas by questioning, interpreting, and considering multiple perspectives;
- to understand and manage your own composing process: drafting, revising, and copy-editing;
- to revise drafts with attention to development, organization, paragraph structure, style, voice, audience, and grammar & mechanics;
- to be a constructive reader of your own work in progress and the work of others.

Finally, I hope you will come to feel that writing is a medium you can use for personal and public purposes to gain understanding, to create particular effects, and to communicate.

Because we all learn best to write by writing and having a receptive audience, class sessions will be run more like discussions and workshops than lectures. Your classmates—both students and teacher—will also be your most immediate audience, and peer response groups will provide an opportunity for you to receive responses to drafts. It is therefore especially important that you attend class consistently, where a good deal of writing and experimenting with new writing strategies will take place.

**• Required Texts & Materials •**

I do NOT require that students purchase a textbook, since our class writings will function as your primary text. However, it is a smart idea to purchase a standard writing handbook that you can use in ENG101 and throughout your collegiate career, so I’ll recommend a few. The best writing handbooks on the market today, I believe, are published by Bedford/St.Martins. Pick whichever one you can find for less money by doing a search for the ISBN at a website such as amazon.com or powells.com:

- OR

**• Attendance & Lateness Policies •**

Since this is a writing workshop class, active and energetic participation—by completing all readings and writings as assigned, sharing your ideas, attentive listening, group participation, peer response sessions, and contributing to class discussion, etc.—is not only highly valued, it is **required**.

This is not a lecture course in which you can miss classes and just get the notes from someone else; this is a writing course, so much of our work involves reading, writing, and discussing our reading and writing. Therefore, by the start of each class meeting, you are expected to come prepared, as you do yourself, me, and your classmates a disservice by coming to class unprepared. Class functions best with full participation from everyone.

As noted in the Suffolk County Community College 2008-2010 College Catalog:

> The college expects that each student will exercise personal responsibility with regard to class attendance. All students are expected to attend every class session of each course for which they are registered. Students are responsible for what transpires in class whether or not they are in attendance, even if absences are the result of late registration or add/drop activity at the beginning of a term as permitted by college policy. The college defines excessive absence or lateness as more than the equivalent of one week of class meetings during the semester. A student may be required to drop or withdraw from a course when, in the judgment of the instructor, absences have been excessive [emphasis mine]. (68)

Thus, in this class, each student is allowed one week’s worth (i.e., two class meetings) of unexcused
absences for the semester. Save your unexcused absences for those days when things come up, for when you have a cold, for when your car breaks down, etc. For an absence to be considered excused, you must provide written documentation verifying the necessity of your absence (e.g., legal or medical reasons). Should you miss a class, it is your responsibility to make up the work and prepare for the next class.

Finally, arriving late is disruptive to other students and to the discussion, so do not be late to class. If a student repeatedly arrives to class late, I will take note of the number of minutes; two late arrivals will equal one absence.

**Portfolio System of Evaluation**

I use a portfolio system of evaluation for this course, with the major essay units weighted as follows:

- **15%** Essay 1 • Expressing Ourselves
- **20%** Essay 2 • Adding to the Conversation
- **20%** Essay 3 • Presenting a New Argument
- **20%** Essay 4 • Interacting with Others
- **25%** Essay 5 • Reflecting on Our Writing

With this portfolio system of evaluation, I do not grade individual essays or assignments. Instead, I use a holistic system of evaluation that more fairly accounts for the quality of your writing (product) as well as your growth and improvement over the course of the semester (process).

Therefore, you will not receive a traditional letter or number grade on each of your essays; instead, you will receive written comments that emphasize not only what you’re doing well but also on which aspects of effective composition you should pay further attention to.

You will also receive a final draft response rubric that provides feedback on the following aspects of effective composition:

1. content
2. revision
3. development
4. organization
5. paragraph structure
6. style/language usage
7. sentence structure
8. grammar/mechanics
9. integration of research using MLA documentation

Why do I use this system of evaluation? I have found that conventional grading often leads students to think more about grades than about reading and writing. Such grading policies tend to cause students to worry more about pleasing me or playing mind games with me than about figuring out what they really want to say and how to say it. Conventional grading sometimes makes students afraid to take risks in their writing or can make students feel they are working against me rather than with me.

Most importantly, you should be reading a lot and writing about your reading a lot. The more you read and write, the more your reading and writing will improve—and become easier.

For the purposes of the final semester portfolio evaluation, I will respond to each essay according to these criteria in addition to two other crucial ingredients: effort and thinking. What do I mean by effort? I don’t mean that you have to suffer, just work. You should be writing (and reading) a lot. The more you write, the more your writing will improve—and become easier. What do I mean by thinking? I don’t mean that your writing has to be unassailably logical or true. It’s fine if I or others do not agree with what you say or how you say it. I’m not asking you to give in to my idea of good writing, but you do have to show that you have engaged in some genuine “figuring out” work.
In determining your final grade, I assess your performance in this course holistically; that is, I only assign grades at semester’s end rather than assigning grades on your individual pieces of work throughout the semester. I feel that this system allows me to better and more fairly assess your overall performance in this class. In determining your final grade, then, I will balance both process and product:

- **By process**, I mean your effort, participation, class attendance, doing all of the assigned readings and exploratory writings, completing essay drafts on time, offering helpful peer responses, etc.

- **By product**, I refer to your actual finished product, the level of your writing abilities. To help me more fairly assess product, I ask myself, "If four other English professors read this final draft, what grade might they assign it?"

Why the distinction? Sometimes students believe that they should pass because they have worked so hard or put forth good effort. While this may be true, it’s important to balance this consideration with the students’ actual writing levels. In this way, I hope to be most fair to all students, since you all have such a diversity of backgrounds, experiences, and writing practice. I wish neither to privilege those students who have had extensive writing practice and outstanding English teachers all their lives, nor to punish those who have had little writing practice and poor English teachers.

Thus, here’s my contract system with you for the semester. You are guaranteed to receive at least a C for your final course grade if you do all of the following:

- Satisfactorily complete all assigned essays, along with drafts and workshop writings, and do them on time.
- Provide satisfactorily full and thoughtful responses to your peers on their writing.
- Participate satisfactorily in class activities and discussions.
- Meet basic course requirements on participation, attendance, and lateness (ie, no more than 2 unexcused absences).

Your final grade will fall below a C if you don’t meet the above terms. To get a higher final grade, you need to do everything required for a C and your essays and participation need to be of above-average to excellent quality. You may have to work harder for a B with this system than in courses where you just memorize and regurgitate information, but I don’t ask for any more work than other ENG101 classes. You are more likely to receive an F for this class if you fail to complete all of the assigned essay units and/or if you have 6 or more unexcused absences.

Of course, I realize that most students are very entrenched in traditional systems of grading, so if worries about how you’re doing might negatively affect your attention on learning how to write well, please speak with me so we can review your work to date and discuss your progress.

Most importantly, you should be writing a lot, reading others’ writing a lot, and reflecting on your writing a lot. The more you read and write, the more your reading and writing will improve—and become easier. Above all, I am here to help you improve your writing, reading, and critical thinking skills. Here are some further goals for this class:

- to help you enjoy writing and learn to use writing as a part of your life rather than just for academic work
- to help you think more critically about how this world operates, using writing as a means to comprehend how social, cultural, aesthetic, and intellectual issues raised in class are relevant to your life
- to help you put yourself into your writing, take charge of it, own it, develop your own standards, experiment, take risks
- to make you work hard, yet give you some freedom about how you work
- to create a culture of support and cooperation rather than competition; to help you learn to value self-assessment and peer response over teacher response and grading.
There’s nothing wrong with using the words or thoughts of others or getting their help—indeed it is good to do so—as long as you explicitly acknowledge your debt. But it is plagiarism when you pass off the work of others as though it were your own. For example:

- copying passages from someone else’s writing without using quotation marks and giving the author credit;
- downloading a paper from the Internet—or parts of a paper—and passing it off as your own;
- paraphrasing someone else’s writing without giving credit;
- using someone else’s facts or ideas without acknowledgment;
- handing in work for one course that you handed in for credit in another course without the permission of both instructors.

When you use published words, data, or ideas, you should acknowledge your use in a citation. For proper citation form, consult an up-to-date writing handbook such as the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* or Diana Hacker’s “Research and Documentation Online” website (www.dianahacker.com/resdoc).

When you use friends’ or classmates’ words, data, or ideas, you can use regular citations as above, or just thank them in your process note (for example, “I am grateful to my classmate so-and-so for the argument I use in my third paragraph”).

When friends or classmates just give you helpful reactions to your draft or give you stimulating suggestions that you don’t use, you don’t have to acknowledge their help; but it is gracious to do so and most writers do.

* * * * *

The larger point is this: Scientists, academics, and indeed almost all writers depend on the writing of others as they engage in their own work. Dishonesty destroys necessary trust and undermines the possibility of working together as colleagues. We cannot advance knowledge if we pass off the work of others as our own. And it will even hinder our learning process if we do so. Yet of course it is a good thing to strengthen our writing and learning by using materials by others, so long as we acknowledge that use and so long as we use that material as a building block—rather than a substitute—for our own thinking.

Most colleges insist that instructors report every case of plagiarism to an Academic Honesty Board which keeps a record of all cases. The recommended penalty for plagiarism is failure for the course. Individual instructors may request more severe penalties such as suspension.

Remember too that unintentional plagiarism is still plagiarism. Now that you have read this, you cannot plead ignorance. Therefore, if you have any questions about the proper acknowledgment of help, be sure to ask your instructors.

NOTE: The above plagiarism policy was prepared by Peter Elbow for the University of Massachusetts/Amherst Writing Program and is used here by permission. For a copy of this document online, go to the UMass/Amherst Writing Program page.
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• Services for Students with Disabilities •

To learn about accommodations for learning, physical, and other disabilities, contact the Eastern Campus Office for Disability Services:

- by foot: Peconic 122
  - Monday through Friday
  - 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- by phone: 631.548.2527
- by TTY: 631.548.2699
- by email: disabilityserv-east@sunysuffolk.edu
- by web: http://www3.sunysuffolk.edu/StudentServices/

• Academic Skills Center •

For tutoring and other academic-studies services, contact the Eastern Campus Academic Skills Center:

- by foot: Orient 234
- by phone: 631.548.2594
- by email: EastASC@sunysuffolk.edu
- by web: http://depthome.sunysuffolk.edu/East/ASC

• Transfer and Career Counseling •

For information about transferring to a four-year school, advice about career exploration, and information about scholarships, contact the Eastern Campus Counseling Center:

- by foot: Corchaug 007
  - Monday through Friday
  - 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- by phone: 631.548.2672
- by email: careerservices-east@sunysuffolk.edu
- by web: http://www3.sunysuffolk.edu/StudentServices/main/index3.asp

Related links:

- Suffolk CC Scholarship Search: http://www3.sunysuffolk.edu/Scholarships/search.asp
- Suffolk CC Job Connection: http://www3.sunysuffolk.edu/Jobs/search.asp
- Suffolk CC Honors Program: http://www.sunysuffolk.edu/Web/Selden/Honors/home.html
- FastWeb Scholarship Search: http://fastweb.monster.com
- FinAid Scholarship Search: http://www.finaid.org