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2020

ENGL 110: College Writing (Cultural Identity)

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English 110: Cultural Identity

Instructor: Margot Kotler

Classroom:

Meeting Times:

Office Hours:

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Identity is not only a story, a narrative which we tell ourselves about ourselves, it is stories which change with historical circumstances. And identity shifts with the way in which we think and hear them and experience them. Far from only coming from the still small point of truth inside us, identities actually come from outside, they are the way in which we are recognized and then come to step into the place of the recognitions which others give us. Without the others there is no self, there is no self-recognition.

– Stuart Hall

Overview and Course Goals

How do our identities come into being and shape who we are? How do we experience and narrate them? While we might traditionally think of identity as a representation of the uniqueness of a particular individual or as a set of innate characteristics, this course will consider identity as a process that is informed by our cultural, historical, and geographic locations. We will explore how it serves as both a form of collective identification, one that allows groups to unite around a shared heritage or struggle against oppression, and as a potential source of conflict. The writers and critics we will read in this course put forth multiple theories of identity, from hybridity and intersectionality to concepts including passing and disidentification. They explore identity and culture through lenses of race, gender, nation, sexuality, class, and more. Several of the theoretical texts we will encounter will demonstrate the multiplicity of identity and make arguments about its political potential. The literary texts will allow us to consider the forms and methods writers employ to capture the complexity of identity. These readings should allow you to think critically about identity and serve as a model for your own writing.

However, the primary goal of this course is to teach you to use the conventions of scholarly writing in all of your General Education courses. College writing looks very different and functions very differently across disciplinary boundaries, and this course has been designed to help you meet the wide variety of challenges you'll face as a writer at Queens and beyond. To achieve that goal, this course is organized around an interdisciplinary topic, rendering it not an "English" class in the conventional sense. We'll place no particular emphasis on literary study. Instead, we'll discuss the ways that writers use textual evidence across multiple genres to advance their thinking in conversation with each other. Students will:

- Produce writing that responds appropriately to a variety of rhetorical situations with a particular focus on academic argumentation.
- Learn reading strategies to summarize, synthesize, analyze, and critique other people's arguments and ideas fairly.
- Learn research practices that will help strengthen their writing and thinking.
- Produce writing that shows how writers may navigate the diverse processes of composing including revision and collaboration.
- Produce writing that strategically employs appropriate language conventions in different writing situations.
- Take ownership of their work and gain an understanding of their own voice, style, and strengths.

Course Materials

This is a Zero Textbook Cost (ZTC) course. All of the readings are linked below or available in our class Dropbox.

Policies

- Participation: More than with most courses, class participation is critical to passing this course. This means talking in class, of course, but also demonstrating that you are prepared, participating in peer work, group activities, in-class writing, etc. Read, be ready to speak, speak intelligently (or earnestly) at least once per class session, and your participation will be satisfactory. This cannot be stressed enough: attending all classes, turning in all work on time, and demonstrating commitment to your writing in the course, is the only sure way to receive an A. Lateness, absence and incomplete assignments will make a high grade impossible.
- Attendance: Given the emphasis on group work and participation in this course, attendance is critical. No in-class work will be made up. In addition, tardiness is not tolerated. If you are more than fifteen minutes late, you will be considered absent. If you know you will be absent, notify me in advance and contact a classmate to find out what you missed.
- Late papers: Late assignments will only be accepted under exceptional circumstances (e.g. serious illness, family emergencies). Late short assignments and homework will not be accepted at all. For the papers, if no previous arrangement has been made, you will lose 10% of your grade each day that they are late, including days on which the class does not meet. This means final papers will not be accepted at all after one week of lateness. If you expect that a paper will be late, it is best to contact and/or meet with me well *before* the deadline. Additionally, it is best to submit papers early so that any electronic malfunctions you may encounter can be dealt with and communicated to me.

- Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the act of presenting another person’s ideas, research or writings as your own. All acts of plagiarism will be recommended to the Queens College administration and are punishable by failing grades, suspension, and expulsion. At the very least plagiarism will result in the failure of this course.

QC Resources

- Writing Center: Located in Kiely Hall 229, tutors at the Writing Center are trained to help you revise your writing at various stages. If you believe you need additional help with your writing, or if I ask you to set up a regular meeting with a tutor, you should make an appointment at least one week prior to when an assignment is due. You can also get online help by visiting their website at <http://qcpages.qc.edu/qcsw>.
- Accessibility: If you have a learning, sensory, or physical reason for special accommodation in this class, contact the Office of Special Services in 171 Kiely Hall at 718-997-5870 and please inform me. The Office of Special Services will make sure you have what you need to succeed in this classroom. If you have anxiety, health concerns, or anything else that might influence your ability to participate, I strongly encourage you to talk to me. I will gladly guide you to the right offices.

Grades

There are three major assignments this semester, but you should note that each of those assignments is broken into a series of much smaller assignments, so the consistency of your work is crucial to your success in this class. Your grade for each of the major assignments depends on your completion of the smaller assignments they contain, including in-class writing and drafts. You will receive regular feedback but not letter grades on those smaller assignments, because they will be factored into your final grade on each large assignment. I will assess your grade in the end by this formula:

Essay 1: 20%

Essay 2: 20%

Essay 3: 30%

Participation: 10% (discussion, peer review, conferences)

Informal writing: 20% (blogs and short assignments)

A+: 97-100	B+: 87-89	C+: 77-79	D+: 67-69
A: 93-96	B: 83-86	C: 73-76	D: 60-66
A-: 90-92	B-: 80-82	C-: 70-72	F: 0-59

Course Calendar

Unit I: Close Reading

Day 1: Introductions

- Reading: Hazel Carby, "Where Are You From?" in *Imperial Intimacies*
- Writing: Diagnostic essay

Day 2: Defining Identity and Culture

- Reading: Stuart Hall "Cultural Identity and Diaspora"; Raymond Williams, [Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society](#): culture, nationalist, racial
- Writing: Blog #1

Day 3: Close Reading

- Reading: Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands/La Frontera* chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 22-45); "How to Read like a Writer"; Gordon Harvey, "Elements of the Academic Essay"
- Writing: Blog #2: Keyword assignment
- Group A: Identifying a problem in a text

Day 4: Close Reading

- Reading: Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands/La Frontera* chapter 5 (pp. 75-86); watch [Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Ted Talk, "The Danger of a Single Story"](#)
- Group B: Identifying a problem in a text

Day 5: Thesis Statement and Argumentation

- Reading: [James Baldwin, "If Black English Isn't a Language, Then Tell Me, What Is?"](#) (Black Thought and Culture Primary Source Collection); [They Say/I Say chapter 1](#)
- Writing: Provisional thesis statement
- Group A: Thesis Workshop

Day 6: Thesis Statement and Argumentation

- Reading: Excerpt from Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*
- Group B: Thesis Workshop

Day 7: Summarizing, Paraphrasing and Quoting

- Reading: [They Say/I Say chapter 2](#)
- Writing: Essay 1 Pre-draft

Day 8: Summarizing, Paraphrasing and Quoting

- Reading: [Paul R. Spickard, "The Illogic of American Racial Categories"](#), Citing Sources handout, sample student essay
- Writing: Blog #3

Day 9: Revision

- Reading: Uneven U handout, [Defining Sex and Gender](#)
- Writing: **Essay 1 draft due**
- Group A: Draft workshop

Day 10: Revision

- Reading: [Combahee River Collective Statement](#); Watch [Crenshaw's "The Urgency of Intersectionality" Ted Talk](#)
- Writing: Blog #4: Keyword assignment
- Group B: Draft workshop

Unit II: Lens Analysis

Day 1: Intersectionality and How to Read Difficult Articles

- Reading: [Sojourner Truth, "Ain't I a Woman?"](#); Difficult articles handout
- Writing: **Final draft of Essay 1 due**

Day 2: Intersectionality

- Reading: Kimberle Crenshaw, ["Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color"](#)
- Writing: Blog #5

Day 3: How to Perform Lens Analysis

- Reading: Lens Analysis handout; Audre Lorde, ["Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference"](#) (Black Thought and Culture Primary Source Collection)
- Writing: Blog #6
- Group A: Lens analysis workshop

Day 4: How to Perform Lens Analysis

- Reading: Essay 2 Prompt; [TSQ \(2014\) keywords](#): cisgender, disability, identity, intersex, LGBT, queer, transgender, whiteness
- Group B: Lens analysis workshop

Day 5: How to Engage Multiple Viewpoints

- Reading: Sample student essay, handout on Engaging Secondary Sources
- Writing: Pre-draft due

Day 6: Formulating Thesis Statements for the Lens Essay

- Reading: "Effective Theses" handout
- Writing: Thesis statement for Essay 2

Day 7: Paragraphing and Revision

- Reading: “What Paragraphs Say and Do,” Excerpt from Audre Lorde’s [Zami: A New Spelling of My Name](#) (Internet Archive)
- Writing: **Draft of Essay 2 due**
- Group A: Draft workshop

Day 8: Paragraphing and Revision

- Reading: [Nella Larsen, Passing](#) part one (Internet Archive)
- Group B: Draft workshop

Unit 3: Research Paper

Day 1: Passing and Hybridity

- Reading: Nella Larsen, *Passing* part two (Internet Archive)
- Writing: **Final draft of essay 2 due**

Day 2: Passing and Hybridity

- Reading: Nella Larsen, *Passing* part three (Internet Archive)
- Writing: Blog #5

Day 3: Introduction to the Research Essay

- Reading: Prompt for Essay 3, sample secondary source
- Writing: Blog #6: Keyword assignment

Day 4: Library Day

Day 5: Secondary Sources

- Reading: Types of Sources handout, [Mark Gaipa, “Breaking into the Conversation”](#)
- Writing: Proposal for Essay 3 due
- Group A

Day 6: Evaluating and Using Sources

- Reading: Review [They Say, I Say chapter two](#)
- Writing: Bring a secondary source you have found through research to class
- Group B

Day 7: Effective Introductions

- Reading: Introductions handout
- Writing: Source analysis due
- Group A: Thesis Workshop

Day 8: How to Structure a Research Essay

- Reading: Sample student essays, handout on structure and organization

- Group B: Thesis Workshop

Day 9: Review

- Writing: Blog #8: End of semester reflection

Day 10: Peer Review: Groups A and B

- Writing: **Draft of Essay 3 due**

Day 11: Conferences

Day 12: Presentations

- Writing: **Final draft of Essay 3 is due**