

Dr. Janine Utell
ENGL 101: Reading, Thinking, Writing
Fall 2014 – MWF 10-10:50
Office: Kapelski 331
Office Phone: 610.499.4527

Office Hours: MWF 9-10, 11-12, 2-3; virtual hours: TR 9-10pm; and by appointment
Email: jmutell@widener.edu
Twitter and Skype: janineutell
GChat: janine.utell

Course Description

Success in college calls for curiosity, engagement, and a willingness to be challenged, as well as having a strong foundation in reading, writing, and thinking. First-year students at Widener begin their college career with ENGL 101, a course designed to prepare undergraduates for serious academic inquiry, full participation in the intellectual life and mission of the university, and sustained self-directed learning throughout the curriculum. Students have the opportunity to select a section of ENGL 101 focused on a particular theme or topic. Through a variety of challenging reading and writing assignments engaging with the topic of choice, students become more careful and discerning readers; they will express insights and craft sustained arguments supported by carefully chosen evidence from primary and secondary material; and they will strengthen their ability to ask questions, evaluate and synthesize complex information, and draw conclusions.

All sections of ENGL 101 have a theme, a guiding idea or set of questions to be pursued from a range of perspectives. Our theme is **Ways of Being and Living: Public and Private**. This connects to our common reading, Jena Osman's *Public Figures*, but it also seems like a worthwhile topic to delve into as you begin this new phase of your intellectual, social, and personal life. Who are we in public? Who are we in private? How do we engage with the world and others, while also figuring out who we are? What shapes us, and how do we make sense of all the different parts of our lives: family, friends, work, society? How can we use reading, writing, film, etc., as a way to work through some of these questions?

Student Learning Outcomes

Habits of Mind: Students will develop the habits of mind necessary for successful academic inquiry and participation in the intellectual life and mission of the university, including curiosity, openness, engagement, creativity, persistence, responsibility, flexibility, and metacognition.

Engagement with Content: Students will be able to read, understand, and manipulate substantive, serious, and challenging content written from a range of perspectives and drawing on a variety of fields of inquiry primarily focused on the liberal arts.

Rhetorical Knowledge: Students will be able to analyze and use rhetorical concepts in their own writing, including audience, purpose, context, genre.

Critical Thinking: Students will be able to analyze a text and make thoughtful decisions based on that analysis, including dealing with other points of view, asking good questions, formulating claims and deploying evidence, synthesizing information, and putting their own ideas in conversation with others.

Information Literacy: Students will be able to locate multiple types of sources from the traditional to the digital, evaluate them for credibility and relevance, and use them effectively while creating their own writing in a variety of print and digital environments.

Writing Process: Students will be able to use multiple strategies to undertake and sustain writing and research, such as invention, location and manipulation of primary and secondary sources, drafting, workshopping, and revising.

Knowledge of Conventions: Students will be able to use the conventions of correct academic writing, including syntax, diction, documentation, etc.

Required Texts

Jon Krakauer, *Into the Wild*
Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home*
Jena Osman, *Public Figures*
George Orwell, *Down and Out in Paris and London*
plus assorted handouts where necessary

Course Requirements

I have two main requirements for any course I teach:

- Do all the reading, carefully, critically, with an open mind and a serious effort to enjoy what you're doing
- Participate in the work of the course through active engagement and collaboration, including discussion and written contributions

I believe that a course is created by all the people in it. We spend a semester together collaborating both in written work and in discussion. Your writing, both formal and informal, makes a contribution to the work of the course and the ideas we are shaping; my comments on your papers are part of that dialogue. Likewise, our discussions are part of a collaborative building effort. My goal is to make the classroom a hospitable place for intellectual exchange; I hope you will join in the spirit of that endeavor.

My classes are discussion-based, and I take participation in that very seriously. I don't think of it merely in terms of a "participation grade," where I check off who speaks on which given day, or who "performs" well in answering a question. Three times a week, we come together to share ideas about the work we are doing and try to build something of value that you can take with you. In order to fully join, you are obligated to me and to your colleagues to complete reading and writing assignments, and to take them seriously. Don't think of it as, "I need to take this seriously because the teacher wants me to and I want an A." Think of it as, "I need to take this seriously because I have a responsibility to the community of the class for the time we are here." In the final analysis, it's up to you how seriously you take the course. You will do as well as you choose.

In return, I will take your ideas seriously, try to challenge you by asking interesting questions, and give you feedback that you personally will find useful for what you want to work on and for your particular learning style, which I hope to become acquainted with over the course of the semester through class discussion, writing assignments, and one-on-one conferences.

The work for the course will consist of a series of tasks and challenges asking you to look at the concept of selfhood from a variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives, as well strengthen research, writing and critical thinking skills. At the end you will have a chance to synthesize what you've learned, and build on it by imagining areas of further investigation. The variety of assignments is meant to give you multiple, different opportunities to demonstrate your learning through doing, making, and writing, and to allow you to practice multiple modes of enquiry and the use of multiple tools.

1) Progressive Paper: The main assignment for this course is the progressive paper: an extended writing project you'll be working on all semester. It will be done in parts, with lots of feedback. The paper will allow you to engage with a question for the duration of the course; you'll start with that question and answer it as best you can, and then add material developed through your reading, guided research, and feedback. At each stage, we'll be asking: what do you need to go further, answer your questions, deepen your thinking, change your mind? We'll start this right at the beginning, and it will be due at the end of the semester. 3 stages, each worth 20 points = 60 points + final version = 40 points = 100 points total

2) Short writing based on the reading: After we finish each book, there will be a short paper addressing some theme or question raised by our reading and discussion. 15 points each = 60 points

3) Engagement with Orwell: When we read *Down and Out in Paris and London*, you'll have a chance to learn from some upper-level students who are also working on the book. They will have designed something to facilitate our discussion, challenge you in writing, or teach you something new about Orwell's book. You'll have a chance to give them feedback in turn. 30 points

4) Common Reading Events/Reflection: Everyone is required to attend one event related to the common reading and write a reflection. I'll be providing dates, as well as sign-up opportunities and tickets where applicable. 20 points

5) In-class writing: We will often have in-class writing to spark discussion, reflect, ask and answer key questions, etc. These will be ungraded, but I'll collect them and tally them up for your points, as well as read them to see how and what you're thinking. 20 points

6) Conferences: We will conference at least twice during the semester; some time will be spent in class coming up with the agendas for these meetings. 10 points each (including agenda setting and reflection) = 20 points

total possible points = 250

A = 250-225

A- = 224-200

B+ = 199-175

B = 174-150

B- = 149-125

C+ = 124-100

C = 99-75

C- = 74-50

D = 49-25

F = 25 and below

I'm looking forward to working with you, and invite comments, suggestions, feedback, concerns, etc. over the course of the semester.

Course Schedule

Week One: 8/25-8/29

Introductions: Who I am, why I write: how do we define the public and private self/public and private writing
start *Into the Wild* for Friday

Week Two: 9/1-9/5

No class Monday: Labor Day
Into the Wild

Week Three: 9/8-9/12

Into the Wild; video and *New Yorker* article

Week Four: 9/15-9/19

first short paper on *Into the Wild* due Monday
start *Fun Home*
start working on progressive paper

Week Five: 9/22-9/26

Fun Home
first stage of progressive paper due Monday

Week Six: 9/29-10/3

second short paper on *Fun Home* due Monday
no class: conferences

Week Seven: 10/6-10/10

No class Friday 10/10
working on progressive paper + supplemental reading

Week Eight: 10/13-10/17

No class Monday 10/13: Fall Break
Public Figures

Week Nine: 10/20-10/24

Public Figures
second stage of progressive paper due Monday

Week Ten: 10/27-10/31

third short paper on *Public Figures* due Monday
no class: conferences

Week Eleven: 11/3-11/7

No class Friday 11/7
working on progressive paper + supplemental reading

Week Twelve: 11/10-11/14

Down and Out in Paris and London

Week Thirteen: 11/17-11/21

third stage of progressive paper due Monday
Down and Out in Paris and London; engagement with Orwell

Week Fourteen: 11/24-11/28

No class Friday: Thanksgiving
fourth short paper on *Down and Out in Paris and London* due Monday

Week Fifteen: 12/1-12/5

progressive paper due Friday 12/5

Policies and Necessary Administrative Type Info

Attendance and Grading policy:

You are permitted six absences for emergencies (Widener policy stipulates that students are allowed to be absent twice the number of times a class meets a week—we meet three times a week, hence six absences). You will receive a warning after five. After the six absence, I will enter a failing grade for you for the course. If something is going on with you that causes you to miss class, please come talk to me about it before it gets out of hand! Note that because this class has a hefty in-class work requirement, if you miss it will impact your grade.

I will return your graded work back to you as quickly as possible, and you should *always* feel free to talk to me about the feedback you receive (or would like to receive). You will have the option to receive feedback either in writing or electronically. It is important that you participate in the feedback loop: this means reading through my comments and sharing thoughts in conferences, giving serious consideration to the kinds of feedback you're getting, and telling me what kind of feedback you need.

Late policy:

Work will not be accepted beyond the class meeting immediately following the meeting in which the work is due. In other words, if a paper is due on a Monday, you have until we meet for Wednesday's class to turn it in if it has to be late. Email papers are always fine, of course, but NOT after we begin class the meeting after the due date. No late in-class writing will be accepted. The reason for this is once too much time has elapsed, you lose the thread and import of whatever it is you're writing about in relation to the course moment that generated it, and your chances for success are diminished. Especially for the longer projects in this class, the drafting and revising process will not work if you fall behind on turning in your work and getting feedback. Simply put, it's not fair to you to allow you to follow your worst impulses, and you won't get as much out of assignments if they are not completed on time. Informal writing will not be accepted late, ever; the whole point is that they are meant to contribute to class discussion, and turning them in late defeats the purpose.

Cell phone policy:

I certainly understand the desire to stay connected to other aspects of your life, but I would like to keep the multitasking to a minimum so that we can pursue our work with limited distractions and the fullest engagement possible. So, devices should be put away unless you are expecting something really important. If you do mess with the device, you will be asked to surrender it. This policy will be waived in emergencies, or if we ever need to Google something. NOTE: If there is a serious event happening in your life (family member in the hospital, sister about to go into labor, amazing job opportunity about to come your way), talk to me about it BEFORE class starts. If you need to take a call, you may leave the room and deal with it, and I won't embarrass both of us by yelling at you because I didn't know.

Textbooks and e-Readers:

Purchasing the books, reading them, and bringing them to class is required. No exceptions. If you do not have the text, you will be marked absent. If you have no intention of getting the books you need by the time you need them, you may as well drop the course. The text is necessary for our work; it would be like trying to have lab without the proper equipment. If you must use e-texts (i.e., Google Books, Bartleby.com, Project Gutenberg), print them out and bring them to class—AFTER you check with me to make sure the text is correct (send me the link so I can make sure). For now, e-readers, like a basic Amazon Kindle, are acceptable; laptops and tablets are not. All I should see on your desk are your notebook, a writing implement, the required text for the day, and (where applicable) your cell phone.

Email/Social Media/IM policy:

I believe technology can be a valuable teaching tool. Social media is a part of the professional world, so learning to use it appropriately in a work context is important. These tools allow us to continue a class discussion outside of class hours. They give students who might be shy about speaking up in class a chance to contribute their thoughts. They make it easier for me to comment on your drafts and ideas as you work on your papers, and to answer quick questions you might have about readings and assignments. Finally, if you have a problem with the way class is going, or a concern you don't feel comfortable raising in person, they can make it possible for us to work through those issues. I am happy to talk about class with you over a chat app, social media, or—if you can't make it to the office but prefer something face-to-face—Skype. I encourage you especially to take advantage of virtual office hours. And I use email A LOT, so please remember to check Campus Cruiser every day. It will be a forum for disseminating assignments and weekly wrap-ups.

BUT: it is important that these tools be used appropriately. I want to be accessible, but I would also like to be treated with courtesy, the same courtesy I hope I show to you. All of these tools in this context should be viewed as a *professional* communication. You should write to me the same way you would write to a colleague in a work environment. So, here are a few ground rules for professional and reasonable use of e-communication:

- Please use “please” and “thank you,” especially if you are writing for help with something like a paper or assignment. It is my job to help you, and I want to help you – but good manners never hurt anybody.

- Please identify yourself clearly – name, course, etc. – and use appropriate salutations and closings. This is just good sense for professional communication; your future employers and colleagues will appreciate you getting into this habit now, if you are not already.
- Please use language appropriately. As with any professional correspondence, you should avoid language that is too informal. You should write grammatically correct sentences. You should check for spelling. You should avoid IM and texting-type usage and abbreviations. (These can be relaxed a bit for IM communication, since it's more casual—clarity is the most important thing.)
- If I send you something, like a draft with comments, please write back to confirm receipt. I will do the same for you when you send me something. If you do NOT get a confirmation from me, feel free to remind/nudge!
- If you send papers via attachment, please use MS Word. If you do not have MS Word, please save in “.txt” or “.rtf” format. Please do not cut and paste into the body of the email.
- Please be reasonable when emailing/IM-ing with questions about papers, exams, etc. Leave yourself enough time when working to email questions or drafts. If you email me at 3 a.m. the night before a paper is due, I cannot help you. I try to answer email as promptly as I can, and I do have a smartphone, but I usually stop dealing with email by 9 p.m. except for emergencies, and start up again at around 7:30 a.m. after I am sufficiently caffeinated. Weekends are usually fine for emailing and getting a prompt response; if it's not fine, I'll let you know.
- If you have a serious problem with me – the way I run class, the way I've graded your paper, anything – I absolutely encourage you to come talk to me. But please do not send me an angry, invective-filled email in the heat of the moment. Take a deep breath and think, “How would I feel if somebody sent me an email like this?” It can be too easy to send things in anger you might regret later, especially when there is no face-to-face contact.
- I do not go back and forth over email regarding grades. Those conversations should take place in person. If you have a problem with a grade, you can email me to set up an appointment to talk about it, and we'll go from there.

Academic Integrity policy:

Widener University regards dishonesty on the part of students as unacceptable behavior. This includes but is not limited to plagiarism, handing in another's (either a student's or a professional's) work as your own, or cheating.

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense. It is the unattributed use of another's work. In essence you are stealing someone else's thoughts or words. Every word you write must be your own. If you use someone else's ideas, you must give that author credit through correct documentation. We will discuss plagiarism and how to avoid it in class; I expect that you will uphold the integrity of the academic community here at Widener and your discipline more broadly. Unintentional plagiarism is just as bad as intentional plagiarism.

If plagiarism does occur, however, the university has policies to deal with it: My minimum penalty for individuals who have committed academic fraud will be ***failure in the course*** and a memo turned in to the Provost's Office and the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences detailing the infraction for your permanent record. For a second offense, the penalty will be failure in the course and expulsion from the university.

I take plagiarism very seriously, because I take ideas very seriously. To steal someone else's work is an offense to what we are doing here, and I will deal with it as such.

Learning Accommodations:

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, any student has the right to request reasonable accommodation of a disability. Accommodations can be requested through Academic Support Services, Disabilities Services (520 E. 14th St., 610-499-1266). Disabilities Services is the office that authorizes all accommodations on campus. Please note that you will need to present documentation of your disability to Disabilities Services. It is important to make this request as soon as possible so that we will have time to make any necessary arrangements.