

ENC 1102, Section 28: Freshman Writing and Research  
American Culture—The Popular, The Personal, The Political  
Spring 2011

Course Meeting Time: MWF 11:15 am – 12:05 pm  
Location: WMS 217

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Office: WMS 329 Office hours: MW 10-11 am

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### First Year Composition Mission Statement

First-Year Composition courses at FSU teach writing as a recursive and frequently collaborative process of invention, drafting, and revising. Writing is both personal and social, and students should learn how to write for a variety of purposes and audiences. Since writing is a process of making meaning as well as communicating, FYC teachers respond to the content of students' writing as well as to surface errors. Students should expect frequent written and oral response on the content of their writing from both teacher and peers. Classes rely heavily on a workshop format. Instruction emphasizes the connection between writing, reading, and critical thinking; students should give thoughtful, reasoned responses to the readings. Both reading and writing are the subject of class discussions and workshops, and students are expected to be active participants in the classroom community.

If you would like further information regarding the First-Year Composition Program, feel free to contact the program director, Dr. Deborah Coxwell Teague ([dteague@fsu.edu](mailto:dteague@fsu.edu)).

### Course Outcomes

In ENC 1101 and ENC 1102, students work to develop their own thinking through writing. The First-Year Composition Program sees the aims—goals and objectives—of the courses as outcomes for students, and we share the position adopted by the Council of Writing Program Administrators (WPA) regarding "outcomes," or types of results, and not 'standards,' or precise levels of achievement . . . [that] we expect to find at the end of first-year composition" (from the WPA Outcomes Statement). For more information, visit the following URL:

<http://www.wpacouncil.org/positions/outcomes.html>

### Required Materials

*The Curious Researcher: A Guide to Writing Research Papers*, FSU Edition, by Bruce Ballenger, 2009

*Beyond Words: Cultural Texts for Reading and Writing*, FSU Edition, by Ruskiewicz, Anderson, & Friend, 2009

*The McGraw-Hill Handbook*, FSU Edition, by Maimon, Peritz, & Yancey, 2010

Access to a computer and email

### Requirements of Course

All of the formal written assignments below must be turned in to me in order to pass the course.

- Three papers, edited and polished

- Four drafts and revisions of each of the three formal papers
- 10-15 informal exploratory journals/reading responses
- Two individual conferences in lieu of class time to work one-on-one on a draft, writing strategy, etc
- Thoughtful, active, and responsible participation and citizenship, including discussion, preparation for class, in-class informal writing
- Final project

### Grading Breakdown

Paper 1	20%
Paper 2	25%
Paper 3	20%
Final Project	15%
Journal/Reading Responses	15%
Participation	5%

### ALL FORMAL PAPERS AND THEIR PROCESS WORK MUST BE COMPLETED AND TURNED IN TO EARN A PASSING GRADE IN THIS COURSE.

You will turn in drafts of all essays/projects on assigned dates, and you will receive both feedback from your peers and from me.

### Attendance

The First-Year Composition program maintains a strict attendance policy to which this course adheres: an excess of six absences is grounds for failure. You should always inform me, ahead of time when possible, about why you miss class. Save your absences for when you get sick or for family emergencies. Not showing up for a conference counts as an absence as well. Part of your grade is based on class participation—if you are not here you can't participate!

### Tardiness

Entering class late is disrespectful to me and your fellow students. Thus, whether you are a minute late or ten minutes late, you are disrupting my classroom. Should you arrive to class late more than three times in the semester, you will be marked absent instead of tardy. The same goes for leaving early without prior notice.

### Late Work

Late work is not acceptable. Papers turned in late will be reduced a third of a letter grade per day, beginning the minute the assignment is past due—since you submit your papers online, that means a third of a letter grade per day, not per class meeting.

## Conferences

During the semester, you will have two twenty-minute conferences with me to work on your papers. I will give you feedback and a projected grade so you can gauge how you are doing on the assignment. These conferences are mandatory. Failure to attend a conference counts as two absences in the course.

## First-Year Composition Course Drop Policy

This course is NOT eligible to be dropped in accordance with the “Drop Policy” adopted by the Faculty Senate in Spring 2004. The Undergraduate Studies Dean will not consider drop requests for a First-Year Composition course unless there are extraordinary and extenuating circumstances utterly beyond the student’s control (e.g.: death of a parent or sibling, illness requiring hospitalization, ect.). The Faculty Senate specifically eliminated First-Year Composition courses from the University Drop Policy because of the overriding requirement that First-Year Composition be completed during students’ initial enrollment at FSU.

## Civility

This class will tolerate neither disruptive language nor disruptive behavior. Disruptive language includes, but is not limited to, violent and/or belligerent and/or insulting remarks, including sexist, racist, homophobic or anti-ethnic slurs, bigotry, and disparaging commentary, either spoken or written (offensive slang is included in this category). While each of you have a right to your own opinions, inflammatory language founded in ignorance or hate is unacceptable and will be dealt with immediately.

Disruptive behavior includes the use of cell phones, pagers or any other form of electronic communication during the class session (email, web-browsing, text messages, etc). Disruptive behavior also includes whispering or talking when another member of the class is speaking or engaged in relevant conversation (remember that I am a member of this class as well). Likewise, I consider sleeping in class disrespectful to both me and your peers. This classroom functions on the premise of respect, and you will be asked to leave the classroom if you violate any part of this statement on civility. Remember you will send me an email that indicates you have read and understand this policy.

## Journals

Exploratory journals usually deal with a reading assignment or class discussion. Journals should be thoughtful and show the depth of your thinking process; you might tell stories to illustrate your ideas, you might end up contradicting yourself, you might write things you aren’t certain are true or not—these are a few ways you can “explore” in your journals. We will regularly share journals in class, so be sure to write things you are comfortable discussing with others.

## Drafts, Revisions, and Final Papers

You’ll need to make copies of your drafts and revisions (not final papers) before you come to class on days we workshop. The number of drafts needed will be provided to you prior to each workshop. I require that all drafts and revisions by typed (MLA format, 1-inch margins). You have access to a number of computer labs around campus, so if you don’t have your own computer take advantage of one of FSU’s. Final papers do not need covers or title pages. All your written work must have your

name, my name, and the date at the top of the first page. You will be responsible for some photocopying expenses for this class on occasion, in order to share your writing with your peers. You will generally be choosing your own topics and structures for the drafts and papers in this class (after the first week). You will be required to share your work with your classmates so take care in what you choose to write about. Your writing for this class is nearly always public writing in the sense that others will be reading, hearing, and commenting on it.

## Reading Writing Center (RWC)

The Reading/Writing Center, located in Williams 222-C, is devoted to individualized instruction in reading and writing. Part of the English Department, the RWC serves Florida State University students at all levels and from all majors. Its clients include a cross-section of the campus: first-year students writing for composition class, upper level students writing term papers, seniors composing letters of applications for jobs and graduate schools, graduate students working on theses and dissertations, multilingual students mastering English, and a variety of others. The RWC serves mostly walk-in tutoring appointments, however it also offers three different courses for credit that specifically target reading, undergraduate-level writing, and graduate-level writing.

The tutors in the RWC, all graduate students in English with training and experience in teaching composition, use a process-centered approach to help students at any stage of writing: from generating ideas, to drafting, organizing and revisions. Why the RWC does not provide editing or proofreading services, its tutors can help writers build their own editing and proofreading strategies. Our approach to tutoring is to help students grow as writers, readers and critical thinkers by developing strategies for writing in a variety of situations.

During the fall and spring semesters, the RWC is open Monday through Thursday from 10-6 and Friday from 10-2. Hours of operation vary in summer. Visit the RWC website or call 644-6495 for information.

## Strozier Satellite Location

The Strozier location serves students where its most convenient for them, and alongside the research and advising services the library offers. Only walk-in appointments are available at this RWC location, on a first-come first-served basis, but students can sign up in advance the day of an appointment at the tutoring area. Hours vary by semester, but are updated on both the RWC website and the Strozier Library website at the start of each semester.

## Digital Studio

The Digital Studio provides support to students working individually or in groups on a variety of digital projects, such as designing a website, developing an electronic portfolio for a class, creating a blog, selecting images for a visual essay, adding voiceover to a presentation, or writing a script for a podcast. Tutors who staff the Digital Studio can help students brainstorm essay ideas, provide feedback on the content and design of a digital project, or facilitate collaboration for group projects and presentations.

Students can use the Digital Studio to work on their own to complete class assignments or to improve overall capabilities in digital communication without a tutoring appointment if a

workstation is available. However, tutor availability and workspace are limited so appointments are recommended.

To make an appointment email [fsudigitalstudio@gmail.com](mailto:fsudigitalstudio@gmail.com) or visit the Digital Studio in Williams 222-B. Hours vary by semester and are updated at their website.

### Plagiarism

Plagiarism (including self-plagiarism) is grounds for suspension from the university as well as for failure in this course. It will not be tolerated. Any instance of plagiarism must be reported to the Director of First-Year Composition and the Director of Undergraduate Studies. Plagiarism is a counterproductive, non-writing behavior that is unacceptable in a course intended to aid the growth of individual writers.

Plagiarism is included among the violations defined in the Academic Honor Code, section b), paragraph 2, as follows: "Regarding academic assignments, violations of the Academic Honor Code shall include representing another's work or any part thereof, be it published or unpublished, as one's own." A plagiarism education assignment that further explains this issue will be administered in all first-year writing courses during the second week of class. Each student will be responsible for completing the assignment and asking questions regarding any parts they do not fully understand.

### Gordon Rule

In order to fulfill FSU's Gordon Rule "W" Designation (writing) credit, the student must earn a "C-" or better in the course, and in order to receive a "C-" or better in the course, the student must earn at least a "C-" on the required writing assignments for the course. If the student does not earn a "C-" or better on the required writing assignments for the course, the student will not earn an overall grade of "C-" or better in the course, no matter how well the student performs in the remaining portion of the course.

The University stipulates that students must write 7000 words in ENC 1101 & 1102 (at least 3500 words per course).

### ADA

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodations should in the FIRST WEEK OF CLASS 1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC) and 2) bring a letter to the instructor from SDRC indicating the need for academic accommodations. This and all other class materials are available in alternative format upon request.

## Papers & Projects

**NOTE:** All papers should be in 12pt, Times New Roman

### Paper 1: The TV Paper, 5-7 pages

This paper asks you to examine a facet of culture as it is portrayed on TV or another show that attempts to show "reality." This paper is really an exercise in semiotic reasoning. In other words, as you work with your material, you should keep asking (and answering!) two fundamental questions: why and what does this mean?

You may choose one show to study in-depth or two shows to compare/contrast. There is an almost endless number of ways this paper can be approached, but the real goal here is analysis. Whether you look at representation of gender, race, class, stereotypes, some combination of these, or something all your own, your task is to produce an argument in terms of what the show says about some facet of our culture. One of the challenges will be to avoid simply summarizing the material you've viewed, so be sure to strike a balance between recapping what happened on the show and what it means in a larger sense.

It is off-limits for this paper, but I'll use *Survivor* as an example here to show you what kind of work you might do. If you were to watch an episode of *Survivor* and notice that it seems to constantly portray women as whiny and backstabbing, your goal would be to (1) show evidence of this by citing specific examples from the show and (2) to ask the questions why and what does that mean in a broader sense, i.e. what is the message being sent? You might then branch out to discuss how, conversely, the men are portrayed. Are there any women who defy the stereotypes? If so, how do they do this? How are they received by the other women on the show? By the other men? Does this world (the world of *Survivor*) seem to privilege one sex over the other?

Possible avenues this paper could explore:

- Speaking of *Survivor*, you might compare two TV shows that are contests. Perhaps you could compare/contrast and analyze *Project Runway* versus *Top Chef*. What elements are present in both shows and what effect do they have? Does the show seem scripted even though the people are supposedly every-day Joes? What do you notice about the contestants? What about the editing?
- You might look at *The Hills* and try to determine why the show is so popular. Where is the line between reality and script? What elements of the show are so appealing? To whom is it appealing?
- You might look at an episode of MTV's *The Real World* and take on an analysis of the stereotypes the show works with.
- What about the shows that have contestants humiliate themselves in some way? Certainly a group of people diving head first into a trough of bloodworms for \$50K is saying something about American values.
- Perhaps you could look at one of the many shows that has women or men vying for the prize of one person's "love." How are the contestants portrayed? What kinds of values are being promoted?
- You might watch an episode of *Law & Order* and discuss its portrayal of the American legal system. Do the police officers seem realistic? The lawyers? The

crimes? Who seems to have the most power? Is it ever exploited?

Again, there is any number of approaches that you could take here, but keeping in mind that your goal is analysis will be helpful in writing this paper.

## Paper 2 – Reflecting and Shaping American Cultures 7-10 pages

This paper moves beyond personally exploring one's own culture and asks you to critically analyze various cultures existing within America, but instead of looking at American culture on television and talk shows, this paper will allow you to examine other cultural facets of America. You will examine how American culture is reflected and shaped through various legal actions, media formats, and concepts. Your paper will select one of particular facets of American culture—one that closely reveals a part of America's culture. For example, you could explore the increase number of college students who watch John Stewart's *Daily Show*, and how this television show becomes the main, or only, source of news for this particular group; how does this show impact youth's perception of news? Also, you could examine the ways gas prices or global warming has shaped and continues to shape America's automobile industry. Then you will compose a feature article or exposé in order to reveal how your particular topic defines our overall culture and how do the rhetoric and images surrounding this topic impact one's understanding of it. How do current events and news shape our understanding of American culture? We want to examine what we take for granted in our culture, interrogate it, and bring our discoveries to light in this paper. In order to investigate a particular part of our culture, you will become journalists, freelancers, and authors, writing for the news publication, magazine, or insider program of your choice.

When approaching this topic, you need to look past the simple news story and closely analyze what this specific part of our culture means both to us and the American culture. Like with the first paper, do not summarize but analyze. Find something that engages or troubles you within the American culture.

- You could take a closer look at some of America's obsessions such as Facebook, text messaging, and conveniences (with fast cars, food, and cash).
  - How has Facebook altered the social aspect of American culture or how does our culture affect Facebook?
- You could also consider current events and news, ranging from political decisions to technological inventions to media programs that depict these events.
  - For example, you could explore: what has happened to Miami and the United States Immigration Policy since Elian Gonzalez?
  - What is an American college degree in the twenty-first century?
- You could also explore America's shifting understanding of gender, politics, race, sexuality, and other concepts.
  - You could analyze the "modern" American concept of beauty (where does it come from or how has beauty shaped our culture and vice versa?).
  - Another example is looking at the impact of Florida's law on adoption in connection with homosexual couples, and you could use the

Steven Lofton's lawsuit against Florida's legal standing on homosexuals and adoption rights, deeming it a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution.

- You could also examine America's understanding of art and aesthetics, using Stephen Colbert's portrait hanging outside the bathrooms in the Smithsonian.

After finding an interesting topic to analyze, you need to consider who you want to address—who is your audience—as you compose your feature article or exposé. Where might such an article or exposé be published? A feature article informs the reader and engages them in an interesting way, while an exposé exposes some stories or information, uncovering untold truths. Make the topic interesting for the audience; make us want to read it. You need to not only catch the reader's attention but also hold that attention through your choice of language and your tone. Your language and rhetoric become tools for presenting your critical stance of this part of American culture. Think about how writer's rhetoric and your own rhetoric conveys a topic; how do images alter one's perception of culture and how can you also use images to deliver your message.

There is a **minimum of 5 sources** required to support your **7–10 page article**, drawing from a **variety of source materials**: library books, journals, magazines, newsprint, credible web publications, interviews, etc. Our text, *The Curious Researcher*, will guide us through the steps to researching for your feature article/ exposé and to documenting your sources using MLA format. In addition, your article **must incorporate a visual in some way**.

## Paper Three – Personal Politics: Advertising and Marketing on a Personal Level 5-7 pages

For this assignment, the writer is asked to consider certain types of marketing and advertising schemes that you feel have direct applicability to your life. The writer will consider how, and in what ways, certain types of advertising or marketing campaigns speak to the writer: as an individual person, as a member of a small community, and then a conflation of the two in the national and/or global world at large.

For example, the writer may see a t-shirt sporting a specific slogan or picture indicative of not only a certain product but of a certain marketing strategy. Certain Cola-Cola television advertisements picture former U.S. Senator Bill Frist (a Republican) debating with political strategist James Carville (a Democrat) on a television talk show. Frist says to Carville, "Jinx—you owe me a Coke." The rest of the advertisement shows the two engaged in leisure activities around the Washington D.C. area, clearly arguing that drinking Coca-Cola clearly helps people of different political persuasions get along. An examination of this advertisement would take into account:

- the viewer's political persuasion (if, indeed, there is one) and how this plays a role in both the interpretation of the advertisement and also along what party lines the viewer defines him or herself;
- a reflection on how the advertisement addresses both the growing rift between political parties and the (seeming) lack of genuine, hospitable dialogue between members of opposing parties—both done with viewer self-reflection front and center in the analysis;

- the dichotomy between demonizing and humanizing those that belong to opposing camps and how the viewer feels this is portrayed in the media and by members of the viewer's personal cadre of associates;
- finally, an exploration of the viewer's political ideologies on (1) a personal level, (2) within the viewer's close group of friends and family, and, finally, (3) the role of the viewer's politics in response to the message portrayed by the commercial.

The writer should keep in mind their audience of peers when writing this paper. This assignment should make use of at least 3 outside sources other than the primary advertisement/commercial that serves as the basis for the paper. If using a commercial aired on television, it would behoove the writer to find a clip online—YouTube, perhaps—and include the clip on the “Works Cited” page.

### **Final Project: The Cultural, Blogging Critic** approx 2-4 pages

The goal is for you to identify yourself as a cultural critic, which you should feel comfortable doing at this point in the semester. This project requires you to choose a specific angle from which to attack/analyze/comment on the world. You might choose to organize your work thematically and decide that, say, advertising is going to be your focal point and proceed from there, looking at anything from a specific ad campaign to a quick rant on the nature of advertising as a whole. You might take the position of music critic and look at MTV and what it plays for music (when it plays videos) or at the top hits on YouTube. Perhaps you are interested in sports, Foxnews, gardening, college life, scenesters, gourmet food, etc... Or maybe you want to take on a persona for your blog—someone that sounds nothing like the “real” you but who has a lot to say on a variety of topics (I once had a student write her entire blog from the perspective of a 30-yr-old cactus). Really, the topic(s) that you choose and the way you organize and approach your work will be entirely up to you.

A blogger can look at anything. What is key is that the tone is correct; I am asking you to be a critic here, which means you must generate something interesting to read for your audience—something at least partially analytical/critical. Voice is of the utmost importance. Just claiming that what unifies your work is that it sounds like you is not enough. How does it sound like you? What features of the writing make your voice unique? Or if you take on a persona, how does it sound like that other person?

You will compose anywhere from 6-12 blog entries (ultimately, three-four typed pages). And as we have spent the semester analyzing different types of texts, this is the project that really synthesizes your ability to do this. There must be a visual component to each blog entry. You will see from the blogs that we look at that there are many ways to incorporate visuals (YouTube clips, music videos, still pictures, etc...). Getting the visuals and the text to really support and work off one another will be one of the unique challenges to this genre of writing.

Finally, have fun with these. You have a lot of freedom, so as long as you aren't doing anything outright offensive (which would receive no credit), you can really get away with a number of different things. Just make sure there is something that unifies your work (either a theme, voice, content...) AND a visual component to each one.

### ***For students, after some time has been spent on the projects:***

For the two final days of the semester, you will be giving presentations on the blogs you've been working on. It is up to you how you present your work, but the following should be taken into consideration and addressed during your presentations, as it is the criteria by which you will be judged:

- Cohesiveness. What unifies your work? Do you have a theme that connects all of the pieces? If not theme, what is it that makes the blog identifiable as having been created by you?
- Voice. What kind of voice did you try to work with? Is it your “authentic” voice, or did you try something else? Why? If it's your voice,
- Audience. Of course, the audience is me and the rest of the class, but who else could you imagine reading your blog? Who would enjoy it and why? Who wouldn't touch it with an eight-foot pole? How did you address audience in the writing? Did you think about it as you wrote?
- Visual component. Do you think your visuals are effective? What makes them work? Are any of them your own photos? If not, where did they all come from?
- Could you see yourself ever keeping a public blog? Would you consider continuing this one?

I recommend making some notes for your presentation, but try to refrain from just reading the paper in your hand. You know everyone in this class at this point, so standing up for 5-10 minutes and talking to the people shouldn't be that intimidating. You might have people click through your work and vote on what they like best. You might ask people to read aloud. It's your classroom for 5-10 minutes. Make the most of it.

Good luck with this, and try to have fun. As Oscar Wilde said, “Life is too important to be taken seriously.”