

Blakemore 150

English 150 / Pre-collegiate Reading & Writing / Fall 2012 CRN#E1703/ MW 1:15 - 2:40 / FM 208

Instructor: Dr. Peter Blakemore
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"I am always doing that which I can not do, in order that I may learn how to do it."
Pablo Picasso

Prerequisite: ENGL 350 (or equivalent) with a "C" grade or better, or assessment recommendation for ENGL 150. **You may need to provide evidence of eligibility.**

Required Texts & Materials (All materials are available at the CR Bookstore)

- *Into the Wild*, Jon Krakauer
- *How Free is Free?*, Leon Litwack
- A good handbook, such as *The Bedford Handbook*, 8th edition (recommended)
- A good (at least 70,000 words) paperback dictionary
- Three exam bluebooks
- Regular access to a computer and the rudimentary knowledge of how to use it
- Paper and pen for every class
- A flash drive memory storage device

Welcome to English 150, a course in the development of college-level reading, writing, and critical thinking skills. This class will focus on basic argumentation. You will analyze ideas and structure in assigned readings and compose essays supporting arguable thesis statements.

English 150 Student Outcomes

If you successfully complete this course, you should be able to:

- Develop an effective, thesis-driven argument appropriate to an academic audience.
- Critically read and respond to argumentative texts.
- In a multi-stage process, incorporate feedback (from instructors and peers) in essay planning and drafting.
- Apply basic grammar and punctuation rules, particularly those that address sentence boundaries.

Inquiry, Critical Thinking & Coursework

At the center of any really valuable college education must be critical thinking. Thinking critically has little to do with the common ideas about being harsh or insensitively honest or merely picky. In order to think critically you will have to engage in the process of inquiry. To approach topics and issues from the perspective of inquiry requires that you weigh ideas and consider questions you or others might have regarding claims. Most importantly, inquiry means wanting to understand an issue well enough that you can come to conclusions about your own beliefs. This is a process that is generally not taught in school before college in America, so many of you will have had little rigorous practice in the art of inquiry. Though it is a process many of us engage in every day – such as when we decide to consult movie reviewers before shelling out \$8 or \$9 for a movie – it's also true that most people don't reflect on how carefully and critically they inquire into ideas before coming to belief. College, then, must be one of the primary places where we engage in inquiry consciously. We do this not because it will help us to earn more

money after graduation (though it almost certainly will); we do this so that we can prepare ourselves to examine and know the world, nature, our nation, our cultures, our communities, and ourselves as thoroughly as possible. As you might have guessed, this process can be quite difficult – sometimes frustrating, often confusing or even exasperating, and nearly always quite complicated – yet I hope you will realize how important learning this art can be. It can liberate you, enrich your mind, and open your eyes to patterns, systems, and new ways of seeing.

Each of you will have something of your own agenda, as I have mine. As I see it, the most important reason for you to learn inquiry and how to communicate the fruits of your inquiry is that it should help you to be a better informed, more involved, more thoughtful and even more compassionate member of your community. This in turn should benefit you, me, and most everyone else you will come into contact with during the rest of your life. (Yes, I am serious about all of this.) Toward that end of modeling and practicing inquiry, I will ask you to imagine the classroom as a community akin to the wider world beyond the college (actually, the fact that we gather in this same space twice a week to discuss the world already makes this group a community). If you engage with the rest of us in the ways I have developed in the reading and class schedule, you *will* play a vital role in this community. With your effort, reading, thinking, discussing, arguing, and writing, we will all come together to affect one another in meaningful, valuable ways. Please join in!

Reading: All of our writing this term will be based on things we read and the discussions that flow out of those readings. The texts we read will be quite complex and will necessarily lead to controversy and dissent, so they will require concentration and careful analytical thinking. On most of the days when reading has been assigned, we'll start class with brief writings to identify main ideas and authorial intentions (the writer's thesis, either stated or implied) in order to get to the central issues at the heart of a topic. In the same in-class writings you will be asked to come up with questions you have about the reading or about ideas that arise within your mind after reading the essay. You will also be asked to write out a brief response describing and exploring your thoughts or emotions about the essay. If you come to class without having done the reading for that day, you will lose credit for the in-class writing and your participation during the subsequent discussion will likely be of a fairly low order. Obviously, missing 2 or 3 of these in-class writings will affect your grade, but more importantly, your failure to take the time to think through the reading in advance of our discussion will hurt the class in general and will affect your ability to write an interesting, meaningful essay. To ensure that doesn't happen, make out a schedule and block out specific times during the week when you will be able to give your reading the undivided attention necessary to truly engage the ideas. You should expect to be reading at least 50 pages or more a week. **You should always be prepared to write in class and discuss our readings on the days they are listed in our schedule.** If you are having trouble keeping up, let me know immediately – **DON'T WAIT UNTIL IT'S TOO LATE! DON'T WAIT UNTIL IT'S TOO LATE!**

Annotation and highlighting: I am also going to ask you to pay careful attention to the ways that you work with your reading. We will take time during the first couple weeks to practice the art of active reading by exploring our reasons for selecting passages from the texts we read and by examining and discussing the kinds of questions and comments we write in the margins. If you have never written in a book or on a copy of something you've read in the past, this will be new to you. Don't worry! We'll do it together in class first.

Writing: Our writing will be directly related to the questions and ideas that arise out of our reading and discussion. Because writing about inquiry requires a rigorous process of examination, critical assessment of ideas, reflection, and revision, you will need to set aside enough time to actively engage this process. Don't sell yourself short by thinking you can whip out an essay in 30 or 40 minutes. The best way to approach the writing process is to think of your

reading and discussion as the beginning of a **writing project**. I have built this idea into the course by requiring you to write in class before final essays are due. You should also keep more extensive notes in a journal or on three-ring-binder paper that you save for future use as you work through the process of each writing project. You should also keep notes on any small or large group discussions we have and combine these together with your reading notes in order to accumulate more material for each writing project. Indeed, your essays should begin in these notes to yourself. It would be wise to begin notes to yourself by writing about the thoughts you have regarding our topic. You will want to determine the central question or problem that is at issue in the reading – decide what is “in dispute” – and in your notes begin to draft your answer (or answers) to that question. With feedback from classmates, your instructor, and tutors in the Writing Center, you will begin to learn how others receive your ideas and whether or not what you wanted them to know about your ideas comes across. You will also be required to revise throughout the semester.

The Essays: We will be writing three out of class essays of different kinds and lengths during the term. The first will be a three-page **Problem Essay** in which you will inquire into some problem to discover your ideas about it through the process of questioning and the development of adequate reasons. We will move on to two longer, four-to-five-page **Thesis Essays** following the same pattern of inquiry into ideas derived from our reading and discussion but focusing more specifically on thesis and essay structure. For each of the three formal out-of-class essays you will need to attach in-class writings, invention materials, and early versions as well as tutorial forms with feedback from Writing Center tutors. Finally, in the last few weeks of the term we will write three in-class essays responding to prompts. The first two will be practice essays and the final writing of the term will be the required 150 Competency Exam, a one-and-a-half-hour in-class writing based on readings I will give you one week before the exam. **Note: Do not expect to pass this class without handing in all of the writing assignments. Also, make sure you never give me the only copy of an assignment – it is your responsibility to keep backup copies (electronic or on paper).**

Reading Journal: I strongly recommend that you keep a Reading Journal. I will not collect or read these journals (unless you would like my feedback and specifically ask me to read them) – they will be for your benefit, and should help you immensely during the time I ask you to respond with in-class writing. If you keep a simple, inexpensive Composition Notebook and use it to jot down notes and ideas while you read for this class, and if you also use it as a place to develop burgeoning ideas that are brewing in your mind, you will be able to keep track of how your thoughts are turning and shifting, and you will thus begin digging deeper into ideas you encounter in reading, discussion, television viewing, movies, and life in general. Having a compact, handy book full of thoughts and feelings is an extremely useful tool for recording ideas, pulling thoughts together, organizing information, and generating valuable material to be used in drafting writing projects.

Plagiarism: All Essays (the **Problem Essay** and the two **Thesis Essays**) need to be posted to **Turnitin.com** before you can receive credit for them. The process is simple and takes only a few minutes. I will walk you through the procedure, and you will be able to do it in the Writing Center or anywhere that you have access to the Internet. I have decided to require this not just because it is CR English Department policy, but also because I have had so many cases of plagiarism in the past several years that I want to curb the temptation as much as possible. Plagiarism, which is the act of claiming another writer’s words or ideas as your own without citing them as a source, is a serious breach of academic conduct and will result in failure of the assignment and possible failure for the course. We will discuss it in detail during the term. If you aren’t sure whether you’re about to plagiarize or not, ask an instructor.

Grammar: Because people operate at various levels of proficiency with the grammar and mechanics of written English, teachers cannot tailor college courses to hit only those aspects each individual has difficulty with. To achieve a balance, we will focus on the most common problems during the semester. They are: 1) *identifying subjects and verbs*; 2) *identifying dependent & independent clauses and differentiating these from phrases*; 3) *recognizing and correcting fragments*; 4) *recognizing and correcting comma splices & run-ons*; 5) *comma usage*; 6) *and other punctuation, including apostrophes, semi-colons, and colons*. To ensure that students in my 150 classes understand these concepts, I will rotate you through grammar-review groups. In these groups, you will work together to establish knowledge of usage and mechanics. When we have covered enough material to warrant an exam, I will give you one. All exam dates are in the schedule, so be prepared. We will also have a cumulative section on grammar and identifying terms and reading critically for the Final. If I discover persistent problems for individual writers in their formal essays, I will give people Grammar Worksheet Assignments that they will have to complete before receiving final grades on their essays. I might also assign individuals more grammar work in the Writing Center and online. If you find yourself covering concepts and rules you feel you already know well, good for you! If you find yourself struggling with many of the concepts and doing poorly on writing assignments because of grammatical errors, please come to me for extra help. Feel free to come meet with me in my office as a group or to ask me or any other instructor for grammar help in the Writing Center. Although instructors will not “proofread” your writing, they will help you to understand grammatical concepts that should, in turn, help you with your proofreading.

The English Department Attendance Policy: Students at the College are expected to attend all sessions of each class in which they are enrolled. Students *may not miss more than two weeks of class with unexcused absences*, no matter how many times that class meets in one week. If a student exceeds the limit on absences before week 11 of the semester, an instructor will notify the student that he or she has been dropped. After that, students are still responsible to go into Web Advisor and withdraw themselves from the class, in order not to receive an F. After week 10, excessive absences will likely result in failure.

Grading: I will give you credit for class work on the following basis:

Writing	One 3-page Inquiry Essay	= 10 points
	Two 4-5-page Thesis Essays	= 40 points
	In-class Competency Exams	= 20 points
Quizzes	Grammar Quizzes	= 10 points
	Final Reading & Grammar Exam	= 10 points
Participation	Class Discussion & Participation	= 10 points
		100 points

Grades will be assigned on the basis of this scale: 93-100=A / 90-92=A- / 88-89=B+ / 83-87=B / 80-82=B- / 78 - 79=C+ / 70 - 77=C / 60 - 69=D / 59 and below=F.

Working Online: I will be asking you to do some work online at our MyCR site and will be placing some course readings there. There will also be regular forums open where you can explore your ideas further and check in to see what others from our class have had to say beyond classroom discussion. Please make good use of your time online (and I don't mean Facebook).

Learning Disabilities: Students who have special needs due to physical or learning disabilities should let me know at the very beginning of the course (**I mean during this first week**) so that we can arrange appropriate accommodations. Since English 150 concludes with a timed writing competency exam, it is important that you make the necessary arrangements with the Academic Support Center *in advance*, preferably within the first few weeks of the semester.

An Invitation: Finally, experience tells me that people who think carefully about their education and become more reflective about it generally have the greatest success. Probably the best way to get involved in this process is to get to know your teachers and speak with them outside of the classroom. Visit them in the Writing Center during their hours. Make appointments to drop by their offices and let them know what’s going through your mind as it relates to your work in their classes. And most important of all, let your teachers know if something in particular isn’t coming across clearly for you. Sometimes your problem is just a particularly difficult concept, a complex section of reading, or a challenging assignment or series of assignments. Your teachers will, in almost every case, want to help you work through those tougher parts of the class. But you need to communicate with them. You especially need to communicate with me – this is an intense and very involved class that requires a lot of discipline from you. If you feel that you are falling behind, you should let me know as soon as possible. If you ask me, I will offer plenty of extra help or direct you toward others who can help. I am in the Writing Center every week (T 10 -11:30). My office hours are listed at the beginning of this syllabus, and if you cannot see me during any of these times, I’m certain we can schedule another time to meet. If you need to contact me, please call my office (476-4314) and leave a clear, specific message, including a telephone number and time when you can be reached. If you decide to email me, you should know that email has been severely compromised by spam and I may not even see your email unless it has a specific, course-related subject title. If you contact me, I will get back to you as soon as possible. I look forward to getting to know each of you better and to seeing all of you succeed. Welcome and good luck!

The lab component of the course is scheduled in the Writing Center, where students receive individualized instruction in critical reading, in the conventions of standard written English, and in all stages of the writing process.

P. Blakemore’s Precollegiate Reading & Writing—ENGL 150 / Fall 2012
Reading & Writing Schedule for *Ideas that Matter*
 (Note: if changes are required, you will receive ample notice)

A Foundation in Questions & Arguments

Week 1 / August 27 & 29

M – Introduction, syllabus, course guidelines. What is an argument? What is inquiry? How do they relate to one another? What are they good for? Why are we forced to study such things? What *matters* to *you*? Do *ideas matter*? If so, which ones? Interviews.

W – Read and respond: Considering current issues and arguments; Introduction to the Writing Center in LRC 102.

Week 2 / September 3 & 5

M – No class – Labor Day

W – Read and Respond #1: handout of Edward Abbey’s “Freedom & Wilderness, Wilderness & Freedom”: What is at issue? What are the best questions we can ask to get to the core of Abbey’s ideas? Post two questions and any comments or ideas about the reading to the MyCR Discussion Forum RR#1.

Week 3 / September 10 & 12

M – Read and Respond #2: Jon Krakauer’s *Into the Wild* pp. 1-46; Post two questions and any comments or ideas about the reading to the MyCR Discussion Forum RR#2.

W – Read and Respond #3: Jon Krakauer’s *Into the Wild* pp. 47-102; Post two questions and any comments or ideas about the reading to the MyCR Discussion Forum RR#3. Grammar Review: *subject and verb*.

Week 4 / September 17 & 19

M – Read and Respond #4: Jon Krakauer’s *Into the Wild* pp. 103-156; Post two questions and any comments or ideas about the reading to the MyCR Discussion Forum RR#4.

W – Read and Respond #5: Jon Krakauer’s *Into the Wild* pp. 157-207; Post two questions and any comments or ideas about the reading to the MyCR Discussion Forum RR#5. Grammar Review: *independent and dependent clauses*.

Week 5 / September 24 & 26

M – Writing Assignment #1 *The Problem Essay first draft* due in class for workshops Writing Center Conference Worksheet #1 due.

W – Grammar and Mechanics Exam #1; class discussion—problems and questions.

Week 6 / October 1 & 3

M – Hard copy of Writing Assignment #1 *the Problem Essay* due; class readings and argument reviews.

W – Read & Respond #6: in MyCR Resources, Eric Holder’s “Remarks on Black History Month”; Post two questions and any comments or ideas about the reading to the MyCR Discussion Forum RR#6. Grammar Review: *run-on sentences and comma splices*.

Organizing Our Ideas: from Question to Claim

Week 7 / October 8 & 10

M – Read & Respond #7: Leon Litwack’s *How Free is Free?* pp. 1-50; Post two questions and any comments or ideas about the reading to the MyCR Discussion Forum RR#7.

W – Grammar Review: *sentence fragments*.

Week 8 / October 15 & 17

M – Read & Respond #8: Leon Litwack’s *How Free is Free?* pp. 51-94; Post two questions and any comments or ideas about the reading to the MyCR Discussion Forum RR#8.

W – Writing Center Conference Worksheet #2 due. Grammar Review: *commas*.

Week 9 / October 22 & 24

M – Read & Respond #9: Leon Litwack’s *How Free is Free?* pp. 95-143; Post two questions and any comments or ideas about the reading to the MyCR Discussion Forum RR#9.

W – Writing Assignment #2 *Thesis Essay first draft* due in class for workshops Grammar Review: *commas and apostrophes*.

Week 10 / October 29 & 31

M – Read & Respond #10: in MyCR Resources, Ashraf Rushdy’s “Exquisite Corpse”; Post two questions and any comments or ideas about the reading to the MyCR Discussion Forum RR#10.

W – Writing Assignment #2 *Thesis Essay due in class*

Developing Claims and Sustaining an Argument

Week 11 / November 5 & 7

M – Class issues discussion: Topic selections due in Forums.

W – Report on Individual Issues due in Forums. Grammar Review: *other punctuation*.

Week 12 / November 12 & 14

M – No class – Veteran’s Day

W – Issue and Inquiry Report due in Forum.

Week 13 / November 19 & 21

M – Writing Center Conference Worksheet #3 due

W – Competency practice exam #1.

Week 14 / November 26 & 28

M – Writing Assignment #3 *Inquiry Essay first draft* due in class for workshops Review for Competency and Grammar Exams

W – Competency practice exam #2.

Week 15 / December 3 & 5

M – Writing Assignment #3 *Inquiry Essay due in class* Review for Competency Exam.

W – Competency Exam.

Finals Week / Final Exam / Wednesday, December 12, 1-3 pm

Required Syllabus Insert

Syllabus for: English 150 – Precollegiate Reading and Writing	
Semester & Year:	Fall semester 2012
Course ID and Section Number:	E1703
Number of Credits/Units:	3.5
Day/Time:	MW 1:15-2:40
Location:	
Instructor’s Name:	P. Blakemore
Contact Information:	Office location and hours: CA 134 / M 11- 12; TTh 11:30 – 12:30 Phone: 476-4314 Email: peter-blakemore@redwoods.edu
Course Description (catalog description as described in course outline): A course in the development of college-level reading, writing, and critical thinking skills, emphasizing basic argumentation. Students analyze ideas and structure in assigned readings and compose essays supporting arguable thesis statements. The lab component of the course is scheduled in the Writing Center, where students receive individualized instruction in critical reading, in the conventions of standard written English, and in all stages of the writing process.	

Student Learning Outcomes (as described in course outline): 1. Develop an effective, thesis-driven argument appropriate to an academic audience. 2. Critically read and respond to argumentative texts. 3. In a multi-stage process, incorporate feedback (from instructors and peers) in essay planning and drafting. 4. Apply basic grammar and punctuation rules, particularly those that address sentence boundaries.

Special accommodations: College of the Redwoods complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. Please present your written accommodation request at least one week before the first test so that necessary arrangements can be made. No last-minute arrangements or post-test adjustments will be made. If you have a disability or believe you might benefit from disability related services and may need accommodations, please see me or contact Disabled Students Programs and Services. Students may make requests for alternative media by contacting DSPS.

Academic Misconduct: Cheating, plagiarism, collusion, abuse of resource materials, computer misuse, fabrication or falsification, multiple submissions, complicity in academic misconduct, and/ or bearing false witness will not be tolerated. Violations will be dealt with according to the procedures and sanctions proscribed by the College of the Redwoods. The student code of conduct is available on the College of the Redwoods website at:

<http://www.redwoods.edu/District/Board/New/Chapter5/Ap5500.pdf>

College of the Redwoods is committed to equal opportunity in employment, admission to the college, and in the conduct of all of its programs and activities.