To: Writing Program Assessment Committee

From: Joshua Cohen

Subject: English 101 Syllabus “Writing through Parody”

Date: December 18, 2014

The proposed English 101 syllabus, “Writing through Parody,” will help students achieve the writing program’s learning outcomes by having them write in several genres, as well as parodies of those genres. The course will focus on four major genres: news articles, essays, academic prose, and oratory. Theming the course around parody will cement students’ understanding of genre conventions. The hypothesis of this syllabus is that by experimenting with exaggeration, hyperbole, and irony in their parodies, students will gain a more sophisticated knowledge of the conventions of each genre than they would if they only wrote standard versions.

The course is divided into four major units, one for each genre. Students will write two formal assignments, in addition to informal daily writing assignments, during each unit. Daily writing assignments are designed to help students summarize and analyze the readings and develop topics for their formal writing assignments. To set the stage, students will read a short selection from Mikhail Bakhtin’s “From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse” during the first week to set up the course’s central terms: genre, conventions, parody, irony, satire, etc. This piece by Bakhtin, in which he discusses the parodic satyr plays performed after and in deliberately mockery of Greek tragedies, should be especially usefully in helping students understand how parodies can only be recognized as parodies when they subvert the established conventions of a given genre.

In the first unit, students will read a series of news articles, discuss their conventions in class, and write one of their own. After they have written a standard news article, they will read parodies of the genre from sources like *The Onion* and write their own parodies. The second unit focuses on essays. Students will consider the conventions of the essay as a genre and how different kinds of essays—from personal narratives to photo essays—follow different conventions. A full week will be devoted to working carefully through Virginia Woolf’s “A Room of One’s Own.” In class writing and group discussion will give students the opportunity to summarize aspects of Woolf’s argument and analyze the significance of her claims. Next, students will read satirical essays, like Jonathan Swift’s “A Modest Proposal,” and write a satirical essay. The third unit explores academic prose. In this unit, students will read sections of *They Say, I Say* and discuss what makes a successful academic argument. They will identify specific conventions of academic prose in a scholarly journal article and then write a research paper. A few examples of academic satire, such as Samuel Beckett’s “Le Concentrisme,” will reinforce the nature of academic prose. In the final unit, students will read a variety of speeches and sermons, and then write and deliver speeches of their own. This will facilitate discussions of the differences between oral and written communication. Students will read pieces of ironic oratory and write satirical speeches to conclude the semester.

Selections from the *Bedford Book of Genres* will provide students with concrete examples of the conventions of news articles, photo essays, and peer-reviewed journal articles. *How to Write Anything* will give students resources for writing academic arguments and help them distinguish between “high,” “middle,” and “low” style.

This course will encourage students to engage in every aspect of the writing process. After students have turned in their first three written assignments, the seventh week of the course will be wholly devoted to practicing revision strategies. This will take the form of both readings and discussion of revision and in class peer review workshops. This cycle will be repeated, so that after three more weeks another week will be devoted to revision. The course will, thus, include a total of four peer review workshops, as well as individual conferences with the instructor. Forty percent of the course grade will be based on students’ final portfolios. Students will choose three of their seven formal assignments to revise for their portfolios. As part of their portfolios, students will write a formal reflection on the changes they made. They will be asked to explain what they felt (or were told by their peers) was ineffective in their first drafts and how the changes they made produced more successful pieces of writing. They will explain how the pieces in their portfolio adhere to or, in the case of parodies, subvert or exploit the conventions of the given genre. Students will write their reflections as arguments: they will cite examples from their portfolios to convince the reader that they have met the learning outcomes for the course.

**English 101, Section X, “Writing through Parody”**

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| --- | --- |
| Instructor:  | Joshua Cohen |
| Meeting Time and Place:  | TBA |
| Office Hours:  | By appointment |
| Contact:  | Joshua.laurence.cohen@emory.edu |
| Course Website:  | TBA |

**Course Description**

Do you get your news from *The Daily Show*? Would you rather read *The Onion* than *The New York Times*? Satire has a long history, but it is as refreshing and controversial today as it was in ancient Greece.

The best parodies are funny because they fully exploit the conventions of the genres they mock. In this course, we will read and write a wide range of genres, including personal narratives, news articles, editorials, essays, speeches, and sermons, in conjunction with parodies of those genres. We will use satire as a way of interrogating generic conventions, even as we practice and sometimes subvert those conventions in our own writing.

This is a writing and thinking intensive course: we will practice (re)writing a number of genres for different audiences and revising our work throughout the semester.

**Course Goals**

By the end of this class you will

* Understand the nature of parody
* Understand how genres function through conventions, ranging from structure and paragraphing to tone and mechanics
* Write in several genres, including parodies of various genres, adapting your writing style to different audiences
* Consider writing as an ongoing process, which includes generating ideas, drafting, revising, and polishing
* Practice critiquing others’ works in constructive ways through peer review workshops
* Develop strong research skills by analyzing primary and secondary sources and synthesizing them with your own ideas

**Required Texts**

*They Say, I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing* by Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein

All other readings will be available on Reserves Direct or online

**Course Policies**

**Assigned Readings:** You are expected to come to class with all assigned readings and with daily writing assignments completed. If you do not, you may receive a lower participation grade.

**Participation**: You will receive a participation grade that includes attitude, in class writing, and willingness to contribute to discussions and writing workshops.

**Attendance:** If you miss more than three classes, points will be deducted from your final grade. Beginning with your fourth unexcused absence, your grade will drop by one letter per absence. If you know you will have to miss class for a school-related activity you must let me know ahead of time to be excused. Documented medical emergencies are also excused.

* 4 absences = B
* 5 absences = C
* 6 absences = D
* 7 absences = F

**Writing Workshops:** We will devote several class sessions to reading each other’s work. These workshops are critical to fulfilling our course goals, so missing them may result in a lower participation grade. You are expected to come to class having read and made comments on your fellow students’ work so that we can devote class time to discussing each other’s drafts in small groups. These workshop sessions will be essential to helping you revise your work for you final portfolio.

**Late Work:** All assignments are due by the time and date specified. Late work will be penalized by one letter grade for each class period the assignment is late. Should you feel that your circumstances warrant alternate considerations, you are advised to contact me as soon as those circumstances arise: documentation will be required in these events.

**Short Writing Assignments**: It is vital that you keep up with these as they are assigned. They help prepare you for class and let you practice writing skills without the pressure of a grade. You will receive full credit for completing them on time or a zero if you fail to do so. These assignments will not be accepted late. If you know you will be absent, you must turn your assignment in early.

**Electronics:** Please do not use cell phones during class. If you bring a laptop or tablet to class, please only use it for class purposes. Failure to do so may result in a lower participation grade.

**Email:** Email is the best way to contact me if you have questions or concerns. Generally, I will respond to all student email within 24 hours (although on weekends and holidays, it may take a little longer). Likewise, there may be instances when I will need to contact you by email. It is your responsibility to check your Emory-based email account at least once every 24 hours.

**Academic Integrity:** We will follow the Emory University Honor Code (<http://catalog.college.emory.edu/academic/policy/honor_code.html>). I take plagiarism and other forms of dishonesty seriously. Should you engage in academic dishonesty in this course, you may receive an F on the assignment.

**Public Nature of the Course:** Please consider all writing for this class to be “public.” Part of becoming an effective writer is learning to appreciate the ideas and feedback of others. In this course, our purpose is to come together as a writing community. Avoid writing about topics that you wish to keep private.

**Course Assessment**

**Daily Assignments**

We will free write or do other impromptu writing assignments during most classes. Completing these will count toward your participation grade. Other short writing assignments will be given for homework as preparation for our next class session. These will be completion grades: you will receive a zero if you do not turn them in on time, but will otherwise receive full credit.

**News Article Assignment**

After we look at several different kinds of news articles in class you will write one of your own. The goal of this assignment is for you to learn the conventions of journalistic prose and apply them to a topic of your choice. You do not have to write about a current event. You can write your news article about an event that is historical or even fictional, so long as it uses voice, tone, and style appropriate to reporting the news. This piece should be 500-750 words.

**News Article Parody**

After writing your own news article you will have the opportunity to transform it into a parody. The goal of this assignment is to subvert, exaggerate, or otherwise humorously exploit the conventions of journalistic prose. You may change your topic when you write your parody, but should consult me when doing so. This piece should be 500-750 words.

**Essay Assignment**

The French word from which “essay” is derived means “to try”—not to have the last word on, but to investigate, explore, or wander. Essays are not, however, random musings, but rather follow a particular line of thought. As our class readings suggest, different kinds of essays follow different conventions. The goal of this assignment is for you to write a specific kind of essay—topical, polemical, personal narrative, photo essay, etc—by following the appropriate conventions. Your essay might draw some philosophical conclusions from an anecdote. Or it might take the form of a meditation on a single idea. It might consider various angles on an important issue. Whatever form your essay takes, it should have a purposeful structure and vivid details. This piece should be 500-750 words.

**Satirical Essay Assignment**

After writing one essay in earnest, you will write one in jest. The goal of this assignment is for you to gain a deeper understanding of how the conventions of the essay can be exploited for satirical purposes. Like the examples we read in class, your satirical essay might make what appears to be a serious defense of something absurd. Or your satire might make a serious point by inverting a widely held system of values. The tone of your essay might be more “Horatian” and playful or more “Juvenalian” and biting. This piece should be 500-750 words.

**Analyzing Academic Prose Assignment**

To help you practice identifying the conventions of academic prose, you will write a 500-750 word analysis of a scholarly article. You must discuss at least three conventions of academic prose, locate specific examples, and explain their importance within the article. This is not a summary assignment; you do not have to write a synopsis of the article.

**Writing Academic Prose Assignment**

After we discuss argumentation, you will write a short, well-supported argument of your own. The goal of this assignment is to help you become familiar with the conventions of academic writing, which you will use in research papers throughout your time as an undergraduate. You will write 1,000-1,500 words on a topic of your choice. This will give you an opportunity to incorporate primary and secondary sources into your own writing. Your paper should have a clear thesis statement, smooth transitions, and properly cite at least three outside sources.

**Speech Assignment**

You will write a speech, sermon, or other piece of oratory. The goal of this assignment is to produce a piece of writing intended to be spoken aloud rather than simply read. Your speech should have a clear purpose—to inform, persuade, etc—and a specific audience. Your speech should be 500-750 words.

**Ironic Oratory Assignment**

After writing a serious speech you will have the opportunity to transform it into a parody. The goal of this assignment is to cement your understanding of the conventions involved in oratory. While your parody does not have to keep the same topic as your original speech, it should satirize a specific kind of speech—a parody of an informational speech will look different from a parody of a persuasive speech. Your parody should be 500-750 words.

**Final Portfolio**

Throughout the semester we will discuss revision strategies, and at the end of the semester you will compile a portfolio that represents your best work. You will revise three of your graded drafts for your portfolio, which must include your Academic Prose assignment, two other assignments of your choice (one satirical, one non-satirical), and a one-page reflection. Your reflection should explain the major revisions you made and why you think they make your pieces more effective, as well as demonstrate how these three pieces fulfill our course goals. You will write your reflection letter as an argument: you must cite examples from your portfolios as evidence to convince the reader that you have met the learning outcomes for the course. Your revisions should not be limited to correcting sentence level or grammatical errors, but should involve the overall structure of your piece. You might eliminate sections that were unsuccessful and replace them with something better, or change the sequence of paragraphs in your piece.

**How grades are calculated**

20%    Participation/Daily Assignments

5%    News Article

5% News Article Parody

5% Essay

5% Satirical Essay

5% Analyzing Academic Prose

5% Writing Academic Prose

5% Speech

5%  Ironic Oratory

40%   Final Portfolio

**Grading Scale**

**Percentage Scale: Emory Point Scale:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Points/Percentage** | **Letter Grade** |
| 95.00-100 | A |
| 90.00-94.99 | A- |
| 86.00-89.99 | B+ |
| 83.00-85.99 | B |
| 80.00-82.99 | B- |
| 76.00-79.99 | C+ |
| 73.00-75.99 | C |
| 70.00-72.99 | C- |
| 66.00-69.99 | D+ |
| 60.00-65.99 | D |
| 0-59.99 | F |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Points** | **Letter Grade** |
| 4.00 | A |
| 3.70 | A- |
| 3.30 | B+ |
| 3.00 | B |
| 2.70 | B- |
| 2.30 | C+ |
| 2.00 | C |
| 1.70 | C- |
| 1.30 | D+ |
| 1.00 | D |
| 0.00 | F |

**Student Success Resources**

**Access and Disability Resources**

I strive to create an inclusive learning environment for all. I am invested in your success in this class and at Emory, so please let me know if anything is standing in the way of your doing your best work. This can include your own learning strengths, any classroom dynamics that you find uncomfortable, ESL issues, disability or chronic illness, and/or personal issues that impact your work. I will hold such conversations in strict confidence.

Students with medical/health conditions that might impact academic success should visit Access, Disability Services and Resources (ADSR formerly the Office of Disability Services, ODS) to determine eligibility for appropriate accommodations. Students who receive accommodations must present the Accommodation Letter from ADSR to your professor at the beginning of the semester, or when the letter is received.

**Emory Writing Center**

The Emory Writing Center offers 45-minute individual conferences to Emory College and Laney Graduate School students. Our discussion- and workshop-based approach enables writers of all levels to see their writing with fresh eyes and to practice a variety of strategies for writing, revising, and editing. The EWC is a great place to bring any project—from traditional papers to websites—at any stage in your composing process. EWC tutors can talk with you about your purpose, organization, audience, design choices, or use of sources. They can also work with you on sentence-level concerns (including grammar and word choice), but they won’t proofread for you. Instead, they’ll discuss strategies and resources you can use to become a better editor of your own work.

The Emory Writing Center is located in Callaway N-212. We encourage writers to schedule appointments in advance as we can take walk-ins on a limited basis only. We require hard copies of traditional paper drafts and encourage you to bring a laptop if you're working on a digital or multi-modal text. Please bring a copy of your assignment instructions, too. In addition to our regular conferences in Callaway, we host Studio Hours every Tuesday from 7-9 pm in Woodruff Library 214. Studio Hours provide a supportive, focused workspace and are open to all students. Emory Writing Center tutors circulate to encourage writers, provide resources, and address questions. For more information, or to make an appointment, visit<http://writingcenter.emory.edu>.

**Tutoring for Multilingual Students**

If you are a multilingual student and English is not your first language, you may benefit from working with trained ESL Tutors. These tutors are undergraduates who will support the development of both your English language and writing skills. Like Writing Center tutors, ESL tutors will not proofread your work. Language is best learned through interactive dialogue, so come to an ESL tutoring session ready to collaborate!

ESL tutors will meet with you in designated locations on campus for 1-hour appointments, and they will help you at any stage of the process of developing your written work or presentation. You may bring your work on a laptop or on paper.

For instructions on how to schedule an appointment, links to ASST, and the policies for using the service, go to:<http://college.emory.edu/home/academic/learning/esl/tutoring/index.html>

If you do not have a scheduled appointment, you may use the Academic ESL Skills Lab, located in Room 422 of Woodruff Library (next to the Language Center). Here, you may have less time with a tutor if other students are waiting, but you can find drop-in support just when you need it. To view the lab hours for the current semester, go to:<http://college.emory.edu/home/academic/learning/esl/lab.html> .

For information about other ESL services available to undergraduates, go to:<http://college.emory.edu/home/academic/learning/esl/index.html>

or contact Jane O’Connor, Director of ESL Services (jcoconn@emory.edu ) or Denise Dolan, Assistant Director of ESL Services (denise.dolan@emory.edu ).

**Emory Counseling Services**

Free and confidential counseling services and support are available from the Emory

Counseling Center (404) 727-7450. This can be an invaluable resource when stress makes your work more challenging than it ought to be. <http://studenthealth.emory.edu/cs/>

**Final Exam**

There will be no final exam for this course. During the last week of class, I will hold conferences to discuss your revisions as you finalize your portfolios.

**Tentative Schedule**

BBG=*Bedford Book of Genres*

DW=daily writing

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Date | Topic | Readings | Writing |
| W 8/27 | Course Introduction |  |  |
| F 8/29  | Introduction to Parody | “From The Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse,” Mikhail Bakhtin p. 51-68 | DW: “What is parody?” |
| M 9/1  | Labor Day | No class |  |
| W 9/3  | The News | BBG p. 88-100 | DW: “Does the news matter to you?” |
| F 9/5 |  | BBG p. 126-142 | DW: brainstorm news article topic |
| M 9/8 |  | Assorted articles from *The Economist* and *The Guardian*, *USA Today*, *The New York Times*, and *The Wall Street Journal* | DW: “What is the most important convention of a news article?” |
| W 9/10  | Parodying the News | Assorted articles from *The Onion* | DW: “Does parody help or hurt the ‘real’ news?” |
| F 9/12  |  | Assorted articles from *SatireWire* | DW: brainstorm news parody topic |
| M 9/15 | Essays and Personal Narratives | “Notes of a Native Son” James Baldwin | **News article draft due** |
| W 9/17  |  | “Roger Federer as Religious Experience” David Foster Wallace | DW: “What makes a good essay?”  |
| F 9/19  |  | BBGp. 77-86“Shooting an Elephant” George Orwell | DW: “Why does Orwell shoot the elephant?” |
| M 9/22  |  | “A Room of One’s Own” Virginia Woolf p. 1-40 | **News parody draft due** |
| W 9/24  |  | “A Room of One’s Own” Virginia Woolf p. 41-80 | DW: brainstorm essay topic |
| F 9/26  |  | “A Room of One’s Own” Virginia Woolf p. 81-118 | DW: “What is Woolf’s point?” |
| M 9/29  | Satirical Essays | “A Modest Proposal” Jonathan Swift | DW: “What are the risks of satire?” |
| W 10/1  |  | “As Concerns Interpreting the Deity” Mark Twain | DW: “What is Twain satirizing?” |
| F 10/3  |  | “Martha Stewart Explains Her Drone” Henry Alford | DW: brainstorm satirical essay topic |
| M 10/6  | Revision Strategies I | “Shitty First Drafts” Anne Lamott; “The Maker’s Eye: Revising Your Own Manuscripts” Donald M. Murray | **Essay draft due** |
| W 10/8  | Workshop | Workshop Drafts | Comment on peer drafts |
| F 10/10  | Workshop | Workshop Drafts | Comment on peer drafts |
| M 10/13  | Fall Break | No class |  |
| W 10/15 | Academic Prose | *They Say, I Say* p. 17-52 | **Satirical essay draft due** |
| F 10/17  |  | *They Say, I Say* p. 53-77 | DW: “How does the reading change your view of academic essays?” |
| M 10/20  |  | *They Say, I Say* p. 78-102 | DW: “What role does audience play in academic writing?” |
| W 10/22  |  | *How to Write Anything*p. 72-105 | DW: “What makes a good academic argument?” |
| F 10/24  |  | BBGp. 143-175 | DW: “How can you preserve your own voice in academic prose?” |
| M 10/27  | Parodying Academic Prose | “Transgressing the Boundaries: Towards a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity” Alan D. Sokal | **Identifying conventions of academic prose assignment due** |
| W 10/29  |  | “‘Le Concentrisme’ and ‘Jean du Chas’: Two Extracts” Samuel Beckett | DW: brainstorm research topic  |
| F 10/31  | Revision Strategies II | “Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Adult Writers” Nancy Sommers*How to Write Anything*p. 432-449 | DW: “How does the reading change your understanding of revision?” |
| M 11/3  | Workshop | Workshop Drafts | Comment on peer drafts |
| W 11/5  | Workshop | Workshop Drafts | Comment on peer drafts |
| F 11/7  | Speeches and Sermons  | “I Have a Dream” Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; “The Ballot or the Bullet” Malcolm X | DW: “How do these speeches provoke emotion?” |
| M 11/10  |  | “A Brief Recognition of New England’s Errand into the Wilderness” Samuel Danforth; “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” Frederick Douglass | **Academic prose assignment due** |
| W 11/12  |  | “Nobel Lecture” Toni Morrison; “The Solitude of Latin America” Gabriel Garcia Marquez | DW: brainstorm speech topic |
| F 11/14  |  | “A Left-Handed Commencement Address” Ursula Le Guin; “Vice Presidential Nomination Address” Geraldine Ferraro | DW: “How might Ferraro respond to Le Guin?” |
| M 11/17  |  | “The Gettysburg Address” Abraham Lincoln; George W. Bush’s 2002 State of the Union | DW: “How does each president address national tragedy?” |
| W 11/19  |  | “Divinity School Address” Ralph Waldo Emerson | DW: “Who is Emerson’s ideal audience?” |
| F 11/21  | Ironic Oratory | Excerpts from *Juneteenth* | DW: “How does Ellison parody black preaching?” |
| M 11/24  |  | Stephen Colbert’s speech at the White House Correspondents’ Dinner | **Speech draft due** |
| W 11/26  |  | *The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail* Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee | DW: brainstorm ironic oratory topic |
| F 11/28  | Thanksgiving Break | No class  |  |
| M 12/1  | Student Speeches |  | Work on portfolios |
| W 12/3  | Student Speeches |  | Work on portfolios |
| F 12/5  | Student Speeches |  | Work on portfolios |
| M 12/8  | Student Speeches |  | **Ironic oratory draft due** |
| M 12/15  |  |  | **Final portfolio due** |