



Summer Program 2015

Essay Writing A

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Course Description

As much as we live in a world of things—trees, cars, dogs, fire hydrants, the sun—we live in a world of words. Words are not merely a means of communication but actually shape how we perceive the world and ourselves in relation to it. This course will encourage students to take a fresh look at themselves and the world in which they live through the methods and processes of essay composition, and to engage with contemporary dialogue through critical reading, discussion, and writing.

Essential Questions

We will embark upon discussions that are relevant and important items of attention for all of us living in the world now, navigating the complex terrain of contemporary society. Topics will be centered around the theme of *Change and the Future*. Together we will interrogate key debates, issues and problems, including but not limited to:

- *Technology and society; the meteoric rise of the internet and cultural responses to rapid and pervasive change
- *The discussions that make up the human quest to understand ourselves and what we are—the question of origins, our brains, language
- *Education—its role and function, strengths and limitations of our current system, *your* education and what you stand to get out of it

Students will also have the opportunity to introduce their own topics and facilitate class discussion, drawing upon resources from their own research. At all stages, grammar and usage will be stressed and addressed in class as needed.

Outcomes

The essay is one of the most versatile and powerful forms of literary expression, and can be adapted to a number of ends and purposes. In this course we will read and practice writing three of the most useful and asked-for essay styles: expository, persuasive, and personal. In the case of each, we will read and critique model writing samples and explore the conventions of the genre through analysis and in-class exercises. In addition, students will compose one longer formal essay of each type over the course of the summer.

Instructional Strategies

Writing is like physical exercise. If you exercise regularly, you become stronger, and exercise becomes easier. Expect to write a lot, both in class and at home. And be open to experimentation, as we will be exploring many different styles and approaches to effective writing. Another central component of this course is the reading-based class discussion, during which we will share perspectives, build ideas, construct arguments, and analyze texts.

Student Assessment

Students will be evaluated based on their progress in and out of class. 50% of the final grade will be based on class participation, and the remaining 50% will be the average of the three formal essays. We will use a 6-category writing rubric in the assessment of formal essays.

Participation includes coming to class prepared, keeping up with the readings, taking part in discussion and group activities, and in-class writing assignments. It is imperative that you come to this class ready to engage with new ideas, with your own writing and cognitive processes, and with each other. I ask that you be willing to share your reactions and ideas through discussion and writing, engage with your peers' work, and offer your own writing for critique and discussion. We will move quickly with daily in-class writing and discussion and nightly reading and writing assignments. I will expect that you bring your course packet, a notebook, a writing implement, have completed the reading and/or writing assignment, and are ready to contribute to a lively discussion on a daily basis.

Resources and Materials

Texts: All assigned readings will be provided in class, in the form of a course packet and printed articles that I will distribute. In addition to essays and a selection of readings from contemporary written media, film study will be incorporated into the class, as well as elements of internet media and visual culture.

You need: a notebook with pages you can tear out, writing utensils you like, a way to organize your papers, access to a computer and printer, and a stapler.

Tentative Course Schedule

Date	Topic(s)	In-Class Activities
M 6/29	Introduction	Writing skills assessment
T 6/30	Components of an essay	Discussion, writing
Th 7/2	SAM Field Trip	Reflection
M 7/6	Expository Essay	Discussion, writing
T 7/7	Expository Essay continued	Evaluating topic/essay development
Th 7/9	Expository Essay continued	Peer Critique
M 7/13	Expository Essay continued	Discussion, writing
T 7/14	Persuasive Essay	Analysis of model essays
Th 7/16	Persuasive Essay continued	Debate
M 7/20	Persuasive Essay continued	Peer Critique
T 7/21	Personal Essay	Discussion, writing
Th 7/23	Underground Tour	Reflection
M 7/27	Personal Essay continued	Essay Development
T 7/28	Personal Essay continued	Peer Review
Th 7/30	Conclusion	Self-analysis, course review