

Contemporary American Literature: Cli-Fi

Dr. Everett Hamner

Western Illinois University, Spring 2018, Thursdays 12:30-3

ENG 337: Q01 (Quad Cities Complex 2204), westernonline.wiu.edu

Office hours M 10-12, W 10-11, Th 10-11 in QCC 2209

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General Catalog Description & Prerequisites

Study of contemporary American fiction, poetry, non-fiction, drama, and film, emphasizing recent formal and thematic trends. Prerequisite: ENG 299 with a grade of C or better, or consent of instructor.

Specific Description & Goals

This course considers emerging directions in early twenty-first-century US novels and films as they increasingly engage pressing questions about anthropogenic (human-caused) climate change. Moving slowly through four major novels and two daring films, most of which were published or released in 2017, we will ask how and why our species is collectively hurting the odds of its long-term thriving on this planet, not to mention neglecting more immediate opportunities for environmental justice.

The course's first task is to ensure that we all understand both the basics of climate science and the political agendas that have often succeeded in obfuscating it. In this phase, we will read Ashley Shelby's humorous and revealing tale of the lives led by researchers, artists, and support personnel working at Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station. That story's controversy over a climate change denialist sets up a more introspective treatment of climate change's intersections with class, educational background, patriarchal culture, and religious community in Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behavior*. This second segment of the course also features the simultaneously realistic and fantastic film *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, a post-Katrina celebration of love across races and generations.

The course's third section is devoted to one of the longest novels I have dared to assign undergrads, Kim Stanley Robinson's epic *New York 2140*. Taking a full five weeks to digest its pages, we will use the novel as a climactic opportunity to think through the psychology of humanity's widely divergent responses to climate change, including our own. With attention to both very practical and more abstract questions, we will especially consider the inextricability of "global weirding" from enormous social structures and the economics of global capitalism. Finally, in the course's last weeks, we will return to cli-fi's blurring of realism and fantasy via the enormously provocative Darren Aronofsky film *mother!* and Charlie Jane Anders's delightful and illuminating *All the Birds in the Sky*. This final novel will also allow us to consider how cli-fi can transgress common distinctions between general and Young Adult fiction, perhaps fitting a nascent classification as New Adult fiction.

Coursework includes a *relatively* heavy and very much *required* reading load and four quizzes, but an unusual approach to writing projects that do not include a traditional argumentative paper. Instead, students will write four equally-weighted short papers in four distinct genres: the smart, complex question; the research archive; the personal letter; and the short story. In each case, we will aim to face the realities of climate change more directly and to cultivate attitudes of sober, active hopefulness.

Meeting, Reading/Viewing, & Assignment Schedule

PLEASE NOTE:

~"READING," "VIEWING," or "WRITING" = watch, read, or complete in full BEFORE class

~"IN CLASS" = no preparation required

Part One: Acclimation, not Accomodation

1st WEEK, JAN 18th: WHY CLI-FI

IN CLASS: ~Baba Brinkman, "Make It Hot" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t8gsh0AD3Go>
 ~Censored local TV piece on climate change <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vgta3mXFseQ&feature=youtu.be>
 ~A first glimpse of short cli-fi: Joe Magee, "The year is 2037. This is what happens when the hurricane hits Miami." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vgta3mXFseQ&feature=youtu.be>
 ~Syllabus review, discussion of goals and assignments, and introductions

2nd WEEK, JAN 25th: IMAGINING THE SCIENCE

READING: ~Margaret Atwood, "It's Not Climate Change--It's Everything Change" (July 2015)
<https://medium.com/matter/it-s-not-climate-change-it-s-everything-change-8fd9aa671804#u2gbtaou3>
 ~Bill McKibben, "Winning Slowly is the Same as Losing"
<http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/bill-mckibben-winning-slowly-is-the-same-as-losing-w512967>

~Paolo Bacigalupi, "The People of Sand and Slag" (short story, 2004)
<http://windupstories.com/books/pump-six-and-other-stories/people-of-sand-and-slag/>

IN CLASS: ~"Highlights" of *The National Climate Assessment* (2014): twelve findings
 ~Several of the most helpful visualizations
<http://www.climatecentral.org/news/history-global-warming-animation-21670>
<http://gizmodo.com/one-of-the-most-convincing-climate-change-visualization-1775743779>
<http://www.iflscience.com/environment/this-temperature-timeline-of-earth-shows-exactly-how-nonsensical-climatechange-deniers-really-are/>
 ~Student selections of "Global Weirding" episodes to sample over weeks ahead
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCi6RkdaEgRVKi3AzidF4ow/videos>

3rd WEEK, FEB 1st: THE POINTLESSNESS OF THE CULTURE WARS

READING: ~Ashley Shelby, *South Pole Station* (2017), pp. 1-152 (up to ch. entitled "the divide")

IN CLASS: ~Why Antarctica and its glaciers matter, even if you don't want to live there
 ~Yale Program on Climate Change Communication, "The Six Americas of Global Warming" <http://climatecommunication.yale.edu/about/projects/global-warmings-six-americas/>
 ~Gleb Tsipursky, "How to Talk to a Science Denier without Arguing"
<https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/observations/how-to-talk-to-a-science-denier-without-arguing/>
 ~John Abraham, "Just who are these 300 'scientists' telling Trump to burn the climate?"
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/climate-consensus-97-per-cent/2017/feb/27/just-who-are-these-300-scientists-telling-trump-to-burn-the-climate>

4th WEEK, FEB 8th: UNDERSTANDING THE FORCES BEHIND CLIMATE CHANGE DENIALISM

READING: ~Shelby, *South Pole Station*, pp. 153-358 (remainder)

WRITING: ~Quiz #1 & discussion of Paper #1 (Five Questions)
 ~Nathalie Baptiste, "He Was a Professional Climate Skeptic. Then He Switched Sides."
<http://www.motherjones.com/environment/2017/11/i-was-a-professional-climate-denier-i-was-wrong/>

Part Two: Humans, Other Animals, and Structural Injustice

5th WEEK, FEB 15TH: KATRINA, SANDY, & WAYS BEYOND PARTISANSHIP

VIEWING: ~*Beasts of the Southern Wild* (film, 2012; OK to rent/stream)

WRITING: ~Paper #1 (Five Smart Questions) due in "Assignments," W.O., 11:59 pm Th 2/15

IN CLASS: ~Informal presentations of pop culture climate treatments
 ~Clare Forin, "The House Republicans Calling for Climate Action in the Trump Era"
<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/03/house-republicans-climate-change-global-warming-trump/518430/>
 ~Robinson Meyer, "Democrats Are Shockingly Unprepared to Fight Climate Change"
<https://www.theatlantic.com/amp/article/543981/>
 ~Discussion of Paper #2 (Pop Culture Archive) and submissions open (first come ...)

6th WEEK, FEB 22ND: BRIDGING DIVISIONS OF CLASS, EDUCATION, & REGION

READING: ~Barbara Kingsolver, ch. 1-5, *Flight Behavior* (2012)

IN CLASS: ~Amitov Ghosh on climate change and fiction
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9DyV7b7tsPQ>
<https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/wheres-the-great-climate-change-novel-a-conversation-with-amitav-ghosh/>

7th WEEK, MAR 1ST: FAITH, SCIENCE, & TACT

READING: ~Kingsolver, ch. 6-10, *Flight Behavior*

IN CLASS: ~Meera Subramanian, "Seeing God's Hand in the Deadly Floods, Yet Wondering about Climate Change" <https://insideclimatenews.org/news/19102017/christianity-evangelical-climate-change-flooding-west-virginia>
 ~Mike Kilen, "An evangelical Christian took her climate change message to the heart of conservative Iowa. Here's how she was greeted." <https://amp.desmoinesregister.com/amp/759486001>
 ~Hiroko Tabuchi, "In America's Heartland, Discussing Climate Change Without Saying 'Climate Change.'" <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/28/business/energy-environment/navigating-climate-change-in-americas-heartland.html>

8th WEEK, MAR 8TH: INDIVIDUAL & STRUCTURAL CHANGE

READING: ~Kingsolver, ch. 11-14, *Flight Behavior*

WRITING: ~Paper #2 (Pop Culture Archive) due in "Discussions," W.O., 11:59 pm Th, Mar 8

IN CLASS: ~Quiz #2
 ~Barbara Kingsolver, testimony to Pennsylvania House of Representatives (8/26/14)
<http://www.pahouse.com/PolicyCommittee/documents/2014/hdpc082614.pdf>

MAR 15TH: NO CLASS (SPRING BREAK)

Part Three: Science Fiction as Realism

9th WEEK, MAR 22ND: SUNK COSTS, OVERCONFIDENCE, & REAL SOLUTIONS

READING: ~Kim Stanley Robinson, parts 1-2, *New York 2140* (2017)

IN CLASS: ~Franklin, Stefan, & Roberto: sharks and foragers
 ~NY2140 within Robinson's oeuvre and cli-fi more broadly
 ~Paul Hawken, ed., excerpts from *Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming* (2017)
 ~Discussion of Paper #3 (Personal Letter) and Paper #4 (Short Story)

10th WEEK, MAR 29TH: MONEY & PRICELESSNESS

READING: ~Robinson, parts 3-4, *New York 2140*

IN CLASS: ~The citizen, Mutt, & Jeff: future historians and comic relief
 ~José Luis de Vicente, "Angry Optimism in a Drowned World: A Conversation with Kim Stanley Robinson"

<http://lab.cccb.org/en/angry-optimism-in-a-drowned-world-a-conversation-with-kim-stanley-robinson/>

11th WEEK, APR 5TH: TIPPING POINTS & HUMAN PSYCHOLOGY

READING: ~Robinson, parts 5-6, *New York 2140*

IN CLASS: ~Charlotte & Inspector Gen: women who follow the clues wherever they lead
 ~Joshua Rothman, "Kim Stanley Robinson's Latest Novel Imagines Life in an Underwater New York"

<https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/kim-stanley-robinsons-latest-novel-imagines-life-in-an-underwater-new-york>

12th WEEK, APR 12TH: REIMAGINING THE COMMONS

READING: ~Robinson, parts 7-8, *New York 2140*

IN CLASS: ~Quiz #3

~Amelia & Vlade: heroes visible and invisible

~Gerry Canavan, "Utopia in the Time of Trump" <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/utopia-in-the-time-of-trump>

Part Four: Cli-fi, the Fantastic, & the Shifting Terrain of YA Lit

13th WEEK, APR 19TH: ALLEGORY, OR, THE BACK DOOR

WRITING: ~Paper #3 (Personal Letter) due in "Assignments," W.O., 11:59 pm Th 4/19

IN CLASS: ~*mother!* (2017, dir. Darren Aronofsky)

14th WEEK, APR 26TH: TALKING BIRDS, CONSCIOUS COMPUTERS, & NEW ADULT LIT

READING: ~Charlie Jane Anders, Books 1-2, *All the Birds in the Sky* (2016)

IN CLASS: ~Genre mashing and the emergence of New Adult literature

15th WEEK, MAY 3RD: A SLOW-MOTION EMERGENCY AND A SAVING WONDER

READING: ~Anders, Books 3-4, *All the Birds in the Sky*

IN CLASS: ~Quiz #4 & course evals

~A review of the course's key questions and some partial answers

FINALS WEEK, MAY 10TH: TELLING IT SLANT

WRITING: ~Paper #4 (Short Story) due in "Assignments," W.O., 11:59 pm Th 5/10

IN CLASS: ~Readings of short story excerpts



Photo by Kristi McCluer, Oregon, 2017



Josh Keyes

Texts for Purchase

PLEASE NOTE:

*Prices below are rounded from recent amazon.com new prices—that site has free 2-day shipping for students. In many cases, used copies can be purchased less expensively (also try bookfinder.com).

*I am happy for students to use complete electronic versions of texts so long as they use appropriate citation methods when writing papers and can accept occasional challenges in finding a given passage.

- Shelby, Ashley. *South Pole Station*. Picador, \$18. ISBN: 9781250112828.
- Kingsolver, Barbara. *Flight Behavior*. Harper Perennial, \$11. ISBN: 9780062124272.
- Robinson, Kim Stanley. *New York 2140*. Orbis, \$12. ISBN: 978-0316262316.
- Anders, Charlie Jane. *All the Birds in the Sky*. Tor, \$8. ISBN: 9780765379955.
- *Beasts of the Southern Wild*. (no need to buy: on reserve at WIU-QC; 9 DVD/blu-ray copies in RiverShare system; OK to rent/stream via Amazon, YouTube, Google, iTunes, etc.)

Additional Recommendations

FICTION

Paolo Bacigalupi, *The Windup Girl*, *The Water Knife*, *Pump Six and Other Stories*, *Ship Breaker* trilogy
 Ursula K. Le Guin, "Paradises Lost," in *The Birthday of the World*, and *The Dispossessed*
 Cormac McCarthy, *The Road*
 Kim Stanley Robinson, the *Mars* trilogy, the *Science in the Capital* trilogy, *2312*, *Aurora*
 Peter Heller, *The Dog Stars*
 Margaret Atwood, the *MaddAddam* trilogy: *Oryx and Crake*, *The Year of the Flood*, and *MaddAddam*
 David Mitchell, *Cloud Atlas*
 George Turner, *The Sea and Summer*
 Joan Slonczewski, *A Door into Ocean*
 Jeff Vandermeer: The *Area X* trilogy: *Annihilation*, *Authority*, and *Acceptance*
 Nathaniel Rich, *Odds against Tomorrow*
 Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway, *The Collapse of Western Civilization: A View from the Future*
 Ian McEwan, *Solar*
 Octavia E. Butler, *Parable of the Sower*, *Parable of the Talents*
 Alexis Wright, *The Swan Book*
 James Bradley, *Clade*
 Liz Jensen, *The Rapture*
 Annie Proulx, *Barkskins*
 Richard Powers, *The Overstory*

FEATURE FILMS & DOCUMENTARIES

<i>Snowpiercer</i>	<i>The Fountain</i>	<i>Children of Men</i>
<i>Sleep Dealer</i>	<i>Blade Runner 2049</i>	<i>Adaptation</i>
<i>A.I.: Artificial Intelligence</i>	<i>Noah</i>	<i>Planet of the Apes</i> remakes
<i>The Day after Tomorrow</i>	<i>Geostorm</i>	<i>Waterworld</i>
<i>An Inconvenient Truth</i> & sequel	<i>Years of Living Dangerously</i>	<i>Merchants of Doubt</i>

NONFICTION & SCHOLARLY BOOKS

Gerry Canavan and Kim Stanley Robinson, *Green Planets: Ecology and Science Fiction*
 Eric Otto, *Green Speculations: Science Fiction and Transformative Environmentalism*
 Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*
 Ursula Heise, *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet*
 Bill McKibben, *Eaarth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet*
 Amitov Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*

Grading Criteria

I will figure final grades using the university scale (A, B, C, D, or F, with pluses/ minuses) and the values below (with minor adjustments as needed). Please note the "My Grades" function on the course website, which lets you track assignment grades and estimate your current overall grade at any point.

40%	4 quizzes (10% each)
15%	Paper 1 (Five Smart Questions)
15%	Paper 2 (Pop Culture Archive)
15%	Paper 3 (Personal Letter)
15%	Paper 4 (Short Story)

Brief Looks at Main Assignments

Quizzes: These will neither be picky, insignificant-detail interrogations, nor such easy affairs that one could prepare sufficiently by reading summaries. The idea is that most people who recently covered all assigned reading and viewing with good comprehension will average 70-80% of the points available (i.e., earn a "B" or better). Please keep in mind that each quiz only covers material since the previous

one and will focus more heavily on primary than secondary texts. Students sometimes worry about the quizzes initially, but generally agree they provide valuable accountability during the course and allow for higher-quality, greater-depth discussions. My best advice is to get the reading and viewing done well in advance, then go back over it, your journals and in-class notes, and my “discussion notes” or other handouts. Checking your understanding and comparing reactions in outside-class conversations with classmates can also be very helpful.

Paper 1 (Five Questions): In 700-800 words, write five paragraph-length questions that could be posed to the author of *South Pole Station* that reach beyond the obvious and about which you are genuinely curious. Think about how the novel explains the science of climate change, its development of a variety of characters at the research station, its relationship to historical events, its pacing and narrative strategies, its combination of humor and seriousness, its relationship to other novels, etc.

Grading breakdown: 1/3 for the depth of observations built into your questions; 1/3 for the uniqueness of your questions relative to classmate submissions (so don’t share ☺) and to questions asked of novelists generally; and 1/3 for your writing clarity, organization, and mechanical polish.

Paper 2 (Pop Culture Archive): This research project is designed to create an archive of very recent popular cultural treatments of climate change. Your first job is to search your favorite comics, TV shows, video games, and other popular cultural texts *other than novels, short stories, or films* for references to climate change. After finding the most provocative and potentially influential treatments of climate change that you can, list your top five (with links) in a post under “Discussions” on Western Online, explaining *in one sentence* what makes them stand out. Note: *you cannot receive credit for items already submitted*, so this part of the task becomes more challenging the longer you wait to do it.

The assignment’s second part is to “reply” to your original posting, selecting ONE of your texts and writing a 700-800 word descriptive and analytical paper that (a) orients those unfamiliar with its storyworld to its main character/s, setting/s, and plot/s (max 200 words); (b) very specifically describes (without yet evaluating) everything you can about how the specific episode/issue/game engages climate change (especially implicit or explicit definitions, the tone it adopts about the problem, etc.) (max 200 words); and (c) stakes out an analytical position concerning the text’s potential impact on audiences (300-400 words), quoting or otherwise sampling evidence from it that stands out and comparing it to at least one required text. Lastly, be ready to describe the text informally to the class.

Grading breakdown: 1/3 for your five texts’ potential impact and uniqueness; 1/3 for the specificity of your description of a single text, the insightfulness of your analysis, and the connections you build to our course materials so far; and 1/3 for your writing clarity, organization, and mechanical polish.

Paper 3 (Personal Letter): Write a 700-800 word letter to a friend or a specific community that (a) discusses your learning in this course so far, (b) tactfully conveys what you have found most significant, and (c) describes your experience of at least two of our novels/films so far. Your audience may be an actual or imaginary person or group; person(s) you know exceedingly well or not at all; and individual(s) relatively familiar or unfamiliar with the science. The key is that you believe it could be valuable to share what you have been learning with this person or group.

Grading breakdown: 1/3 for the specificity, density, and organization of the details you provide about the science of climate change; 1/3 for the depth of your analysis of our texts and their significance for you/your reader(s); and 1/3 for your writing clarity, organization, and mechanical polish.

Paper 4 (Short Story): With *All the Birds in the Sky* as a model, write a 700-800 word short story that is Young Adult or New Adult fiction and that deals significantly with an element of climate change.

Grading breakdown: 1/3 for the originality, specificity, accuracy, and insightfulness with which the story engages some element of climate change; 1/3 for the effectiveness of your story simply as a piece of fiction, including its character development, depth of storyworld, logic of the plot, and humor/poignancy; and 1/3 for your writing clarity, organization, and mechanical polish.

PLEASE NOTE:

The following is part of all of my syllabi. Please read it carefully, but keep its generality in mind.

My Teaching Philosophy and Expectations of Students

The better we understand each other's expectations, the more quickly we can develop a good working relationship. Here are a few key elements of my teaching philosophy:

~I want students to engage me and each other authentically and maturely. I hope this course will spark your curiosity in many ways, and that happens best when students honestly *and* tactfully share reactions to controversial topics. I intentionally raise such issues because a public university classroom is a uniquely valuable setting in which to explore and learn from frank, respectful disagreement. I aim for us to develop a classroom community that everyone appreciates and that extends beyond its walls.

~*Just as critically*, I expect students to be professionally responsible. You should approach this course as you might a challenging, rewarding job, one with tasks that are yours alone. I well understand that it is *very* hard to balance multiple classes, paid work, childrearing, and other responsibilities, but my roles include challenging you beyond your comfort zone and honestly assessing your academic work (not your value as a human being). Having a good sense of how your work stacks up, both in terms of strengths and weaknesses, is critical for your future decisions. Do your best to remember: a grade is a snapshot of a brief moment (and even one semester is brief); it takes a lot of these together to begin to illustrate your abilities, and your entire college/grad school GPA will never convey those as fully as the recommendation letters you enable professors to write about you. Those usually matter far more.

~While we will be studying fields in which I am relatively expert, I approach this class as a learner, too. Wisdom is not just knowledge, but humility, a deepening awareness of how much one does *not* know. I spent over a decade earning my graduate degrees not to hoard power, but to be in a position to empower others. You show you are ready for that with your simultaneous investment. In short, what you get out of this course will be directly related to what you put into it, during and beyond classtime.

Attendance & Participation

My courses differ substantially from those requiring regurgitation of memorized information. Our goals include learning new interpretive approaches, understanding diverse people and ideas, expanding critical thinking and creativity, strengthening analytical and writing skills, and learning from each other's unique backgrounds. Thus preparation for each session, regular on-time attendance, and thoughtful discussion participation are crucial. *Except in extreme circumstances, each class missed beyond 3 (with tardiness or early departure counting as ½ class) will automatically lower the final mark by 1/3 grade (e.g. missing 4 classes changes a B to a B-). Extensive absences will result in an "F" for the course.*

Classroom Courtesies

Please excuse yourself when necessary; transitions are the best times. Please mute cell phones and other potential distractions; obviously, laptops and electronics should not be used during in-class quizzes. Finally, please wait to put away materials until we call it a day; I will respect your schedules as well.

Communication

While there are occasional errors, I do my best to build a trustworthy syllabus that won't need major adjustments. Please read it thoroughly; it answers most routine questions. Also, keep in mind that unless you expect to be gone for multiple class meetings in a row, I don't need to know about illnesses, transportation problems, work conflicts, or the other ordinary challenges. When you have a question not addressed on the syllabus or in class, please ask after class or in office hours. If that isn't possible, email is the next best option (far faster than voicemail). My goal is to respond within 2 business days, but if my answer is detailed, I may ask to shift the chat to office hours. Finally, be aware that I sometimes use email to make class announcements, so ensure I have an address you check daily.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Q. Can I make up the quiz I missed?
A. Yes—but only within the next week (whether in office hours, during the next class meeting's break, or immediately afterward). Also, I only offer this opportunity once per semester, barring extreme circumstances (which do not include having to work, car breakdowns, deaths in friends' families, etc.).
2. Q. Can you tell me what I missed in class?
A. Not really; the experience of most of our conversations and even my presentations will be difficult to replicate in other forms. However, I can say that almost every week, I hand out some form of "discussion notes," and I usually post these on the website (under "Content") soon thereafter, if not beforehand.
3. Q. What should I write about?
A. What do you care about? What has grabbed you and evoked some sort of emotional response, whether positive, negative, or in some combination? I regularly encourage students to engage texts and questions that have significant personal resonance; most people do their best work when it means more than a grade. If you're having a hard time getting at what you care about, seek out conversation—not just with me and peers, but also with family, friends, and others who know you well. Sometimes having to introduce your learning to those unfamiliar with the material helps the most in figuring out what excites you.
4. Q. How does your grading scale work?
A. My system may mean your grade is higher than you think. Western Online will compute your current course grade using my formula, but it's simple enough to do yourself. The maximum possible points for the course is 100, so divide your total by that (or by the points available as of a given date), then multiply that number by 4. This puts your score on the 4.0 scale, which I then translate to a letter grade. The same process can be used for any individual assignment. So, for example, if you earned 8 out of 10 points on a quiz, you would divide 8 by 10 (=80), then multiply that by 4 (=3.20), and that would be between a B and a B+. At the course's conclusion, when consistent effort and other contributions to the class's success warrant it, I sometimes bump up a borderline grade.
5. Q. Do you want a hard copy of my paper, and when will it be graded?
A. Please submit papers via the course website only; if it should be inaccessible as a deadline approaches, emailing the paper and then posting it the next day is fine. My goal is to return papers online within a week of the due date. Late papers usually take longer; please alert me of such submissions with an email.

Further Writing Assignment Guidelines

In addition to utilizing the argumentative essay revision guide at the end of this syllabus, it is worth familiarizing yourself with a good style guide. I use MLA style most often, but other styles (Chicago, APA, or another with pre-approval) are fine as long as they are consistently applied. Please use this page setup on all assignments, unless specified otherwise: 1" justified margins on all sides; size 12, Times New Roman font; and double-spacing. Finally, provide a cover page including paper title, course title and my name, your name, and date, as well as a list of works cited or a bibliography. Unless instructed otherwise, all assignments should be submitted online as a docx, doc, or rtf file.

The Writing Center

"The U.S. Bank WIU-QC University Writing Center is available to assist you with general and specific questions on writing assigned in any discipline and at any academic level. The one-on-one assistance available is valuable for generating ideas, talking about global-level issues such as organization, and even working through grammatical problems. The writing center is located in QC Complex 2219. Call 309-762-9481 for an appointment and be sure to bring a copy of your assignment."

Late Work

Barring extreme emergencies or prior arrangement, I will deduct one-third of a grade for each week (or portion thereof) that an assignment is late. If you anticipate special difficulty in meeting a deadline, please discuss this with me privately and well in advance so that if warranted, we can consider special arrangements. Readings and assignments are in many ways cumulative, so it is important that you keep up; at the same time, we lead busy lives and occasionally other priorities intervene. Balancing those realities, my policy aims to make being on-time important without making a rare delay devastating.

Academic Dishonesty

Plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty are among the most serious violations of a student's integrity and of relationships with the instructor, fellow classmates, and the university. In the humanities, plagiarism most often involves presenting another person's specific words or ideas as one's own, whether by copying or closely paraphrasing, and without citing the source. *Please be aware that such an offense will at minimum result in an "F" on the assignment and in many cases leads to an "F" for the course.* In many of my courses, I briefly review proper citation, but if you have questions about how to credit an idea or information source, ask. If you are unsure about definitions or consequences of academic dishonesty, consult WIU's Student Academic Integrity Policy at <http://www.wiu.edu/policies/acintegrity.php>.

Counseling Services

"Confidential counseling services are available for WIU-QC students. Time management, stress management, balancing work and family, study skills, low self-esteem, relationship problems, depression, and anxiety are some examples of issues that students may address in personal counseling. Students may call 309/762-1988 to make an appointment with Counseling and Career Services."

Accommodations

"Students with disabilities: In accordance with University values and disability law, students with disabilities may request academic accommodations where there are aspects of a course that result in barriers to inclusion or accurate assessment of achievement. To file an official request for disability-related accommodations, please contact the Disability Resource Center at 309-298-2512, disability@wiu.edu or in 143 Memorial Hall. Please notify the instructor as soon as possible to ensure that this course is accessible to you in a timely manner."

Sex Discrimination/Title IX

"University values, Title IX, and other federal and state laws prohibit sex discrimination, including sexual assault/misconduct, dating/domestic violence, and stalking. If you, or someone you know, has been the victim of any of these offenses, we encourage you to report this to the Title IX Coordinator at 309-298-1977 or anonymously online at: http://www.wiu.edu/equal_opportunity_and_access/request_form/index.php. If you disclose an incident to a faculty member, the faculty member must notify the Title IX Coordinator. The complete Title IX policy is available at: <http://www.wiu.edu/vpas/policies/titleIX.php>."

Student Rights & Responsibilities

For further information on expectations for both students and university personnel, please see <http://www.wiu.edu/provost/students.php>.

Dr. Hamner's Argumentative Essay Revision Checklist

The Introduction

1. **Hook:** Does your introduction (including the first sentence) efficiently grab readers' attention without being silly, exaggerated, or disconnected? Is the shift from it to the paper's thesis natural or abrupt?
2. **Thesis:** Is it clear what sentence(s) convey the paper's central claim?
Strengthening your thesis:
 - *Is your claim obvious or subtle? Boring or daring? Outlandish or plausible?*
 - *Is your claim vague or specific? General or precise?*
 - *Is something significant clearly at stake in your argument? Have you provided a sense of why it matters whether your reader buys or dismisses your claim?*
3. **Map:** Does the introduction preview the order in which the paper will examine the evidence?

The Body

4. **Main Points:** Can you summarize in a single phrase the main point and/or task of each body paragraph, or are some paragraphs' goals or relevance to the thesis unclear?
5. **Topic Sentences and Concluding Sentences:** Within a given paragraph, do the topic sentence and concluding sentence fit, without being identical? Do they provide meaningful links between paragraphs?
6. **Organization:** Are there any paragraphs that don't make logical sense in the organization of the essay—e.g. too-short/disconnected "lonely" paragraphs or too-long/repetitive "bullying" paragraphs? Should any be removed or integrated elsewhere? Can you reorder so the argument's force grows more naturally?
7. **Textual Evidence/Quotation:** Is there sufficient evidence from specific texts (at least one quotation per body paragraph, as a general rule) to back up the argument's main points? Are there appropriate page number citations? Does the paper introduce quotations with a sense of their original context? After quotations, do you offer interpretations of their meaning or just expect readers to hear them as you do?
8. **Minimal Summary, Maximum Analysis:** Except in briefly introducing unfamiliar key text(s), does the paper avoid plot summaries? Does *your* interpretive and analytical work remain the focus?
9. **Reasonable Specifics, Not Generalities or Overreaches:** Does your paper resort to vague generalities that might describe any text? ("The author uses lots of description to help readers understand.") Does it include gross overstatements that cost you credence? ("In this story everything is about death.")

The Conclusion

10. **Closure:** Does the conclusion bring the essay to a meaningful close or end abruptly? Does it avoid exact restatement of the introduction, but still reinforce your main points? Does it suggest how the essay's main ideas might be expanded into other contexts and why it matters that your reader take them seriously?

Mechanics & Style

11. **Grammatical & other mechanical issues:** Has at least one strong writer proofread your paper?
Among the most common problems (beyond spelling, capitalization, basic punctuation):
 - *Pronoun reference: are the referents of your pronouns clear? Do they agree in number?*
 - *Run-on sentences and fragments: is each of your sentences a single, complete thought?*
12. **Stylistic issues:** Have you presented your work in the most professional, attractive manner possible?
Among the most common problems, especially for less experienced writers:
 - *Verbal "fluff": is every word and phrase doing real work toward demonstrating your thesis? Have you eliminated as much repetition as possible? You want the "impact per word ratio" as high as possible.*
 - *Have you stayed in the present tense while writing about literature, film, or other artistic texts?*
 - *Have you provided an accurate, unique, provocative, inviting title?*
 - *Does your paper fit the length and formatting requirements?*