

WRI 120: College Composition
Spring 2012 Course Descriptions

S01

MWF1 9:30-10:50am

John Crutchfield

Writing About Film

How do movies reflect and affect American culture? What makes the art of film so powerful as a social and economic force in contemporary America? Why do certain films that "speak" to one generation seem to fall on deaf ears in the next, only to be heard again later? Through readings in film technique and criticism, through viewing and analyzing selected films, and above all, through formal and informal writing, students in this course will address these and related questions while developing their skills in critical perception, critical thinking, and written argumentation.

S02

TTHF2 9:30-10:50 am

Mary Husemann

Maybe You're Not Everyone

What does it mean to be "everyone"? Is the norm an objective standard designated by statistical analysis, or is the norm a subjective reaction that crystallizes a culture's values and fears? This course will focus on the idea of social norms and how individuals define their identities in response to those norms. We'll examine the role that the media plays in determining standards, the way that our culture embodies its greatest fears in its monsters, and the impact norms have on those living on the margins of society. We will cap each unit with a writing assignment that will capitalize on writing strengths and cultivate skills useful in many different disciplines.

S03

MWF1 11:00am-12:20pm

Catherine Reid

The Art of the Essay

This class celebrates and explores the rich possibilities of the essay. We'll study such pros as Virginia Woolf, George Orwell, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Joan Didion, determining what makes their work sing, provoke, inspire or argue. Many of them we'll read, as Flaubert said of Montaigne, "in order to live." Through experimenting with a variety of nonfictions, from personal narratives to persuasive essays, we'll cultivate an understanding of the voice, shape, and intention most appropriate for select venues.

S04

TTHF2 11:00am-12:20 pm

David Mycoff

Modern Theatre and Social Issues

In this course, we will use our study of selected modern and contemporary plays as a means of developing our own perspectives and creating our own reasoned arguments concerning two broad areas of social issues: (1) Race and Economic Status and (2) Sexuality, Gender, and Power. Students will compose four essays, each with required revisions. One essay will be a personal reflection that develops

the student's own perspective on a specific issue drawn from one of the course's broad issue areas. Two essays will develop reasoned arguments surrounding a specific issue drawn from one of the course's broad issue areas. At least one of the argumentative essays must integrate material from relevant published material that they have researched in consultation with the instructor. A fourth essay will present a literary analysis of one of the plays that we have studied, focusing on how the play explores social issues. In each essay, students will make some use of the plays that we have studied as source or inspiration for the questions that the papers examine and possibly for ideas that the papers develop. The course is not, however, a survey of dramatic literature or of theatre history.

S05

MWF1 1:00-2:20 pm

Lilian Crutchfield

Gothic America

Specters and haunting. Opened graves and rotting corpses awakened. Depthless voids and monstrous encounters. Ah, the terrible Gothic. We Americans may love it or loathe it, but the imagery of horror has inhabited this nation's artistic production since its founding. Our earliest recognized novel, from 1798, is a tale of supernatural forces and a gruesome family slaughtering. And if you watch HBO's *True Blood* this Sunday night, you'll get our latest version. Why such dark material surfacing in so many works, regardless of their dates or genres—or even subjects? What may we learn from our nation's persistent Gothicism if we pay attention?

In "Gothic America" we will explore connections between the art of horror and the traumas of U. S. history by close reading, discussing, and writing about a range of short works from 1835 to 2009. Some of our authors include Hawthorne, Poe, Ambrose Bierce, Stephen Crane, Flannery O'Connor, Joyce Carol Oates, Stephen King, and Poppy Z. Brite—along with reference to films from *Night of the Living Dead* to *1408*. We will also draw from a bit of Freud, trauma studies, and theory of history-writing in order to build a good vocabulary for your own writing. As a seminar designed to train you in drafting and revising, the course requires 4 critical essays, each of which will involve meaty process work. A series of in-class workshops and peer review sessions will help you develop your craft and practice skills such as structuring an argument and incorporating quotes into your prose.

S06

TTHF2 1:00-2:20 pm

Rose McLarney

Bringing Food Home: From Local Agriculture to Personal Appetite

"Tell me what kind of food you eat, and I will tell you what kind of man you are" and "The destiny of nations depends on the manner in which they are fed" are among the aphorisms asserted by Brillart-Savarin in the 1800s. Well before the popularity of the local food movement or the development of complex, industrial food systems, he knew that food choices were intimate matters and also had far-reaching implications. In this course, we will consider local food in a variety of senses, studying social movements related to ethical eating; regional foods grown in our mountainous Appalachian region; and how culture and experience have formed your personal appetites. Our texts will range from research on moonshine, to articles on organics, to MFK Fisher's memoir, *The Gastronomical Me*.

Our examination of food will be a means to improve all aspects of your writing, including generating ideas, organizing drafts, revising, and fulfilling the expectations of a particular kind of essay. You will write in class most every day, academically and creatively, and complete four final papers: a research

essay, argumentative essay, profile, and memoir. We will share ideas in discussion and writing in peer evaluations, and share food too.

S07

TTHF2 2:30-3:50 pm

Justin Gardiner

The History and Preservation of Our National Parks

Through considering a wide range of historical, political, literary, and natural-science based texts, this course will center on the past and present state of our National Park System. Discussions will range from the abstract level of cultural theory to the concrete data of an ecologist working in the field. First and foremost, however, students will be expected to think as writers: analyzing and crafting arguments, compiling and presenting research, and always being attentive to the nuts-and-bolts of strong composition. We will begin our course by surveying some of the key evolutionary strands in America's concept of Wilderness, and then move to consider the preservation of our nation's first parks: Yellowstone and Yosemite. The final portion of the class will center largely on independent research, with each student compiling a report—in addition to the formal writing assignments—on a National Park of one's own choosing. Discussion, workshops, and student presentations will all be essential components of the course.

S08

TTHF2 2:30-3:50 pm

Rachel Howard

Everyone's a Critic: Writing about the Arts

We all have strong opinions about the arts, whether we're talking about a stadium rock concert or a symphony hall recital. We all encounter art that confounds us, art that moves us, and art that infuriates us. In this course, we'll practice deepening and refining the thoughts that arise from those reactions, and channeling them into clear, expressive writing. How can, or should, one write about art in an age of proliferating blogs and shrinking newspapers? Is the arts writer a purveyor of consumer advice? A reporter recording history? A mediator or bridge between the artist and the audience? An aesthetic instigator and tastemaker? We'll try out these possible roles by writing (and revising) reviews of movies, music, and books, and then by interviewing and profiling a local visual artist. Your final assignment will address that tough core question: What is art? You'll read critics from A.O. Scott to Arlene Croce, think deeply about art you love (and hate), form and structure engaging arguments, and develop the skill to sustain meaningful discourse about aesthetics, culture, and more.