

Instructor: Dr. O. Alan Weltzien

Office: MH 311A

Office Hours:

M-Th 11:30-12:15 and by appt.

Phone: -7431 (o); -6858 (h—between 10 a.m. – 10 p.m.); 802-345-2620 (cell)

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Required texts:

Thomas Savage: *The Pass* (1944; rpt. 2009)

The Power of the Dog (1967; rpt. 2001)

The Sheep Queen (1977; rpt. 2001)

Course statement:

Foundations of Language combines the old ENGL 101, Freshman Composition, and ENGL 131, Oral Communications, classes. In other words, our class focuses upon college writing and public speaking. It introduces you to the conventions and standards of academic discourse, and explores connections between thinking, writing, and speaking. Writing is hard work but can feel extremely fulfilling. The best thing you can do is develop a positive mind set about your writing. Contrary to the experience of some in high school English classes, writing does not depend primarily upon rules; it does depend on correct spelling and punctuation and application of current bibliographical standards, though.

This course also explores, to a limited extent, analogies between public speaking and writing. Public speaking is this course's secondary focus. You will want and need to get over your particular public speaking fears as soon as you're able, and develop coping strategies, i.e. ways of converting nerves into something positive. You'll have several "opportunities" for oral presentations as well as turning in drafts of work. Remember that this class introduces you to worlds of writing and speaking, and that both take sustained, hard work for any improvement—improvement that will take much more time than one block or semester or even year.

I think that no more important markers of success in adult life exist than effective writing and public speaking: success that extends well beyond your workplace and career.

About your writing, as a colleague of mine has written: Some will improve more quickly than others. Plan to get frustrated. Preplanning, drafting, revising, outlining: all these phases/activities help you become a better writer. Sometimes you'll work and work and work and it doesn't seem to change or improve. Persistence over the long term, though,

leads to more substantive and controlled writing—and more self-confident, polished public speaking.

Course objectives:

You like bullets?

- develop critical reading and thinking skills
- discover your own voice and put it into writing and your oral presentations
- learn the importance of drafting, revision, peer editing, and re-revision in your writing
- learn how to construct an effective essay with a focused thesis, coherent and compelling structure, precise and interesting language
- incorporate relevant reference sources with proper MLA-style documentation, without plagiarizing, while still retaining your own voice
- connect your experiences of writing and speaking with our two books to see the relationship between literary study and the larger world you inhabit—and the adult you're becoming

Course expectations:

Ours is a seminar-workshop course, with concentrated discussion, lots of small-group work, lots of informal interaction between yourselves and yours truly. All that, along with our compressed, Block semester means you can't miss any classes. If you're an athlete, you know about the Hold Harmless Policy, and need to negotiate immediately. If you guys know you'll be gone a class day, discuss in advance with me and classmates, who might be willing to share missed material with you.

Other and apart from these exceptions, your course grade drops for each missed or tardy class. Enough said? In college we faculty expect you to take your education seriously and responsibly. It's your show and I don't entertain/accept excuses.

I will be grading your oral and written work along the way in the term, but will not put grades on returned work. I want you to concentrate on my commentary: in one respect, our class is a dialogue occurring between you individually and myself. You listen acutely to what I write and say about your work, then incorporate it. If at any time you want to know your letter grade for a particular assignment, you can use an office hour to find out.

In some respects, I define writing and public speaking classes as an ongoing *dialogue* between myself and yourself—one in which the instructor retains the dominant voice. I listen closely to what you think and feel in your drafting and prepping for oral presentations, as well as your completed papers or speeches, and give you detailed feedback. I will coach you during class time as well as in my office during office hours.

Your job is to trust me and incorporate my praise and criticisms into your work in progress. I'm both coach and judge, and in our brief time together, I use the former role more than the latter. Part of our class is 1:1. Your job is to make sure you're getting the individual attention from me you need.

Just in case it seems fuzzy to you, here's a shorthand view of letter grades:

F = unacceptable, for many reasons

D = weak, uneven work, with substantive problems

C = solid work, some strengths as well as weaknesses present; undistinguished; still too many writing errors or clumsy moments

B = fairly well controlled work, with at least a few impressive features

A = well controlled, substantial, praiseworthy work, though not necessarily perfect; in some way original, and /or a pleasure to read and think about

A- and B-level writing and speaking include some or all of the following: thoughtful development of your ideas; clear voice and vocabulary; specific textual references and avoidance of most summary; precise diction (hint: AVOID these words: MAJOR, INTERESTING, REALLY, VERY, DEFINITELY); coherent and progressive presentation of your ideas; clear transitions; little passive, repetitive language; no clichés or slang; and appropriate MLA-style documentation.

Details on paper formats: you'll observe for all your written work:

- word-processed with 12-pt. regular font
- avoid title pages
- 1" margins—no more—with only left margin justified
- double-spaced, indented paragraphs
- no double spacing between PPs
- consistent pagination on each page
- be as close to grammatically correct as you're capable. Consult the Harris Handbook which you've bought for college (not just this Block course).

Remember that spelling and correct punctuation and correct documentation in writing, and correct pronunciation and referencing in public speaking, MATTER. A LOT.

Course policies:

- late work is not accepted
- computer problems are your problems, not the school's or mine
- in-class assignments cannot be made up

- ain't no extra credit
- if you miss class, I don't repeat the stuff for you; you discover, via classmates, borrowed notes, whatever, what you missed
- avoid, at all costs, any hint of plagiarism.

Regarding plagiarism, even if you've heard this before, a bit of definition and clarity. Because you inhabit the Wonderful World of Web, plagiarism is infinitely easier to commit—and be caught at—that in the pre-Internet age. Here's what it means:

Plagiarism is the intentional or unintentional theft of words or ideas. It is also the incorrect attribution of words and ideas to a source. Plagiarism will result in a zero on the assignment, a course F, and being reported to the Dean of Students for possible college sanctions. Re: UM-W policy on academic dishonesty, consult your UM-W Student Handbook. In our course, you must provide accurate bibliographic information and correct in-text documentation. There is no margin for error, folks. Same holds for quoting and incorporating secondary sources/research materials in your speeches. If you use words from a source that is directly quoted yet you forget q. marks, you've plagiarized. Know the differences between the values and obligations of direct quotation and of paraphrase. Remember that the latter requires attribution as well.

A couple of words about college classroom etiquette and protocol: I expect you to treat one another as adults, which means a combination of candor and civility and tact. Rudeness is unacceptable. Pre-college classroom behavior is unacceptable. The last thing you want to do is get me angry at/with you. No cell phones allowed in class. Period. So make sure they're turned off and stay off. You may use them only outside class and/or during designated breaks. If you want to bring/use a notepad/laptop, it can only be for class purposes during specified times.

Course evaluation:

Participation and Preparation: 25%

Persuasive Research Paper (5-6 pp., excluding Works Cited page): 25%

Other writing (incl. analyses and synthesis of information, summary of texts or sources, intermediate drafts, etc.): 50%

Special Events: I expect you to attend two readings, in the English Department's ongoing *Dances With Words* series, as follows:

18 November, 7:30 p.m., The CUP: Dillon poet, Jenni Fallein

2 December, 7:00 p.m., The CUP: Butte fiction writer, David Abrams

These readings will take one hour or less. Afterwards, write a 1-p. critique and submit it to me the next class day. This results in extra credit for you.

Schedule:

Day 1:

Assignments:

Study my article, “Thomas Savage, Forgotten Novelist” from *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*. Begin *The Pass*, reading Chaps. 1-10 (i.e. until at least p. 106)

Activities:

Introductions of ourselves and Block courses

Review of syllabus. Work on Savage biography and writing in SW Montana

Day 2:

Assignments:

Begin thinking through your research paper topic: what aspect of Savage’s fiction—his world—particularly grabs your attention? What do you want to focus upon? Take notes for yourself and begin narrowing down your long-range topic. Read *The Pass*, Chaps. 11-20

Activities:

Self-introductory speeches. Work on initial papers.

Day 3:

Assignments:

Refine topic for research paper. Zero in on a topic that particularly grabs *you*. What, from all this, matters especially to you? What do you hold strong opinions about, and want to learn much more about (i.e. research)? Read *The Pass*, Chaps. 21-30

Activities:

Brief oral presentations (2 minutes or more, not less) on your first paper, if there is time. Small group discussions, topics from *The Pass*

Day 4:

Assignments:

Draft a 1-pp. prospectus, or plan, or short version, of your research paper topic. Finish *The Pass*, submit first paper

Day 5:

From now on, I shall abbreviate our daily schedule, and with some exceptions, announcing it day by day. Remember that the focus is always on your speaking and writing, i.e. the specific ways you react to and understand both books. Probably watch John Ford's epic *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962)

Day 6:

Discussion: evaluating Internet and print sources for scholarly validity, documenting sources, avoiding logical fallacies

Work on peer editing. Write, revise, and submit second paper.

Days 7-8: read *The Power of the Dog*. Continuing research and drafting of research paper.

Days 9-15: TBA. Day 9, submit 2nd paper. Day 10—Friday, 3 December—all day field trip. CLEAR YOUR SCHEDULE NOW. Final arrangements closer to the time.

Week 3, read *The Sheep Queen*.

Days 16-17: submit final draft, persuasive research essay. Give final presentations.

Day 18: Where you've come from, where you're going: course review, i.e. relation of ENGL 102 to other Gen. Ed. Courses as well as subsequent coursework.