

# Guizhou University \* West Chester University

## An Introduction and Syllabus for West Chester University's Written Rhetoric 210 Multicultural Writing

### Four-Week Study-Abroad Summer Session at Guizhou University

Guiyang, Guizhou Province, China  
June 1, 2013 through June 30, 2013

**Course number and title.** WRH210, "Multicultural Writing."

**Professor.** Dr. William B. Lalicker.

**Office hours and contact information.** At Guizhou University in China, office hours will be held on days and times, and at a location, arranged after consultation with GU authorities; details will be announced in class.

Telephones: The professor will likely obtain a Chinese mobile phone and will announce its number for students to call with questions.

Email: [wlalicker@wcupa.edu](mailto:wlalicker@wcupa.edu).

Website: Desire2Learn (D2L) course management system; access details to be discussed in class.

**Course description.** The official description reads, "This course focuses on understanding the role that writing plays in shaping a multicultural society. Assignments will ask students to write for diverse social contexts and will help students expand their repertoire of genres and writing strategies." The world today is a multicultural society; many of us will find ourselves operating, as citizens and as working people, in diverse social contexts that cross international and intercultural borders; therefore, the genres and writing strategies that we learn should not be limited to those of our own home cultures. The ways we communicate in writing in a globalized, transnationalized world will help to determine what kind of multicultural international society emerges, and how effectively those of us from different countries and cultures interact to meet the challenges of the future.

**This course fulfills the Writing Emphasis (W) component of the WCU General Education curriculum. Additionally, this course fulfills the Diverse Communities (J) component of the WCU General Education Curriculum.** More detailed information on these components, and the goals they meet, is provided on the following page.

If you are a WCU English major, this course is a "Power and Politics" option for the Writings Track, and a Writings Crossover option for the Literatures track.

In this course you will become familiar with the rhetorical and writing standards of several world cultures, with special emphasis on Chinese and American (English language, Western tradition) styles of writing. Each culture has its own genres, traditions, and assumptions

about what is acceptable and effective in the rhetoric underlying that culture's writing, and you'll study those traditions as well as the rhetorical hybridities that make multicultural writing, and intercultural writing, successful—and you'll write essays in several genres to demonstrate your understanding of the rich intellectual and communicative possibilities opened by your receptiveness to the multicultural writing situation.

**Writing Emphasis goals.** This course meets two General Education goals (linked to the Writing Emphasis component, goals that will help students learn to:

- Communicate effectively;
- Think critically and analytically.

Furthermore, students will be given opportunities to revise their writing with the benefit of feedback from the instructor and peers (see references to workshop drafts, and to the revision opportunity delineated in Week 4 of the schedule). You will note that the syllabus includes formal writing in the Genre Essays and Final Examination essay question element, and informal writing in the Introductory Essay. You will note, also, that class time will be allotted for instruction concerning techniques of composition as appropriate to the writing assignments: prior to every genre essay's workshop draft, the instructor will focus on generating ideas for the genre, plus the methods of drafting, organizing, revising, and proofreading. The Introductory Essay plus the Genre Essays together account for 55% of the course grade; furthermore, writing will be required in answers on quizzes and Final Examination that account for the remaining course percentage.

**Diverse Communities goals.** This course meets four General Education goals linked to the Diverse Communities component; these goals will help students learn to:

- Respond thoughtfully to diversity;
- Communicate effectively (as noted above);
- Think critically and analytically (as noted above);
- Demonstrate the sensibilities, understandings, and perspectives of a person educated in the liberal arts tradition.

Furthermore, this course meets the following Diverse Communities course objectives:

- Students will be able to identify, compare, and differentiate critical issues related to historically marginalized groups;
- Students will demonstrate the ability to effectively apply theoretical framework(s) to analyze structural inequities relative to groups/content studied;
- Students will be able to articulate an informed and reasoned openness to differences related to groups studied;
- Student will be able to assess and evaluate broad social policies and practices in light of the university's goal of graduating students who are committed to creating a just and equitable society.

The course fulfills these goals through its readings, which focus on the ways in which diverse communities articulate their cultural values through rhetoric. The readings frequently present arguments and reflections on critical issues related to historically marginalized groups, and invoke histories and theories of oppression; in your analyses of these readings, you will

apply theoretical frameworks to analyze the structural inequities cited in these readings. The study and practice of multicultural writing rests upon an understanding of how power relations condition rhetorical exchanges between differing discourse communities, and the weekly schedule notes the “Informing Theories” that undergird these rhetorics. In the Genre Essays (particularly the Policy Argument) and the quizzes and the Final Examination, you will enact your knowledge of the rhetorical theories that invoke oppression and the readings that articulate these theories.

**Course objectives.** By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. Understand how culture influences the ways that discourse communities and individuals communicate in writing.
2. Understand the basic theories and traditions of rhetoric and writing from several cultures: first the great and ancient Chinese traditions; then the classical Greek traditions of Plato and Aristotle that undergird Western rhetoric; plus additional traditions, including indigenous “native American” traditions, African and postcolonial traditions, and the feminist-borderlands theory of Anzaldua.
3. Understand how differing cultural traditions on topics such as education, human nature, and social class influence the practice of rhetoric and writing.
4. Understand how a transcultural rhetorical consciousness may contribute to creative discovery and successfully hybridized writing in the context of world Englishes.
5. Demonstrate the ability to adjust one’s communication and argument style to write effectively for audiences of a culture other than one’s own.
6. Write essays in several genres (the literacy autobiography/biography, the policy argument, and the review ) that successfully communicate one’s point across cultural boundaries.

**Course method.** This course will be taught on the GU campus, with GU and WCU students together. This course relies on partnership between GU and WCU students. The Chinese students possess a lived expertise in Chinese culture and traditions, including rhetorical traditions. The American students similarly possess a lived expertise in American traditions, plus the competency in English writing that comes with practice in a native language. Not only our course subject matter, but our daily interactions will be multicultural. Chinese students and American students alike will learn from each other. For this course to be successful, all students—Chinese and American—must commit themselves to a partnership, a mutually beneficial and harmonious sharing of one’s expertise. This partnership requires patience, openness, sensitivity, and dedication. Students will be paired or grouped for joint writing assignments in which Chinese and American students will work together to produce essays. This “tandem” model of learning is unusual, and—if you participate in this model in a spirit of international friendship and generosity—unusually productive, even transformative, as a way of gaining understanding and competence in our subject. The intercultural experience encouraged by the tandem model will be further enhanced by direct experience of the cultures of Guizhou—not only the modern urban Chinese culture of life in the city of Guiyang and in a large, advanced university campus, but also by planned visits to the strongholds of China’s “minority cultures,” the indigenous tribes pursuing traditional lives in nearby parts of Guizhou Province. When Chinese and American students share experience, they learn to see through the eyes of the other, which is an asset to multicultural understanding and to rhetorical effectiveness as well.

(This Summer I course taught on the GU campus will be followed by a Summer II class—English 368, Business and Organizational Writing—taught on the WCU campus, and to

include both GU students from China and WCU students from the United States. If you would like to continue the tandem model of multicultural learning, consider registering for the Summer II English 368; the professor can provide details to help you register for this special course section.)

During class time, the emphasis in this course will be on discussion, with secondary emphasis on lecture to provide details on materials and theories. You should be ready to engage in discussion every day based on the readings for that day (the professor will alert you, at the end of each class, to the material we'll get to discuss in the next class). Every class day, you should be ready to answer, from your own perspective, the following questions about the readings at hand:

- What's the point of this reading?
- What does the writer bring to this essay, in terms of assumptions, supportive examples, logical arguments, slices of life articulated, to support that point?
- What is the cultural perspective of the writer (from her or his national heritage, historical era, community experience, or individual experience)?
- What is the cultural perspective that I have, as a reader (from my national heritage, historical era, community experience, or individual experience)?
- What knowledge or experience do I need in order to fully understand and respect this writer's point? Do I like it? Do I think it is valid?

You should annotate the readings, define terms that you aren't familiar with, come to our class discussions with all questions that arise, and generally be able to show that you have grappled intellectually (and maybe emotionally) with the assigned material, every class day. Some of our readings are pretty difficult, in a discourse that may be culturally inflected, or complicatedly academic or abstract. Remember our tandem model: you should work as a partner with others in the class, including those who are from the national and cultural perspective that differs from your own and that can enrich your own understanding. In other words, study together, discuss the readings together, prepare for examinations together, with those of the differing and enriching national and cultural expertise. Remember, also, that the professor values the questions you might ask as much as the answers you might produce; and you may get a grasp on a piece of writing by focusing on a part of it, an interesting or intriguing or perplexing sentence or two, as a way in and a contribution to class discussion.

**Course readings and required texts.** The first required textbook is a collection of essays from many cultures: Michael Austin (ed.), *Reading the World: Ideas that Matter*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Norton, 2010), ISBN 978-0-393-93349-9. Most of our readings will come from this anthology.

The second required textbook is Muriel Harri and Jennifer L. Kunka, *The Writer's FAQs: A Pocket Handbook* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.) (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2011), ISBN 978-0-205-77784-6. This is a general grammar reference guide, useful also for tips on the writing process as well as research and documentation style guidelines. We will not use this textbook on a daily basis, but it will be valuable for you to refer to it as you make sure your essays are professional in the quality of their discourse.

I may also reproduce a few essays for you to consider as models, or examples, of the genres in which we are writing, or to add to the multicultural content of the course and the context of our class discussions. Any essays so added to the course texts will be required reading in the same way as the other texts are required.

Because distribution of American textbooks in China can be problematic, I will be applying several approaches to make sure that GU students have full access to the texts. One method is linked to our tandem learning model: I expect WCU students to bring their textbooks to China and to share their textbooks with their designated GU partners. I will also bring extra copies of the textbooks to China and will place them on reserve at a location (probably a GU library) where students can access the books at one-hour intervals. I will also be seeking arrangements with publishers to put copies of the textbooks online where they may be accessed by Internet from China. Finally, I will photocopy and distribute some sections of the texts as necessary.

**Course writing assignments.** This is a Writing Emphasis course, and thus you'll write a variety of assignments in varying degrees of formality, with differing purposes.

1. Introductory Essay:

This is a short and informal essay of a page or less asking you to provide your view on the following question: What makes writing good, in your culture? Identify the primary values. Although you should definitely think about the values that apply in academic writing—what matters the most to teachers or professors—you may also consider about what makes writing good in other contexts in your culture, if you wish. This assignment is due on the first day of Week 2. (This assignment is worth 10 points.)

2. Genre Essays (three of them):

Genre Essay I: Literacy Autobiography/Biography

Genre Essay II: Policy Argument

Genre Essay III: Review

In each of these essays, you will:

- Demonstrate appropriate use of the features of the genre—and these genres are linked to Western rhetorical notions—but approach the context with an eye toward lessons you have learned from the cultures we have studied;
- Write no more than three pages, double-spaced and otherwise following all of the conventions of Western academic discourse (reference to the Harris and Kunka textbook will help).

You will receive up to 15 points for each essay, including 5 points for production of a draft to be discussed in a workshop where classmates will provide commentary and support for your essay's aims.

**Tests.** There will be two types of test in this course.

Quizzes will be based on the assigned readings, and will be designed to let you show that you have read the readings and considered the most important issues in those readings. There will be a quiz in each of Weeks 1 through 3, to be given unannounced during that week. Each quiz will be worth up to 5 points (for a total of 15 points).

The two-hour Final Examination will be mostly essay questions based on notions in the assigned readings, but may also include some “correct the error” or definitional questions based on the readings, and may also be linked to the course’s goals and objectives listed above. Exam material will be based on the entire course, including issues that emerge during in-class discussion; more detail will be provided in the last week of the course. The exam will be given on the last day of class, and is worth up to 30 points.

**Grading system.** This course uses the standard grading system found in West Chester University catalogues, and course writing is the main factor in arriving at the grade:

- Introductory Assignment, 10%
- Genre Essays (three at 15% each), 45%
- Quizzes (three at 5% each), 15%
- Final Examination, 30%

Although I assume that anyone taking a core course for English majors is committed to serious scholarly work, so much of the success of this course relies on engaged in-class discussion that attendance is an appropriate factor in the grade. Therefore, 5% will be subtracted from the grade total for each absence after missing two classes. (In special circumstances, the professor may agree that a makeup assignment can recover the lost points—if the professor determines that such a makeup assignment is appropriate, and if not too much of the course has been missed.)

I realize that many of you have high standards for your learning and are sometimes anxious to find out what grade you have earned on a given assignment, and why; I am happy to discuss this topic with you, as a contribution to your development as a student. Feel free to make an appointment with me for any such discussion; as detailed commentary and dialogue serves this need best, try to refrain from emailing me for your grade (especially at the end of the semester when I am very busy reading essays and exams and recording grades for all of my classes: your final grade is available online at myWCU about one week after the final exams end).

**Standards of academic community.** Our class is an intellectual community in accordance with the ideals of the West Chester University Mission Statement. The Mission Statement says, in part, “We appreciate the diversity the members of our community bring to the campus and give fair and equitable treatment to all; acts of insensitivity or discrimination against individuals based on their race, gender, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, abilities, or religious beliefs will not be tolerated.” We will honor this ideal; moreover, all ideas may be heard fairly, while all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. If you have any concerns about a possible violation of any aspect of this ideal, feel free to discuss the matter with me.

Respect for the community in which we work together includes being fully present—not just physically (although attendance itself counts—see **Grading system** above) but in terms of undivided focus on those who are speaking. What I mean is that, although I’m sure that a lot of you are excellent multitaskers and can check your email and text friends and keep generally conscious of class discussion at the same time, your full intellectual engagement and likeliness of actually being in dialogue with others is really enhanced when you turn off the phone, turn off the screen, and listen actively and completely to whomever is sharing ideas. It disrespects your classmates to act as if somebody on the phone or something on the screen is more important than the person right in front of you in the present moment. If a special circumstance or condition requires computer use, let me know. If your phone rings in class—and I know that

safety and security make it an advantage for us to have those phones on—deal with the interruption quickly and, barring real emergency, get back with your class community, present and focused.

Our class should be a community of seekers after knowledge, not just an exercise aimed at credit hours and a grade. Therefore, academic honesty will be strictly enforced, first for ethical reasons, and additionally because the course requires a true participation within an intellectual community, as such participation will prepare you for achievement of your academic goals. Plagiarism will result in a failing grade on any assignment and, if appropriate in the view of the professor, a failing grade in the course. I may require work to be submitted in electronic format for testing against anti-plagiarism software and online services. (Don't be offended—requests will sometimes be made at random, to test the anti-plagiarism systems as much as to test student writing. I aim to be an idealist, and I also aim not to be a fool.) In my classes, there is no penalty for asking a question or seeking help. If you have any doubt about the propriety of your work procedures, collaborations, drafting, and research methods, or if you're feeling cornered by a deadline, talk with me—I'll help you.

**Miscellaneous suggestions.** Try to show up on time to class; it's boring for the whole class when a prof has to repeat stuff because you weren't there to hear it the first time, and it interrupts class. If you find it tough to get up and go in time to an early class, have a classmate come and get you and bring you. When essays are due, they may come in any time the day they're due, but can lose 10% of their grade for each day late (to be fair to those who handed it in, ready or not, on time)—unless you ask for an extension, which generally will be granted with a reassigned due date. Emailed essays are accepted, but the burden is on you to make sure they arrive, in unencrypted and readable form; emailed essays can get lost in cyberspace or in the prof's long email queue or in inexplicable shunting to junk mail files, so it's much better to provide a hard copy. Office hours (or appointments, if those fit your schedule better) are intended for you to use: don't be shy about asking questions, getting advice, getting commentary on your drafts.

### **Schedule of Readings and Assignments**

#### **Week 1. Introduction to Multicultural Writing.**

READING: Gloria Anzaldua, "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" (in Austin 527; to be provided electronically to

GU students).

WRITING: Introductory Assignment, details provided first class (electronically to GU students), essay due

first day in Week 2.

INFORMING THEORIES: Borderlands and feminist rhetorics.

#### **Week 2. Theme: Language and Rhetoric.**

READING: Aristotle, from *Rhetoric* (Austin 489); Gertrude Buck, "The Present Status of Rhetorical Theory"

(Austin 496); Chinua Achebe, "Language and the Destiny of Man" (Austin 503); N. Scott Momaday,

"Personal Reflections" (Austin 519).

WRITING: Literacy Autobiography, workshop draft and final draft. For a sample of the genre, please read

Frederick Douglass, "Learning to Read" (Austin 46).

INFORMING THEORIES: Western classical, African American, and postcolonial rhetorics.

### **Week 3.**

#### **Theme: Human Nature.**

READING: Plato, "The Speech of Aristophanes" (Austin 89); Mencius (Meng Zi), "Man's Nature is Good"

(Austin 94); Hsun Tsu (Xun Zi), "Man's Nature is Evil" (Austin 100); Ruth Benedict, "The Individual

and the Pattern of Culture" (Austin 132).

WRITING: Policy Argument, workshop draft and final draft. For a sample of the genre, please read Lin Tse-

Hsu (Lin Zexu), "A Letter to Queen Victoria" (Austin 193); Mo Tzu (Mo Zi), "Against Offensive

Warfare" (Austin 253); Sun Tzu (Sun Zi), from *The Art of War* (Austin 256); or George Orwell,

"Pacifism and the War" (Austin 282).

INFORMING THEORIES: Western classical, Chinese classical, and postcolonial rhetorics.

### **Week 4. Theme: Education.**

READING: Hsun Tsu (Xun Zi), "Encouraging Learning" (Austin 8); Seneca, "On Liberal and Vocational

Studies" (Austin 16); Paulo Freire, "The Banking Concept of Education" (Austin 62); and Kisautaq Leona Okakok, "Serving the Purpose of Education" (Austin 76).

WRITING: Review, workshop draft and final draft. Samples of the genre will be provided by the professor. Optional revision of any one of the genre essays, due the fourth class day of Week 4.

INFORMING THEORIES: Chinese classical, Western classical, postcolonial, and liberatory rhetorics.

SPECIAL ACTIVITY: **Review for Final Examination.**

**FINAL EXAMINATION will be administered on the last day of class.**

The requirements described in this introduction and the schedule of this syllabus may be altered as necessary, to meet the professor's judgment of the best provisions for the students; any such changes will be noted in class.