

English 1C Applied Intermediate Composition: The Search for American Utopias

Jim Sullivan
 Section 50 MWF 2:10-3:00 OLMH 1132
 Section 56 MWF 3:10-4:00 HMNSS1405
 Email: jim_sullivan@mac.com

Office: HMNSS 3307
 Hours: MF 11:30-1:30 / Wednesday 12:15-1:45
 (and by appointment)
 Phone: (909) 964-2776

Course Description / Objectives

"The starting point of these reflections was usually a feeling of impatience at the sight of the 'naturalness' with which newspapers, art and common sense constantly dress up a reality which, even though it is the one we live in, is undoubtedly determined by history. In short, in the account given of our contemporary circumstances, I resented seeing Nature and History confused at every turn, and I wanted to track down, in the decorative display of *what-goes-without-saying*, the ideological abuse which, in my view, is hidden there." -- Roland Barthes, *Preface to Mythologies*

This course seeks to empower you as a reader of cultural texts ranging from advertisements and music videos to film and literature. In our conversations, both written and verbal, we will return again and again to the question of how representations of the quest for an American Utopia engage with questions of race, class, gender, sexuality, identity (personal, ethnic, and national), power, and desire (sexual, material, political, etc.) As we employ the language of semiotics (the study of signs), we will practice closely reading or interpreting signs (images, actions, language, objects) in their specific cultural contexts. We will engage in these interpretive acts recognizing that both the texts we interpret and our own interpretations reflect specific cultural and political interests, values, and perspectives. Because of this complicated intersection of text and reader, we will come to recognize the instability of "meaning" and the creative power of and cultural resonance of interpretation itself.

Supplemented by class discussion and critique groups, assignments (in and out of class) will require writers to develop and demonstrate the following skills:

- the ability analyze and interpret the imagery and language of various media (print, internet, television, film, and literature) in its cultural and social context
- the ability to compose coherent, unified, and engaging essays that argue for a specific interpretation of a "text."
- the ability to present compelling evidence to support an essay,
- the ability to construct varied, lively, and grammatically correct sentences,
- the ability to employ dynamic, concise, and appropriate language
- and the ability to research a topic and correctly integrate that research into an analytical argument

Required Texts and Materials

- Baum, L. Frank. *The Wizard of Oz*. New York: HarperTrophy, 2001 (not in the bookstore—you will have to shop on line or visit a local bookstore). You can use any edition that includes the illustrations of W.W. Denslow—the original illustrator.
- Maasik and Soloman. *Signs of Life in the U.S.A: Readings in Popular Culture for Writers*, 3rd ed. Boston: Bedford / St. Martins, 2003.
- Maguire, Gregory. *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West*. New York: Regan Books, 1995.
- Morrison, Toni. *Paradise*. New York: Plume, 1997.
- A college level thesaurus/dictionary
(I recommend *The Synonym Finder* and the *Oxford American English* dictionary)
- four manila file folders
- an email account (the account you check everyday)
- access to Microsoft Word
- a blank videotape and access to a VCR

Highly Recommended Texts and Materials

- ❑ Axelrod, Rise B. and Charles R. Cooper. *The St. Martin's Guide to Writing*, 6th ed. (SMG) (I key all grammar marks to SMG and also refer to it occasionally for other resources. You could borrow this if you do not own a copy; you will not need it every day).
- ❑ Troyka, Lynn Quitman. *Simon and Shuster Workbook for Writers*, 6th ed.

Expectations: A Community of Writers

- ❑ We each understand that we write in this course for a public audience (each other)
- ❑ We each recognize that this course provides each of us (including the instructor) an extraordinary opportunity to develop our ability to communicate with others through writing.
- ❑ Each of us has ideas and experiences to share with others through our prose and class discussion.
- ❑ Each of us will arrive to class on time, having completed all reading and writing assignments according to the class schedule.
- ❑ Each of us will treat the other members of the class with respect, listening attentively while others speak.
- ❑ In the context of this mutual respect, we will not hesitate to disagree with each other and offer constructive critical responses to each other's compositions.
- ❑ Each of us understands that racist, sexist, or otherwise inflammatory language contradicts our commitment to respect each other and develop our community of writers. It also violates the standards of the broader UC Riverside community of which we are a part.
- ❑ Each of us commits to submitting our own original work for each assignment in this class (ideas, language, and assignments taken from others without proper documentation constitute plagiarism).

Course Policies**❑ Grading**

Assignment #1: Semiotic Reading of an MTV Video (1600 words)	15 points
Assignment #2: An Interpretation of Toni Morrison's Paradise (1600 words)	15 points
Assignment #3: Interpreting a Film that Searches for an American Utopia (1600 words)	15 points
Assignment #4: Creating and Interpreting Your Own American Utopia (3000 words + annotated works cited list)	25 points
Exams (Verbal Midterm and Written Final)	15 points
Other Writing Assignments (blackboard discussions, peer critiques, journal entries, etc.)	15 points

Assignments will have individual instructions and rubrics (available on the course blackboard). I will score all assignments on point system. At the end of the quarter, I will determine your grade by simply adding the total number of points earned and applying the following scale. After the second week of the program, you can always check your grade status on the electronic blackboard.

A	93-100 points	C+	79-77 points
A-	90-92 points	C	76-73 points
B+	87-89 points	C-	72-70 points
B	83-86 points	D	69-60 points
B-	80-82 points	F	59 and below

- ❑ **Attendance, Preparation and Participation:** You may have noticed that I do not include class participation as an evaluation category in the final grade. I do so not because I do not believe in class participation but because I believe that attendance in class each day, careful preparation for class, and full participation in all class activities and discussions are minimum requirements for the course, not something that should be evaluated on the same level as the more challenging writing assignments that you will complete. Although I do not have a separate grading category for attendance, preparation, and participation, I expect each student to come to class each class period with all required materials after having prepared carefully for class (by heavily annotating the text or preparing reading notes or some other study resource), I also expect each student to participate during each class period in group activities, workshops, and class-wide seminar discussions. I will penalize students 2 points for each missed class, 1 point for each class a student arrives to unprepared, and half a point for not participating fully in all

aspects of a class meeting.

- ❑ **Arriving Late to Class:** Because we only have 50 minute class periods, late arrivals particularly disrupt our work. Students who arrive late to class must meet with me during the next available office hours to discuss their situation and review any missed material.
- ❑ **Outlines and Drafts:** Students must submit outlines and drafts via the course dropbox. On critique group days, students **MUST** bring a copy of their draft and their cover sheet to class with them. Failure to do so will result in a 10% lowering of your final paper grade and a 1 point penalty for lack of preparation.
- ❑ **Conferences:** I expect students to conference with me regularly during office hours. I will require at least two mandatory conferences during the quarter.
- ❑ **Film Screenings:** Each student must attend two film screenings for the course (The Wizard of Oz and a second film that the student will choose from several options).
- ❑ **Final submissions:** You will submit final essays via the course drop box by the time listed in the course calendar. You will also submit a manila folder with the following items: 1) the cover sheet for you final draft, 2) a printed version of your outline with any comments I have made, and 3) a printed version of your first draft with the complete peer critique stapled to it. All blackboard submissions must be MICROSOFT WORD files and properly formatted. I will not accept improperly formatted essays or non-word formatted files. I will require students to resubmit these papers, and I will apply late penalties to these late submissions.
- ❑ **Documenting Research:** Writers must turn in photocopies—clearly ordered, highlighted, and labeled—for every source used in a paper (this includes paraphrased and summarized material). I will not accept the final paper without the highlighted, ordered, labeled copies of sources used in the paper.
- ❑ **Late Submissions:** I will subtract 10% of a paper's value for each class day it is late. A paper is late when it is not submitted electronically via the digital drop-box by the time stated in the course calendar. **A student cannot pass the class without completing the following course requirements:** all papers, two film screenings, all required conferences, and the two exams (midterm and final).
- ❑ **Revisions:** You may revise one of the first three papers, but you must meet the following conditions: 1) you must have a conference with me and agree to substantive revisions of the paper (I will not accept revisions for grammar or mechanics clean ups), 2) you must submit your revision with your original essay and all drafts, 3) you will provide a 250 word introduction to your revision explaining how and why you have revised the essay, and 4) you will submit the revisions by the day of your final exam.
- ❑ **The War on Grammar:** This quarter I have declared war on grammar errors that undermine the quality of your writing. If you make more than a few minor grammar or mechanical errors in your essay, I will require you to complete a grammar correction log cataloguing your errors, the relevant grammar rules, and your corrections. You will have to complete an entry for each and every error in your paper and submit that log to me via the digital drop box within one week of when I return your essay. Failure to do so will result in a 10% penalty for the assignment.
- ❑ **Plagiarism:** Do not present the work of others as your own. Plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the course, without exception. Because UC Riverside has a strict plagiarism policy (you may face academic probation or dismissal), this serious academic offense could jeopardize your academic career. While many non-Western cultures consider the un-cited copying of ideas and language from others a tribute or honor to the original writer, the academic culture of the United States views such practices as a serious breach of integrity. Develop your own voice and prepare yourself for professional life in this culture by learning to recognize plagiarism, submit original work, and properly document any references you make to the thoughts, ideas, or language of others. If you feel overwhelmed by an assignment, reach out to me as early in the process as you can. You have my office hours, email address, and home phone number: use them. I want to support your effort to develop your own voice as a writer in any way that I can.

Revised SOL Edition 3 Version of Course Calendar

How to read this calendar: SOL refers to *Signs of Life*, and author last names refer to essays included in SOL. After each author's name, you will find a page number. That tells you where the essay you must read begins. Always read all assigned essays in their entirety using underlining, highlighting, circling, and margin notes to mark the text so that you can return to it in class, during blackboard discussions, or in your essays.

The Course Blackboard: For every day of class you should also check the Blackboard *Assignments* section. There you will find "lecture notes," forms you need to print out and bring to class, and instructions for class activities and assignments. I recommend checking the Blackboard *Assignments* section as soon after each class meeting as you can. I will not repeat announcements made on blackboard or instructions provided on blackboard in class. If you have questions about any of the assignments or instructions, feel free to email me or stop by office hours.

Week 1: An Introduction to Semiotics and the Market of American Desires	
April 2	SOL Introduction 1-19 (and study all visual images in chapter); Blackboard: Read and Study Syllabus, Check "Assignments" page and complete any assigned tasks.
April 4	SOL Chapter 1: 47-55, Shames (55), Norton (62), Ewen (79), Kron (94); Nuts and Bolts: "Active Voice" Complete "The Semiotics of My Room" Discussion Board.
Week 2: Reading and Writing Gender in America	
April 7	SOL Chapter 2: 117-128, Marchand (129), Solomon (137), Barthel (149), Steinem (160). "Portfolio of Advertisements on course Blackboard Complete Apple "Switch" Advertisement Blackboard discussion Bring Selected MTV Video to Class
April 9	SOL Chapter 6: 437-447, Devor (447), Blum (453), Messner (460) Nuts and Bolts: "Concision"
April 11	SOL Scanlon (472), Naomi Wolf (481), Tannen (490), Gibson (496) Nuts and Bolts: "Sentence Variety"
Week 3: Reading and Writing Race and the Other in America	
April 14	SOL Chapter 7: 515-525, Omi (526), DeMott (538), Bernstein (562). Music Video Semiotic Analysis Thesis/Topic Sentence Outline due by 8 AM
April 16	SOL Anzaldua (575), Shen (583), Hancock (593), Jennings (640) Music Video Semiotic Analysis Draft due by 8 AM
April 18	Hooks (Blackboard), Greenblatt (Blackboard) Music Video Semiotic Analysis Final Draft due by 12 noon
Week 4: Paradise? (Mandatory Conference #1 Week)	
April 21	<i>Paradise</i> 1-120
April 23	<i>Paradise</i> 120-220 Blackboard Discussion
April 25	<i>Paradise</i> 220-318 Sentence Variety
Week 5: Interpreting Paradise (Verbal Midterm Week)	
April 28	Engle (738), Medhurst (746), Bader (785) <i>Paradise</i> Interpretation Thesis/Topic Sentence Outline due by 8 AM
April 30	SOL Chapter 4 299-308, Ray (308), Seger (316), Bordo (333) <i>Paradise</i> Interpretation Draft due by 8 AM
May 2	Read the first half of <i>The Wizard of Oz</i> <i>Paradise</i> Interpretation Final Draft due by 12 noon
Week 6: From the Wonderful Wizard to the Wicked Witch (Verbal Midterm Week)	
May 5	Complete <i>Wizard of Oz</i> before attending screening

	View <i>Wizard of Oz</i> at Sunday afternoon or evening screening Complete <i>Wizard of Oz</i> discussion board
May 7	<i>SOL</i> Chapter 4: 289-298, Ray (299), Seger (308), Bordo (317), Parenti (366)
May 9	<i>SOL</i> Chapter 9: 657-667, Engle (677), Medhurst (686), Croal/Hughes (702), Prager (706), Cross (710).
Week 7: <i>Wicked</i> / Writing a Film Interpretation	
May 12	<i>Wicked</i> : 1-139 Film Interpretation Thesis/Topic Sentence Outline due by 8 AM
May 14	<i>Wicked</i> : 139-179 Film Interpretation Draft due by 8 AM
May 16	<i>Wicked</i> : 179-222 Film Interpretation Final Draft due by 12 noon
Week 8: Designing an American Utopia (Mandatory Conference #2 Week)	
May 19	<i>Wicked</i> : 222-329 Complete Discussion Board
May 21	<i>Wicked</i> : 332-406 First Thoughts American Utopia email due by 8 AM
May 23	Reading TBA Outline of Your American Utopia due by 8 AM
Week 9: A Semiotic Analysis of Your American Utopia	
May 26	Holiday
May 28	Reading TBA Draft of Your American Utopia due by 8AM
May 30	Draft Annotated Bibliography for research based semiotic reading of American Utopia due by 8 AM
Week 10: Even American Utopias Must Come to an End	
June 2	Reading TBA Draft of Research Based Semiotic Reading of Your American Utopia due by 8 AM
June 4	Final Draft of Complete American Utopia Paper due
June 6	Reading TBA Final Exam Workshop
June 9	Final Exam 8-11 AM

I reserve the right to change this calendar as needed (with reasonable notice, of course).

General Rubric for Writing Assignments

A range papers - Outstanding	
An "A" essay answers the demands of the assignment exceptionally ; in addition, it displays particularly thoughtful or creative insights; it displays few or no mechanical flaws ; it demonstrates complex, varied word choice that is appropriate to the demands of the essay; it displays a command of sentence variety and organization ; and it may contain stylistic devices which illuminate the material	
"B" range papers - Very Good	"C" range papers - Competent
A "B" essay answers the demands of the assignment effectively ; in addition, it displays effective insights (possibly acknowledging multiple perspectives), has few or no major mechanical flaws , and has an organization and tone appropriate to the material.	A "C" essay is one which manages to convey information to the reader competently . It has adequately logical organization with a clear thesis statement or controlling idea; it contains coherent and complete sentences , and appropriately fulfills the assignment ; and it does not have so many mechanical flaws that legibility suffers . Essays with few or no grammar flaws can still receive a "C".
"D" range papers - Shows potential	"F" range papers—Clearly inadequate
A "D" essay is one that is appropriate to the assignment at times, but lacks overall focus or coherence. It may have several major grammatical errors that make the essay difficult to understand. Although it is not a passing grade, a "D" paper shows potential and gestures toward fulfilling the assignment.	A "F" essay has significant flaws in organization, content, or mechanics that seriously impair its meaning. It demonstrates an inappropriate or incoherent response to the assignment.