

ENGLISH 110: COLLEGE WRITING
EVOLUTION
(Linked to Anthro 102)
Tues/Thurs 4:30 – 6:20

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In 1979, Stephen J. Gould and Richard Lewontin penned an article that sent biologists cursing up and down department halls. More than a century after Darwin's *Origin of the Species*, these two scientists boldly accused their colleagues of getting evolution all wrong. "We criticize [their] approach," Gould and Lewontin write: scientists might as well suggest "legs were clearly intended for breeches" or "noses were made to carry spectacles." Though high schools often teach Darwin as an end to a discussion, it's really the beginning. Culturally, we're still arguing over what evolution means, whether it is right, and exactly how far it should extend. On one hand, evolutionary theory has become so ubiquitous it's infiltrated our movies, our books, our schools, and our love lives; on the other hand, creationists have gained a foothold in American politics and schools, arguing evolution is just a "theory." We will start at the source – Darwin – reading, debating, and critiquing selections of Darwin's writing. From there, we will move outward to consider the life that writing has had in the scientific community, the educational community and "culture" writ large.

These discussions of evolution will help us mine the intersection of science and writing: What is science writing and how does it work? How is it topically, structurally, linguistically, and syntactically unique? How does scientific rhetoric inform social rhetoric? What happens in that transfer? Examining "evolution" across a variety of media and fields (science, history, literature, education, cultural studies) will allow students to ask larger questions and begin making connections across disciplines – the foundation of a liberal arts education. Writing will be the linchpin of these discussions. You learn to recognize and interrogate scientific discourse in its various modes and incarnations, you will also develop their own rhetorical expertise; an understanding of science-inflected textual strategies will grow in tandem with your own writing skills. This course uses a variety of writing assignments to help you form coherent and articulate stances on these issues, developing skills that are both general in nature and specifically targeted at students interested in the sciences.

Learning Goals. By the end of this class, students should be able to:

- Recognize an argument (and specifically the thesis of that argument).
- Create solid arguments and theses of their own.

- Understand and apply the process of revision.
- Find and incorporate secondary source material into their own writing.
- Be able to speak about the conventions, possibilities, and limitations of writing in different disciplines (specifically, the natural sciences and the social sciences).

Required Texts and Supplies:

Bedford Basics: A Workbook for Writers [ISBN: 0 312 15457 7]

The Darwin Reader

Understanding Scientific Prose by Jack Selzer

All readings that are not from these texts will be posted on blackboard or wordpress

Note about Linked Course:

This is a linked course. This means the themes and discussions in this course are specifically intended to intersect with and compliment the issues in your Antropology 102 class. This also means that if you want to drop this course, you also need to drop Antropology 102.

Essay #1: Critique (Conference Presentations)

Due Dates: Variable – check wordpress

a) Conference Presentation (5 – 6 pages).

b) Conference Presentation Response (2 full pages).

Essay #2: Analyzing Scientific Discourse (4-5 pages)

Rough Draft Due Oct 12

Final Draft Due Oct 26

Essay #3: Research and Synthesis (8-10 pages)

Final Due Date: Dec 16

Grading

• In-class participation (20%):

I will be assessing you on your in-class engagement, respectful engagement with texts, peers and me, active participation, and in-class assignments (free-writes, quizzes, mini-presentations, etc). You must also come with your homework (e.g. writing mechanics/grammar assignments) complete. I consider in-class participation a key element of your learning. In-class assignments cannot be made up at a later time. As such, I expect that you will attend class regularly.

Presentation on Writing Mechanics and Grammar (5% of the 20% in-class participation grade):

These will be short presentations in which you **creatively** present which ever aspect of grammar we are covering for the day. Your presentation will last **ten minutes with five minutes afterward for questions** (Note: ten minutes is both shorter and longer than you think. Plan well.). *Bedford Basics* is a good starting place for a discussion of your topic, but I encourage you to look online for other discussions. **Thinking about this some days ahead of time will be well worth your while.**

Things to consider when planning

- What are the most basic and important features of this topic?
- What are the most relevant applications? Where would you be likely to see these issues? In what kind of writing and at what point in an essay?
- Where does it get confusing? Why?
- What are the most difficult/unexpected aspects of this topic? Examples of trouble spots would be excellent for the class. Please come up with your own. They can be based on the ones in the homework, but shouldn't be exactly the same.

** Please *do not* simply use the examples from the book. I expect you to find your own examples either from your own understanding of the grammatical subject or from the web. This will show me that you really understand the topic.

What can I do?

BE CREATIVE. You can write a comic, come up with a skit, write a song, create a character who embodies the mistake, write very silly but instructive examples, create useful diagrams for how to navigate your way out of the problem, write a useful how-to, etc.

The more fun you have with this and the more thoughtful you are, the better it will be for both you and your classmates.

If you have an issue with any aspect of the in-class participation requirement, please come speak with me.

You are responsible for any work you missed due to absences.

• **Homework (15%):**

Some homework will be handed in as a hardcopy; some will be digital. When your homework is digital, it will be accompanied by a "(blog)" indicator. On blog days, you will post on our class website: <http://altschuler110evolution.wordpress.com/>. You will need to sign up for a wordpress account in order to post. Please use your full name: e.g. fscottfitzgerald so that everyone involved in the class can easily recognize you.

• **First Essay (20%):**

5-6 page Conference presentation (15%). You will lose 5% of the 15% if you do not circulate your paper to me and your respondent by 5 pm two days in advance.

Response paper (5%)

• **Second Essay (20%)**

You must bring two copies of your essay on the day the rough draft is due or you will lose 1/3 of a grade from the final essay.

• **Third Essay (25%)**

You must bring two copies of your essay on the day the rough draft is due or you will lose 1/3 of a grade from the final essay.

Rules and Expectations:

- 1) **Respect.** The classroom must be a safe space in order for fruitful learning to take place. I absolutely expect you to respect the material, each other and me. If you are unable to do so, you will be asked to leave, and you will not be able to make up any assessments that occur during the rest of that class period.
(this *includes* turning off cell phones during class, not chatting with your friends during discussion, posting respectfully on blackboard, etc).
- 2) **Plagiarism.** Plagiarism occurs when you use someone else's ideas or words as your own. You must clearly indicate (through citation or reference) whose words you are using if you have not come up with the material or ideas yourself. This is also true for paraphrasing and summarizing. If you are confused, please ask me. It is always better to cite too much than too little. **Plagiarism will not be tolerated.** Students who plagiarize will automatically fail the paper and risk failing the class. Not only will your act of plagiarism be marked on your permanent record, but a second act of plagiarism could lead to a suspension or dismissal. Here is CUNY's academic integrity policy: <http://web.cuny.edu/academics/info-central/policies/academic-integrity.pdf>
- 3) **Late Papers.** If you are having a personal problem and are worried you will not be able to complete a paper on time, please speak with me BEFORE your paper is due. Papers will be down-graded a half a grade for every day they are late. Both papers must be turned in before you can receive a grade for the class.
- 4) **Materials.** I expect you to bring all relevant materials to class each day we meet. This includes your binder, paper, pen, and any book we will be using that day in class.

Schedule:

* Subject to change*

The dates below indicate the days on which the texts and/or assignments are due. We may or may not get to discussing them that day, but it is my expectation that you will have read the texts, will have written your homework assignments, and will be fully prepared to participate in class discussion.

These selections are subject to change, and you are responsible for keeping up with these changes.

Tues, Aug 31

Introduction

Thurs, Sept 2 – Darwin and Evolution, Reading for Writing

Darwin Reading #1

Read p. 83-86 in *Bedford Basics* and do exercises 8-1, 8-2, and 8-3 on p. 87-90.

Tues, Sept 7

Darwin Reading #2

Excerpt from Gould, *The Structure of Evolutionary Theory*

Thurs, Sept 9 – No Classes –

Tues, Sept 14

Darwin Reading #3

Conference Day

Thurs, Sept 16

Darwin Reading #4

Conference Day

Tues, Sept 21– The Contemporary Science Turn, Analysis of Scientific Rhetoric, Thesis Statements

Gould and Lewontin, “The Spandrels of San Marco” (in Selzer)

Write a 300 word description of Gould and Lewontin’s rhetorical strategies using textual evidence.

Read p. 91-92 in *Bedford Basics* and do exercises 9-1, 9-2, 9-3 and 9-4 on p. 93-96.

Thurs, Sept 23

Read first article from Selzer

Write a 150-word summary of article. Please begin by identifying the thesis statement of the article and rephrasing it in your own words.

Tues, Sept 28 – Analysis of Scientific Rhetoric, Thesis Statements, Argument

Read second article from Selzer

Write a 150-word summary of article. Please begin by identifying the thesis statement of the article and rephrasing it in your own words.

Read p. 57-67 in *Bedford Basics* and do exercises 5-1 and 5-2 on p. 59-60.

Thurs, Sept 30

Read third article from Selzer

Write a 150-word summary of article. Please begin by identifying the thesis statement of the article and rephrasing it in your own words.

Tues, Oct 5 – Forming a Critical Response

Read fourth article from Selzer

Write a 150-word summary of article. Please begin by identifying the thesis statement of the article and rephrasing it in your own words.

Read p. 73-77 in *Bedford Basics* and do exercises 7-1, 7-2, 7-3 and 74 on p. 79-82.

Thurs, Oct 7

Darwin Reading

**** Conference Day ****

You will need to have decided by this day which two articles you're using for your essay. For those two articles, please write another 150 words identifying two elements that you thought were particularly strong about the essay and one or two that you thought were weaker, problematic, unhelpful, or wrong.

Tues, Oct 12

**** ROUGH DRAFT OF FIRST PAPER DUE ****

Please bring two hardcopies of your rough draft

Thurs, Oct 14 – The Cultural Turn. Analysis of cultural rhetoric, close reading for precise writing

Read first half of *Inherit the Wind*

Read p. 97-98 in *Bedford Basics* and do exercises 10-1, 10-2, and 10-3 p. 99-101.

Tues, Oct 19

**** Class cancelled for individual meetings ****

Finish *Inherit the Wind*

Thurs, Oct 21

Continue working on your essay.

Read p. 103-4 in *Bedford Basics* and do exercises 11-1 and 11-2.

Tues, Oct 26

****Essay #2 Due****

We will watch *Inherit the Wind* in class.

Thurs, Oct 28 – Cultural and Social Science Rhetoric, Uses of Evidence

Excerpts from Jena Pincott, Nancy Etcoff, and Joe Quirk
Read p. 109-111 in *Bedford Basics* and do exercise 12-1 and 12-3.

Tues, Nov 2

Darwin Reading
** Conference Day**

Thurs, Nov 4

Excerpt from *The Darwin Awards*
Excerpt *Sex and War: How Biology Explains Warfare and Terrorism and Offers a Path to a Safer World*

Tues, Nov 9

Excerpt Richard Hernstein, *The Bell Curve*
Excerpt Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*

Thurs, Nov 11 – The Evolutionist Struggle. Academic Debate, Evaluating Argument

Excerpt Richard Dawkins's *The Selfish Gene*
Excerpt Gould's *The Structure of Evolutionary Theory*
Read p. 117-8 in *Bedford Basics* and do exercise 13-1 and 13-2.

Tues, Nov 16

Excerpt Kim Sterelny, *Dawkins vs. Gould: Survival of the Fittest.*
Excerpt Richard Morris, *The Evolutionists: The Struggle for Darwin's Soul*

Thurs, Nov 18 -- Research

Library Session
Meet in the lobby of the library

Tues, Nov 23 – The Creationist Turn. Scientific vs. religious rhetoric, Incorporating research

Excerpt Bruce Malone, *Censored Science*
Excerpt *Zoology II: Swimming Creatures of the Fifth Day*
Read p. 123-5 in *Bedford Basics* and do exercise 14-1, 14-2 and 14-3.

Thurs, Nov 25 – Classes cancelled, Thanksgiving break –

Tues, Nov 30 – Finding your own intervention, building an argument

Excerpt Carl Werner, *Evolution: The Grand Experiment*
Excerpt Carl Werner, *Evolution: The Grand Experiment, The Teacher's Guide*

Thurs, Dec 2

Darwin Reading
** Conference Day**

Annotate a passage from your creationist text

Tues, Dec 7 – Pulling it together

Prepare an annotated bibliography of your six sources.

Read p. 131-2 and 137-9 in *Bedford Basics* and do exercise 15-2, 15-3, 16-1 and 16-2.

Thurs, Dec 9

Bring in a hardcopy of what you have so far.

Thurs, Dec 16

**** FINAL PAPER DUE BY NOON.****

No late papers accepted. Please slip them under my door