

HON 150 Sec. 02 – Introduction to Critical Inquiry (Fall 2014)

Tu and Thu 8:10-9:25 Engleman A105

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Course Description

Honors 150 gives you an opportunity to develop the critical reading and writing skills that will make you more successful in college and prepare you to get a real education, not just a degree. Our course this term is a first step into the history of ideas. The readings cover a diverse but carefully selected range of classic and contemporary authors – e.g., Francis Bacon, Aristotle, Karl Marx, and Martin Luther King, Jr. – as well as Raymond Williams' influential *Keywords* and Jennifer Silva's new book, *Coming Up Short*. Together, we will use these readings to examine a set of themes crucial to your lives as intellectuals in the 21st century: the nature of power, and what language and critical thinking can do to contest it.

The work necessary to grow intellectually is not always easy but it will pay off if you do it honestly and steadily. We will provide assignments, guidance in both reading and writing, and comments about your work, but only you can actually do the work and learn the skills. Your persistence and your motivation are the major factors in how much you will learn. The formal and informal written work that we will collect, read, comment on, grade, and return to you will amount to roughly 50 pages in all. This work will also include chances for personal creativity and innovation, including a semester-long "Keyword Project," a film review, and a final presentation.

Required Texts

Please acquire all of the texts listed below. We expect you to have these texts on hand for every class session, including the Course Packet of writing handouts as well as hard copies of any readings posted to Blackboard (via .pdf).

- Lee A. Jacobus, ed., *A World of Ideas: Essential Readings for College Writers* (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2013) [WI] ISBN: 9781457604362
- Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, 2nd edn (Oxford University Press, 1985) ISBN: 9780195204698
- Jennifer Silva, *Coming Up Short: Working-Class Adulthood in an Age of Uncertainty* (Oxford University Press, 2013) ISBN: 9780199931460
- Diana Hacker, *A Pocket Style Manual*, 6th edn (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2011) ISBN: 9780312542542
- HON 150 Course Packet of Writing Handouts [CP] and Readings in Blackboard [BB .pdf]

Assignments

• *Essays* 60% You will write four formal essays of varying length (approx. 3-6 pp., over 20 pp. total) this semester. Each essay will be based on our course readings and will build upon other written work – formal and informal – in order to help you strengthen your critical thinking, articulate better, more focused arguments and thesis statements, and enhance your sentence- and paragraph-level writing skills over the course of the semester. We will devote ample class time to discussing these written skills, and rough drafts will be scheduled at various points throughout the writing process.

Detailed writing prompts will be distributed in class well in advance of each paper deadline. Below, however, is a general overview of these formal written assignments:

Essay #1 (due Week 4) – A summary and response to Francis Bacon's "Idols," focusing on your ability to summarize carefully and accurately and to respond with original thinking

Essay #2 (due Week 7) – A critical examination and definition of a key concept in Nyerere's "One-Party Democracy" in relation to our readings of Aristotle and Machiavelli

Essay #3 (due Week 12) – An analytical argument using the ideas of the writers we have read on social and political protest to develop a written review of a film

Essay #4 (due Week 15) – A written evaluation of Jennifer Silva’s *Coming Up Short* in relation to the previous writers in our course

• *Keyword Project and Presentation* 20% From week 4 through the end of the semester, you will have a running written assignment in Blackboard called a “Keyword Project,” culminating in a final presentation.

Following Raymond Williams’ *Keywords*, your keyword project will be your chance to do your own original thinking and “primary” research about the nature and history of the English language. You will choose a word – *one* word – and track that word throughout our readings in Units 2-4, noting *all* of its appearances (with quotations and citations) and explaining its variant meanings, uses by different writers, and unfolding significance. What makes this single word *more* than just a word? In what sense is it a “keyword” of culture and society? Why?

Your keyword assignment will be graded on the quality of your weekly Blackboard posts, due by Thursday’s class each week, and on your final presentation (approx. 10 min. long) delivered in weeks 14 and 15. Each weekly post will be worth a maximum of 50 points (we will assign as grades either 50, 40, 25, or 0 points depending on the quality of the post).

• *Final Exam* 10% The final exam will consist of an in-class written essay produced during the final exam period, building upon our readings. The topic of the essay will be announced a few weeks earlier so that you have an opportunity to organize your thoughts before coming to class

• *Participation, Writing Quizzes / Misc. Assignments* 10%

Policies

1. *Class attendance.* You are expected to attend every class. Absence from class does not excuse you from assignments. Should you miss a class, it is still your responsibility to find out what has been assigned and to complete any work. Missing more than three classes will result in a grade of W, WF or F for the course, at the instructors’ discretion. Cell phone use or excessive late arrivals may also count as an absence.

2. *Academic honesty.* It probably need not be stressed that the work you do in this class should be your own, not downloaded from the Internet, copied from other sources or taken from another student’s work. *Do not plagiarize.* You will be squandering a fine opportunity to learn and will subject yourself to severe university penalties if your work is not honestly done. Southern welcomes you as a member of its community of learners and scholars, but that membership carries with it a responsibility to be honest in your academic work. Any work found engaging in academic dishonesty will receive a zero and may result in stiffer penalties, such as failure of the course and even dismissal from the university.

3. *Critical reading.* This course will introduce a variety of strategies to help you learn what “critical reading” means at the college level. We expect that you will wrestle with those strategies as you confront the ideas and methods of the readings. (Success in this struggle may sometimes be measured by your ability to specify exactly where you “got lost.”) You should come to every class with your texts marked in pencil or pen, and with passages noted for discussion.

4. *Participation in class.* You are expected to come to each class prepared to participate in discussions of all assignments, whether from *A World of Ideas* or other sources. Participating in the give and take of the classroom is a powerful way to learn to think critically. Coming to class unprepared will count as an absence. (This is true even if you missed a previous class during which work was assigned.)

5. *Essays and Deadlines.* (a) All formal essays and drafts are due, in hard copy, at the beginning of class. *We will not accept assignments via email.* (b) Excessive errors in punctuation and grammar will result in a paper’s being returned ungraded; it must then be resubmitted at the next class. (c) If you submit a revised paper in which marked errors or comments have been ignored or that reveals minimal changes in thinking, a grade of F will be recorded for that assignment.

Late Work: (a) Late essays will be docked ½ letter grade for every 24-hour period they are late; thus, if you fail to hand in a paper at 8:10 AM Tuesday, it will lose ½ letter grade until 8:10 AM Wednesday, at which point it will be docked a full letter grade. (b) Blackboard posts are due at the times listed online; late Blackboard entries may be posted by 5:00 PM for ½ credit;

6. *Extensions.* We will grant one 48-hour extension on a formal paper of your choosing (not misc. assignments or Blackboard posts), if requested in advance by email. You only get one extension, so use it wisely.

7. *Students with Disabilities.* We will be pleased to provide reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities on an individualized and flexible basis. If you are a student with a documented disability, the University's Disability Resource Center (DRC) can work with you to determine appropriate accommodations. Before you receive accommodations in this class, you will need to make an appointment with the Disability Resource Center located at EN C-105A. Once you have done so, you may meet with either of us - Professor Dodson or Professor Smith – to make arrangements for your classroom or work needs.

Course Schedule

Below is an outline of our course schedule, with a list of readings and deadlines for major assignments. Detailed schedules for each unit will be distributed in class (and posted on Blackboard); please follow each unit schedule carefully, as well as verbal instructions announced in class. All readings and assignments must be completed on the date next to which they are listed.

Key: WI = *A World of Ideas* BB = *Blackboard (readings)* CP = *Course Packet of Writing Handouts*

Unit 1 – From Keywords to Key Ideas: Thinking About Language

Wk 1

Th 8.29 Course Introduction

Wk 2

Tu 9.3 Read: Raymond Williams, Introduction to *Keywords*; Martha Gill, "Have We Literally Broken the English Language," and W. H. Auden, "September 1, 1939" (handout); "Evaluating Ideas: An Introduction to Critical Reading" (WI 1-11)

Due: Look up one word in Auden's poem that also appears in Raymond Williams' list of "keywords." Write a short paragraph (5-6 sentences) in which you explore the following question: How would the changing meaning of that word, according to Williams, change the meaning of Auden's poem? In what sense is that word a "keyword" for Auden? Use direct evidence from the poem and from Williams to support your written response.

Download and print off a copy of HON 150 Writing Models and Handouts [CP] from Blackboard

Th 9.4 Read: Francis Bacon, "Idols of the Mind" (WI 879-93)
Due: Written summary of Bacon (per instructions provided in class)

Wk 3

T 9.9 Read: Baldwin, "If Black English Isn't a Language, Then Tell Me, What is?" (WI 795-801)
Due: Written summary of Baldwin (per instructions provided in class)

Th 9.11 Discussion of Bacon and Baldwin (cont.'d)
In-Class Writing Workshop: Paragraphing
Due: Bring a rough draft (2 full pages, minimum) of first essay to class

→ **Essay #1 due (Tu 9.16)**

Unit 2 - Defining Power: Some Keywords and their Problems

Weeks 4, 5, and 6 (Tu 9.16 – Th 10.2)

Readings:

Douglas L. Wilson, “Thomas Jefferson and the Character Issue” (.pdf BB)
Aristotle, “Democracy and Oligarchy” (WI 121-40)
Niccolo Machiavelli, “The Qualities of the Prince” (WI 219-36)
Julius K. Nyerere, “One-Party Government” (WI 165-76)

Assignments:

Begin Keyword Project Th 9.18
Essay #2 due Tu 10.8

Unit 3 – Protesting Power: Evaluating Social and Material Inequality

Weeks 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 (Tu 10.7 – Tu 11.4)

Readings:

Henry David Thoreau, “Civil Disobedience” (WI 301-26)
Karl Marx, from *The Communist Manifesto* (WI 453-76)
Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (WI 375-96)
In-Class Film Screening (t.b.d.)

Assignments:

Essay #3 due Th 11.13

Unit 4 – 21st Century Keywords: The Economics of “Millennialism”

Weeks 11, 12, 13, 14 (Th 11.6-Tu 11.25)

Readings:

Jennifer Silva, *Coming Up Short: Working Class Adulthood in an Age of Uncertainty*
Robert Reich, “Why the Rich Are Getting Richer and the Poor, Poorer” (WI 513-29)

Assignments:

Essay #4 due Tu 12.2

Unit 5 – Keyword Project Presentations

Weeks 15 and 16
Final Presentations

Final Exam: Th 12.11 8:00 AM