

English 1 Syllabus

English 1, Section 80703: College Composition
Fall 2008: 2:00-3:15 Tu&Th in Room 701
Office Hours & Place: TBA

Instructor Dave Badtke
(707)334-4882
Dave@Badtke.com

→ **Online Reference: QCounty.com** (follow link to Solano College classes)

Prerequisites: score of 102 within the last three years on the sentence skills section of the assessment test, or SAT verbal scores of at least 500, or an ACT score of at least 23, or recommendation of a counselor or English instructor based on a Multiple Measures Evaluation, or successful completion of English 305, 350, 355 or 370 and a score of 8 or higher on the Composition Mastery Exam (CME).

Visceral Course Objectives: In the course of learning how to read more critically and to write more effectively, English 1 will give you an opportunity to discover how accomplished writers have formed their identity by dealing with their families, friends, classmates and teachers, and how they have gone on to contend with the confusing and complex demands placed on them in their efforts to find productive and fulfilling places in our diverse society. And by reading these writers and using their texts and additional research as a basis for your own writing, it is my hope that you will become better writers who are more aware of and understand better your past and future.

Required Texts:

1. *50 Essays: A Portable Anthology*, Second Edition, by Samuel Cohen;
2. *Ourika: An English Translation* by Claire de Duras, translated by John Fowles;
3. *No Longer at Ease* by Chinua Achebe;
4. A bound composition book that you will use for your journal;
5. A college-level dictionary.

Suggested Texts:

1. A Roget's thesaurus, which is organized by meaning rather than spelling;
2. The grammar handbook by Little Brown, *LB Brief*, which is available in the bookstore packaged with a dictionary for approximately the same price as the handbook alone;
3. *The Elements of Style*, 4th edition, by William Strunk, Jr. and E. B. White, which is a short classic of English rhetoric that can be either intimidating or inspirational, depending on your point of view.

Specific Course Objectives: This composition course focuses on critical reading, expository writing, and research techniques, skills that will help you in all your college classes. As E. M. Forster wrote, "How can I know what I think until I see what I say?" When we write to understand, we slow our thought processes down. We read, do research, brainstorm, plan, pre-write, write, edit and revise, repeating this process iteratively until we begin to discover what we really mean to say. Mastery of this writing cycle and of the rhetorical structures that support it -- description, explanation, examples, comparison, causation, to name just a few -- depends critically on learning the importance of rewriting from rethinking, from performing additional research, and from receiving audience feedback, which I and your peers in this class will provide.

Since research that is correctly cited will be critical to papers that you will write in the second half of the semester, you will also learn how to use library databases to find texts that oppose and support your theses.

Additionally, you'll find it easier to perfect your writing skills if you're interested in the topics about which you're writing. In this regard, Samuel Cohen's second edition of *50 Essays: A Portable Anthology* contains essays on important themes -- family, education, identity, society, science and ethics -- that will be especially helpful both for their content, which will encourage contemplation and discovery, and for their craft, which will encourage emulation: "The use of language begins with imitation. The infant imitates the sounds made by its parents; the child imitates first the spoken language, then the stuff of books. The imitative life continues long after the writer is secure in the language, for it is almost impossible to avoid imitating what one admires. Never imitate consciously, but do not worry about being an imitator; take pains instead to admire what is good. Then when you write in a way that comes naturally, you will echo the halloos that bear repeating" (Strunk & White 70).

Since important social issues are also addressed in fiction, you'll be reading two novels. First you'll read a very short novel, *Ourika*, by Claire de Duras, about a Senegalese slave girl raised in France during the French

Revolution. Later you'll read a longer novel, *No Longer at Ease*, by Chinua Achebe, in which the Nigerian protagonist finds himself caught between English paternal imperialism and Nigerian culture and corruption.

If you strive to keep an open and inquisitive mind, if you work hard on your assignments, if you participate in class discussions, if you use your journal to take notes and to explore interesting ideas, and if you remain open to change, English 1 will introduce you to or reinforce the importance of critical reading and writing.

Ethical class behavior: In order for us to cover this material successfully, we have to engage in ethical behavior. By this I mean that in dealing with me and your classmates, treat others as ends, not as means; be happy for others when they succeed and be understanding when they struggle; be respectful of others' beliefs, most especially when they're different from your own; and be true to all these things even when no one is watching.

Requirements & Grades: Since your on-time attendance and classroom participation are critical to your success, it is imperative that you be in class from 2:00-3:15, Tuesday and Thursday, ready to work with required texts, a dictionary, and your journal. Because you are allowed by school policy to miss one class for each credit, you have two free passes, but for each additional class missed beyond two, your grade will be lowered by 15 percent.

- 1) **60% of grade:** You will write essays ranging from short reader responses to longer synthesis essays supported by multiple sources. Essays are due on the assigned date. During the first half of the semester if you hand in your paper on that date, you are allowed one significant rewrite, due within a week of receiving your paper back, to which you must attach your original. Since writing is about rewriting, a superficial, quick, maybe-I'll-get-lucky rewrite may lower rather than raise your grade. Essays must be typed, double-spaced, and follow MLA guidelines. There will also be a final-exam paper due during the final exam period at the end of the semester.
- 2) **15% of grade:** You will keep a writer's journal in which you will record class notes and reactions to your readings through writing, pictures, drawings, photographs—any form that engages you in reading and that helps your writing creativity. To help you with your journal, I will assign study questions as well. I will usually collect your journals near the end of each month and before finals.
- 3) **25% of grade:** There will be frequent quizzes, many of them open-book and open-note, which is another reason your journal is so important. There will also be a mid-term, in-class writing assignment that will test your analysis and composition skills.

Help: Since one-on-one help can be the best kind of help when everywhere you look there are walls without doors and the sky is falling down, please make an effort to see me during office hours or make an appointment to meet with me.

Finally, will you be successful in English 1? Most students who struggle in my classes are trying to do too much because when they get up Monday morning, the week seems long enough to get everything done. Here's a quick calculation to help you determine whether you have enough time to do well in my class.

Expect to spend two hours for homework for each class unit. Also don't forget that you need to sleep, eat, spend time with friends and family, get to all the places you need to go via car or public transportation, and also that you need to exercise and waste time to preserve your mental health. Let's say this is 15 hours each day (8 for sleeping, 2 for eating, 2 for commuting, and 3 hours for other things), which leaves you with just $(24 - 15) \times 7$ hours per week = 63 hours. Now do the calculation below to see how much time you need:

Hrs of work per week = _____

Hrs in class per week = _____

Hrs of homework per week = _____ units this semester x 2 = _____

Add these to get total hours needed for work+class+study = _____

If you need more than 60 hours, you should consider cutting back on either work or school to be successful in English 1 *and* your other courses.