

The Teaching Portfolio

of

James Bezerra

California State University Northridge

Dr. Clark

ENGL 600B

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Table of Contents

ENGL 114B Syllabus	2
Syllabus Rationale	9
Sample Assignment with Comments	16

English 114B: Approaches to University Writing B

SYLLABUS

California State University Northridge: Spring 2016

Instructor: James Bezerra

Office/Hours: Mondays 9:30-10:30

Contact: james.bezerra,70@my.csun.edu

Section #: 14152

Location: Santa Susana Hall (SN) #405

Day/Time: Monday/Wednesday 8:00am - 9:15am

Required Texts:

- *50 Essays* 4th Edition Samuel Cohen
- *The Areas of My Expertise* by John Hodgman
- *Rhetoric and Composition* John Barrett. (This is a free wikibook which can either be downloaded as a PDF or accessed online):
en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Rhetoric_and_Composition

Required Materials:

- A working CSUN email account
- Internet access
- Note taking ability (a paper notebook or a laptop/tablet, preferably both)
- Digital file storage (either a flash drive or online cloud storage of some kind)
- Some form of word processing software (Microsoft Word or Google Docs are preferred)

Course Description:

English 114B is intended to engage students with expository prose writing in a way which focuses on both content and form. This course is designed to give students the necessary skills to examine and analyze complex topics and respond in clear, well-organized writing. Specifically this course is

geared toward the exercise of logical thought and healthy skepticism We will be engaging with multiple types and forms of text and media.

Course Objectives:

- Demonstrate competence in university writing
- Demonstrate the ability to use rhetorical strategies that include the appeal to audience, logic, and emotion
- Understand writing as a recursive process and demonstrate its use through invention, drafting, and revision (creating, shaping and completing)
- Demonstrate the ability to use conventions of format, structure, style, and language appropriate to the purpose of a written text
- Demonstrate the ability to use library and online resources effectively and to document their sources

Student Learning Outcomes:

- Students will gain the ability to read critically.
- Students will gain the ability to write effectively.
- Students will gain knowledge of the cultural diversity of literatures.

GE Student Learning Outcomes: Analytic Reading and Expository Writing

Goal: Students will analyze and reflect on complex topics and appropriately synthesize their own and others' ideas in clearly written and well organized edited American English.

Students will:

- Analyze and compare perspective, meaning, and style in different texts, including those that reflect multicultural images and voices;
- Construct a theme or thesis and organize and develop a substantial, balanced and convincing defense of it in a voice, tone, language, and format (e.g., essay, autobiography,

report, editorial, case study, inquiry, and research) appropriate to the purpose of the writing;

- Use logical support, including informed opinion and fact, as well as their interpretations, to develop ideas, avoiding fallacies, biased language, and inappropriate tone;
- Demonstrate satisfactory competence in the conventions of Edited American English and the elements of presentation (including layout, format, and printing);
- Select and incorporate ideas derived from a variety of sources, such as library electronic and print resources, books, journals, the Internet, and interviews, and document them responsibly and correctly;
- Apply a variety of strategies for planning, outlining, drafting, revising and editing written work.

Course Requirements and Grading:

The following are REQUIRED in order to receive a passing grade in this course:

- Regular attendance and *vigorous* participation
- At least one individual conference either with the professor or with an LRC tutor
- Weebly posts, as assigned
- Readings, as assigned
- Three completed projects, including drafts, peer review, and finished projects
- Final Portfolio

Attendance and Participation: 150 pts. (15%)

Your participation grade includes class discussions, staying current with the assigned readings, and class workshop activities. The class will often engage in discussion and there is no way to make up for having missed that aspect of the class. Students should attend and be prepared for each class, and arrive on time. Students will be allowed a maximum of **3 absences**. A student who exceeds the 3 allowed absences must make arrangements with the professor to get caught up.

In cases of emergency, please contact me via email immediately and be prepared to present written documentation (i.e. a doctor's note) supporting your excuse. It is your responsibility to contact your classmates or consult the class schedule for anything you missed in class.

Weebly Posts, as assigned: 100 pts. (10%)

This is a composition class and therefore we will be composing frequently, if not nearly constantly. The Weebly site you will build for this class will be the primary repository for your work over the course of the semester. Posts should generally be 250 - 500 words in length, but more is always welcome. These posts should be considered mini-essays and are an opportunity for you to engage your thinking and writing skills all at one.

The Projects and Essays: 250 pts. (25%)

A quarter your grade will be based upon the three projects which will be completed over the course of the semester. Each project is a series of interconnected reading, writing, and thinking exercises which culminate in a substantial written work. Each exercise and draft produced is worth points that will be part of your total course grade. You will be doing multiple exercises and drafts, which must be submitted on time. Drafts and exercises will be part of your final portfolio, therefore save all of your work.

Final Portfolio: 500 pts. (25%)

There are no tests or final exams in this class. In place of a final exam, you will submit a final portfolio of your best writing. The portfolio will include: a reflective essay and two essay packets (each packet will include the polished, revised final draft, the rough drafts, peer review sheet, progressions, and the writing prompt). *For this reason, do not throw away anything from this class and always save a copy of your work.* Members of the English Department faculty will be reading and grading your portfolio. Your final portfolio will be evaluated as representative of your writing ability at the end of the semester.

COURSE POLICIES:**Plagiarism**

The CSUN catalog states that plagiarism is “intentionally or knowingly representing the words, ideas, or work of another as one’s own in any academic exercise.” Plagiarism is considered a serious offence and an intolerable act. As required by CSUN, all cases of plagiarism will be turned over to the Student Affairs office and the English Department. Students who are caught plagiarizing will fail the course. Furthermore, students who commit plagiarism may be suspended or expelled from the University.

Classroom Conduct

Be respectful and to your peers and your professor.

Late Work Policy:

- Weebly assignments must be posted before class on the day they are due, unless otherwise specified.
- All reading should be completed before class begins on the appropriate day.
- Assignments which must be printed and brought to class must be printed and brought to class, there is really no way around that.
- Progression essays MUST be completed by their due date. Late progression essays will be docked a letter grade, at the instructor’s discretion.
- Final Portfolios can not be late. Late portfolios WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.
- In all other, non-specified cases, all class assignments are due at the start of class on the due date.

Office Hour Policy:

Office hours are Mondays from 9:30am - 10:30am, or by appointment.

Grading Scale:

I use the +/- grading scale. There is a total of 1,000 points possible in this class. Final grades are determined as follows.

A: 940-1000	B+: 870-890	C+: 790-770	D+: 690-670	F: 590 or <
A-: 900-930	B: 830-860	C: 760-730	D: 660-630	
	B-: 800-820	C-: 720-700	D-: 620-600	

Criteria for Writing Assessment

A - Represents a writing level of excellent polish and style, often taking an unusual or especially thoughtful or insightful position on the topic. The thesis is well supported and the writer addresses the complexity of the topic by acknowledging and then arguing skillfully against its opposing viewpoint. The essay is extremely well developed and organized, and the writing is not only free of grammatical problems or careless mistakes but is rich in details and exhibits considerable fluency and control.

B - Represents solid, readable writing that does what the assignment requires. The thesis is thoughtful and the writer indicates his or her awareness of the complexity of the topic by acknowledging and then arguing skillfully against and opposing viewpoint. It demonstrates concrete support for the thesis, good organization, and is mostly free of grammatical problems or careless mistakes.

C - Represents writing that, for the most part, satisfies all the requirements of an assignment. However, the thesis is not well conceived and the writing lacks sufficient, concrete support needed to illustrate its assertions or prove its point. C-level writing also shows lapses in editing proficiency and many careless errors.

D - Represents writing that does not adequately satisfy the requirements of an assignment. The thesis is poorly conceived or missing, and the writing lacks coherence and support. D-level writing is characterized by significant lapses in editing proficiency and many careless errors.

F - Represents writing that is flawed in terms of fulfilling the requirements of the assignment and supporting a thesis, as well as in overall coherence and appropriateness. The writing is characterized by considerable lapses in editing and a great many grammatical errors.

A Note about Help or Special Considerations

If you require any course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability or special need, or if you have any emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case of a building evacuation, please let me know as soon as possible. You should also contact me right away if you have any questions or problems with respect to any assignment, class discussion, or any other aspect of this class. You are here to learn and I am here to facilitate that process to the best of my ability.

Professor's Advice

- Always take notes. You never know when something said in class will be important for the essays you are writing.
- Keep everything. Because prompts and drafts will be included in the portfolio, filing them in a safe place is important.
- Get your classmates' contact information.
- Come to class with an open mind.
- Read instructions carefully, and always ask for clarification if you are unsure about anything.
- Come see me during office hours with any individualized questions, concerns, or just to say 'Hi'.
- Don't procrastinate! We have a great deal of material to cover, and it is very easy to fall behind. Set aside an appropriate amount of time every week so that you can keep up.

James Bezerra

Dr. Clark

ENGL 600B

14 December 2015

114B Syllabus Rationale

As I sit here gathering together all of my notes, I am struck by how profoundly ironic it is that I have no earthly idea how to write a syllabus rationale, because so much of my approach to the 114 classes has been about confronting students with genres which are unfamiliar to them. Now I'm getting a taste of my own medicine, I suppose. That's fine. I shall gracefully take it in stride.

I'm getting ahead of myself, let's back up and take a look at the big picture.

I've developed an approach to First Year Composition that is centered around a handful of key concepts which I believe to be important and which are also, essentially, of such a practical nature that they can easily be viewed as prescriptive.

1) First and foremost, I approach the composition classroom as a writing classroom.

Though I have a year of pedagogical training, I've also been a creative writer for nearly three decades. I'm at my most effective as an instructor when I can draw on all of my experience and knowledge in service of the students. The creative writing classroom privileges product over process, because the end-reader only ever sees the polished product, but it *values* process because without it there would be no product. The creative writing class understands that authors develop their

own unique processes. My role then, in the First Year Composition classroom, is to shepherd my fledgling writers in the direction of polished final product and along the way, to expose them to as many effective elements of process as I can. This thinking goes hand-in-hand with my second major key concept:

- 2) The metaphor of the toolbox. My students hear about “the toolbox” more than frequently. I believe it is helpful to contextualize writing skills this way. To identify or demonstrate a skill and then - through the process of metaphor - help the students understand that they now have an additional “tool” which they will place into their writing toolbox, for use later. This metaphor is both descriptive and prescriptive. Often we will approach a (generally short) text with the intention of performing a deconstruction of that text, in the manner that good old Jacques Derrida taught us to do; identifying the component parts of a text, attempting to understand their mechanical functions, but also probing them for their ideological prejudices. In this way we can learn from models by disassembling them. I derived this sort of approach by expanding on Douglas Hesse who, in his article “Occasions, Sources, and Strategies” advocates for the importance of understanding components, explaining, “Focusing on how a few theoretical principles are enacted in different writing situations allows students to see how different plausible texts result” (50). I’ve found this to be a wonderfully egalitarian project because it ultimately empowers students when they realize that *all* writing is the sum of its parts, and not imbued with any magic which is unattainable to them. This realization drives home the point that all writing products are the result of

writing process and that the tools students have collected in their toolbox will allow them to build whatever sort of writing they choose.

- 3) It is of value then, to expose students to numerous types of writing. Specifically I have taken (and adapted) a page from Dr. Ian Barnard's book *Upsetting Composition Commonplaces* and attempted to expose students to non-traditional genres about which they do not have an existent set of preconceptions. Barnard advocates the teaching of manifestos and zines (small, self-published magazines), he argues that these forms resist the "narrow constructions of argument and college composition (and academic writing) in general" (127), but I feel that any form of writing which represents a brand new genre can facilitate the sort of metacognition that we hope to instill in our students. Exposure to new genres requires students to attempt to contextualize those new genres in, around, or between, genres that they already understand. As Paul Butler explained in his article "Toward a Pedagogy of Writing Immersion: Using Imitation in the Composition Classroom", students "acquire language by understanding oral and written messages whose linguistic forms and structure are just beyond our current level of competence" (107). This process of exposure to new genres is a way of placing students in a position where they are required to confront writing which is just beyond their level of competence and therefore necessitates a deconstruction during which students examine their toolboxes and identify the mechanisms of genre with which they are already familiar. It is a process of developing genre awareness by the use of binaries. For instance, in the case of an autoethnography, students have

to ask, “How is this a *biography*?” and “How is this *not* a biography?”, “How is it a *research paper*?” and “How is it *different* from a research paper?” This parsing of particulars is literally the act of developing genre awareness at the mechanical level of writing. I have found that it has the additional benefit of allowing students to then invent their own process of writing when tasked with the creation of their own autoethnography. Some students lean more heavily on the research elements, others rely more heavily on deep description. Neither is wrong for an autoethnography, but the choices the students make represent their growth as writers.

- 4) Finally, I make every attempt to treat the composition classroom as a writing laboratory. Gone are the days when the composition teacher is the arbiter of good taste and resident disciplinarian. There is no wrong or right way to write, there is simply that which is most appropriate and most effective for a given project. Our projects are simply experiments in genres, the transfer of skills and knowledge from one genre to another is the ultimate goal. Students always bring their own unique sets of existing knowledge into a classroom, just as they bring their own idiosyncratic relationships with language. My role is that of a facilitator, helping them to synthesize their knowledge and their identities into their own writerly voices and to guide them in the refinement and use of those voices.

This is all quite high-minded of course. I constantly press myself to remember what Kathleen Blake Yancey told us in her article “Attempting the Impossible: Designing a First-Year

Composition Course” when she wrote, “what the course needs to accomplish cannot be achieved in the time given to it” (321). Ours is an endeavor of idealism which must be conducted under the most practical of circumstances. Yancey later tells us that our job ultimately is to help students develop “habits of mind” (322) and I believe that those habits are portable and will transfer not just across genres and disciplines, but across all of the years of our students’ lives.

Keeping this goal in mind, I have attempted to design a syllabus which is holistic (or as holistic as is practicably possible in the context of a First Year Comp class at a public university). I have endeavored to design a syllabus which values product in so far as it is the result of effective process. For instance, grades are calculated on a 1,000 point scale. The size of this scale is so large that it discourages students from attempting to conceptualize individual exercises as a way to earn points. Nothing would more quickly assist in the production of lackluster writing as the idea that it can be quantified in terms of points. Conversely however, the final portfolio project constitutes 500 points, or half of all the available points. This emphasizes that the project of writing is a recursive one and guarantees that by the end of the semester students have drafted and revised their writing (as part of the individual projects), but also that they have returned to that writing again as part of their portfolio revision. The goal here is to emphasize that we do not leave our writing by the side of the road when a project is completed, but rather that we can always return to it and view it with fresh eyes and re-envision it with new thinking and skills. In addition to the grading scale, I have also included a verbal section that briefly describes the goals and expectations of each grade. For instance an A paper is one that is “polished” and “insightful, while a B is “solid” and “thoughtful”, and so on. I find that students respond more vigorously to these concepts than they do to the abstractions of *points*.

The syllabus also contains all of the old chestnuts about plagiarism and attendance and such, but I have also added a section of “Professor’s Advice” which encourages things like taking notes and not procrastinating. I have specifically placed this section at the very end of the syllabus so that a rather dry and pro forma document ends with a touch of humanity, and an indication that the professor is an advocate and guide and the fascinating journey ahead.

Works Cited

Barnard, Ian. *Upsetting Composition Commonplaces*. Logan: Utah State University Press. 2014.

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Butler, Paul. "Toward a Pedagogy of Writing Immersion: Using Imitation in the Composition

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Hesse, Douglas. "Occasions, Sources, and Strategies." *First-Year Composition: From Theory to*

Practice. Ed. Deborah Coxwell-Teague, Ronald F. Lunsford. Parlor Press, 2014. 49-65. Print.

Yancey, Kathleen Blake. "Attempting the Impossible: Designing a First-Year Composition Course."

First-Year Composition: From Theory to Practice. Ed. Deborah Coxwell-Teague, Ronald F.

Lunsford. Parlor Press, 2014. 321-342. Print.

Sample Assignment with Comments

Below is an example of student work and my comments. This example of student writing is a first draft of the “Manifesto” progression (the prompt for this assignment is below).

These are typical of the notes I give on a project at this stage. You will see sentence-level corrections which I then discussed with the student in person when returning this assignment. My notes at the end of the assignment generally seek to 1) briefly sum up my thoughts on the state of the work, 2) set a plan of action for future revision, 3) mention specific areas which need to be given attention during further revisions.

I try to keep these notes brief in the hope that students will actually read them. Largely I feel that this is an opportunity to frame a discussion that the student should have with me and with others about how to move forward in the writing process.

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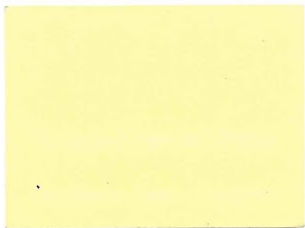
Autoethnography Prompt:

Autoethnography is a form of self-reflection and writing that explores the researcher's personal experience and connects this autobiographical story to wider cultural, political, and social meanings and understandings.

You will use (1) your own personal experiences in life as a way to (2) investigate and (3) describe an (4) issue of social/political/cultural importance and support your description with both (5) formal and (6) informal research, and your project will center around (7) a central metaphor.

General Paper Requirements:

- 1,500 - 2000 words
- At least 2 formal (scholarly) and 1 informal source. You are free to use more sources as you wish.
- Works cited page
- MLA Format



English 114A

October 26, 2015

Autoethnography

I remember the day I left to Mexico, I was 7 years old. My parents and I moved because we have no family here in the United States. We left with some savings to create opportunities for ourselves over there, with the money we took we were able to open a pizzeria in one of the most transited streets of Mexico City. The outcome of that business was not successful, it had to be closed down. Right after the business closed down, we opened a bar ^{ex} in the other side of town, again in a very well transited street of Mexico City. The outcome was not positive once again. Finally, in a third attempt to create a business, my parents decided to open a restaurant. I believed out of all three this one would be the one that maintained us financially stable but not for long. After three years of trying to live in Mexico and working independently. My parents decided it was best to head back to the United States, with literally just a "dollar and a dream" - J. Cole.

we need to find a better way to use this...

New paragraph

Leaving to Mexico with enough savings to create a family business to come back with just a few dollars for a couple of days was dreadful. My parents are undocumented so they ~~cannot~~ ^{could not} find a job easily. The previous jobs they had here were already gone and to top it off we returned two years after the recession started, meaning unemployment was rising and ~~less~~ ^{fewer} jobs were available. In hope of a new start, my dad asked a friend for a loan of ~~probably no more than~~ ^{about} \$500. That was his capital to start a business, that money was used to buy a couple of camcorders and cameras. At first my dad experimented with several kinds of devices. In a time span of six years, ~~these~~ ^{that} \$500 ~~have~~ ^{had} been transformed into a successful commerce and repair shop of cell phones. A

for



cellphone is a device that is used to communicate with people across the world. To me every cell phone contains "the American Dream". *great!*

Introduce this quote
↙
↘

"Each year seven hundred thousand new illegals enter and remain in the country" (Cairco). People migrate to the United States in search ^{of} ~~for~~ refuge, opportunities, or a fresh start.

It has been like this since the start of this nation. America is seen as the land of opportunity by the rest of the world. Illegal immigrants take a risk in coming to the United States without any work permits, or visas, "it will be much difficult to find better employment, which may end up slowing down their dreams and shortening their quality of life and opportunities" (usa-job).

Many people like my family took the risk, we attempted to create opportunities in our country and ^{failures} ~~downfalls~~ ^{inherent} were ~~imminent~~. As soon as we ^{got} ~~go~~ to the United States, my dad saw a vision in technology, specifically the rise of the cell phones. In the start of his little business he had a dream, he said "In five years I will be driving a BMW" (Ricardo). For us a BMW was a symbol of success, progress, and stability. Fast forwarding to 2015, it has been about two years that we own a BMW. That ^{was} ~~has been probably~~ the first time my dad has set himself a goal that includes something materialistic. The fact that he was able to afford that specific car shows that our hard work in this country is starting to pay off. Most immigrants have a vision, and want to plant the seed and see the vision grow. We have much more to accomplish, but I can say that my family has experienced a small glimpse of "The American Dream".

The American Dream ^{CAN} ~~could~~ be defined in many ways, to immigrants the American Dream "represents a fresh start under one of the best political systems in the world that makes it much easier for immigrants to start a new life and make their dreams come true" (usa-job). Immigrants come to the United States to seek opportunities their country do not ~~have to~~ offer. I have lived what is it like to be on both ends of the story. To this day I ask myself how did

it all happen, all the odds were against us. We had a very small capital, no experience in the work field, and most importantly, people were trying to not spend money due to the recession. That is the risk immigrants have to take to find a place in this country. There are different paths immigrants take, some work eight hour shifts, others like my family decide to be independent. I asked my dad, what was his definition of the "American dream" and why he chose to go ~~through~~ *back down* the path of selling and repairing cell phones. He said:

"My definition of the American Dream is to be given the opportunity to have a better lifestyle than in Mexico. As a child I saw my family struggle to be financially stable. I am a man with minimum education, I did not create a career for myself. Most importantly as a father I wouldn't want my kids to go through the same harsh experiences I went through. Education eliminates some risks like the one I took when migrating to the United States. I saw a future in cell phones because the same year I started to sell on eBay, smartphones were being introduced. Everything around us evolves, we have seen it with cars, televisions and computers. I saw great success in cellphones and that is why I proceeded to work hard in that field. I am grateful that I followed my gut and after several attempts of trying to give my family a better life, I have succeeded and now I have established a foundation where both my children can go to college and create even more opportunities for themselves, much more than what I could have created" (Ricardo).



My parents would be considered ~~a~~ ^{the} member of the first generation of immigrants and I would be considered ^{the} second. According to a Pew Research Center Study, "Members of the second generation have median incomes about \$12,000 more a year than those who immigrated here. They are also 7% more likely to have a college degree and are 13% more likely to own a home"

This is the perfect way to use A source!

(Pearson, New York Daily News). The American Dream is still alive and it is what my dad is trying to explain. I am ~~part~~ ^{ONE} of 700,000 immigrants that enter the United States each year and now I am also part of the 7% who will earn a college degree. The American Dream is an idea of change and an opportunity to start fresh.

Every immigration story is unique, they all create different experiences and struggles. My family's struggle was to find the correct market to work in. If my dad would have decided to open a cell phone business in Mexico, the result would have not been the same. Mexico and the United States have ~~a~~ different economic systems. As a result, ~~to~~ the United States ^{was} being the best ^{place} ~~option~~ to create a cell phone business. I see cell phones as ~~being~~ the savior to our family's problems. Cell phones were the escape to the previous failures and were also the window of opportunity to allow my dad to purchase ^{the} a car he dreamed for almost all his life.

New paragraph

Every immigrant that has entered the United States has that object or idea that brings them back memories to their previous struggles and reminds them of the American Dream. Cell Phones are the objects that remind me that the American Dream is true. Opportunities were created through making a business out of these mobile devices. My family has tasted economic stability, something that was hard to find in another country. Just like my family, there are ~~several~~ more families from all around that seek what we have found here in the United States. Most immigrants come here illegally because the wait to enter legal is a very long ~~process~~ ^{process}, to which some do not have the time to wait patiently. It a matter of survival of the fittest. The immigration

JAC

reforms of this nation should be more lenient so more families can find opportunities here just like my family found it. "After all, America was formed and made by immigrants of many backgrounds" (usa-job).

Good job!

A RICARDO THIS IS A very good paper and you should be very proud of the writing you did here.

When we revise at the end of the Project ~~you will~~ you will need to clean up the sentence-level SYNTAX AND GRAMMAR ERRORS, but I marked many of them.