

**ENGLISH 105 (AL): COMPOSITION**

**ZOMBIES AND XENOPHOBIA: READING THE  
UNDEAD**

**FALL 2015 / CRN #85832 / MW 12:35-1:50  
/ ROOM PH-401**

**DR. MICHAEL CROSS**





### **COURSE INFORMATION**

Instructor: Dr. Michael Cross

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Office Location: 7-302

Mailbox Location: 8-114

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 2:00-3:00 pm

### **CATALOG DESCRIPTION AND PREREQUISITES**

Writing Prerequisites: English 836 or 846, or ESOL 400, with grade C or better, or eligibility for English 105 on approved college placement tests and other measures as necessary. Reading Prerequisites: Reading 836, with credit or a grade of C or better, or English 846 with a grade of C or better, or ESOL 400 with a grade of C or better, or eligibility for 400-level Reading courses on approved college reading placement test, and other measures as necessary. In English 105 students will write critical expository essays dealing with a variety of ideas at a skill level appropriate to a college transfer level class.

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

In English 105, you will cultivate and develop college-level reading, writing and critical thinking skills—techniques that promise to inform every aspect of your future success as a college student (and productive adult, no less!). No matter your chosen field of study, these skills are the bedrock of a successful life as a student, primarily because they inform *every aspect* of the college experience. A concerted effort in this course promises to make your future college career significantly easier as you become more comfortable and more confident in your writing skills and your ability to understand difficult texts. My goal is to help demystify the writing process by teaching essential grammar rules and rhetorical strategies that will make the practice of writing more approachable (and more enjoyable), while also reinforcing reading strategies that will make you a stronger critical reader.



In order to practice building stronger writing skills, I'd like to focus on a particular theme together; this term, we'll study figures and representations of "the undead." In contemporary culture, figures of the undead—including vampires and zombies—are often utilized to address anxieties related to identity categories such as race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. I'm interested in what we can learn about contemporary "normalcy" by studying that which is most different—in this case, that which is a foil or total inversion of "acceptable" contemporary life. In other words, what can we learn by studying aberrations or mutations of "homogenous" culture? By carefully examining monster tales in their social contexts, can we learn what these "marvelous warnings" signal in our contemporary milieu? In short, how can better understanding the undead—interpreting what they want from us—help us ethically comport to those who represent different worldviews, cultures, religious practices, sexual orientations, and class categories?

### **STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- 1) Write sharply focused, coherent and well developed essays appropriate to transfer level that support a self-generated thesis, and demonstrate, in addition to competence in standard English grammar and usage, a command of a variety of organizational strategies appropriate for academic audiences while reflecting an informed commitment to conventions of academic discourse.
- 2) Demonstrate critical reading, writing, thinking and research skills in the development of analytical and evaluative responses to important ideas and arguments from multiple points of view.
- 3) Utilize developed information literacy skills which include executing an effective research strategy using appropriate tools, evaluating credibility of sources, and using information ethically by applying conventions and documentation.
- 4) Demonstrate self-critical awareness of their own writing strategies and competencies as they continue to perceive themselves as improved writers, thinkers and student scholars engaged in academic discourse in cross-disciplinary contexts.

### **REQUIRED TEXTS:**

- Colson Whitehead, *Zone One*. New York: Anchor Books, 2012.
- *The Walking Dead: Book One*. Berkeley: Image Comics, 2013.
- A variety of individual critical essays available for download through WebACCESS
- *What, Why, and How? Mastering 15 Concepts to Become a Better Writer* (available online here: <http://www.skylinecollege.edu/skyenglish/>).

### **GRADING BREAKDOWN**



Four Critical Essays (including extensive revisions): 70%

Midterm Examination: 5%

Final Examination: 5%

Reading Responses: 10%

Class Participation: 10% (including attendance, peer editing workshops, competent essay revisions, in-class writing, pop quizzes, and general participation)

### **PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE**

Participation is absolutely imperative to your success in this course—by “participation” I mean active class conversations and participation in peer editing groups. In order to participate, you must be present in class, both mentally and *physically*, and you must be up to date on class readings. Each student may use two free absences to cover illness, emergencies and other unforeseen circumstances. Once these absences have been utilized, student participation grades will drop a third for each subsequent absence (for example, an A will become an A-). You will be marked absent if you are more than ten minutes late to class.

### **READING RESPONSE CRITERIA**

Reading responses are 1-2 page typed critical reflections on a specific text. Try to avoid summarizing the prose by directing your comments towards issues you find especially fascinating, problematic, confusing, etcetera. It is helpful to write plenty of notes in the margins of your text in order to give shape to your thoughts. With reading responses, I am more interested in the exploration of difficult ideas than narrative cohesion; in other words, it is acceptable for your thoughts to get scattered while running with ideas. You will learn more by grappling with loaded topics than summarizing issues you have already mastered. Reading responses *will not* be accepted late, *no exceptions*.

### **CRITICAL ESSAY CRITERIA**

Essays should be 4-6 typed pages in legible, 12-point font with double spaced lines and 1-inch margins. Students are expected to develop an argument pertaining to the reading(s) that is sufficiently reinforced by textual evidence and shows a clear sense of organization and cohesion. Any essay receiving an “R” *must be* revised by the revision deadline (see “Re-vision Criteria”). Any essay receiving a B- or lower may be revised for a higher grade; these revisions are subject to the same criteria as “R” papers. Late papers will be accepted, but these assignments will be marked down a grade for each subsequent class period. For instance, an A paper will receive a B, a B paper will receive a C, and so forth. Assignments submitted more than a week late will



receive an F; however, you must complete all four major essay assignments to earn a passing grade for the course.

### **RE-VISION CRITERIA**

I have the word “re-vision” hyphenated here in order to stress a process of “seeing” your work anew; simply fixing spelling and altering word choice does not constitute a revision. Instead, I expect re-visions to be a process of drastic re-thinking. You should be rewriting or deleting paragraphs that do not benefit your argument, adding information to make your thesis clear to the reader, re-imagining your introduction and conclusion, etcetera. In short, if I receive a revision that looks too similar to a previous draft, I will not change the essay’s final grade. You may revise the first three essays for a higher grade, but I will only accept one revision per essay. If you receive an “R” grade, you *must* revise to receive a passing grade for the course. In order to submit a revision, you must make an appointment with me to discuss your game plan. Re-visions must also be submitted with all previous writing for the essay, including previous drafts and prewriting. All revisions must be submitted before the final day of class. After this deadline, all revision essays (those receiving a grade of “R”) will automatically revert to failing grades.

### **INCOMPLETE GRADES**

If a major emergency takes place during the course of the semester and a student is unable to finish the class requirements, the student *may* be given an “incomplete” (though qualifying circumstances are very rare). In order to qualify for an incomplete, no matter the nature of the emergency, the student must fulfill the attendance requirement for the course and must have three of the four essays complete.

### **PLAGIARISM & ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Plagiarism is using another person’s words and ideas as if they were your own. It is easy to avoid plagiarism: simply place the material you have taken from someone else’s writing in quotation marks and cite the person’s name and publication in your paper. Plagiarism is a serious offense that can result in expulsion from school. A paper that contains any plagiarized material will receive an F; two such papers will result in the student receiving an F for the course (Note: plagiarism is not restricted to the use of published work; the passing of another student’s work as your own is also a case of plagiarism). I have failed many students in the past for this offense. Please do not find yourself in this position, and please do not force me to make a decision I would otherwise not choose to make.

### **THE LEARNING CENTER**



The Learning Center provides support for writing, reading, and other subjects through the Writing and Reading Lab. You can access this support by signing up for LSKL 853 (a free course that provides access to peer and graduate student tutors). The Learning Center is located in room 5-105 and is open Monday-Thursday from 8 am – 7 pm and Friday from 8 am – 4 pm. You can make an appointment by calling (650) 738-4144.

### **ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENTS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

If you have a documented disability and require accommodations, please inform me at the beginning of the semester. Students with documented learning and/or physical disabilities may receive reasonable classroom and/or testing accommodations in coordination with the Disability Resource Center. You can find the DRC at 5-132 or call (650) 738-4228 for more information.

### **SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND SEX DISCRIMINATION**

Members of an academic community—students, faculty and staff—must be able to work in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust. Students, teachers and staff must feel personally secure in order for education to take place. As a place of work and study, Skyline College should be free of sexual harassment, sex discrimination, and all forms of sexual intimidation and exploitation. Any violation of trust, any form of intimidation or exploitation, regardless of gender, damages the institution's educational process by undermining the essential freedoms of inquiry and expression.

### **CODE OF STUDENT CONDUCT**

Students are responsible for adhering to the Code of Student Conduct outlined in the Skyline College Catalog and Skyline Student Handbook (both available online). Students who engage in disruptive behavior—conduct that interferes with the instructional, administrative, or service functions of the course—can be subject to disciplinary action, including suspension and/or expulsion from the course and/or college.



