

INT 201.00
Auto Zone: Building Community
Mercer University
Spring 2015

Dr. Douglas E. Thompson
Associate Professor
Southern Studies

Groover 211
thompson_d@mercer.edu
478.301.2017

Office Hours: MF 9-11; TR 11-12

TR 1:40-3:20 RYL 204

“Tell the truth; Vary the format; Get up and dance.”

Prerequisites: *WRT 120, 24 hours college credit*

A demonstrated ability, at a level commensurate with current college standing, to read and understand texts, to analyze and interpret abstract concepts, and to communicate orally and in writing. Subject matter will explore the relationship between education, citizenship, and inclusive human communities by examining the works of writers, thinkers, artists, and scholars representing the four domains of natural science, social science, humanities, and the arts. As a Writing Instruction course, substantial attention will be given towards developing the practical skill of writing.

Course Description:

After two courses in the writing sequence, INT 201 builds on and expands on those writing lessons. Students will study issues and problems in creating public good within communities and nations. We will examine the idea of “community” through the ways that automobiles create community and the ways that they create barriers to community. Subject matter will confront students’ conceptions of community, education, and citizenship. We will read, discuss, and respond in writing to a variety of texts from the four knowledge domains: the humanities, the arts, the social and behavioral sciences, and the natural and physical sciences. The central theme for INT 201 is “Building Community”: in this case the ways automobiles shape communities. Throughout these explorations we will work to integrate data, approaches, and perspectives of the four domains with critical thinking and a conscious, focused attention to writing. Course content and assignments will be reflective of how the self and its relation to others has been imagined and defined by writers, thinkers, artists, and scholars representing the four domains of knowledge (the arts, humanities, natural science, and social science). As a Writing Instruction course, substantial attention, both in instruction and course work, will be given towards developing the practical skill of writing. We will fashion through multiple genres of writing an expression of the building community.

Required Texts:

INT 201 *Mercer Reader* (MR)

Vanderbilt, *Traffic: Why We Drive the Way We Do (and What It Says About Us)*

Writing Handbook: Little, Brown, Essential Handbook

You are also required to read additional handouts and e-resources as indicated in the syllabus.

NB. You are to complete the reading for the day on which it was assigned.

The readings for this course are designed to provide content for the writing assignments. *Mercer Reader* provides a series of core readings that all INT 201 sections will cover. As we think about “community,” these readings will provide possible definitions of what we mean by the term. *Traffic* will serve as a model for the kind of interdisciplinary writing I am looking for in the research essay. The *Essential Handbook* serves as a resource tools for writing projects. *In this case, think of the Handbook as a life lesson since I expect you to know what is in it without going over it, which will serve you well when you enter the workforce.*

Course Objectives:

To succeed in this course you must develop and demonstrate the ability to read, to write, and to discuss texts and ideas at a second-year level. You must participate actively in class discussions, writing workshops, and writing activities, in and out of class. INT 201 is the third of three Writing Instruction courses required for graduation. Upon successful completion of the course, you will be able to:

1. Reflect on personal values in the context of promoting the public good and an ethic of service.
2. Reflect on human aspirations of equality, opportunity, liberty, justice, and/or community.
3. Understand the need for civility in public discourse.
4. Articulate practical and creative responses to issues affecting the public good.

Requirements:

Informal Writing (5%)

You will have opportunities for informal writing on nearly a daily basis, both in and out of class time. “Informal” writing gives you the opportunity to understand and learn course material and to practice writing and critical thinking skills. Much of this writing will not receive a grade, although I will give feedback. Informal writing assignments include response papers, focused free-writing, sentence/passage springboard, student-formulated questions, and annotations. I will explain these forms of writing and assign them when appropriate throughout the semester.

You will also keep a “driving log” that details your travel on a daily basis. Whether you have a car or not, keep a log of where you travel to and how you get there. If you can, keep mileage and route data, which will be helpful to you during the semester.

Discussion (10%)

Class discussion is essential for the success of this seminar and for your comprehension of the material. Although I am not evaluating you on each class discussion, I am paying attention to the general tenor of the class. Here are some guidelines for discussion. Make an effort to engage your classmates in critical dialogue. Pay attention to what your neighbors say, respond with appropriate criticism, and be willing to receive the same type of criticism. A comment that causes your neighbors to think further about a topic or idea will serve the class well. If the conversation heightens so that everyone becomes engaged in the discussion, then the question posed and the responses given show critical thinking “on the fly” and all will benefit. If I have to ask the questions and lead the entire time, the discussion will suffer. I expect students to be engaged with the material each class period.

Though I am not giving students a daily grade, there is a cumulative grade assigned to each of you at the end of the semester. I will try to give you a sense of your participation grade during the term, but if you are wondering please ask. The scale for Participation grading is 6-10. Showing

up earns you a six (6). Listening quietly but looking distracted earns you a seven (7). Listening quietly and looking interested gives you a seven-point-five (7.5). Listening and taking notes gives you an eight (8). Listening and making notes, with an occasional good comment earns you an eight-point-five (8.5). Listening and taking notes, with several good comments gives you a nine (9). Listening well and commenting in such a way that alters the class discussion in a significant, positive way earns you appreciation from the professor and a nine-point-five (9.5). Ten (10) is at the discretion of the professor and considered rare. Doing homework for another class, or otherwise looking disinterested, and failing to bring the book to class *will* result in a zero (0).

Formal Writing (80%)

Each student will write five “papers” during the course of the semester, representing a variety of forms that includes a research essay. I will hand out specific directions for each assignment. At least three will follow a formal writing process. “Formal” implies writing that has gone through revision to achieve accuracy and clarity, which will include pre-writing and peer review workshops. I will evaluate these papers as a demonstration of your understanding and communication of the material and your handling of appropriate writing conventions. All written work must be typed, double-spaced, using 1-inch margins, and 12 pt. NewTimes Roman font, but as we move into web publishing this requirement will change. Papers are due at the specified time and date on the course schedule. **You will submit all essays to me via attachment to e-mail.** Please save the file with your student ID in the file name. Use your student ID to identify yourself in the initial heading and **do not include** your name anywhere in the essay. More than five (5) days late results in a 0, no exceptions. Your essays will be evaluated on the basis of content, organization, style, and mechanics. The rubric for each assignment shows how those 100 points will be divided.

Though there is a subjective element in grading essays versus grading a multiple-choice test, there are standard conventions to follow. Complete sentences are a must. If sentences are not complete, the fragments and comma splices will be highlighted in **RED**. Punctuation and clarity matter. If you see **YELLOW**, then there is a problem with one of the stated issues or an organizational issue causes the essay to be unclear. The other two colors I use (**GREEN** and **PURPLE**) signify that I like the way you articulated the point or I have a question but there is nothing grammatically wrong with the sentence(s). If you think the content is the most important point, then we need to talk. If the reader has to fix the errors, then the point is lost. Great “content” will never overcome poor grammar skills. Sometimes I can be forgiving if the mistakes do not distract from the overall point of the essay; however, if I am having to stop often to fix mistakes the essay has problems that no content argument can overcome. As for the subjective nature of grading essays, please read and then re-read the section below “What will I have to do to make a good grade?”

Students bear sole responsibility for ensuring that papers or assignments submitted electronically to a professor are received in a timely manner and in the electronic format(s) specified by the professor. Students are therefore obliged to have their e-mail client issue a receipt verifying that the document has been received. Students are also strongly advised to retain a copy of the dated submission on a separate disk. Faculty members are encouraged, but not required, to acknowledge receipt of the assignment.

Writing Workshop: You will be working as each other’s editors and should be prepared to devote the same care to helping your fellow classmates as you do to preparing your own writing. I

expect all of you to bring a complete, full-faith draft to each workshop. I will grade your draft as well as your work as a peer reviewer.

Conferences: Each of you will meet with me individually to discuss your writing, and to determine ways to improve it. I will give you the opportunity to select from a range of meeting times; it is your responsibility to come to the conferences prepared and on time, and to participate fully in discussing and working on your writing proficiency.

Presentation (5%)

More about this part of the class will follow later in the semester, but for now know you will distill your research into a short presentation to the class.

STATEMENT ON ASSESSMENT:

The College of Liberal Arts is keenly interested in assuring the quality and integrity of its General Education Program. Every semester, randomly selected students from each General Education course will be required to submit samples of their work to an independent and objective assessment by faculty. No personally identifiable information about any student will be used for the purposes of this assessment, and assessment results will have no bearing whatsoever on student grades.

Due Dates for Formal Writing Assignments:

15% Roads and Community Assignment

Final Draft – Monday, Jan. 26

15% Driving Log Essay

Rough Draft – Tuesday, Feb. 10

Final Draft – Monday, Feb. 16

15% Second Street Project Assignment

Rough Draft – Tuesday, Mar 3

Final Draft – Friday, Mar 20

20% Website/Blog Assignment

Rough Draft – Tuesday, Apr 7

Final Draft – Monday, Apr 20

15% How and Where I Drive Essay

Final Draft – Thursday, May 7

Scale: 100-90 **A**; 89-88 **B+**; 86-80 **B**; 79-78 **C+**; 76-70 **C**; 69-60 **D**; 59 and below **F**

I do not give extra credit and given the generosity of the scale I do not round up. Failing grades on the four assigned essays will result in an F for the course in spite of all other work.

What will I have to do to get a good grade? (Altered from Colin Harris, Professor, CCPS, Mercer)

Mercer's grading system is set up to reflect certain levels of involvement and performance. The C and C+ range of grades reflects the performance one would expect of someone in college. It means the course requirements have been met in a satisfactory way. The B and B+ grades recognize an above average level of involvement and performance in the course. This means that the student has more than met the minimum standards for the course and has shown some initiative in taking charge of her or his learning own learning experience. The A grade represents a level of seriousness and excellence in involvement and performance that is the best students can produce.

In a course such as this one, it is more difficult to measure the quality of performance than it would be in a more concrete subject area. What I can do is tell you some things I have noticed about students whose work in this course has been above average and superior. I hope these observations will be helpful to you in thinking about your own involvement.

1. Above average and excellent students attend and participate alertly in class sessions. An occasional absence is necessary; however, there is a clear difference between necessary and casual absence. Alert participation means serious involvement in our study, not necessarily just talking in class. The fact that some persons are less vocal than other does not mean that their participation is less. It may be more. Students who participate in group learning and are concerned not only for their own learning process but also for what they can contribute to their fellow learners seem to be those who do the best work. I would like for you to call or email me before an absence, if you can, or as soon as possible afterward so that we can stay caught up with the work we are doing together. On a rather sour note, more than two absences could be cause for failure in this class.
2. Above average and excellent students tend to spend six to eight hours outside of class preparing for and reflecting upon each class section. Many, of course, "get by" with less; but that is often the difference between adequate and excellent.
3. These students tend to be "active" rather than "passive" learners. This means that they engage the subject matter as partners in dialogue rather than merely as receptacles of information. The active learner asks questions of the subject and takes initiative in pursuing related lines of inquiry.
4. Above average and excellent students seem to be persons who are willing to change and grow in their understanding. They have what might be called "critical flexibility," which means that they do not remain rigidly fixed to particular patterns of thinking, nor do they change just because they encounter something new. Rather, they constantly test their thinking according to the truth they discover. They are more concerned to grow in understanding than they are to prove certain ideas right or wrong.

Cell Phone and Pager Usage

Out of courtesy for all those participating in the learning experience, all cell phones and pagers must be turned **off** before entering any classroom, lab, or formal academic or performance event. If this becomes a problem, the teacher reserves the right to remove the phone and/or the student from the class. Reading text messages in class will result in a zero on the highest weekly grade for each incidence.

Students with Disabilities:

"Students requiring accommodations or modifications for a disability should inform the instructor at the close of the first class meeting or as soon as possible. The instructor will refer you to the

ACCESS and Accommodation Office to document your disability, determine eligibility for accommodations under the ADA/Section 504 and to request a Faculty Accommodation Form. Disability accommodations or status will not be indicated on academic transcripts. In order to receive accommodations in a class, students with sensory, learning, psychological, physical or medical disabilities must provide their instructor with a Faculty Accommodation Form to sign. Students must return the signed form to the ACCESS Coordinator. A new form must be requested each semester. Students with a history of a disability perceived as having a disability or with a current disability who does not wish to use academic accommodations are also strongly encouraged to register with the ACCESS and Accommodation Office and request a Faculty Accommodation Form each semester. For further information, please contact Carole Burrowbridge, Director and ADA/504 Coordinator, at 301-2778 or visit the ACCESS and Accommodation Office website at <http://www.mercer.edu/disabilityservices>"

Honor Code:

All of the members of this class will conduct themselves according to the guidelines of the Mercer Honor System as outlined in the *Lair*. Specifically within the context of essays, the thoughts and/or words of other people must be fully acknowledged with appropriate notes. Plagiarism, even inadvertent plagiarism, is a serious offense. If you any questions about proper citation of sources, talk to the instructor before submitting a paper. Your own work for another course may not be submitted for a grade in this course.