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# ENG 1091G-099: Composition and Language (Honors)

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1091G-099

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## **Introduction to Alternative Media (English 1091: Honors Composition) Course Policies and Procedures**

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**Textbooks (many of our readings appear on the Internet; the following required books are available from EIU's Textbook Rental Service):**

*The Blair Handbook*, Fulwiler

*The Progressive Guide to Alternative Media and Activism*, Project Censored

*Corporate Media and the Threat to Democracy*, Robert McChesney

### **COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

**(read the following carefully; these words constitute our contract,  
and I will request your written agreement to them)**

**Goals:** Because this is a composition course, we will focus on sharpening your writing and editorial skills. In this regard, our course has three main purposes--to continue the enhancement of your writing skills as developed in high school, to introduce you to the demands of writing at the university level, and to bring your writing up to the university level. In a writing course, we need something for you to research and write about; our topic this semester will be "alternative media," including Alternative Music, Alternative News, Independent Film, and the Internet. Also, since we have the privilege of spending half of our class time in a computer lab, you will learn how to use your own EIU web page, and you will publish your writing in this course on the Internet and link it to your EIU page. As you do so, you will also learn some of the basic techniques of web design, thereby acquiring a set of skills that is gaining increasing value in the job market.

More specifically, our goals include the refinement of skills in the following areas:

1. **Constructing arguments:** improve your ability to construct your own written arguments. One of our aims is to learn to distinguish between "opinion" and a "reasoned argument" that is based on carefully constructed points, evidence, and so

on. Each of your major essays will require at least two drafts, with review of an early draft by a classmate, and strict, college-level commentary and grading of the final draft by the instructor.

2. **Critical reading:** improve your ability to read critically by questioning and evaluating what you read. Writing skills depend in part on your mastery of critical reading skills, which enable you to discern and emulate the successful argumentative strategies of other writers. The better reader you are, the better writer you can be. In order to be a more critical reader, you have to participate in what you are reading, actively deciphering the argument in all its parts, rather than passively receiving strings of words. Active participation in this course will help to improve your ability to summarize what you read and then to evaluate the claims and assumptions on which the argument is based. Go through your readings for this course carefully, highlighting or underlining important passages, writing marginalia, and taking notes.

3. **Online bibliographic research:** improve your knowledge of how online library resources work and how to use them. You will familiarize yourself in this course with library resources (including online catalogues and periodical indexes, electronic databases, and librarians) and other online information. Reasoned arguments are dependent upon knowing how to find, evaluate, and then use good information. In addition to learning how to find appropriate information, you will improve your skills in using such sources. You cannot make effective use of an article or essay if you cannot summarize its basic argument and identify how it is constructed. Therefore, using research means finding useful materials, and knowing how to read them and incorporate them into your own writing. (Incorporating research materials also includes knowledge of appropriate documentation styles. There are several of these standardized documentation styles; we will be using MLA, the widely preferred format for work in English Departments--more on this documentation style later.)

4. **Collaborative learning:** improve your ability to learn from others and to teach them about your own thinking and about writing. As in most professional spheres, much of your success in this course will depend on the process of drafting and peer critiques. You will practice forming honest, thorough, and constructive critiques of your own writing as well as that of your peers, and how to make use of what you have learned from your own self-critique and that of others.

5. **Clean, smart prose:** improve your ability to write clear, concise, and meaningful sentences, to compose organized and developed paragraphs, and to identify and address recurring grammatical or mechanical problems specific to your own writing (these vary from writer to writer). We will spend time talking about why a grammatically correct, clear, efficient style is so important to your success in college and in professional life.

6. **Internet publishing:** learn how to build professionally presentable web sites. Although this is a writing course, an additional benefit at semester's end will be your mastery of basic web-publishing skills. This aspect of the course will cause some of you headaches at first, but I will be available for any questions or help you might need. I promise that ALL students who have patience with the computers will learn how to quickly publish and manipulate online documents. When you finally

graduate from EIU, you'll be able to add a line to your professional resume asserting your skills in this area. In fact, web-publishing skills are increasingly appreciated by employers. As Jo Allen points out in her book *Writing in the Workplace*, "Web pages have become an important way to present information to the public. Businesses use Web pages for advertisements and sales. Governments at all levels publish announcements, reports, research results, and much-used forms on Web pages. Educational and health institutions use Web pages to relay course work, report data needed by various departments, and provide access to research facilities. With the expanding use of the web, you are likely to be involved in designing Web pages as part of your job assignment." Again, publishing your work on the Web will give some of you headaches at first, but I promise that it will become second nature for all of you well before the semester is over. Particular web-publishing skills that you will learn include:

- Converting word-processed documents to a web-ready format
- Transferring material from a disc or a computer to the Internet
- Using your own EIU home page (which you already have)
- Creating links to other documents of your own, and to other sites
- Retrieving, placing, and manipulating images
- Making internal links within a document

### **Grades and Major Assignments:**

Your final grade will be determined as follows:

Paper One: 10%  
Paper Two: 15%  
Paper Three: 15%  
Paper Four: 20%  
Revised Paper: 10%  
Peer Reviews: 15%  
Participation, quizzes,  
daily writings, attendance:  
15%

### **Other matters:**

**E-Mail Activity:** Enrollment in this class requires an "EIU" e-mail account, and you must check it frequently, preferably every day, for messages pertaining to the course. I will subscribe you to our class listserv (also known as a "discussion list") with your EIU e-dress, so even if you've been using another e-mail service, you must use your EIU account for this course. You can use this account on the Internet, at [www.eiu.edu/mymail](http://www.eiu.edu/mymail). You will also use your EIU e-mail account to publish writings for this class on your own web site (as you'll discover, you already have a web site, courtesy of EIU). E-mail is the quickest, easiest way to reach me if I am not in my office; I welcome any and all questions and comments. Again, using an e-mail account frequently is crucial for this course—if you do not send me an e-mail message at the above address by the beginning of class on Tuesday, September 2, I

will assume that you have chosen against fully participating in the course, and I will therefore drop you. In your message, 1) describe yourself in whatever ways you choose, including your career aspirations; 2) list and describe at least two examples of "alternative media" that you are already familiar with, and also explain what they are an "alternative" to; and 3) write a statement to the effect that you have read and agree with the course policies and procedures that you are presently reading.

**Regarding the Writing Center:** Tutoring services at the English Department's Writing Center are free, and students may drop in any time or schedule appointments during the Center's working hours. If you have problems with grammar, punctuation, spelling, or other parts of the writing process, I strongly recommend that you make use of this free and valuable service.

**Classroom Environment:** In class, I expect all of you to participate in discussions (class participation will be figured into your final grade), and to attend regularly. The best way to demonstrate that you are an active, engaged, and interested reader and writer is by contributing regularly to class discussions, and by paying close, respectful attention to what everyone else has to say. If you have questions, no matter how simple or complicated, go ahead and ask me, either in class or via e-mail—chances are that other people have the same question. I do not plan to lecture in this class; I want us to contribute together to a positive, challenging, interesting learning environment. Finally, you must also be willing to give and receive constructive, insightful, frank criticism! I'm sure that all of you will work very hard on your writing projects, but try not to let criticism of your work hurt your feelings, and don't hold back from offering helpful advice because you think it might hurt someone else's feelings. Also, a couple of smaller matters: please do not chew gum or eat food during class, activities which are too distracting to others--drinking beverages is okay. Finally, no caps, please, but if you want to wear one, turn it backwards so I can see your eyes.

**For students with disabilities:** If you have a disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, let me know; also, if you haven't contacted the Coordinator of Disability Services (581-6583), do so as soon as possible.

**Attendance Policy:** I will take attendance, and I expect you to attend class every day, on time, and prepared to discuss the material listed for that day on the "daily schedule." **If you have more than three absences this semester, your course grade will drop a full letter grade for each absence beyond three.** Also, missing a scheduled conference meeting without prior notification of the instructor will result in the automatic lowering of your grade for the current assignment by ten points. Call or write to me via e-mail if you have to miss a conference with me; I will do the same if I have to reschedule. **Regarding tardiness:** this is a small class, so late arrivals are disruptive—if for some bizarre reason you wish to get on my bad side, you can easily do so by developing the habit of arriving late for class. **If you will not be able to arrive for this class on time because of other commitments, drop it and take another section.** Finally, remember that you are responsible for all assignments, whether you attend class or not. Get the telephone number of one or two other students in class so you can find out about any missed assignments before you come to class, or write an e-mail message to me asking about what you missed.

**Academic Honesty:** I expect you to act honestly and do your own work in this class, and so does Eastern Illinois University. **It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the English Department's policy on plagiarism:** "Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—"The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's original work" (*Random House Dictionary of the English Language*)—has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office." In a class like this one, which involves a great deal of reading and writing on the Internet, it is tempting to use the writings of others in inappropriate ways; **if you have any questions about whether you are drawing on the writings of others correctly, don't hesitate to ask me about it.**

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## **English 1091 Daily Schedule Fall, 2003**

(this schedule may be subject to change,  
so be sure to check it before each class session)

### **Mainstream Media**

#### **Week One (Computer Room, Coleman 3120)**

T AUG 26 Introduction to the Course and to Each Other

- discussion of course policies and procedures
- after class, carefully read the [course policies and procedures](#) for this course and click through the rest of the class web site; if you have questions or concerns, ask Dr. Engles by writing to him at [cftde@eiu.edu](mailto:cftde@eiu.edu)

R AUG 28 Technology Workshop: Setting Up Your 1091 Disc

- before class, familiarize yourself with your EIU e-mail account, which you must use to write the message to Dr. Engles described below (this is also the account that you will use to access and store information on your web site)
- to see your EIU login, EIU e-dress, and EIU web site, [click here](#), then enter your name in the search box, and press Enter
- bring a new, blank computer disc to class; [click here](#) for online directions for in-class work (if you already know how to publish on the Internet, but you do so in a different way, note that in this class, you will still need to learn the method spelled out in these directions by using Netscape Composer--that way, I'll be able to help if you have any problems; finally, if you get through our directions quickly in class today, please try to help out anyone around you who is having problems)
- **send the required e-mail message to Dr. Engles (cftde@eiu.edu):** in your message, 1) describe yourself in whatever way you choose, including your career aspirations; 2) write a statement to the effect that you have read and agree with these course policies and procedures (if indeed you have--if you haven't yet, [go back](#) and do so); 3) describe a form of "alternative media" that you already use, and explain why it is "alternative"; also, what is it an alternative to?
- if you finish these tasks before the end of class, [go here](#) and follow the directions to begin an assignment due on T SEP 2 (save a copy of the survey in Word on your disc, and begin typing answers to the questions)
- if your web site isn't up and running the way it should be by the end of class, send Dr. Engles an e-mail message ([cftde@eiu.edu](mailto:cftde@eiu.edu)) describing the problem

#### **Week Two (Discussion Room, Coleman 3130)**

T SEP 2 discussion of [anonymous survey](#) results

- print out bring to class your survey results

## R SEP 4 In-class video-screening: "The Merchants of Cool"

- work in class will include discussion of assignment regarding sections from Robert McChesney's book for summary in class next week: before the date of your presentation, prepare for the class, with your partner, copies of a one- or two-page handout summarizing the main points McChesney makes in the sections assigned to you; be sure to include a few questions about your section of the book on your handout that you think could lead to interesting class discussion; during class next week, review for us your part of McChesney's book, and lead class discussion of your section of the book by referring to your handout
- pairings for McChesney project: Jordan Angle/Amy Scherman; John Toomey/Scott Tresch; Susan Wolf/Kelli Belluomini; Ashley Gemar/Jennifer Shaffer; Sarah Travis/Cynthia Deitch; Sarah Stark/Megan Wollin; Nicole Marczewski/Alicia Borsa

**Week Three (Computer Room)**

## T SEP 9 Discussion of "The Merchants of Cool"

- before class, read Robert McChesney, *Corporate Media and the Threat to Democracy*, pages 5-29 (this is a fairly complex, detailed book--be sure to give yourself enough time to study it thoroughly, and to jot down important ideas from it, or questions that you have
- also, before class, visit and click around [the PBS web site](#) for the episode of "Frontline" that we've been watching, and then write and bring to class answers to these questions: 1) how does this site add to your experience of watching the program on television? 2) read one part or section of the site and a) summarize this part or section's contents in one paragraph, and b) explain how this part or section, OR something in the video itself, added to or changed your opinions, beliefs, or knowledge about something

## R SEP 11 McChesney, 30-54

- discussion of Paper One topics

**Week Four (Discussion Room)**

## T SEP 16 McChesney, 54-74

## R SEP 18 Getting to Know The Blair Handbook

- bring your copy of The Blair Handbook to class
- bring a one-page explanation of why you will probably find two particular sections or chapters of this book useful this semester for improving your writing
- bring at least one paragraph of your first draft of Paper One to class on a disc

**Week Five (Computer Room)**



M SEP 22 a full rough draft of Paper One must be posted and linked to the appropriate section of your Assignment Index by 5 p.m. today

T SEP 23 Peer Review Workshop: Organization

- if you haven't been able to post your rough draft yet, do it in class today
- in-class work: Peer Review One (of a classmate's rough draft) must be linked to your Assignment Index by noon on Monday

## Independent Film

R SEP 24 What Is "Independent Film"?

- before class, visit two of the three websites listed below and the links to their various sections; then write down a one- or two-paragraph explanation of how they seem to define or conceive of "Independent Film"; in what way or ways are the films they feature "independent"? (the second two sites seem to work better in Explorer than in Netscape)

[The Sundance Institute](#)  
[The Independent Feature Project](#)  
[The Independent Film Channel](#)

- in-class: discussion of three sites; begin screening of *Real Women Have Curves* (Directed by Patricia Cardoso, 2002)
- Peer Review Three (of a classmate's rough draft) must be linked to the appropriate line of your Assignment Index by today at 5 p.m.

## Week Six (Discussion Room)

T SEP 30 Continue Screening of *Real Women have Curves*

R OCT 2 Discussion of *Real Women have Curves* as an "Independent" "Film"

- before class, do some research on your own, and find at least two sources that help to explain some of the ways that *Real Women have Curves* could be classified as an independent film; bring to class a one-and-a-half to two-page, typed, double-spaced explanation of how this film qualifies as an independent film, according to these sources (these do not necessarily need to be sources about this particular film)