English 15S
Freshman Rhetoric & Composition / First-Year Seminar

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Office hours: Tuesday 2:30-3:30 @ Webster’s Bookstore Café, Wednesday 4:30-5:30 @ Kern Graduate Building, Thursday 2:30-3:30 @ Webster's Bookstore Café, and by appointment

Course Policies and Procedures (Fall 2015)

Primary Texts:
Andrea A. Lunsford and John J. Ruszkiewicz, Everything’s an Argument, sixth edition
William Strunk and E.B. White, The Elements of Style, fourth edition
(a little book worth buying and keeping for the rest of your life)
Penn Statements

Additional Texts:
The New York Times
The Centre Daily Times
The Daily Collegian
USA Today
The world around you

Suggested Resources:
Purdue Online Writing Lab <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>
A Guide to Grammar and Style <http://www.andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Writing/>
Research and Documentation Online
<http://www.macmillanhighered.com/catalog/static/bsm/hacker/resdoc/home.htm>
Everything’s an Argument e-resources <bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/everythingsanargument6e/#t_818909____>
William Zinsser, On Writing Well
A good college dictionary
An open mind and copious curiosity

Course description:
P.T. Barnum purportedly said: “There’s a sucker born every minute.” But are suckers born or made? And what, if anything, can we do to avoid slipping into suckerhood? In this class, we will explore the rudiments of argumentation by examining the rhetoric of everyday life—the profound, the mundane, and most things in between. In between. In this class, we will sharpen our rhetorical acumen by learning to communicate with a coherent sense of purpose and audience (through a strategic deployment of argument and design). In this class, we will approach composition as a process—a process that begins with listening. And understanding. Instruction will be based on the Socratic Method of inquiry with copious discussion, considerable reading, and profuse writing. And rewriting. And rewriting. And rewriting. And rewriting. English 15S asks not simply for self-expression, but for participation in the public discourse.
Beyond the basic requirements of Freshman Composition, this course also serves as a First-Year Seminar for DUS students. As a result, this class must adhere to the following prescribed goals:

- to engage students in learning and orient them to the scholarly community from the outset of their undergraduate studies in a way that will bridge to later experiences in their chosen majors, and
- to facilitate students’ adjustment to the high expectations, demanding workload, increased liberties, and other aspects of the transition to college life

To achieve these goals, you will be required to participate in several supplemental programs being offered by the College of Liberal Arts and the Division of Undergraduate Studies. A schedule of these events will be distributed during the semester.

**Requirements:**
To pass this course (with a grade of “C”) you must satisfactorily fulfill the following requirements:

**Write five papers.** Unless you are otherwise instructed, each paper must be submitted electronically. You will also be responsible for submitting any peer review comments you receive. Papers must be uploaded on time. In most instances, this means before class begins on the day the paper is due. Late papers will be docked one letter grade per day, unless you get my approval for an extension before the due date.

**Participate online.** Each week, you will post a meditation (100-200 words) on Angel by Friday at 6:00 pm. Most weeks, I will provide you with writing prompts to stir your creative juices. You will respond to at least two of your classmates’ postings (by Sunday at 11:59 pm). In addition, there will be open discussion boards and targeted forums for you to exchange ideas with classmates. Engagement is the key, and I encourage you to engage your classmates in lively discussion. But I also expect your postings to be thoughtful and prepared with due diligence. Sloppy posts containing misspellings, poor mechanics, and random capitalization will only serve to damage your credibility. Toward this end, I suggest that you compose your messages in a word processing program, then copy and paste onto the discussion board.

**Be here.** I take it as an insult when students don’t show up for my class. If I don’t see room full of smiling faces, I tend to become ornery. Come to class; I’ll try to make it worth your while. You will be allowed TWO unexcused absences; any more, and your grade will suffer. Penalties for excessive absences manifest both indirectly (through a reduced participation grade) and directly (through compulsory reduction of your final grade). Regardless of work performance, egregious absenteeism can—and will—result in course failure. If you miss a class, be the absence excused or unexcused, it is your responsibility to get the assignments and make up any work you miss—hint: you might try emailing me with a lame excuse in a show of feigned sincerity.

**Be here on time.** Tardiness will not be tolerated.

**Come to class prepared and participate.** There will be reading and/or writing assignments due for every class. You will be expected to come to class with all your assignments completed. You will also be expected to take part in frank, free, uninhibited, open (yet civil) discourse. Your opinion counts; everyone’s opinion counts. Be unabashed, be forthright, but be courteous. If you come to class unprepared, you may be asked to leave.

**Come prepared to class and stay focused.** On days when readings are due, you should bring your text(s) to class with you. If the readings are online, you should either bring printed copies of the readings to class with you or access them on a Wi-Fi-friendly electronic device. Please note: in-class use of laptops, tablets, and smartphones is restricted to class-related activities—not for checking your email or updating your Facebook status or sharing your favorite YouTube video or covert googling or tweeting or Pinteresting or Tumblr or Instagramming or Snapchatting Grandma or doing homework for some other class or whatever. Unauthorized use of electronic devices will result in your immediate dismissal from class.

**Quizzes.** If I detect that students are coming to class unprepared, I may elect to give an unannounced reading quiz. Students who have done the reading should have no problem passing such quizzes. If, however, you fail the quiz, you will be asked to leave, receive an unexcused absence, and be given a make-up assignment to complete. Such penalties can be easily avoided: come to class prepared and encourage your classmates to do the same.
Listen attentively. More than most, this course requires you to hone your listening skills. I expect you to listen carefully to your instructor (me) and your classmates—being a successful participant requires you to be a successful listener. As such, your participation grade will be assessed qualitatively, taking your listening skills into account. Students who refuse to listen courteously to their classmates or instructor will be asked to leave.

Participate in peer review: Not only is feedback crucial to you as a writer, but reading critically and offering constructive criticism to peers are skills essential for any writer to possess. For each major assignment, we will devote one class period to critiquing each other's drafts. Participation is mandatory: you must review at least two classmates' papers and have your drafts reviewed by at least two classmates. Papers that have not been peer reviewed will not be graded.

Enjoy yourself. It's later than you think.

Grades:
To pass this course, you must satisfactorily meet all requirements. Grades on individual assignments reflect the quality of the work and will be assessed in accordance with the Department of English grading standards. Please note: English 15S is a cooperative experience, not a competitive one. Helping your classmates succeed will only help your grade. Your final grade will be computed as follows:

- Paper #1 (This I Believe Essay) 15%
- Paper #2 (Definition Essay) 20%
- Paper #3 (Discursive Bibliographic Essay) 20%
- Paper #4 (Rhetorical Analysis) 5%
- Paper #5 (Informal Evaluation) 15%
- Online meditations and responses 15%
- Participation, homework, and peer review 10%

Letter grades will be calculated according to the following scale:

- A 95-100
- A- 90-94.999
- B+ 87-89.999
- B 83-86.999
- B- 80-82.999
- C+ 77-79.999
- C 70-76.999
- D 60-69.999
- F Below 60

This class maintains a strict no-whining-about-grades policy. If you wish to discuss your papers and how might improve your work, I will gladly meet with you. But the moment that you begin complaining about your grade, the discussion will end.

In fact, this class maintains a no-kvetching-about-anything policy. If you have a suggestion on how class can be improved, feel free to offer it (along with support on why your suggestion will lead to improvement). But please be aware that incessant grumbling damages your credibility and alienates the audience you are trying to persuade.
Office conferences: Think of my office as an extension of the classroom and use my office hours to discuss any aspect of your reading or writing: problems, questions, papers you’re working on, ideas you wish to develop, strategies you’d like to try, and so on. I’m here to help you; I suggest you take advantage of my generosity. If you can’t make it during my office hours, set up an appointment for some other time.

The Burrowes Building, longtime home of the English Department, is currently being renovated. For the duration of the renovation (or at least until the cows come home), my “office” will be downtown in the former Verizon Building, 224 South Allen Street. Since is not be the most convenient or hospitable place to meet, I will be holding conferences in the following locations:

- Au Bon Pain at Otto’s Cafe, Lobby of the Kern Graduate Building
- Webster’s Bookstore Café, 133 East Beaver Avenue (main entrance on Humes Alley).
- Saint’s Cafe, 123 West Beaver Avenue
- Irving’s, 110 East College Avenue
- Mackinnon’s Cafe, Pattee Library

Available conference times and locations are listed above and on the class homepage. Due to the chaotic nature of my officelessness, all conferences will be by appointment only.

Email: I expect you to have an email account and to check your email daily. I often send additional assignments, corrections, clarifications, cancellations, announcements, and the occasional pep talk over email. In addition, you will use email to submit your argument proposals and some homework assignments. Argument proposals may be pasted into the email message or sent as file attachments. Feel free to email me any time about anything (within reason, that is); you can (generally) expect a prompt reply.

Before emailing me, however, you should try to find the answer on your own. Asking questions whose answer can be found on the class website serves little purpose other than alienating your instructor. Moreover, the content of your email should relate to its subject line. In other words, do not simply click reply to an email I sent the class. I reserve the right to ignore any email that lacks professionalism or basic courtesy for its recipient.

Format: Keep in mind that formats are rhetorical decisions. But typically, your papers should be typed in a standard black 12-point serif font, double-spaced, with approximately one-inch margins. Unless otherwise instructed, no separate title page should be used. Place your name, the date, “English 15S,” and my name (Paul Kellermann) in the upper left hand corner of the first page. In the upper right hand corner, put the name of the assignment, the draft, and the word count. Place your title above the text on page one and double space beneath it. The title should not be underlined. Page one need not be numbered, but page numbers should be placed (along with your last name) as a header in the upper right hand corner of all subsequent pages. I expect all papers to be spell-checked (and the spell-check to be verified with a good old-fashioned dictionary) and to be relatively free of asinine mechanical mistakes and typos. In other words, proofread the mofos before you hand them in—or better yet, have someone proofread for you. Your papers (along with peer review comments) will be submitted electronically in accordance with procedures to be discussed in class.

Paper submission. All papers will be submitted electronically to the designated dropbox on Angel. Because this class is participating in an ITS pilot study, papers submitted to Angel will be automatically bridged to turnitin.com, where you will have access to your originality report.

Unless otherwise indicated, papers are due class time on the date the syllabus specifies. If, for any reason, you cannot be in class on the day a paper is due, it does not matter (since you’re submitting the paper electronically). It is your responsibility to make sure that the paper has uploaded properly. If you run into technical problems while uploading your paper, please email me.

To avert catastrophe, please keep at least one backup copy of all papers—both papers in progress and completed papers—by emailing them to yourself and/or saving them to the cloud. With countless free storage options available to you, hard drive apocalypse is not a valid excuse for failing to submit a paper.
Plagiarism. Penn State defines academic integrity as the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest and responsible manner. All students should act with personal integrity, respect other students’ dignity, rights and property, and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts (Faculty Senate Policy 49-20).

Dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated in this course. Students who are found to be dishonest may receive academic sanctions and be reported to the University’s Judicial Affairs office for possible further disciplinary sanction.

Talking over your ideas and getting comments on your writing from friends are NOT plagiarism. Taking someone else’s published or unpublished words and calling them your own IS plagiarism: a synonym is academic dishonesty. As an academic exercise, students will submit soft copies of all papers to turnitin.com and view their papers' originality reports.

For further information, please consult the Department of English Plagiarism Policy.

A statement on nondiscrimination: The Pennsylvania State University is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to programs, facilities, admission and employment without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. It is the policy of the University to maintain an academic and work environment free of discrimination, including harassment. The Pennsylvania State University prohibits discrimination and harassment against any person because of age, ancestry, color, disability or handicap, national origin, race, religious creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or veteran status. Discrimination or harassment against faculty, staff, or students will not be tolerated at The Pennsylvania State University.

A note to students with disabilities: The Pennsylvania State University encourages qualified persons with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions, please tell me as soon as possible.

A word about decorum: You will soon notice that I prefer an informal classroom setting. I strongly believe that a relaxed atmosphere maximizes learning potential. Loud, boisterous, jovial classes will be the norm, and you’ll be expected to contribute to the anarchy. We’ll joke around; we may even make fun of one another in a playful (not malicious) manner. But be forewarned: I will not tolerate intolerance or discourtesy in any form. A little respect goes a long way.

A Seemingly Unnecessary Warning: This classroom is a cellular-free zone. I do not want to see cell phones and I certainly don’t want to hear them. Do yourself (and everyone) a favor: disconnect before coming to class and stow your phone away where it won’t be a distraction. If your cell phone rings during class, you will be asked to leave. If I see your cell phone at all, I will ask you to leave.

I can't believe I even need to mention this: Class is only seventy-five minutes long. Most healthy adults should be able to maintain for this length without taking a bathroom break. Nevertheless, you might consider attending to your bodily needs before class begins and/or waiting until class ends. If you have a medical condition that requires you to take frequent bathroom breaks, please inform me immediately.

Have Fun.