

English 315 – Advanced Writing

North Central College – Spring 2019

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TEXTS: Caliendo, S. *Inequality in America: Race, Poverty, and Fulfilling Democracy's Promise*. (IA)

Preston, R. *The Best American Science and Nature Writing, 2007*. (SNW)

Guzman, R. *Writing Well Wherever You Work*. (WW)

...plus online readings and viewings, like Netflix's *Explained: The Racial Wealth Gap*

Course Description and Goals:

ENG 315 is a so-called “junior rising” writing course. By now most of you have established yourselves in your majors, but majors often narrow you down to specific questions, techniques, and professional jargon. It narrows your company, too. Biologists talk to biologists, sociologists to sociologists, economists to economists, English professors to other English professors. ENG 315 takes you back to remind you of and to re-polish writing skills you learned earlier—because good writing *grows* in importance as you enter your professional lives. It’s one of the things employers *always* say they need more of. ENG 315 also helps you write to connect to a wider, general public. For a host of reasons, you’ll need to help more people understand why the things you study and the things you’ll do in your career matter. Beyond that, college-educated persons should have the ability, and feel the duty, to write elegantly and forcefully on issues important to democracy and fulfilling democracy’s promise. You should see yourselves as *public intellectuals*. This term we’ll read some of the best writing about science and nature and look at several TED talks to help us understand how writers reach a wider audience. And we’ll also focus on one of the most important issues for democracy today: Inequality, especially as it relates to race, and also gender.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:

March	26	Intro. <i>The model for Public Writing</i> .
	28	<u>Read:</u> SNW—Rough (<i>beginning</i> p.178...); On my website E.B.White – “Three Very Short Essays,” and Lewis Thomas – just the essay “Germs;” and WW—Chp. 4 on Lean Prose.
April	2	The Public Intellectual. Writing <i>Personas</i> . Read WW: Chapters 1, 9. SNW: Lockwood (115...), Margulis & Case (123...)
	4	No class. See online assignment (#3) under GRADES section below.
	9	Sentence Rhythm. Read: WW: Chps. 4-6; Rauch (153--); SNW: Deming (31...), Fields (36...)
	11	Logical Rhythm. Read: SNW—Rosenwald (169...); in “Supplements” read just <i>first</i> essay from Thomas

	16	Library Session (meet in Oesterle Library)
	18	Multi-Modal Workshop – Room tba
	23	Rhythm and Multi-Modal Writing; Read: IA—Intro and Chps. 1, 2
	25	IA: Chapters 3, 4
	30	IA: Chapters 5, 6, 7
May	2	IA: Chapter 8, and Conclusion
	7	Meetings on papers/projects
	9	Guest: Dr. Stephen Maynard Caliendo
	14	No Class: HONORS DAY (Attendance <i>Required</i>)
	16	SNW: Watters (276--), Olson (127--), Casey (9--)
	21	SNW: Watters (276--); SNW: Olson (127--)
	23	Shnayerson (228--); Readings from “Supplements” – read rest of Lewis Thomas
	28	Presenting papers & projects; Readings from “Supplements” – tba
	30	Presenting papers & projects

GRADES will be based on the following:

- 1) Class Participation. Be **present** in class. Read all material carefully and be willing to share your insights, comments, *and questions*. Though it may seem obvious, remember, I can see you. If you feel you’re being misperceived, please come talk to me. (75 pts.)
- 2) The completion of small class exercises or quizzes, both in-class and before class, assigned at various points in the term. (5-20 pts. based on length of assignment). First small piece **DUE March 28**: One page, double-spaced (assuming Times New Roman 12 point font), about 250 words. Question: What is the “best or biggest story” in your discipline? Why? (10 pts.)
- 3) Racial Wealth Gap online assignment. Watch the Netflix program *Explained: The Racial Wealth Gap* and complete a Google quiz whose link will be coming to you by email. **DUE by Noon, April 9th**.
- 4) Completion of the term’s “major” projects. Each paper should be about 4-5 pages.
 - a) A paper defining a “problem for democracy” from the vantage point of your discipline. **DUE by Midnight, April 11th**
 - b) A paper advocating for action on a problem or for an organization that acts on a problem. **DUE by Midnight, April 25th**
 - c) A paper exploring “Race and [your ‘major’]” **DUE by Midnight May 14th**
 - d) A multi-modal piece translating one of your essays into a different form. **DUE May 28th**

Statement on Plagiarism: Do your own work and “cite” your sources. Penalties for plagiarism can be stiff, including failing the class, or even more serious college sanctions.

❑ ON WRITING:

Writing is very important to the college, which requires that at least 30% of the grade for every assignment be given for the writing.

Besides being grammatically correct, good writing style requires that your work contains a VARIED sentence structure, as well as lean and smoothly flowing—not awkward—prose.

Rules of thumb:

❑ **Structure/Length:** Don't write any more than three sentences in a row that have roughly the same structure or length. For example, you don't want to write like this:

The Wizard of Oz is a movie that I enjoyed very much. It is a movie that many think of as a "classic." The plot that the director uses is one which is full of suspense. We are rooting for Dorothy and Toto almost from the very beginning. The "wizard" is not capable of returning them to where they came from.

❑ **Lean Prose:** Eliminate as much as possible (you can't always), the following words:

TO BE verbs—*is, was, were ...*

PREPOSITIONS—*in, of, from, out...*

RELATIVE PRONOUNS—*that, which, who ...*

This will eliminate an astonishing 70% of your wordiness and awkwardness. For example, revise these sentences.

- This movie **is** very honest **in** the way it portrays how the Jewish people **were** treated **by** the Nazis, **which was** quite awful.
- The characters **in** the film **are** so similar **to** us **that** as an audience we connect and relate easily **to** them **on** a personal level.
- The movie "Hardball," directed **by** Brian Robbins, highlights the hardships faced **by** young boys living **in** the inner city **in** a story of a man **with** terrible habits and a large amount **of** debt **who** agrees to coach Little League **in** the projects **for** a loan.
- This documentary **is** very effective **in** connecting **with** the audience.

Consider revising any sentence having more than three words like these.

We will be reading more about these revision techniques in Dr. Guzman's book *Writing Well Wherever You Work*, available at <http://richardrguzman.com>

A Few (very few) Leading Periodicals

Your library information session will focus on scholarly journals, but some of the country's finest magazines or university journals are also well worth your while and will be permitted as good sources for your papers.

Atlantic Monthly

One of the best general interest magazines. Many articles on culture, society, and politics. Good, long book reviews.

The New Yorker

Perhaps the nation's best literary and public affairs magazines—though note that *The Virginia Quarterly* (see below) is often close behind...and sometimes ahead. Great movie reviews, though its critics don't tend to like a lot of films.

The Virginia Quarterly

Perhaps the best of the leading "University" journals. Art, Literature, General Interest (like *The Atlantic*), and—like *The Atlantic*—a good website.

Commentary

Neoconservative, establishment. Influential, but some think it's overrated.

Harper's

Another great general interest magazine, famous for its statistical renderings of popular topics.

The Harvard Business Review

Perhaps the leading publication on business management and leadership.

Mother Jones

Radical, left point of view, but famous for its investigative reporting.

The Nation

One of the country's longest running left-leaning magazines.

National Review

Perhaps the most interesting conservative magazine.

The New Republic

Long established liberal political magazine.

Rolling Stone

Long established magazine on music, culture, politics.

Also look for University "Centers" – for example...

The Stanford Center for Poverty and Inequality

The John Hope Franklin Center for Interdisciplinary and International Studies (Duke)

RADIO and ONLINE SOURCES?