

COVER SHEET: Request for Approval to Use W-Designation

TYPE I. PROFESSOR COMMITMENT

- () Professor David B. Downing Phone x6486  
( ) Writing Workshop? (If not at IUP, where? when?) \* Equivalent graduate training +  
() Proposal for one W-course (see instructions below) experience  
() Agree to forward syllabi for subsequently offered W-courses? CDE

TYPE II. DEPARTMENT COURSE

- ( ) Department Contact Person \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
( ) Course Number/Title \_\_\_\_\_  
( ) Statement concerning departmental responsibility \_\_\_\_\_  
( ) Proposal for this W-course (see instructions below) \_\_\_\_\_

TYPE III. SPECIFIC COURSE AND SPECIFIC PROFESSOR(S)

- ( ) Professor(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
( ) Course Number/Title \_\_\_\_\_  
( ) Proposal for this W-course (see instructions below) \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURES:

Professor(s) David B. Downing  
Department Chairperson James L. Gray  
College Dean Richard Jordan  
Director of Liberal Studies CD [Signature]

COMPONENTS OF A PROPOSAL FOR A WRITING-INTENSIVE COURSE:

I. "Writing Summary"--one or two pages explaining how writing is used in the course. First, explain any distinctive characteristics of the content or students which would help the Liberal Studies Committee understand your summary. Second, list and explain the types of writing activities; be especially careful to explain (1) what each writing activity is intended to accomplish as well as the (2) amount of writing, (3) frequency and number of assignments, and (4) whether there are opportunities for revision. If the activity is to be graded, indicate (5) evaluation standards and (6) percentage contribution to the student's final grade.

II. Copy of the course syllabus.

III. Two or three samples of assignment sheets, instructions, or criteria concerning writing that are given to students. Limit: 4 pages. (Single copies of longer items, if essential to the proposal, may be submitted to be passed among LSC members and returned to you.)

Please number all pages. Provide one copy to Liberal Studies Committee.

David B. Downing

### Writing Summary for EN 347

Modern American Fiction requires a large amount of reading, but because I feel such a strong commitment to writing, it too will play a major role in the class. I will use **writing to stimulate thought or provoke reactions** from the students at the beginning of discussions of the novels. Sometimes I may ask the students to freewrite for five minutes simply to allow them an opportunity to write about whatever they want. These short pieces will not be graded and may or may not be collected.

I will require the students to write weekly on each different novel or short story discussed. These one to two page **response statements** are designed to enhance a student's critical awareness of the text and issues for each day's assignment. The form of these response statements can vary considerably from structured responses (as in the attached sample response statement) to open letters to me or the class; but despite the wide variations in form, the content should address the week's reading. The evaluation procedures are based exclusively on length as explained in the syllabus: they will consist of a ✓, ✓+, or ✓-. By evaluating only length, or effort, this kind of writing provides a forum for students to explore issues and questions that they may be reluctant to raise in a traditional evaluation model of writing excellence.

The writing that will be done for **evaluation** will begin early in the semester so that students may have many opportunities for revision which is integral to my philosophy of writing. Revision will begin in the classroom with writing workshops and may move out of the class to the Writing Center. During writing workshops, students will exchange papers with other students and critique and offer suggestions for further revisions. These several drafts and revisions will lead to two final paper projects which will be graded. The final papers will be graded holistically on the basis of content, style, mechanics, and organization of the paper. **Memo writing** (see attached explanation) will help students to become better writers as a result of more effective revision and reading. Memos also will help students clarify their purpose in writing.

(5-8 pp each)

English 347: Modern American Fiction  
Spring 1992

Instructor: David Downing  
Office: Leonard 111  
tel: 357-6486  
Office hours: 2-3 MTuWTh

- Texts: The Story and Its Writer, Ann Charters (SIW)  
One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, Ken Kesey  
The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test, Tom Wolfe  
Ceremony, Leslie Marmon Silko  
Love Medicine, Louise Erdrich  
The Joy Luck Club, Amy Tan  
The Color Purple, Alice Walker  
Beloved, Toni Morrison
- 1/21 Introduction
- 1/23 "Things They Carried," p.1069, SIW. Writing: Response Statement/log
- 1/28 "Lost in the Funhouse," p.89, SIW. Writing: Response Statement
- 1/30 "The Overcoat II," p.174, SIW. Writing: Response Statement
- 2/4 One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest. Response Statement.
- 2/6 " " " "
- 2/11 " " " "
- 2/13 The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test. Response statement.
- 2/18 " " " "
- 2/20 "'Further': Reflections on Counter-Culture and the Postmodern," (ditto handout)
- 2/25 "Yellow Woman," p.1158, SIW. Response Statement.
- 2/27 Ceremony. Response Statement.
- 3/3 " "
- 3/5 MID-TERM Projects due.

3/7--3/16

MID-TERM BREAK

- 3/17      Love Medicine. Response Statement.
- 3/19      "            "
- 3/24      "I Stand Here Ironing," p.1122, SIW.  
"Jasmine," p.1008, SIW.
- 3/26      "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been," p.1055,  
SIW.
- 3/31      "Lust," p.987, SIW. Writing: Response Statement
- 4/2      "Territory," p.825, SIW. Response Statement.
- 4/7      The Joy Luck Club. Response Statement
- 4/9      "            "            "
- 4/14      The Color Purple. Response Statement.
- 4/16      "            "            "
- 4/21      "            "            "
- 4/23      Beloved. Response Statement
- 4/28      "            "
- 4/30      "Reading From Inside and Outside of One's Community,"  
by David Bleich (ditto handout).
- 5/5      Final Projects due.

Course Requirements and Grading:

I. There will be two kinds of grading systems used in this class:

A. Formal papers and/or group projects will receive a

letter grade, proportioned as follows in your final grade:

- 25% of the grade will be based on the first paper or project
- 25% of the grade will be based on the second paper or project
- 25% of the grade will be based on class participation, improvement, effort, and my general impression of your work.

Note: The "formal papers" may be group projects, which I will describe.

B. 25% of the grade will be based on all informal writing assignments such as response statements, and in-class writing. Each such assignment will receive a , , or .

In the case of response statements, they will be based exclusively on effort, according to length of response, as follows:

200-300 words will receive a check (✓)

less than 200 words will receive a check minus (✓-)

more than 300 words will receive a check plus (✓+)

At the end of the semester, I will average your informal writing grades, and this segment of your grade will be determined as follows:

an average of check plus (✓+) = A

an average of check (✓) = B

an average of check minus (✓-) = C

All of these grading procedures are often to various kinds of negotiation as we will discuss in class.

II. Group reports: early in the semester, the class will divide into small groups, each group being responsible for leading class discussion on one of the seven main novels we will be reading. You will be encouraged to combine the group reports with one of the papers/projects. There are many directions and alternatives for combining these activities, and these we will discuss in class.

III. Projects and papers should be typed, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins. Response state-ments may be neatly handwritten.

## RESPONSE STATEMENT

### 1. WHAT ARE YOUR INITIAL REACTIONS TO THE TEXT?

With this question, focus on the immediate affective or emotional part of your reading experience. For example, you might respond with interest, excitement, confusion, suspense, identification with characters, terror, anger, boredom, etc.

### 2. WHY DID THE TEXT HAVE THAT EFFECT ON YOU?

#### 2.a. THE TEXT: What effect does the text have on reading?

What characteristics of the text might help account for the nature of your response? Were there any familiar or strange conventions of the text that effected your response? You might consider here the subject matter, the theme, any distinctive features of the language, striking images, unusual idioms or dialogue, the historical period of the text, etc.

#### 2.b. THE READER: What effect does the reader have on reading

Here you should consider your own familiarity or unfamiliarity with the text or the historical period. What assumptions did you bring to the reading that may have effected your response? How did you read: rapidly, involved with the action or characters? playfully, looking for unusual plays on words or characters? carefully, with an eye to the realistic features of the text? What kinds of literary or historical assumptions of your own may have effected your response?

### 3. WHAT DOES YOUR RESPONSE TELL YOU ABOUT YOURSELF AS A READER?

Rather than just a personal, self-analysis, try to answer this question by attending as well to the social and cultural reasons why you might have acquired the values and tastes that your do. What in your background and society has fostered, for example, your appreciation for happy endings, or realistic characters, or science fiction, etc.

## On Memo Writing

In their book, Texts and Contexts, composition researchers Judith and Jeffery Summerfield describe the use of memo writing in the process of evaluating writing. Following their example, and my own success with this technique, whenever you turn in a paper written out of class, I will ask you to attach a memo to it. The first thing I want you to address in these memos is a brief description of what you were hoping to accomplish in the paper. Tell me if you think you accomplished this--even if you're not sure. After the short summary, there are some questions I want you to consider about your writing:

Does it reflect the effort you put into it?

Do you think that it needs another revision or two?

How do you feel about this paper--hate it? like it?

Most importantly, I want you to tell me, specifically, how I can help you make it better. Use the memo to point out the sections or areas where you think you could use an extensive reader's response or critique. Where and on what do you want me to focus my attention? You should also ask your writing group members the same questions in order to receive constructive feedback on your paper.