Welcome to First-Year Composition – IRW

Course Theme: “Consumption in Everyday Life”

When you enrolled this semester in English 114, you automatically joined an exciting course that will integrate reading and writing at every turn. What this means is that you will learn how to write better through your reading and how to read better through your writing. We will focus not only on the processes and practices of reading and writing, but also on the ways that reading and writing interact and complement one another. ENG 114 is an intensive course and accordingly, you will be asked to write and read regularly and copiously. English 114 fulfills the University's first-year Written English Requirement.

In addition to assigned class readings, our second type of primary text will be your writing and the writing of your classmates. This is a class where your writing – and how you can continue to develop and hone your writing skills – will be taken seriously. We will therefore make use of a writing workshop on a regular basis; here, it is your writing that we will be reading, valuing and exploring. At regular intervals throughout the course, I will reproduce essays (or portions of essays) written by members of our class for us to consider. This is an essential part of learning to “read” your own writing and beginning to create a language for talking about writing. You will also, throughout the term, be responsible for reading and responding to the work of your peers in written format, and thus helping each other to write more engaging, complex, precise, and reflexive essays. This class’s success depends a great deal on the community we are able to build as readers and writers who respect and are interested in carefully reading the work that individual writers are doing.

Since we read and writing about *something*, since reading and writing provide us with an opportunity to think critically about the world around us, and since thinking critically allows us to make informed decisions about our lives, I thought it would be interesting to focus on something we all have in common, something that we all do. We are all consumers, from the food we eat, to the clothes we wear, to the electronic devices that make our lives easier and more enjoyable. Yet how often do we stop and think critically about ourselves as consumers? Are we making informed, healthy choices in what we consume? Or, as some theorists argue, are we being manipulated by advertisers into thinking we absolutely must have the latest smartphone? Have we become so in love with Facebook and Twitter that we don’t even ask anymore wondering whether social media is having positive or negative effects on our feelings of community and social relations? (Anyone being cyber-bullied in middle or high school?) So these are some of the questions we’ll read, write and think about this semester. I think you’ll find our exploration of “Consumption in Everyday Life” interesting and informative.

Here then are the instructional goals for this course, built around my teaching philosophy:
• I’ll start with what you already know. Each of you brings to this classroom your own life experience, wisdom, and insights. This is called your schema (pronounced “skeema”). It’s the information and the structures your brain already holds before you even walk into this classroom. And this schema will be the foundation upon which we build.

• You’ll always know what’s going on in the class and why: there should be nothing mysterious about the process of learning. You should never have to wonder, “Why in the world is the teacher asking me to do that?” I’ll do my best to make your learning processes very visible and explicit so that you can get familiar with the processes and use them throughout your life – in school and beyond.

• We’ll have a community in this classroom. I’ll do my part to ensure that the classroom is always respectful, safe, friendly, interesting, interactive and (I hope) a lot of fun. People learn better in an environment with these characteristics, so let’s make sure this is the environment we create and support.

• The goal is not to get the answer or paper “right,” but to arrive at your own interpretation and persuasive analysis. We’ll help and encourage each other to do intellectual work in this class. We will be reading texts and discussing ideas that aren’t black and white. Our work is to practice looking at words, sentences, and ideas closely and critically – others and our own.

Officially speaking, this class promotes the University-approved learning outcomes for 114. These outcomes state that by the end of English 114, students will be able to:

1. read actively and effectively and use information acquired from readings, research and other sources critically in their own writing;
2. use writing processes and strategies for generating, revising, editing, and proofreading their work; collaborate with others during the writing process, developing ways to offer constructive criticism and accept the criticism of others;
3. reflect on their reading and writing processes as an avenue to achieving greater control of these processes and increased effectiveness as readers and writers;
4. demonstrate a basic familiarity with rhetorical conventions, composing effective expository prose with regard to purpose, audience, and genre;
5. create and apply a research plan to locate, use and evaluate information from a variety of sources, including library resources;
6. use evidence and analysis to successfully support the central purpose of their writing; demonstrate ethical conduct in their writing and the appropriate use and citation of the works of others;
7. develop knowledge of genre conventions ranging from structure and paragraphing to tone and mechanics; control such surface features as syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling;
8. use knowledge of the academic community to support their development as learners, readers, and writers.

Assignments

I have designed several types of reading/writing activities to help foster the learning goals bulleted above. They include:

• Short (1 page single-spaced) “difficulty papers” in which you explore an area of the reading that you found confusing or hard to understand. You will post these short papers to the online
discussion portion of iLearn (ilearn.sfsu.edu). You will also respond to several of the difficulty papers written by those in your group in order to compare and synthesize one another’s ideas. These activities will not only help you strengthen your reading practices, but they’ll also help you develop the resources to interpret difficult texts on your own as well as be in dialogue with others about ideas.

- **Text Annotations.** For every assigned reading, you will make notes about what you are reading. Sometimes I’ll ask you to make your notes in the margins of the text itself. At other times, I’ll ask you to make notes in a “double-entry” journal.

- **Four 4-6 page (double-spaced) written responses** to our readings. Here you’ll work especially to develop your own lines of thought and articulate your ideas in writing. You will often write before we have discussed a reading in class so that you may generate your own responses and arguments to our texts before comparing your ideas with others.

- **Self-Reflection Journal Entries.** Throughout the course, I’ll ask you to make journal entries that ask you to think about what you have learned so far, how this learning relates to your life in this class, in your other classes at the University and in your life outside of school.

- **3 substantial revisions** of earlier pieces of writing. These revisions will be “substantial” in that you will either smoothly integrate at least 2 new pages of writing or will rewrite your initial draft completely. Revision will thus mean deep re-thinking and rewriting – not just surface-level correction. We will use class workshops and peer review to help each of you productively deepen and revise your ideas and your words. With each revision, you will collect and hand in your work thus far in a portfolio (see below), along with a written self-reflection.

Most weeks, you should therefore expect to produce about 5-6 pages of writing, some formal and some informal. We will often write in class to brainstorm ideas, develop better sentences and to reflect on our learning. *All writing that you submit must be typed (please use Times New Roman 12 point or smaller, 1-inch margins only) and carefully checked for errors before being handed in.* Here is an overview of the major writing assignments you’ll complete this semester:

1. Consumption and Identity: Write a narrative essay in which you describe your consumer habits. What kinds of things do you consume and what do these habits reveal about who you are and what matters to you? Due September 8

2. Analyzing Advertisements: Write an analytic essay in which you explore a topic related to the effects of advertising on you and your world. Due Sept 29

3. Alcohol Consumption on College Campuses. Write an essay analyzing the phenomenon of heavy drinking on college campuses. Due Oct 27

4. The Food We Eat: Write a persuasive/argumentative essay about a topic related to a cultural, social or political aspect of “the food we eat.” Due Nov 17

5. Social Media: Write a research report related to our consumption of social media. What effects is it having on us socially, politically and communally? Due Dec 15

**Required Texts**

“Consumption in Everyday Life,” an ENG 114 Course Reader, available in the SFSU Bookstore

*Fast Food Nation,* by Eric Schlosser
Grading

This class will use the portfolio system to review and grade your work. Individual essays will receive written commentary throughout the semester but will not receive a letter grade. At two points in the semester, I will ask you to gather the writing you've done thus far and submit this work in the form of a portfolio, which will receive a grade for its entirety, as well as feedback to help you continue to improve. The portfolio system will allow you to take more substantial risks in your writing – trying out new ideas and new ways of articulating those ideas, for example – as well as to demonstrate your growth as a reader/writer over a trajectory of connected assignments. As you can see below, more weight is given to your later writing in order to give you as much time as possible to practice and develop. If at any time one of your assignments does not meet the basic requirements and expectations (i.e., it would receive a failing grade) I will let you know.

The breakdown of the grading for this class is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Final Portfolio and Reflection (December, 15th)</th>
<th>45%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Portfolio (October 13th)</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online difficulty papers, journals, self-reflections and class discussion</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meaningful Participation and response to readings, support of peers in peer-review and discussion, in-class writing, and Attendance</td>
<td>15%</td>
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Attendance, Lateness, and In-Class Policies

Because much of our work will be collaborative and focused on your writing and ideas, and because we only meet twice a week, your attendance at all class meetings is mandatory. You may only miss two class sessions (excused or unexcused) without impacting your grade but please be aware that four absences may result in you failing the course. Conversely, perfect attendance will be rewarded. If you must be absent, please e-mail me or leave a voicemail message about when you expect to be back in class. Also, please be advised that your work is still due. Please have someone deliver it to class or slide it under my office door before class begins. You should also check our iLearn site and contact a classmate to find out what was covered in class and what the assignment is for the next class.

Please note that lateness disrupts the class and work of your peers. Excessive lateness will also negatively impact your grade; every two tardies will count as an absence. If you have to be late, please be courteous and inform me of your circumstances via email.

Cell phones and all electronic devices should be turned off for the duration of class (unless you have spoken with me about a particular accommodation.) No texting please.

Please be aware that late or missing assignments will affect your grade. You may turn in one paper (not a revision or portfolio) late with no penalty if you both 1) notify me that you’d like to use this option,
and 2) submit your paper to me at the beginning of the following class period. Unless you contact me in advance, other late work will not be accepted.

**Academic Freedom**

Each student is strongly encouraged to participate in class. In any classroom situation that includes discussion and critical thinking, there are many differing viewpoints. These differences enhance the learning experience and create an atmosphere in which students and instructors alike will be encouraged to think and learn. On sensitive and controversial topics, students may sometimes disagree not only with each other but also with the instructor. It is my expectation that each of you will participate actively, respectfully, and meaningfully, and I promise to do the same. Your participation need not be authoritative; I do not expect you to have all the answers and find, in fact, that bringing focused questions to class to often be more useful.

**Academic Integrity**

Here’s the University Policy: *Plagiarism occurs when a student misrepresents the work of another as his or her own. Plagiarism may consist of using the ideas, sentences, paragraphs, or the whole text of another without appropriate acknowledgement, but it also includes employing or allowing another person to write or substantially alter work that a student then submits as his or her own. Any assignment found to be plagiarized will be given an “F” grade. All instances of plagiarism in the College of Humanities will be reported to the Dean of the College, and may be reported to the University Judicial Affairs Officer for further action.* (Quotation taken from “College of Humanities Plagiarism Resources,” www.sfsu.edu/~collhum/plagiarism.html)

Here’s my advice: Don’t do it. It’s just not worth a failing grade on that assignment and being reported to the Dean. Rephrase others’ words (even small phrases) into your own language, or put quotation marks around language that is not your own. If you ever have questions about how to cite, make a note on your paper and I’ll be happy to help you figure it out.

**Academic Accommodations**

I wish to make this course as accessible as possible to students with disabilities or medical conditions that may affect any aspect of course assignments or participation. Students needing academic accommodations, please see me during office hours as soon as possible to make necessary arrangements. You can also contact the Disability Resource Center at 338-2472 (Voice/TDD).

**Academic Assistance**

Check out these free resources to receive tutoring and extra help!

*Learning Assistance Center (LAC), E-mail: lac@sfsu.edu*
www.sfsu.edu/~lac

The LAC provides one-on-one and drop-in tutoring in writing, reading, and study skills. Feel free to use them as a helpful resource. They are clocated in: HSS 348; Hours: M-TH 9-4, F 9-12

*English Tutoring Center: http://www.sfsu.edu/~etc/*
Located right in HUM 290. Check the drop-in board for tutoring hours or stop by M/W/F 9-4pm or T/TH 10:30-4pm.

Carp: http://www.sfsu.edu/~carp1/

Night tutoring in HSS 344 for all academic subjects! M-TH 4-8pm and Fridays 11-2pm