

Sample Syllabus Explanation #2

ENGLISH 169 Lecture 1 Professor Lynn Keller
FIG Course: American Literature and the Environment
Fall 2010

(excerpted from course syllabus)

Essay drafts and Writing Fellows

It is our good fortune to have two peer writing tutors called Writing Fellows working with the class this semester, Leah Pribbenow (xxxx@wisc.edu) and Patrick R. Johnson (xxxx@wisc.edu). The Writing Fellows program is based on two beliefs that are supported by current research in writing instruction: 1) that writers of all skill levels can improve their writing by sharing work in progress and revising based on constructive criticism, and 2) that collaboration among student peers is a particularly effective mode of learning. The Writing Fellows are skilled undergraduate writers selected through a competitive application process. They take a course in the pedagogy of writing and are matched with a particular course to work with the enrolled students, helping students improve their writing skills by working with them on particular essay assignments.

A writing Fellow will respond to a draft for each of the two essays you write for this course; his or her feedback will be aimed at helping you present your ideas more effectively and express them more clearly. This will enable you to strengthen your essays significantly as you revise them. At least two weeks before the paper portfolio is due, you will turn in a draft for the Fellow to read. After he or she has written comments on the paper and it has been returned to you (normally, within a week of submission), you will meet in conference with the Writing Fellow to discuss possible revisions. *Be sure to bring your draft, with the Fellow's comments, to the conference!* Every student is *required* to work with a Writing Fellow for both paper assignments, by submitting essay drafts for the Fellow to read on the dates specified in the calendar and by meeting in conference with the Fellow about the drafts. Failure to submit the draft on time or to attend the follow-up conference will affect your grade.

You are required to submit your papers in both (complete) “draft” and “final” versions. By a complete “draft” I do not mean something rough and unformed; rather, I mean a version in which you have worked hard to present your ideas as fully, clearly, and persuasively as you can. This puts you in the best position to benefit from feedback, since it increases the likelihood that the person responding to your work can point you to improvements you might not have made on your own. When you turn in your “final” version on the specified date, it must be accompanied by the draft you submitted previously, along with the Writing Fellow’s written comments on draft, and a brief statement about the revisions you made; hence, the term “portfolio” in the course calendar. I will expect to see substantive revisions between the first and final drafts, based on careful consideration of the Writing Fellow’s suggestions. (Revisions does not mean merely editorial refinements, like eliminating typos or correcting punctuation errors; it means more substantial rewriting such as refining one’s thesis, rewriting one’s conclusion, reorganizing one’s argument, elaborating analysis of one’s evidence, providing more or better examples, etc.) In grading your work, I will take into consideration the effort evident in the first draft as well as the thoughtfulness and effectiveness of your revisions.