

**SYLLABUS**

**English 367.01**  
**The American Experience**  
 Summer 1997  
 T R 1:30-3:18  
 University Hall 28

**Instructor: Chris Johns**  
 Office: 449 Denney. Hours: T & R 3:30-5:00  
 and by appointment.  
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**Course Description and Goals:**

The thematic plan of the course is to present a historical view of the American experience in terms of America as an ideal, but whose ideals are often contradicted by social realities and historical change. The course will be divided into three main sections: The American Ideal; The Ideal in Conflict; and the Hyper Ideal. The first section will feature short readings on foundational ideals such as democracy, freedom, individualism, and expansion. The second section will focus on increasing strains in the American ideal, featuring readings on the civil rights movements of the sixties, the Vietnam conflict, and urbanization. The third section will feature readings concerning “postmodern” America: the current critiques of meaning, illusion vs. reality, consumerism, and the pervasive influence of the media. In addition to the short readings, we will be reading two medium-length books. A film will be featured, also. The course is certainly not intended to be an exhaustive historical view of the American experience, nor can it adequately represent America in all its complexity; but the course will attempt to provide a sense of the historical contingency and necessity of America’s ideals, a sense of its striking contrasts, and an awareness of its complex forces of change. Throughout the course students will be encouraged to take a more profound look at America’s--and hence their own--foundational ideals, values, and problems.

Did I mention writing? Since this course is a required Second-Year writing course, students are required to complete three critical essays and to keep a reading journal. To do well in this course students will be expected to produce well-formed, extended arguments displaying conscientious effort and substantial evidence. Students will be encouraged to formulate their own paper topics, provided that the paper attempts an intelligent, critical analysis of a substantial issue covered in class readings and discussions. Students will integrate primary and secondary readings into their papers, and specific instruction will be provided for writing in-depth analyses of both fiction and non-fiction texts. Several blocks of class time will be devoted to specific compositional issues such as thesis, support, clarity, organization, agent/action prose, and logical fallacies. Students will receive extensive written comments on all drafts, will participate in peer response sessions, and will be encouraged to take advantage of one-on-one conferences with the instructor. Class participation will be vigorously encouraged, or else forced! Overall, you can expect to be very busy doing lots of reading and writing and thinking.

**Course Materials:**

- Course Packet (available at Cop-Ez, Bricker Hall).
- Dispatches. Michael Herr
- White Noise. Don DeLillo
- The Everyday Writer. Lunsford & Connors.
- Rulebook for Arguments. Second Edition. Anthony Weston.
- Essay Folder (your choice)

All materials, except for course packet and folder, are available only at SBX.

**Course Requirements:**

As stated above, you are required to write three formal essays including one rough draft of each. The third is a research paper due during finals week. You will also keep a writing journal consisting of short responses to

the assigned readings. And, as part of class participation, you will be expected to participate actively in peer response sessions and class discussions. The grading percentages for these requirements are as follows:

|                     |     |
|---------------------|-----|
| Essay One           | 15% |
| Essay Two           | 20% |
| Essay Three         | 20% |
| Reading Journal     | 30% |
| Class Participation | 15% |

**Essays:** Essay topics will address the overall themes of this course. This course is designed to enhance your research strategies, so you will be expected to incorporate increasing amounts of secondary sources into your essays. All essays *and drafts* must be five to seven pages in length, typed, double-spaced, have 1" margins, and numbered pages; a title page is optional. The top of your first page (or title page) must present the following:

A title

Your name

Essay # and Draft # and Date

English 367 My name

In addition, your last name and a page number should appear on every page.

- A word about fonts and font-size: Please do not use any large or ornamental fonts. In order to insure fairness and to reduce irritation, I require that you use a normal font, such as Times Roman, Palatino, Courier, Helvetica, or something very similar, and point-size 12. Do not use large fonts like Chicago, and do not use extra wide spacing.
- Regarding computer use: There are many computer labs on campus; however, during busy times they are mostly full. Also, computer, printing, and disk problems occur frequently. For these reasons, avoid the tendency to wait until the last minute to type your papers. Furthermore, while working in labs it is most important to *save your work often, and save it onto your own disk*. If you have any trouble with computer usage, please consult me.
- Rough Drafts: It is wise to take your rough drafts seriously. They must be done on time and be as complete as possible for you to receive valuable feedback from myself and your peers. If you do not bring your rough drafts to class, you forfeit the chance to have them edited. Your performance on these will affect both your essay and class participation grade.

**Reading Journal:** These are shorter (one page), less formal assignments that ask you to *summarize and respond* to the course readings. These exercises are important for developing analytical skills and for generating ideas for papers and class discussions.

• Write one entry for all the readings assigned for that day, and complete it *before* class time. One journal entry is to be completed for every class meeting, for a total of 18. Journal entries are worth five points each and will be graded for quality of content and organization. Everyone gets 10 free points. At the end of the quarter your point total for your Reading Journal will yield the following letter grades:

**90-100=A; 76-89=B; 61-75=C; 46-60=D; 0-45=E.** Plus or minus at either end of the scale.

Note: If your point total yields an A, you cannot get an A unless you have completed all 18 of the entries. For example: you could do 17 and get five points each time, resulting in 95 points, which yields an A; but since you did not complete all 18 Journals, you get a B+.

• Journals must be typed and double spaced. The following information must be single-spaced in the upper left corner of the first page:

Reading Journal and author of reading

Your name

English 367 My name

• In general, the Journal entries should have two sections: 1) a statement which expresses as concisely as possible the central argument of the reading. 2) your reaction to the reading: agreement, disagreement, like, dislike, and *why*. Or, connect the reading to some other related idea.

**Class Participation:** Your ability to participate in class discussions will depend directly upon your keeping up with the assigned readings. Beyond that, how successful this class is depends in part on your willingness to participate in open discussions. English 367 is one of the few places where students and teachers can freely exchange ideas. Your active participation and input are important so that we can understand and learn from each other. It will also make the class much more fun and interesting. Furthermore, you have a responsibility toward other students to provide them with quality feedback on their papers. Keep in mind that this is a place to try out new ideas, without the fear of sounding foolish. *Most importantly, the key to class participation is to keep up with the daily readings; otherwise, you won't know what we're talking about.*

**Attendance:** Your attendance is important individually and to the class as a whole. Also keep in mind that I experience a slight irritation when people miss class. For these reasons, I maintain the following attendance policy: For every **unexcused** absence over two, your overall grade for the course will be lowered by half a letter (i.e. from B to B-, C to C- etc.) In addition, repeated lateness will count against you: three late arrivals equals one absence. *Furthermore, if you have more than four unexcused absences during the course, you will automatically receive an E for the course.* However, you will not be penalized for **excused** absences, which are absences due to illness, death in family, religious holiday, academic testing, or athletic or military service. All excused absences must be accompanied by official documentation, i.e., doctor's note, departmental or faculty memo, copy of death certificate. **To make sure your absence counts as excused, you must speak to me personally and give me a note.** If you miss the deadline for handing in an assignment, you must call or e-mail me as soon as it is reasonably possible to do so.

Note: Whether excused or unexcused absence occurs, in all cases you are responsible for completing any missed assignments. Always ask me about assignments and handouts. Talk to other students about what occurred during class time. As a general rule, if you anticipate being absent, it is best to call me ahead of time.

**Conferences/Office Hours:** You are expected to attend at least two 15 minute conferences with me: once before the third week of the quarter, and once before the ninth week of the quarter. The first conference is mandatory, the second is optional.

NOTE: Failure to meet me and/or failure to meet me at your scheduled time will automatically lower your paper grade by a full letter!

- During my office hours you are encouraged to just walk-in. See me, call, or e-mail if you want to set up an appointment or to inform me that you will come during office hours. It is helpful to get your work to me before your appointment so I can prepare comments ahead of time.

**Late Assignments:** All assignments are due at the beginning of class time on the date specified in the Course Schedule. In order to be fair and consistent, *I cannot accept late papers.* If you are having a problem with an assignment, *you must contact me a day ahead of time.*

**Plagiarism:** Using someone else's words, ideas, or work without proper acknowledgment is a serious academic offense and grounds for dismissal from the university. To put it bluntly, plagiarism is stealing and lying. All cases of plagiarism will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. If you have any trouble understanding this difficult issue, please ask me about it.

**The Writing Center:** If you need any additional assistance with any step in the writing process-- brainstorming for ideas, drafting, revision, organization, style, or grammar and usage--I strongly encourage you to see a tutor at The Writing Center in 338 Denney. You must call ahead for an appointment: 292-5607. Keep in mind that using a tutor does not mean that you are incompetent. Many "incompetent" graduate students, professors, and professionals have used the Writing Center.

**The Ombud:** The Ombud is a resource for teachers and students who have concerns about their English 367 classes. The Ombud is a member of the staff who negotiates and resolves problems or complaints. See the

Ombud if you are uncomfortable talking to me about your concerns. *All discussions with the Ombud are confidential.* This quarter the Ombud is Kathleen Wallace. Phone 292-6065. Her office hours in Denney 410 are 7:30 am to 4:00 pm M-F.

**Departmental Grading Standards. Some General Guidelines:**

Minimal Composition Skills

A student will receive a grade of C in English 367 only if he or she can regularly write essays that are responsive to the assignments and that satisfy the following minimal criteria:

1. An essay must present a clear central idea which provides focus for the composition.
2. An essay must be clearly organized; logical development of thought must be readily discernible.
3. Paragraphs within a composition must be unified, coherent, and adequately developed. They should contribute to the development of thought within the essay.
4. An essay must offer supporting details which make the central idea clear and convincing.
5. An essay must demonstrate a student's ability to use language well; choice of words must be appropriate and specific.

Minimal Mechanical Skills

1. An essay will not receive a grade of C or above if it contains major problems in syntax. Excessive fragments, confused sentence structure, and/or run-on sentences are not present in C papers.
2. While the C paper may, of course, contain few mechanical errors, such errors must be minimal. An essay will not receive a C when it contains serious basic problems of proofreading and editing, such as subject-verb disagreement, numerous comma or other punctuation mistakes, or numerous spelling errors.

**See course schedule, below**

**Course Schedule:**

Scheduled readings and assignments are due on the day listed. Please be prepared by bringing the appropriate course materials to class. All readings except Dispatches, White Noise, Everyday Writer, and Rulebook are found in the course packet. The *italics* indicate activities done in class.

## SECTION ONE: AMERICA, THE IDEAL.

## Week

1. 6/24 *Course Intro; Review Syllabus, Course Policies*  
6/26 Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity"; Ventura, "El Dorado".
2. 7/1 Turner, "The Frontier"; Franklin, "Remarks"; *Everyday Writer Structure Guide*  
7/3 Jefferson, "Dec. of Ind."; Locke, "On Slavery"; Douglas, "Autobiography".
3. 7/8 Emerson, "Nature"; *Schedule Conferences*  
7/10 Marx, "Communist Manifesto"; Kennedy, "Inaugural Address"; *Everyday Writer and Rulebook*

## SECTION TWO: THE IDEAL IN CONFLICT.

4. 7/15 Mailer, "Why Vietnam"; **Essay One, Draft One (Three copies) Peer Response**  
7/17 Mellan, "Days of Rage"; King, "I Have a Dream".  
DRAFTS AVAILABLE FRIDAY
5. 7/22 Herr, Dispatches, "Hell Sucks"; *Everyday Writer and Rulebook*.  
7/24 Herr, Dispatches, "Khe Sahn".
6. 7/29 Herr, Dispatches, "Colleagues". **Essay One, Final Draft Intro Essay Two**  
7/31 Reagan, "Farewell Address"; *Film: Roger and Me*.

## SECTION THREE: THE HYPER IDEAL.

7. 8/5 Baudrillard, "America"; Eco, "Disneyland"; *Everyday Writer and Rulebook*  
8/7 Adatto, "Soundbite"; **Essay Two, Draft One (Three Copies) Peer Response**
8. 8/12 Guterson, "Mall of America"; DeLillo, White Noise, to p. 74  
8/14 DeLillo, White Noise, to 163; *Everyday Writer and Rulebook*
9. 8/19 DeLillo, White Noise, to 242.  
8/21 Finish DeLillo, White Noise.
10. 8/26 Fixico, "Struggle"; **Essay Two, Final Draft. Wrap up; Course Evaluations**  
  
8/29 NO CLASS--FINALS WEEK **Final Essay (Three) due in box outside Denney 449 no later than 4:00 pm, August 29th.**