

Writing 100: Violence in American Culture

Instructor: Nicole Batchelor
Fall 2009
Class meets in Hill 310
MWF: 10:20-11:10 a.m.

E-mail: neb3@moravian.edu
Office: Hill 120
Office Hours: 9-10 a.m. or by appt.

Required Texts: Truman Capote, *In Cold Blood*. New York: Vintage, 1994 [1965].
Hugo Adam Bedau, ed. *The Death Penalty in America: Current Controversies*.
New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997.
Various handouts and essays on Course Documents or External Links.

You'll also need: A folder with pockets to hold drafts of compositions,
a reliable college dictionary, and a notebook.

Course Topic:

In this course we will address such questions as: What drives people to become murderers? Are murderers born pre-conditioned in some way to commit violent acts? Are some people socialized to become killers? If so, what makes someone become a violent criminal? Whether the answer is nature or nurture, or some combination of the two, what is the responsibility of the individual, the family, or the state in dealing with potential killers or those who have killed? Should the state have the authority to execute convicted murderers? If they do, what, if any, are the limits of that authority? What are the responsibilities of filmmakers in the visual representation of violence? Should there be restrictions on the kinds of violence permitted on screen, and if so, what should they be? Do violent films and programs increase viewers' tendency to commit violent acts? What insights about our fascination with violence can we gain from Hollywood's depiction of violent acts in Westerns, war films, gangster pics, horror films, etc.?

The course will be divided into three units, each with a major paper, and an option to revise and resubmit one of the first two unit papers:

Unit I: Causes of Violent Crime
Unit II: The Death Penalty
Unit III: Violence in America Cinema
Option: Revision and Resubmission

Course Objectives:

- to become more critical thinkers about issues of violence in contemporary American culture;
- to develop our skills as critical readers of argumentative essays, creative nonfiction, & popular culture;
- to bolster our skills as thoughtful & effective communicators of ideas, in our speech and in our writing;
- to strengthen our abilities in evaluating our own & each other's writing;
- to learn new ways of writing argumentatively while showing respect for those with whom we disagree.
- to understand the differences in writing styles in different disciplines and use the appropriate academic language (MLA, APA, CSE, etc.) for the specific discipline.
- to understand and use the library to conduct research appropriate for college-level writing and investigation.

Grading:

The grades for the course will be broken down into these percentages:

Major paper #1:	20%
Major paper #2:	20%
Major paper #3:	20%
Class Participation	20%
Debate	10%
Discussion Board:	5%
<u>Quizzes:</u>	<u>5%</u>
Total	100%

Policies/Assignments:

Quizzes: There will be unannounced quizzes during the course of the semester. No make-up quizzes will be given in case of absence or lateness, but you will be able to drop your lowest grade.

Class Debates: The class debate will comprise 10% of your final grade. You will be engaged in one of four class debates on the death penalty during the second unit of the class. You and one or two partners will debate with two or three of your peers on a particular issue concerning the death penalty (e.g. deterrence, constitutionality, etc.) for the entire class period. Debaters will offer opening arguments, pose questions to their opponents, and then receive questions from the class as a whole. Debaters will be evaluated on the thoroughness of their research, the effectiveness of their arguments, and the quality of their presentation in class.

Screenings: The films will be screened outside of class. You will find the films available for screening on the course's Blackboard site under "Videos." If you are unable to screen the film on the Blackboard page, you can watch a rented copy of the film at a viewing station in Reeves Library during its regular hours or screen a personal copy in the comfort of your dorm room. You will be responsible for watching these films, whether on the Blackboard site or on your own at the library or with a rental or personal copy. Most of the films ought to be available in local video stores, and all of them are available through Netflix.

Regardless of where or when you watch them, it's important to know that watching these films should not be a purely passive experience. **Be sure to take notes on what you're seeing**—not just the plot and dialogue, but elements of film style such as mise en scene, editing, lighting, sound, costumes, etc. Careful attention to the films will heighten the quality of our class discussions, and improve your performance on the short essays and major unit papers.

Attendance: I expect regular attendance because Writing 100 is a participatory, activity-oriented class. I'll take attendance every day so that I have an accurate record of absences. Attendance is mandatory. **You are expected to attend ALL regularly scheduled classes and conferences.** If you miss class, you miss important work (e.g. discussions, in-class writing, group work, peer editing) that cannot be recovered or made up. **For this reason, this course's attendance policy does not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences.** There may be valid reason to miss class, such as family emergencies, illness, or unavoidable commitments to officially-sponsored university activities, and if you miss class for such reasons you should inform your instructor **in advance when possible.** But a student who misses too many classes, for whatever reason, has not done the required work and cannot receive credit. To earn credit for the course, you must be present in class to participate in each day's activities. **Therefore, a student who misses three weeks of class (nine in one that meets three times a week) must withdraw from the course or receive a failing grade, except in exceptional circumstances and in consultation with the Director of the Writing Program. Additionally, if you miss seven or more classes for any reason outside of a documented medical emergency, your overall final grade will drop a full letter.** While I may warn you periodically if your absences accumulate, it is your responsibility to keep track of your absences.

Furthermore, you are responsible for inquiring about work missed; it is not up to me, the instructor, to contact you. In the event that you are absent, you should consult the course syllabus, the Announcements page of the course's Blackboard site and your Moravian e-mail account to discover what work that you have missed before contacting me. You should only contact me via e-mail in the event the aforementioned resources prove inadequate or fail to supply the necessary information.

Your grade is based on the quantity and quality of your participation in discussions and activities, even a small number of absences will affect your grade in the course. I take attendance quite seriously. It does not matter to me that just your body is there in the class room. I want your mind present as well. **So if you fall asleep in my class, attempt to do other class work or play with any technological devices (e.g. cell phones, mp3 players, palm pilots, etc.) then I will mark you ABSENT. All cell phones and other electronic devices must be turned off and put away before the start of every class session.**

Lastly, you must come to class prepared. This means that you need to bring all books, scholarly essays, or handouts assigned for each class day. Without these materials, you cannot actively participate in class discussions and close reading activities. You cannot engage in thoughtful dialogues or analyses of a text with me and your peers based merely on your memory of the text or scholarly article. Such a class discussion produces vague and empty conversations that frustrate the complex work of cultural analysis. It is necessary that you bring all course materials to class so you can provide textual evidence as a form of support for your analyses of a piece of literature and help your peers generate informed and insightful readings of a specific work. **Consequently, the failure to bring your course materials to class will result in an absence. In the event that you forget to bring your course materials to class, you may ask a peer to share his/her text or handout so you can follow along with the class discussion or activity of the day, but you will still be marked as absent.**

Lateness: Showing up late to class disrupts the work we do as a learning community. More importantly, it's disrespectful to the instructor and your classmates, especially during the class workshops and debates. **Three late appearances will count as an absence from class; anyone late by more than ten minutes will be marked absent for that class day.**

Participation: Some points are designated for participation in various class activities and exercises. **Three times** during the semester I'll assess your participation (including both your role in class discussion and your preparation for workshops and conferences) and these participation grades will be recorded on each unit paper that is returned to you throughout the course of the semester. The three participation grades from each unit will be averaged together to determine your participation grade for the course. On those days when the class is devoted to a workshop or conference, you must be prepared to engage in the activity in order to receive credit. Merely showing up for a workshop or conference is insufficient; you must have a draft in order to be credited with full participation.

Discussion Board: On our course Blackboard page, among various other features you will find a Discussion Board, a site where I will, on occasion, pose questions concerning the assigned readings and ask you to respond in about 200-300 words (usually) by 9:00 a.m. on the class day. You will be asked to make weekly posts to the Discussion Board on the class Blackboard page. Most weeks, there will be a specific question or set of issues I will ask you to respond to; other weeks there will be a more open ended forum for discussion. Whether there is a specific prompt or not, your posts should demonstrate critical thinking about the film and the assigned readings, not just opinions about whether the film or text is good or not. No late posts will be accepted for any reason.

Blackboard Policy: There are a number of short stories, handouts, critical essays and assignments for this course that you will be required to retrieve from and/or complete on the Blackboard site. Although the personal technology within your dorm room often can prove unreliable, there is no valid excuse for failing to complete

assignments or retrieving course materials from the course's Blackboard site. There are a number of available computer labs on Moravian's campus providing you with the opportunity to complete assigned tasks (e.g. discussion board posts) and print out various course items as needed. You will need to manage your time effectively, completing tasks on time and printing course materials days in advance rather than putting things off till the last minute.

E-mail Policy: E-mail is the most practical way to keep in contact with me if you can't see me during my office hours. I check e-mail fairly regularly, and should usually be able to respond within a day during the week or two days during the weekend. Although you may already have gmail, hotmail, or some other e-mail account, you must use and frequently check your Moravian e-mail account so that we can communicate quickly and efficiently.

When you e-mail me, you must include a greeting and a signature, regardless of the purpose of your e-mail. I will delete (and not reply to) any e-mail that does not have a greeting and signature. I expect e-mails from students regarding questions about assignments, missed work, etc. to display this level of common courtesy.

If you need some information about the course, then refer to our course syllabus, check your Moravian account for e-mail updates from me or log-on to the Blackboard site to read the posted 'Reminders' under the Announcements page before e-mailing me. You should make it a habit of checking your Moravian e-mail daily for any new information regarding the class. Checking e-mail regularly will be essential for any updates on assignments, cancellations, etc.

As a policy, I do not check my e-mail after 9 p.m. Of course, you can e-mail me after 9 p.m., but I will respond to your e-mail the following day. If you need to ask me questions regarding anything about the class that the syllabus or posted 'Reminders' fail to provide, then please feel free to e-mail me. Just make sure that you give yourself (and me) enough time for a reply, up to 24 hours or so during the week, 48 hours on the weekend.

No written work will be accepted via email or as an e-mail attachment. Last, but not least, I will not e-mail you your grades—or tell you how you're doing in the course via e-mail—at any point during the semester. If you need to speak with me about your grade or your performance in the course, stop by during my office hours or make an appointment to meet with me.

Plagiarism: It's a bad idea. When you submit writing for evaluation, it should be your work—the words *and* the ideas. Anything you take from an outside source should be properly documented, preferably in MLA Style. Plagiarism is the act of using someone else's ideas or words and passing them off as your own without giving credit to the source in your academic work. Since a key goal of a college education is to develop and express your own ideas, plagiarism is an extremely serious academic offense.

Other forms of plagiarism, however, may be less obvious. If a student copies a source paragraph but rearranges its sentence order and uses a thesaurus to replace some words with synonyms, it is still plagiarism. If a student borrows a classmate's essay on a similar topic, retypes it while changing a word here or there, and submits it under their own name, it is still plagiarism. If a student is writing an essay on evolution like the insight found on a Web site and includes those ideas in an essay without attributing the source, it is still plagiarism. If a student reads a sentence or two from a newspaper article, decides its detail would be useful in an essay, but fails to enclose the material in quotations marks, it is still plagiarism."

Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this class at any level. If you are unsure about using sources, you can ask the instructor, the library, or the tutors in the writing center to help you. Consult the Moravian College Student Handbook for details on the college's plagiarism policies and for extended definitions of plagiarism.

Conferences: For each of your three major papers, I will offer a variety of times for one-on-one conferences (generally about ten minutes per student) to be held in my office (Hill 120) or some other designated spot in the Hill building. It is up to you to set the agenda for these conferences. ***If you don't have an agenda, we don't have a conference.*** Ask specific questions about things like your thesis statement, the strength of your supporting arguments, sources, tone, word choice, structure, etc. This is your time; make it count.

Text Production: I expect all submissions to be produced with a printer (or typed). Most of you will use a word processor, so that revising will be almost painless, the software will catch many of your typos, but I don't mind a few hand-made ink corrections. Note that spell-check programs do not catch all errors (e.g. omitted words, incorrect word forms, homonyms, etc.), so that careful proofreading is still important. Always save a copy of the paper you submit, either a paper copy or an electronic copy on a disk you trust. Because last minute computer problems are NOT a legitimate excuse for the extension of a deadline, use reliable equipment, reserve time to solve computer glitches, and safeguard your text by making backup copies.

Late Papers: Papers submitted late will be reduced in grade. The later the paper, the greater the reduction. If you contact me in advance of the due date and have a compelling reason to submit a paper after the deadline, we can work out an extension. If you miss a deadline because of an accident or serious illness, I'll have to ask for confirmation, just to keep everything fair.

Additional Help: In addition to the help your peers and I can provide, you can seek assistance from the Writing Center located on the second floor of in Zinzendorf Hall. The tutors are trained to aid you in virtually any stage of the writing process, like prewriting, editing, and revision. The Writing Center tutors will work with students from any course in the college that contains writing of any kind. Writing is not an easy task, and having a second reader to look over your work can make all the difference. Contact the Writing Center at (610) 861-1592 or stop by to make an appointment.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting accommodations, please contact both your instructor and the Director at the Office of Learning Services (610-861-150) as early as possible in the semester. You must have documentation from the Office of Learning Services before accommodations can be granted.

ESL and Multicultural Support: If you think you might need specialized English language or cultural support, contact Kenza Glass in Academic Services at (610) 861- 3591.

Class Cancellation: If Moravian's campus is open, you should expect our class meetings to be held. If troublesome weather threatens to close the campus and thus cancel class, however, you should check the Moravian website for updates on campus closings. You can also sign up for e2Campus, an emergency notification system that sends a text message in the case of college closings or emergencies. You can sign up for e2Campus at www.moravian.edu. Of course, you should always use common sense and place your safety first when determining whether or not it's appropriate for you to drive to campus under such conditions. If I cancel class independently of the campus closing, due to weather or for other reasons, I will send a class-wide email to your Moravian account via Blackboard.

Stay in Touch: If you have concerns about the course or your performance in it, please contact me, either at the end of class, or during office hours, or by email. I would be happy to talk with you about them and see what I can do to alleviate them.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE—SUBJECT TO CHANGE

AUGUST

UNIT 1 CAUSES OF VIOLENT CRIME

M/31 Introduction to the course. For W/2 read Konner article "Rage".

SEPTEMBER

- W/2 Discuss Konner article. For F/4 read Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* pages 3-74.
- F/4 Class Discussion of Capote's *ICB*. For W/9 read Capote's *ICB* pages 77-155. **Assignment: Option #1 short analytical essay of Capote's *ICB* due W/9 at the start of class.**
- M/7 **LABOR DAY. CLASS CANCELLED.**
- W/9 Discuss Capote's *ICB*. Option #1 short analytical essay due today. For F/11 read Rhodes article "The Creation of Dangerous Violent Criminals."
- F/11 Class discussion of Rhodes' article. For M/14 read Capote's *ICB* pages 159-217. **Assignment: Option #2 short analytical essay of Capote's *ICB* due M/14 at the start of class.**
- M/14 Discuss Capote's *ICB*. Option #2 short analytical essay due today. For W/16 read Capote's *ICB* pages 217-279 and Pope and Englar-Carlson's "Fathers and Sons: The Relationship Between Violence and Masculinity."
- W/16 Class discussion of Capote and Pope and Englar-Carlson's article. For F/18 read Capote's *ICB* pages 279-343.
- F/18 Discuss Capote's *ICB*. For M/21 review assignment for Unit 1 paper, thesis vote and sign-up sheet for conferences. **Unit 1 paper due M/28 at the start of class.**
- M/21 In-class assignment review, thesis vote and sign-up sheet for conferences. **Unit 1 paper due M/28. Conferences in my office.**
- W/23 **Class Cancelled. Conferences in my office.**
- F/25 **Class Cancelled. Conferences in my office.**
- UNIT 2 THE DEATH PENALTY**
- M/28 **Unit 1 Paper due today at the start of class.** Introduction to Unit 2 and go over the Rogerian method handouts. For W/30 meet in Reeves Library for research tutorial.
- W/30 Research tutorial in Reeves Library. For W/7 read pages 411-469 from *The Death Penalty in America* for Debate #1.
- OCTOBER**
- F/2 **No Class—Debate Preparation.**
- M/5 **No Class—Debate Preparation.**
- W/7 **Debate #1 Morality of the Death Penalty.** For F/9 read pages 135-161 from *The Death Penalty in America* for Debate #2.

F/9 **Debate #2 Death Penalty as a Deterrent.** For W/14 read pages 149-209 from *The Death Penalty in America* for Debate #3.

FALL RECESS

W/14 **Debate #3 Race/Class Bias in the Death Penalty.** For F/16 read pages 116-126; 176-182; 401-414 from *The Death Penalty in America* for Debate #4.

F/16 **Debate #4 Death Penalty vs. Life Imprisonment.** For M/19 review Unit 2 assignment and Rogerian method handouts.

M/19 Review Assignment for Unit 2 and Rogerian method handouts. For W/21 read Rogerian sample essay.

W/21 Discuss the Rogerian sample essay. For F/23 bring a 2-3 page draft of your Rogerian essay for peer review workshop.

F/23 Peer review in class. **Unit 2 paper due M/2 at the start of class.**

M/26 **Class Cancelled. Conferences in my Office.**

W/28 **Class Cancelled. Conferences in my Office.**

F/30 **Class Cancelled. Conferences in my Office.**

NOVEMBER

UNIT 3 VIOLENCE IN AMERICAN CINEMA

M/2 **Unit 2 Paper due today in class.** Introduction to Unit 3. For W/4 read Graeme Turner's "Film Language."

W/4 Review Turner article and film clips in class.

F/6 **Class Cancelled. For M/9 screen Cronenberg's *A History of Violence*. Assignment: Option #1 short analytical essay of Cronenberg's *History* due M/9 at the start of class.**

M/9 Discussion of Cronenberg's *A History of Violence*. Option #1 short analytical essay due today.

W/11 **Class Cancelled. For F/13 screen of Stanley Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket* and Vivian Sobchack article. Assignment: Option #2 short analytical essay of Kubrick's *Shining* due F/13 at the start of class.**

F/13 Discuss Kubrick film and Vivian Sobchack. Option #2 short analytical essay due today. For M/16 watch John Fawcett's *Ginger Snaps*. **Assignment: Option #3 short analytical essay of Fawcett's *Snaps* due M/16 at the start of class.**

M/16 Discuss Fawcett's *Ginger Snaps*. Option #3 short analytical essay due today. For W/18 read Barbara Creed's "Horror and the Monstrous Feminine."

W/18 Class discussion of Creed article and Fawcett's *Ginger Snaps*. For F/20 read sample film papers for writing workshop.

F/20 Class workshop on sample film essays. **Unit 3 paper due M/7 at the start of class.**

M/23 **Class Cancelled.**

THANKSGIVING BREAK

M/30 **Class Cancelled. Conferences in my office.**

DECEMBER

W/2 **Class Cancelled. Conferences in my office.**

F/4 **Class Cancelled. Conferences in my office.**

M/7 **Unit 3 paper due at the start of class today.** Review the revision assignment. For W/9 bring your Unit 1 or Unit 2 paper to class for peer review workshop. **Revision paper is due W/16 in the box outside my office door.**

W/9 In-class peer review. Fill out evaluations.