

Instructor: John Lawless
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Hours: M 4:00-5:00 • W 12:00-1:00

Course summary

How well do you know yourself? We sometimes imagine that we come by our knowledge of ourselves in quiet acts of introspection, executed best in long bouts of solitude. But when you reflect on what it means to be you, you do not do so in a vacuum. You rely on resources that your society has provided to you. You draw on the language and stories of your community to make sense of your experiences, needs, and aspirations. And you benefit from conversation with others, who will challenge your assumptions and provide perspectives that transcend your own. In this course, we will explore the ways in which public discourse affects our senses of who we are, for better or for worse.

Throughout the semester, students will complete a series of short, ungraded assignments, in which they will practice the diverse skills involved in writing, editing, and revising. In addition, students will draft and revise four major writing projects. First, students will analyze and critique a published personal essay, identifying ways in which the author fails to recognize or to comprehend important aspects of his or her own story. In the second and third projects, students will analyze and critique public discourses about anger and disease (respectively). Here, our goal will be to identify the unspoken (and sometimes pernicious) assumptions that underlie these discourses, and the ways in which these assumptions distort our senses of ourselves. Finally, students will write their own personal essays, in which they will attempt to grapple with the ways in which public discourse has shaped their self-conceptions.

Purpose of the course.

Davidson's only universally required course, Writing 101 gives you an opportunity to hone your skills as an intellectual writer: to become yet more practiced at close and critical reading of others' public and scholarly arguments, to fashion independent positions in response to those arguments, and to craft prose that both evokes your own signature style and reaches powerfully to interested readers.

Though the forms and functions of academic writing vary across the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences, our course focuses on writing that may best be described as *intellectual writing*. It informs all academic disciplines, and shows up in public discourse, as well. Intellectual writing involves the following features.

- It positions itself in relation to previous thinking on the subject at hand.
- It addresses an issue that has led or may lead reasonable people to different conclusions.
- It *argues for* its central claim.
- It acknowledges the assumptions that inform these arguments.
- It acknowledges the contingencies and provisional nature of its findings and arguments.

Our course immerses you in acts of interpretation and judgment. Often, I will ask you to grapple with some contestable issue and consider the various points of view that it engenders. You will develop skills for acknowledging, conceding, or refuting others' claims and arguments. You will

learn how to extend and counter others' conclusions as you advance your own intellectual agenda. You will learn the writerly moves associated with sophisticated argument of the sort you will practice in other courses at the College. In short, we will invite you to become an eloquent, confident, and powerful writer.

Learning outcomes.

Though every first-year student at Davidson has had a fair measure of practice as a reader and writer, the faculty believes that every student should have the opportunity to take those writerly skills to a new level, to teach you how to practice sophisticated analysis and argument. We feel that this will place you squarely on the start of your intellectual pathway through Davidson's curriculum. Every section of Writing101 has four learning goals, which inform the following student outcomes.

- Students will read texts closely and critically for analytic and rhetorical purposes.
- Students will make fair and effective use of the work of others.
- Students will draft and revise arguments.
- Students will draw upon diverse kinds of resources – visual, auditory, and textual – in order to serve specific rhetorical goals.

Online resources.

From time to time, I will ask you to read a section of the Davidson Writer, located at davidsonwriter.redbrickroad.net. This website, maintained by the Davidson Writing Program, offers advice about engaged reading, tackling assignments, shaping claims and arguments, revising your prose, styling sentences, and citation practices. Feel free to consult it at any time.

Projects and grading.

The course involves four graded projects. Each project will take several weeks, and will involve assignments focusing on each stage of the writing process. I will assess students *both* on the quality of the process, and on the quality of the final product. The following table captures the significance of each project to your final grade.

	<i>Process</i>	<i>Product</i>	<i>Total</i>
Project 1	10%	10%	20%
Project 2	10%	10%	20%
Project 3	10%	10%	20%
Project 4	15%	10%	25%
Participation			15%

Your responsibilities.

- **Attendance.**

You may miss a total of three classes over the course of the semester without penalty. Any absence beyond this limit will lower your final grade a full letter for each additional day missed. (For instance, a B would become a C.) **If you find yourself in a situation that makes it difficult to attend the class consistently, please speak with me.** There are resources on campus that may be able to help.

Attendance in the course does not merely amount to your physical presence in the room. You must be *robustly present*. This seminar requires your active involvement as a thinker and conversant each and every day. Writing emerges from and is a contribution to a dialogue with others, and the quality of the writing reflects the quality of the dialogue. I am happy to offer strategies to help you embrace your responsibilities as an active member of the seminar.

- **Timely submission of assignments.**

With few exceptions, I do not accept late papers. If you find that you are in trouble, or have reached a debilitating sticking point as you draft or revise, you should contact me by email so that we can talk together about the problem you're experiencing, but you must do so no later than twelve hours before the paper is due. If you are too ill to work, or have an emergency, **please contact me.**

- **Citation of sources, acknowledgment of assistance**

I expect you to adhere to Davidson's Honor Code in all of your work. We will talk about the charge of plagiarism in the course, and I will instruct you in how to avoid this scholarly transgression. I encourage you to speak to others about your drafts: colleagues, friends, and consultants in the Writing Center. All of the writing that you do for the course must be your own, but you are welcome to get feedback and suggestions from anyone in the Davidson community.

When you turn in your final product for each project, I will ask you to affirm in writing that you have adhered to the regulation of Davidson's Honor Code. I will also ask you to include an acknowledgment footnote, where you thank the readers, tutors, librarians, friends, and others who have helped you conceive, draft, revise, and edit the essay you've written. A graceful acknowledgment is the sign of a confident writer.

Your rights.

- **A respectful environment.**

Please know that you have a right to be here. These rights, like your responsibilities, are robust. Nobody should make you feel unwelcome. If you have any objections or concerns, please speak to me. I promise that I will listen carefully, and will work with you to ensure that we maintain a space that is conducive to your academic success.

- **Accommodation for religious calendars.**

Please look carefully at the syllabus during the first week of class. If any of the assignments conflict with a major religious holiday for your faith, then please let me know. I will make

every effort to make the necessary accommodations.

Should there be a conflict between any class session and a religious holiday or observance, the student should let the instructor know of their personal need. Religious observance warrants a legitimately excused absence. Barring unusual circumstances, though, the student should attempt to fit these absences into the three absences allowed every student.

- **Accommodations for students with disabilities and learning differences.** Davidson College is an equal access institution, and seeks to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. To request an accommodation, or to begin a conversation about a possible request, please contact Beth Bleil, Director of Academic Access and Disability Resources, in the Center for Teaching and Learning. You may find her office in the E.H. Little Library, you may email her at bebleil@davidson.edu, or you may call her at 704-894-2129. It is best to submit accommodation requests within the drop/add period; however, requests can be made at any time in the semester. **Please keep in mind that accommodations are not retroactive, and do not carry over from semester to semester.**

Davidson Writing Center.

The college provides free consultations with the Writing Center, whose tutors are themselves practiced writers and who have been trained to help you with any aspect of your work – from forming ideas, to developing arguments, to structuring your paragraphs, to helping with grammar and style. Visit the Writing Center's webpage for more information:

<https://www.davidson.edu/offices/ctl/students/writing-center>. The Writing Center's peer consultants stand ready to act as careful and interested readers of your work.

Schedule

Introduction to the Course: Naming Ourselves

- Aug 21** “[Entering the Conversation](#)” on the Davidson Writer
Lamott, “Short Assignments”
- Aug 23** Frye, “The Problem That Has No Name” (from *The Politics of Reality*)

Project 1. The Fear of a Name

- Aug 28** Tizon, “My Family’s Slave”
- Aug 30** “[About Argument](#)” on the Davidson Writer
Lamott, “Looking Around”
Responses to Tizon
- Sep 4** “[Formulating Your Claim](#),” “[Six Steps for Finding and Evolving a Central Claim](#)” on the Davidson Writer
- Sep 6** “[Drafting](#)” on the Davidson Writer
Lamott, “First Drafts”
First Project Assigned
- Sep 11** “[Fostering Coherence](#)” on the Davidson Writer
Lamott, “Someone to Read Your Drafts”
Writing Workshop: Drafts Due
- Sep 13** **No Class: Meetings with Instructor**

Project 2. The Subterranean

- Sep 18** Bartky, “Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power”
Lamott, “Perfectionism”
First Project Due
- Sep 20** McBee, “Why Men Fight”
- Sep 25** Frye, “A Note on Anger”
- Sep 27** Kukla, “Discursive Injustice” (excerpt)
- Oct 2** King, “Letter From a Birmingham Jail”
- Oct 4** Anderson, “White Rage”
Second Project Assigned
- Oct 9** *Fall Break: No classes.*
- Oct 11** **Writing Workshop: Drafts Due**
- Oct 16** **Peer Review: Comments Due**

Project 3. The Unnamed

- Oct 18** TBA
Second Project Due
- Oct 23** Reiheld, “Patient Complains of...”
- Oct 25** Reiheld, “Patient Complains of...”
Nelson, “Medicine and Making Sense of Queer Lives”
- Oct 30** Short readings:
Oluo, “The Stigma That Kills”
Sukrungruang, “A Meditation on Pain”
Bolden, “Mental Illness Is Not Just a ‘White Person’s Disease’”
Brown, “Disability Representation and the Problem with ‘Inspiration Porn’”
- Nov 1** Lamott, “Finding Your Voice”

Third Project Assigned

Nov 6 Jamison, "Grand Unified Theory of Female Pain"

Nov 8 *Writing Workshop: Drafts Due*

Project 4. The Power of Self-Definition

Nov 13 Meyers, "Decentralizing Autonomy: Five Faces of Selfhood"

Third Project Due

Fourth Project Assigned

Nov 15 Borges, "The Library of Babel"

Nov 20 Collins, "The Power of Self-Definition"

Nov 22 *Thanksgiving Break: No classes.*

Nov 27 *Pitches Due*

Nov 29 *Writing Workshop: Drafts Due*

Dec 4 *Meetings with Instructor*

Dec 6 *Meetings with Instructor*

Fourth project due during exam period