

Facultad de Filosofía y Letras  
Departamento de Inglés

Contemporary Life and Institutions

Curso Anual  
2011

Prof. Gilda Isaac

This Course is designed to prompt students to become active Readers of the discourse that confronts them daily. It will encourage students to adopt a social or rhetorical “conversation” model for their own writing as a response to other writing after considering the implications and importance of what they have read or heard. Students will be encouraged to cooperate as well as compete with other writers, to address sub-issues as well as to seek consensus and new syntheses.

#### Contents:

The course is organized around focused, topical contemporary public issues, with a historical conceptual perspective, eg:

Education.  
Language.  
Gender.  
Media.  
Civil Liberties and Civil Rights.  
Crime and Punishment.  
Science and Society.

#### Aims of the course:

- To help students see the “intertextuality”, the social nature, of reading and writing.
- To encourage students to talk back, instead of being passive spectators.
- To invite students to see their prose, all prose, in relation to other writing.
- To inspire students to ask themselves: “What can I add to this conversation?”

Methodology: Students will concentrate on the elements involved when readers and writers try to communicate with each other:

- Author and purpose
- Context: aim and audience
- The background or additional information about the author
- The subject

-The medium or genre in which the piece appears

After students have considered the readings, they will be encouraged to respond by arguing with the pieces to offer another perspective and thus furthering the conversation.

Essays are prominent in this course, familiar and formal essays, academic as well as non academic ones, because this form is a common and important genre and because it has correspondences with other genres: the letter, the sermon, the report, the news story, etc. But other genres will not be excluded: public oratory, interviews, poetry, a play, congressional hearings, cartoons, advertisement, journals and more.

The course will expose students to a variety of rhetorical styles, from studied erudition to the semi-formal “objective” voice associated with the Academy: from the conversational informality of Woody Allen to satire or the careful reasoning of Evelyn Fox Keller; from Rolling Stone, Ms, The Village Voice to Esquire, The New Yorker, and the American Scholar; from James Baldwin to George Orwell, Thomas Jefferson or Richard Rodriguez.

Students will encounter mainstream texts and dissenting views. They will hear from famous professional writers and anonymous but eloquent fellow citizens, from public figures and fellow students: from women and men; from majority and minority voices.

Finally, this course will help students find their own voices because they’ve experienced a full range of possible voices in their reading.

### Attendance:

Regular participation in class is mandatory. It is essential that students come to class in order to achieve the objectives of this course. A student with more than three absences will be dropped from the course. Habitual tardiness will affect the final grade of the student.

### Evaluation:

The Final grade will be the result of the following:

- a) Active participation in class
- b) Regular attendance (75%)
- c) Passing grades in 2 (two) written exams, (parciales), at the end of June and October
- d) A Mid –Term Oral Presentation
- e) Final Research Paper
- f) A Final Written Examination (Comprehensive)

- Los dos exámenes parciales consistirán en una prueba escrita de evaluación de los contenidos del programa.
- El trabajo final escrito deberá tener una extensión no superior a 10 (diez) folios escritos en Word A4, Arial 12 y a doble espacio, siguiendo las normas del MLA. En este ensayo el estudiante comentará la lectura que haya escogido de la lista de lecturas requeridas. (ver Reading List 2011 adjunta y que también se encuentra en la fotocopiadora junto con los ensayos completos).
- Presentación oral por parte del alumno: Esta prueba no lleva nota, pues se considera condición Sine Qua Non para aprobar la asignatura.

Note from the professor:

Since this is not the typical, traditional English course the professor will not translate, “decipher” or spend most of the class time giving detailed interpretations of any given text. Instead, students must be motivated enough and self-disciplined to do work on their own. In other words, come to class prepared and ready to engage in lively conversation and discussion. Together we will turn this class into a very interesting experience.

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