ENGL 1101: English Composition I
University of West Georgia
Fall 2019

Climate Futures

Section 110
Class Location: Humanities 205
Class Day/Time: Tuesdays & Thursdays
11:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m.

Section 123
Class Location: Humanities 205
Class Day/Time: Tuesdays & Thursdays
12:30-1:45 p.m.

Contact Information
Instructor: Dr. Shannon Finck
Office: TLC 114-D
Email: sfinck@westga.edu
Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays (in-person) from 10:00-11:00 a.m. and 4:30-5:30 p.m., Wednesdays (remotely) from 11:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. and by appointment, some Fridays by appointment

Course Information
Course Description: ENGL 1101 is a composition course focusing on skills required for effective writing in a variety of contexts, with emphasis on exposition, analysis and argumentation, and including introductory use of a variety of research skills. These sections employ global climate change as a theme through which to examine contemporary critical conversations and practice the relevant writing skills modeled therein.
Prerequisites: All English as a Second Language students must have exited from all English as a Second Language courses. All Learning Support students must have completed all reading and writing required remediation.

Learning Outcomes:
1. To identify and employ a variety of rhetorical modes and techniques of persuasion and acquire reasonable mastery of conventions of college-level prose writing;
2. To develop and apply critical thinking skills in effective expository, analytical, and argumentative writing and to gain facility with the entire writing process from invention through revision;
3. To develop organizational strategies, incorporate and document additional textual materials to strengthen and support an argument.

Required Texts & Materials

Additional required readings for this course—professional articles, short works of creative nonfiction, and excerpts from longer works—will be found on Course Den, in the section labeled “Required Readings.” Readings are organized there according to the order in which they should be read and include all of the bibliographic information you will need to cite them correctly in your work.

You will also need to bookmark the following resources:
- [Purdue's Online Writing Lab (OWL)](https://owl.purdue.edu/) - Periodically, I will refer you to this site to practice basic writing skills, formatting, and documentation of sources. In general, this is a great resource for help writing and revising your work.
- [An Illustrated Book of Bad Arguments](https://www.amazon.com/An-Illustrated-Book-Bad-Arguments/dp/1742375876) – This text, fully available online, provides a cute way to learn the logical fallacies that will weaken your arguments. It’s based on George Orwell’s *Animal Farm.*
Expectations
Assignments:

Essay 1 - Engaging the Text

Purpose
The student reader/writer critically engages with a text, focusing on determining what the text is arguing and what the student reader/writer argues in response.

Skills
• Develop critical reading habits. Read slowly, deliberately, annotating the text and asking questions of it as you read. Use class discussion/group work to practice how to collectively unpack the text’s argument.
• Clearly summarize the argument the text is making (doing so in the introductory paragraph) by choosing active verbs that capture the spirit of the original text’s argument.
• Create a thesis-driven response to a text’s argument. The thesis statement (controlling idea), in this case, is an argument in response to the argument summarized from the text, not the summary itself.
• Learn to use topic sentences—focused arguments that reflect the paragraph’s dual role in the paper’s internal organization (organizes the paragraph itself) and external organization (organizes the paper’s overall structure/argument).
• Practice textual engagement and incorporating relevant support to strengthen an argument and make it more compelling.
• Support takes the form of quotes and paraphrasing. No secondary research will be a part of this essay.
• Begin developing genre awareness, both as a reader (What kind of text am I reading? What are its features? What makes it credible or not? Who wrote it? Where did it come from? What kinds of biases should I expect from it? What are my biases about the topic?) and as a writer (What kind of text am I writing? What are its features? What makes it credible? Who is my audience? What is my purpose?).
• Begin to develop an awareness of usage conventions of academic English. Begin understanding how habits and choices concerning those conventions impact readers and our own ethos as writers/thinkers.

Essay 2 - Analyzing Rhetoric

Purpose
Building on their work in Essay #1, the student reader/writer will focus on how a text presents its subject and argument (what).

Skills
• Continue deepening critical reading skills.
• Continue practicing summarizing a text’s argument (in the student’s introductory paragraph) choosing active verbs that respect the original’s spirit.
• Students must read beyond the “what” of the paper – the argument itself – and begin to identify how the text performs its argument by identifying the formal and rhetorical choices (rhetorical appeals, organizational decisions, word choices, style, etc.) the text makes to produce its effects.
• In this essay, the thesis statement (controlling idea) is an argument about the rhetorical strategies the text uses to make its argument and whether or not those strategies are effective.
• Perform specific textual analysis to support the essay’s argument. This paper will not require secondary research.
• Privilege **direct reference to text** (quotes over paraphrase, narrating a visual scene over plot summary).
• **Continue developing genre awareness**, understanding how rhetorical analysis differs from summary across different mediums/texts.
• Continue **practicing** using **topic sentences**, developing **internal and external organizational conventions**; topic sentences both introduce the argument the paragraph makes and advance the overall argument of the paper’s thesis (controlling idea).
• Continue to develop awareness of **usage conventions** of academic English. Begin understanding how choices concerning those conventions impact readers and our own ethos as writers/thinkers.

**Essay 3 - Synthesizing Arguments**

**Purpose**
The reader/writer joins an ongoing critical conversation about a text and adds their own argumentative voice to that conversation.

**Skills**
- **Join a critical conversation** taking place across multiple texts/ mediums.
- Continue developing **genre awareness** of the sources/voices involved in the critical conversation. A more specific understanding of **Information Literacy** begins to develop as an extension of students’ growing genre awareness.
- Continue privileging **direct reference to text** (quotes over paraphrasing, narrating a visual scene over a plot summary) as students continue their practice of engaging with textual evidence.
- Using a **thesis statement** to **advance critical conversation with a distinct argument in concert with others**. While the argument might not be “entirely original,” we want to encourage and challenge students to look for the conversation across multiple texts and add something unique to the scope of the conversation.
- Continue practicing using **topic sentences**, developing internal and external organizational conventions by writing sentences that both introduce the argument the paragraph makes and help advance the paper’s overall argument.
- Begin introducing **intertextuality** as a way to explain why we use format conventions in academic writing (to keep who is saying what clear and to make sure the writer doesn’t take credit for someone else’s intellectual property). Intertextuality is sort of like the flip-side of “plagiarism,” which is what can happen when intertextuality is handled poorly.
- Beginning to gain a **practical understanding of a formatting convention** (MLA, APA, Chicago).

**Assignment Submission:** All major assignments should be submitted to the appropriate assignment folder in Course Den by midnight on dates they are listed due in the course schedule below. Emailed files will not be accepted, except in the case of verified server failure (like system-wide Course Den maintenance or something). All assignments should be double spaced in a 12-point plain font (i.e. Times New Roman) and follow consistently the set of formatting guidelines for your major/potential major (APA, MLA, or Chicago). All assignments need to be completed in or converted to .DOCX or .PDF formats. I grade in TurnItIn, which does not accept other file formats, so your assignments will not be accepted if they are in another format, like Pages or .TXT, even though these are common file types.

**Late and Make-Up Work:** Because I have a generous grading policy (outlined below), you may not submit major assignments late under any but the most extreme circumstances. If you are having trouble with an assignment, come and talk to me well ahead of that assignment’s due date. I do not generally grant last
minute extensions for assignments. Similarly, it is your responsibility to back up your work and to ensure that the submitted product is formatted correctly. Submission of corrupted files or “I thought I uploaded the file” are not accepted excuses for late work, so I strongly suggest you save your work to a USB drive or cloud storage regularly and double check that ALL of your submissions to Course Den. You may never make up written work we complete in class during a meeting from which you are absent, though there will be enough of these assignments that missing just a few will have a negligible impact on your class performance.

Plagiarism: Please see the Common Language for Course Syllabi for official information on UWG’s Academic Integrity Policy. Note that I will enforce this policy.

Grading:

Introduction to Contract Grading

The present “contract” outlines the requirements to receive each of the possible final grades in the course. It’s going to seem like a strange document to you, I suspect, because it probably defies most everything you’ve come to expect from an “English” class if not from school in general. So, I’d like to offer a short explanation of the contract itself before proceeding to explain the requirements in it: I hate grades. In all seriousness, though, I hate the idea of reducing people, and people’s writing, to numbers because I’ve found both in professional scholarship and my personal experience that such quantification is often an impediment to authentic learning. (If you want to talk scholarship just to confirm that I’m not just one of those “radical professors” depicted in media, and I assure you that I’m certainly not, I would love to do so.) I’m not new to teaching, nor have I forgotten my experiences as a student: grades often provoke anxiety among students, prompting them (myself included, back when) to attempt to figure out and then execute whatever strategies will result in, for example, keeping scholarships or advancing to the next course in the sequence or meeting that graduation requirement. In doing so, then, grades reorient the focus of the class away from authentic engagement with the learning process in the present to consideration of how a specific level of performance will affect something else, whatever else, in the future.

This contract attempts to do the opposite: so long as you put a good faith effort into the course, you’re going to pass, and you can probably even earn an “A” or a “B” in it. In return, though, this expects a good faith effort from you, meaning that you won’t just be able to make a specific score on a test or essay to get a specific course grade. Instead, you will have to engage in a sustained and rigorous manner with the learning process. (Read the last part again. It’s probably the most important passage here.)

If you put in a good faith effort, and stop worrying about specific grades, I promise that you’ll get more from the course overall, but know that you’re going to be completing a lot more work than you otherwise might. This is, I think, a good thing: our course is closer to a clinical rotation in medical school or a practicum in another professional school than it is to a traditional lecture. So, without further ado, here’s an explanation for each of the major requirements in the course, which is followed with a much simplified breakdown of how those requirements translate into final course grades.

Major Assignments

I think it reasonable to expect you to complete all major assignments (there are three, described above) as well as a formal revision of at least one major assignment, in order to earn a passing grade—not least because I’d like to use them as a point of departure to have a transparent conversation about the relative “quality” of your writing with you.
Here’s the deal—the present contract is intended to dispel what I’ll call “grade anxiety” for you and me alike given that it largely makes your final grade in the course a function of how much effort (which necessarily leads to quality) is put into the course. But, I would be lying to you if I told you that quality, however defined, doesn’t matter at all. “Grammar” is a good, if complicated, example, and this particular idea requires an example to illustrate it. Most linguists would describe as “grammatically correct” all utterances in a given language or language dialect intelligible to its speakers, a definition which includes words like “ain’t,” phrases like “he always be leaving me on read,” and even pronunciations like “cahr,” and the same linguists would in turn describe “standard grammar” as a construct that might have political implications to varying degrees.

At the same time, though, most linguists aren’t hiring managers, typical coworkers, and clients, folks who understandably tend to value the form of English taught in the typical English language class as a common tongue that, given sufficient training, allows all speakers of the language to communicate in those contexts. For them, then, the quality of a person’s language is directly proportional to how well the person follows those conventions, again in those formal contexts.

The same applies to things like organization, evidentiary support, and even stylistic choices in writing. So, while your final grade isn’t entirely based on the quality of the work submitted, know that the class itself, particularly the major assignments, will both expect, assess, and work to improve it—often in more rigorous ways than it would if it instead made quality the primary determinant for your final grade. You can, and might, earn a “D” on a major assignment; if you do, though, you should approach it as a chance to more clearly see and work on the aspects of your writing that need improvement, rather than as (I’ve been a student) “the end of your academic career as you know it full stop.” In short, then, you must complete all major assignments to pass the course because you must complete all major assignments to receive the kinds of insight and feedback that will empower you as a thinker, writer, and communicator.

Other Assignments

The need to complete a certain percentage of the total work in the course in order to earn the corresponding letter grade is a little easier to explain, I think. I’m basically assuming the following two things: (1) that to become a “writer,” one needs do nothing other than read and write; and (2) that to improve as a writer, one needs do nothing other than read and write. The repetition is quite intentional: writing isn’t, like the periodic table or the trigonometric unit circle, content that can be learned through rote memorization; it’s a skill that requires modeling and practice, which honestly demands a lot more from us intellectually. (Of the following two, which is the more difficult: memorizing human anatomical structures, or performing a surgical procedure?) So, we’re going to read examples of published writing by accomplished and effective communicators, and we’re going to write, and we’re going to write often. Sometimes, you’ll keep what you produce to include in a major assignment, and other times, you’ll workshop what you produce with the instructor and your peers in order to receive feedback; and still other times, you’ll never use or even read what you produce again. Because the point is, on some level, simply to produce. It seems practical to me, then, to use your willingness to produce as a measure of your effort to improve as a writer.

Attendance

Attendance is similarly simple to explain, even if it here encompasses being both physically and mentally present at class meetings. Much of the feedback that you receive on your writing will come from class discussions—both from the instructor, and from your peers. Likewise, much of the improvement that you make, whether by graciously receiving that constructive feedback or, indeed, by graciously giving that
constructive feedback to others. In other words, much of the effort that you put into the course will occur in the classroom. Let’s work together to ensure that we have an honest, but supportive, space in which we can commit to and benefit from that labor, promising to attend all of the classes that we reasonably can. I will keep track of your presence or absence in the class on a weekly basis as part of your grade, but make sure you keep track of your own attendance as well. Your participation is ultimately your responsibility, and it is one of the most important things you are learning in college.

Portfolio Meeting

The final requirement, what I’m calling a “portfolio meeting,” is included not because it will necessarily require much effort from you, but because it provides us a capstone for the semester, a chance for you to reflect upon and celebrate your progress (and, if you’re putting in the effort, you will make progress) as well as to receive some final recommendations from me on how to proceed going forward—your strengths and weaknesses after finishing the course. Plus, if you show up, you’ll leave knowing just where you stand in relation to this contract, and therefore precisely what grade you’re receiving in the course, well before the deadline for instructors to submit final grades.
### Basic Grading Contract for English Composition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To earn a grade of “A” in the course, you agree to do the following:</th>
<th>To earn a grade of “B” in the course, you agree to do the following:</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| • Complete all major assignments in the course on time.  
  • Revise one or more of the major assignments in the course in consultation with the instructor.  
  • Complete at least **ninety percent** of all other assignments in the course.  
  • **Miss no more than three class meetings** during the semester without good reason (including, but not limited to, a hospitalization, a court summons, the death of a close relative, a university-sponsored event, and a life-changing opportunity).  
  • Compile a portfolio of your writing and meet with the instructor to discuss it at the end of the semester. | • Complete all major assignments in the course on time.  
  • Revise one or more of the major assignments in the course in consultation with the instructor.  
  • Complete at least **eighty percent** of all other assignments in the course.  
  • **Miss no more than four class meetings** during the semester without good reason (including, but not limited to, a hospitalization, a court summons, the death of a close relative, a university-sponsored event, and a life-changing opportunity).  
  • Compile a portfolio of your writing and meet with the instructor to discuss it at the end of the semester. |

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<tr>
<th>To earn a grade of “C” in the course, you agree to do the following:</th>
<th>To earn a grade of “D” in the course, you agree to do the following:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Complete all major assignments in the course.  
  • Complete at least **seventy percent** of all other assignments in the course.  
  • **Miss no more than five class meetings** during the semester without good reason (including, but not limited to, a hospitalization, a court summons, the death of a close relative, a university-sponsored event, and a life-changing opportunity).  
  • Compile a portfolio of your writing and meet with the instructor to discuss it at the end of the semester. | • Complete all but one of the major assignments in the course.  
  • Complete at least **sixty percent** of all other assignments in the course.  
  • **Miss no more than five class meetings** during the semester without good reason (including, but not limited to, a hospitalization, a court summons, the death of a close relative, a university-sponsored event, and a life-changing opportunity).  
  • Compile a portfolio of your writing and meet with the instructor to discuss it at the end of the semester. |

**You will earn a grade of “F” in the course if you (1) fail to complete more than one major assignment, (2) miss more than five class meetings, or (3) otherwise fail to meet the minimum requirements to earn a “D.”**

In conclusion, one fails if one simply makes no effort to complete the work in the course.
Etiquette: Students may be dismissed from any class meeting at which they exhibit behavior that threatens or disrupts the learning environment of others or is deemed disrespectful to other students, the professor, or the learning process. Such behavior includes, but is not limited to:

- Arriving excessively late for class—if you find you are more that 15 minutes late for class, do not come. You will not be given credit for attendance.
- Persistent use of portable electronic devices for purposes unrelated to course content—if you need to send a text here or there, that’s fine, and on occasion, I might even ask you to use phones, laptops, or tablets to look something up or complete an assignment, but if you are paying more attention to social media, work for other courses, email, etc. than what is going on in this class, you will not be given credit for attendance.
- Inappropriate behavior—racist, sexist, classist, xenophobic, homophobic, or transphobic comments or slurs, threats of violence, sexual harassment, or other forms of abuse have no place in an academic setting. These behaviors will not be tolerated.
- Lack of preparedness—if you arrive in class without the day’s assigned reading(s) or means by which to take notes or complete in-class assignments, or if you are found sleeping in class, you will be asked to leave and marked absent for the day.

You may feel free to eat or drink, to use the restroom without asking, to respond in conversation without raising your hand as long as you are speaking in turn, to share materials with others, to bring infants and children occasionally if need be, to raise questions, to share your own knowledge, and to contribute suggestions for course discussions or activities.

Preparedness: Learning to take detailed notes and annotate texts is crucial to succeed in most college classes, not just this one. You are expected to take notes as you read independently and to structure your responses to texts around those notes, referring to specific ideas and passages from course materials. Though I will not be monitoring this stage in your writing process after the first few weeks, it will be apparent from the quality of your work whether you kept good notes on the thoughts and questions you had as you read. I recommend highlighting or underlining ideas you find interesting or that seem important to you, language or concepts you do not understand, vocabulary with which you are unfamiliar and will need to look up, and moments in course readings you think you might be able to use as evidence for the arguments you will make in assignments. Use different colors or symbols to indicate which of these each moment you’ve marked reflects. For this reason, printing the readings from Course Den is recommended, though you can annotate digitally with many document viewers. Also for this reason, renting your textbooks is a bad idea, as the necessity of keeping your book free of markings will add extra steps to this process.

Communication: University of West Georgia students are provided a MyUWG e-mail account. The University considers this account to be an official means of communication between the University and the student. The purpose of the official use of the student e-mail account is to provide an effective means of communicating important university related information to UWG students in a timely manner. It is the student’s responsibility to check this email account. Though I will often communicate with you about course content and assignments using Course Den and welcome you to do the same, please email only from your UWG account to discuss final grades (because FERPA) or with time-sensitive questions or requests, as I am often likely to see this correspondence sooner.

Though I will often reply to your emails promptly, please allow 24 hours for a response during the week (48 hours over the weekend) before sending a follow-up email or message and plan accordingly. Remember that
email is another opportunity to practice good writing techniques—always include a greeting and a closing with your name. Also, be sure to proofread for clarity, spelling, and grammar. Studies show that well-written, courteous emails are better received and more likely to lead to rapid and favorable replies than those that are hastily written or inappropriate in tone.

Student Support

- CourseDen D2L Home Page
  [https://westga.view.usg.edu/](https://westga.view.usg.edu/)

- 24/7/365 D2L Help Center
  [https://d2lhelp.view.usg.edu/](https://d2lhelp.view.usg.edu/)

- University Bookstore
  [http://www.bookstore.westga.edu/](http://www.bookstore.westga.edu/)

- Common Language for Course Syllabi
  [https://www.westga.edu/administration/vpaa/common-language-course-syllabi.php](https://www.westga.edu/administration/vpaa/common-language-course-syllabi.php)

- UWG Cares
  [http://www.westga.edu/UWGCares/](http://www.westga.edu/UWGCares/)

- Center for Disability
  [https://www.westga.edu/student-services/counseling/accessibility-services.php](https://www.westga.edu/student-services/counseling/accessibility-services.php)

- Student Services

- Center for Academic Success
  [http://www.westga.edu/cas/](http://www.westga.edu/cas/)

- Ingram Library Services
  [http://www.westga.edu/library/](http://www.westga.edu/library/)

- Proctored Exams
  [http://uwgonline.westga.edu/exams.php#student](http://uwgonline.westga.edu/exams.php#student)

- UWG Accessibility Statements for Technology
  [https://docs.google.com/document/d/16Rt1XgaXiGx28ooOzRvYPraV3Aq3F5ZNJyVDGVnEA/edit?ts=57b4c82d#heading=h.yrqeffvts1f](https://docs.google.com/document/d/16Rt1XgaXiGx28ooOzRvYPraV3Aq3F5ZNJyVDGVnEA/edit?ts=57b4c82d#heading=h.yrqeffvts1f)

- University Writing Center
  [https://www.westga.edu/academics/coah/writing](https://www.westga.edu/academics/coah/writing)
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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>What’s Due?</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8/15 – Course Overview</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>8/27 – In-Class Screening: <em>Before the Flood</em></td>
<td>8/29 – In-Class Screening: <em>Before the Flood</em></td>
<td>Discuss: Essay #1</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>9/10 – Read: “A Plan” by James Howard Kunstler and “Improvisation” by Paul Kingsnorth on Course Den</td>
<td>9/12 – Read: “Luck” by Elizabeth Kolbert and “Fear” by Nikki Giovanni on Course Den</td>
<td>Essay #1 due by midnight on Friday, 9/13</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>10/1 – Read: “The Silence of the Lambswool Cardigans” by Rebecca Solnit in <em>Change Everything Now</em></td>
<td>10/3 – Fall Break, No Class</td>
<td>Essay #1 due by midnight on Friday, 9/13</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>10/15 – Read: “Dark Waters” by Yusef Komunyakaa on Course Den</td>
<td>10/17 – Dr. Finck at MSA, No Class</td>
<td>Essay #2 due by midnight on Friday, 10/25</td>
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<td>Assignments</td>
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<td>Discuss: Essay #3 and Portfolio Meetings</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>11/19 –</td>
<td>Read: “Porphyrin Rings” by Jennifer Oladipo on Course Den</td>
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<td>11/21 –</td>
<td>Read: “Map of Anguilla, BWI” by Alexis Pauline Gumbs on Course Den</td>
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<td>Schedule Portfolio Meetings</td>
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<td>11/28 –</td>
<td>*Thanksgiving Break, No Class</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>11/26 –</td>
<td>*Thanksgiving Break, No Class</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>12/3 –</td>
<td>Portfolio Meetings: attend your scheduled appointment</td>
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<td>12/5 –</td>
<td>Portfolio Meetings: attend your scheduled appointment</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>12/10 –</td>
<td>Finals Week, Class Does Not Meet</td>
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<td>12/12 –</td>
<td>Finals Week, Class Does Not Meet</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Revision of one major essay due 12/10 by noon</td>
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*Syllabus and Course Den Art by Andreas Lie ([https://www.andreaslie.com](https://www.andreaslie.com))