

ENGL 103: Advanced Composition & Critical Thinking

MJC, Spring 2014

Instructor: Dr. Jason Wohlstadter

Sections: #4270 T/Th 8:00-9:25 am, FH 277; #4286 T/Th 11:10-12:35, FH 278

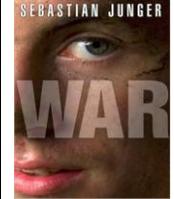
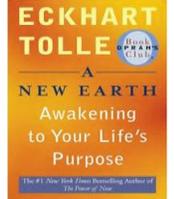
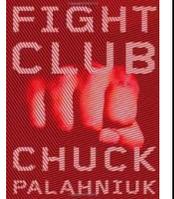
Office Hours: M/W 11:00-12:00; T/Th 9:30-11:00

E-mail: wohlstadterj@mjc.edu

Phone: (209) 575-6180

Office: Founders Hall 260P

For more course information, go to our class website at <http://wohlstadterj.faculty.mjc.edu/>

			<p>Required Texts <u>At MJC East Bookstore:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>War</i> by Sebastian Junger• <i>A New Earth</i> by Eckhart Tolle• <i>Fight Club</i> by Chuck Palahniuk <p>➤ And a Class Reader (for sale at Western Graphix) See class website for more details (prices, location, etc.)</p>
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Prerequisite: Satisfactory completion of ENGL 101.

Course Overview: As the Course Learning Outcomes highlight below, English 103 focuses on argumentation. More specifically, however, our class will be examining arguments that tie into the major themes for our course—**war and peace**. We'll organize our course sequence into four main units, and we'll be thinking critically about important questions such as these:

1. **Why war?** What causes war? What perpetuates war? Why do wars continue in today's modern age? What might a psychologist argue? An anthropologist? A politician? Why?
2. **Just war?** What is a just war? What conditions would make a war just? Does just war exist?
3. **The war within.** Why do many people seem "at war" within themselves? Why do people often sabotage themselves and focus on negative feelings that bring them no peace? What may or may not work to promote inner peace? Why?
4. **Just help?** Why should we help others? How much should we help? At what cost? What factors should be considered in cases of humanitarian intervention?

NOTE: Since our class themes—war and peace—can trigger strong feelings, and since those feelings have their roots in people's backgrounds and core values, being mindful of others will be very important in this class. Please feel free to express your views, but please bear in mind that critical thinking classes are designed to encourage people to consider other people's arguments with care and respect, even if they disagree with them.

Course Learning Outcomes: Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to

1. Demonstrate the ability to analyze and evaluate the major parts of an argument, such as claim, support, and counterargument;
2. Establish and defend an argumentative thesis in essays that
 - A) demonstrate advanced, argumentative forms of writing;
 - B) demonstrate advanced control over written language, including syntax, punctuation, grammar, and spelling; and
 - C) demonstrate avoidance of common logical fallacies.

Administrative Deadlines: **Jan. 26:** Last day to withdraw without a W.

Apr. 7: Last day to withdraw (and receive a W).

Attendance Policy: Attendance is very important in this class.

If you're absent from our first class meeting (for whatever reason), it will be assumed that you're not interested in taking the course and you will be dropped to make room for students waiting to add the course.

- Absences can have a negative impact on one's participation grade since a student cannot participate when he or she is absent.
- Absences can also have a negative impact on quizzes since there are no make-up quizzes.*
- Students are allowed up to four absences. A tip is to save them for illnesses and emergencies, since the allotment is not four days plus illnesses and emergencies—it's four days, period.
- **More than four absences (for whatever reason) is considered excessive and is grounds for being dropped from the course.**
- Being absent does not mean that a student has more time to submit an assignment. Assignments are due on their due date even if a student is absent.

Tardiness: Class starts at its scheduled time, and tardiness disrupts the class. To prevent disruption, students who are habitually or excessively late will be marked as absent. If you arrive to class more than ten minutes late, or if you leave class early, you will be counted as absent. Roll is taken at the beginning of class. *If you arrive after roll is taken, it is your responsibility to let me know that day.*

Late Paper Policy: Work must be submitted *at the beginning of class* to be considered on time.*

- The midterm and final cannot be taken late, unless we've made a *prior* arrangement.*
- Take-home essays may be submitted one class meeting late, but they will automatically be reduced one full letter grade. Beyond that point, "extra-late" essays may still receive credit but will automatically receive a failing mark—59 points or less, depending on quality.
- Students who plan to turn in late work should inform me of it on the day the work is due or earlier (inform me at the end of class, call me, or e-mail me).

* **Note:** A more detailed class policy regarding attendance and late work is attached at the end of this syllabus, and the general campus policy on attendance is listed on p. 78 of the school catalog.

Grading:

Percentages:		Word Count (thesis-driven essays):	Scale for Course Grades															
Quizzes	5%		<table style="border: none;"> <tr> <td>A</td> <td>90 +</td> <td>Excellent</td> </tr> <tr> <td>B</td> <td>80 +</td> <td>Good</td> </tr> <tr> <td>C</td> <td>70 +</td> <td>Satisfactory</td> </tr> <tr> <td>D</td> <td>60 +</td> <td>Not passing</td> </tr> <tr> <td>F</td> <td>Below 60</td> <td>Failing</td> </tr> </table>	A	90 +	Excellent	B	80 +	Good	C	70 +	Satisfactory	D	60 +	Not passing	F	Below 60	Failing
A	90 +	Excellent																
B	80 +	Good																
C	70 +	Satisfactory																
D	60 +	Not passing																
F	Below 60	Failing																
Essay #1	15%	Approx 1400 (4 complete pgs)																
In-Class Essay	20%	700																
Essay #2	15%	1750 (5 complete pgs)																
Essay #3	15%	1750 (5 complete pgs)																
Final Essay	20%	900																
Participation (see details below)	10%	1750 (5 pgs, edited, no thesis) Total = 8250 (6400 are thesis-driven)																

- **Participation marks** reflect one's level of *engagement* in class discussions and activities. The highest marks go to students who volunteer to share ideas with the class. Students who rarely volunteer and students who disrupt the class learning environment (texting, tardiness, etc.) earn the lowest marks. Also factored into participation will be five reading response papers (one-page each), peer review activities, and a group presentation.
- A student's lowest quiz score will not be factored into his or her grade.
- Papers must be typed and follow MLA standards, including 12 pt. font size and 1" margins.
- Absence from peer review or an incomplete draft results in a final draft deduction of 3.5 pts.

- E-mailed work may be accepted, but I prefer to receive course work on paper. Please see the detailed policies on e-mail near the end of this syllabus.
- Students must keep electronic copies of essays and hold on to graded copies of all their work.

Note: To be eligible to pass the course, students must complete all five major essays.

Repeat Policy at MJC

A student who has earned a grade of D, F, NC/NP or W in a course may repeat the course once for the purpose of grade improvement. This allows a student a maximum of two attempts (without a petition) to successfully complete the course. See pages 48-49 in the *MJC Catalog* for more details.

Etiquette: Treat the classroom as a positive learning environment and be aware of the school's regulations regarding disruptive behavior, misconduct, and harassment (*MJC Catalog* 80-81). Behavior that disrupts the learning environment of the classroom will not be tolerated.

- **Cell phones and other such devices must be silent and out of sight. *Do not text in class.***
- Laptops are not allowed during class without permission, and permission typically depends on evidence that laptops are being used appropriately for class and are not causing distractions.
- Do not do homework for other courses during class.
- One of the best things students can do in class is to participate in discussions by expressing their views and ideas; however, when students speak in class it should contribute to the class environment, not disrupt it. Do not have distracting, private conversations. Do not talk when another is talking. Avoid dominating a class discussion or making hurtful remarks. Share your point of view but be mindful of others.

After a first warning, those who continue to be disruptive will be asked to leave the room and may, according to college policy, be suspended.

Academic Integrity: Cheating, academic dishonesty, and plagiarism are violations of academic integrity, and serious violations will be reported. MJC defines plagiarism as “the deliberate adoption or reproduction of ideas, words or statements of another person as one’s own, without acknowledgement” (*MJC Catalog* 79). The consequences of plagiarism, as outlined in the school catalog, are as follows:

The grading of a student’s work rests on the fundamental idea that an instructor is evaluating a student’s own work, so cheating or plagiarism demonstrates a failure to complete this most basic requirement of any course. Thus a faculty member may administer academic consequences for violating the Academic Integrity Policy ranging from partial credit to an F on the assignment or exam.

The instructor may also consider that a student’s violation of academic integrity should be a consideration for disciplinary measures. (79)

To prevent plagiarism, you will be instructed to upload essays to Turnitin.com. For information on avoiding plagiarism, see me or this site: <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/plagiarism/>

Getting Help: I encourage you to see me during office hours whenever you have questions about the course. Please come with specific questions. Time does not permit me, over e-mail, to answer broad, open-ended questions such as “did I miss anything in class today?” or “can you help me on my draft?” I can answer certain questions over e-mail, but time constraints allow me only to offer brief replies to focused questions. There’s time for more detailed discussion during office hours, and I enjoy using that time for that purpose.

You can also take advantage of the many support services that MJC offers. In particular, the school provides Writing Centers on both campuses. Helpful tutors there will assist you, but they will not “fix” your work for you. The school catalog provides the following information on MJC’s Writing Centers:

EAST CAMPUS: Classroom Annex 103; **WEST CAMPUS:** Integrated Learning Center, Yosemite 235

At the Writing Center, you can get the support you need to improve your writing skills. Tutors will work with you on writing-related tasks to help you understand your assignment, gather ideas, focus on the topic, and organize the paper. (31)

MJC also offers accommodations for students with special needs. If you need accommodations, please let me know within the first couple weeks of class. The MJC Disabilities Services Center is located at room 160 of the Journalism Building on the East Campus (phone: 575-6225).

Class Policies on E-mail, Absences, and Late Assignments (Additional Details)

- E-mail at your own risk. If you want to be sure information or work gets to me, provide it in person, or call as well as e-mail. If you choose to e-mail, send your work *both* as a Microsoft Word or PDF file attachment *and* as a message pasted into the body of your e-mail. Also, ask for a receipt (example: "please respond letting me know you received this message"). In short, the following excuse is not acceptable: "Did you get the work I sent? I swear I e-mailed that to you."
- With a *legitimate* excuse, written class work may be accepted and evaluated without a grade deduction. Only a documented illness or emergency will be regarded as a legitimate excuse. Such documentation must include a phone number and address of a professional who can testify to the authenticity of the document. Do not forge or falsify documents; such violations will be reported.
- If you have a legitimate, documented excuse, and want your work evaluated without a grade deduction, it’s your responsibility to take the initiative in letting me know and in providing me with documentation in a timely manner. In other words, I will not ask you for documentation; you need to furnish it—without me asking you for it.
- If you can’t come to class for some reason, consider having a friend or classmate submit your work to me for you.
- I will accept some assignments late, but quizzes, the midterm and the final cannot be taken late. However, if, for some *legitimate reason (i.e. a documented illness or emergency)*, you cannot be in class on the day of a quiz, in-class essay, or exam, and you let me know of this conflict ahead of time or as soon as possible, then we may be able to re-schedule a time for you.
- **Grades on unexcused late assignments will reflect the fact that they were submitted late:**
 - **Grades will be reduced by a full letter when essays are turned in one class meeting late.** For example, a paper due Tuesday can be submitted as late on Thursday, or a paper due Thursday can be submitted as late on Tuesday.

- After being more than one class meeting late, “extra-late” essays may still receive credit but will automatically receive a failing mark—59 points or less, depending on quality.
- If you plan to submit an assignment late, please let me know early or at the time the assignment is due.
- If you ever submit work one class meeting late (with a grade reduction), you do not need to let me know why. I do not need to know an excuse; I just need to know that I should expect the work late. However, if there is something significant that you would like me to know about your circumstances, always feel free to communicate that with me.
- **All assignments are always due at the beginning of class, as stated in the syllabus.** This means, for example, that an assignment due on Tuesday at 9:35 that is submitted at 9:45 will be considered late. This strict policy helps to make the classroom a better learning environment because it discourages many people from disrupting the class by arriving late on days when assignments are due.
- Be sure that your computer and printer are working—and that you have extra ink, and be sure you have a backup plan if you run into technical difficulties. Students often tell me that they had a problem with their printer, and I always believe them because I've experienced such problems so often myself. Even so, despite my sympathy for students hampered by such situations, those *technical difficulties will not be regarded as legitimate excuses for late work.*