HU103-04: First-Year English III: Writing and Reading

Room: 116 Walker
Time: 11:05-12:20 TTh
Term: Spring Quarter, 2000

Instructor: Associate Prof. Craig Waddell
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Required Text

Course Description

With the aid of literature and/or literary nonfiction, First-Year English III: Writing and Reading uses written and oral communication—in the form of class discussions, conferences, oral reports, in-class writing, and formal essays—to examine human values. In this section of the course, we will use Jared Diamond's Pulitzer Prize-winning book *Guns, Germs, and Steel* to examine the causes of global disparities in wealth. We'll also examine why we should care about such disparities and what, if anything, might be done about them.

Over the past several decades, much attention has been paid to multicultural literacy. Some have argued for such literacy in order to celebrate our diversity; others have done so in order to enhance America's global competitiveness. However, in addition to celebrating our diversity, we should also foster a sense of community, for example, by exploring our common biological and cultural origins. This sense of community might then be appealed to in addressing such problems as global disparities in wealth, the most pressing problem facing the human family now and in the foreseeable future. From this problem derive a host of others, such as hunger, disease, illiteracy, population pressures, mass migrations, environmental destruction, terrorism, and war.
Preliminary Questions to Guide Inquiry

1. At a time when part of the world’s population is living in great abundance, why does a substantial part of the human family still live in abject poverty?

2. What effects, if any, do global disparities in wealth have on other global problems, such as hunger, disease, illiteracy, population pressures, mass migrations, environmental destruction, terrorism, and war?

3. Can broader exploration, discussion, and understanding of our common biological and cultural origins—and, hence, our common humanity—help to reduce the alienation that makes global disparities in wealth sufferable to the wealthy?

Reading and Class Discussion

"We don't understand anything until we've discussed it."

Russian Proverb

I assume that none of us have the political sophistication of a secretary of state or a U.N. ambassador. Nevertheless, as college-educated adults, we should be at least as well informed about world affairs as the majority of the world’s people, and, collectively, we should be able to engage in an insightful and constructive dialogue about causes and possible solutions to the problem of global inequities in wealth. We may also enjoy some advantage over seasoned diplomats due to what is sometimes referred to as “beginner’s mind”: the ability to address a problem or issue unencumbered by the dogmas that often accompany the thinking of more experienced people and limit their willingness to consider what can or cannot be done.

Evaluation

Your final grade will be determined approximately as follows:

15% First paper
15% Second paper
15% Reading and discussion quiz
25% Class participation
30% Final paper
The Americans with Disabilities Act

MTU complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). If you have a disability and need a reasonable accommodation for equal access to education or services at MTU, please call Dr. Gloria Melton, Associate Dean of Students (7-2212). For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, your department head, or the Affirmative Action Office (7-3310).

Schedule of Assignments and Class Activities

Dates indicate when reading and writing assignments are due, not when they are given. The questions/issues to be addressed in our three essays will emerge over the course of reading and discussion.

Week 1: Introduction; Preface and Prologue
   TU: Overview of course and syllabus; self-introductions
   TH: Preface and Prologue

Week 2: Part One: From Eden to Cajamarca
   TU: Ch. 1: Up to the Starting Line
   TH: Ch. 2: A Natural Experiment of History; Ch. 3: Collision at Cajamarca

Week 3: Part Two: The Rise and Spread of Food
   TU: Ch. 4: Farmer Power; Ch. 5: History's Haves and Have-Nots; Ch. 6: To Farm or Not to Farm
   TH: Ch. 7: How to Make an Almond; Paper due (3-4 pages); schedule individual conferences

Week 4: Part Two: The Rise and Spread of Food (continued)
   TU: Ch. 8: Apples or Indians
   TH: Ch. 9: Zebras, Unhappy Marriges, and the Anna Karenina Principle; Ch. 10: Spacious Skies and Tilted Axes

Week 5: Part Three: From Food to Guns, Germs, and Steel
   TU: Ch. 11: Lethal Gift of Livestock
   TH: Ch. 12: Blueprints and Borrowed Letters

Week 6: Part Three: From Food to Guns, Germs, and Steel (continued)
   TU: Ch. 13: Necessity's Mother
   TH: Ch. 14: From Egalitarianism to Kleptocracy; Paper due (3-4 pages)

Week 7: Part Four: Around the World in Five Chapters
   TU: Ch. 15: Yali's People
   TH: Ch. 16: How China Became Chinese; Ch. 17: Speedboat to Polynesia
Week 8: Part Four: Around the World in Five Chapters (continued)
TU: Ch. 18: Hemispheres Colliding
TH: Ch. 19: How Africa Became Black; reading and discussion quiz

Week 9: Epilogue and Oral Presentations
TU: Epilogue; oral presentations
TH: Oral presentations

Week 10: Oral Presentations
TU: Oral presentations
TH: Oral presentations on projects; course evaluations; final papers due (7-10 pages)

Images of misery: a victim of the 1984 famine crouches in pain

Will the cycle that keeps Africa poor and famished ever end?