

First World/Third World Writing Course From Louis Crew, Chinese University of Hong Kong

Second Year: Writing About Literature

1. We shall analyze the structures of the standard literary genres and define the ways that individual writers work within them:
 - a. fiction, including novels, novellas, short stories, et al.
 - b. nonfiction, including essays, biographies, literary criticism, linguistic analysis, et al.
 - c. drama
 - d. poetry, including the lyric, the ballad, the sonnet, the epic, the narrative, et al.
2. We shall get a basic understanding of the different rhetorical modes, including tragedy, comedy, satire, parody, et al. We shall also look at various figures of speech, tropes, image patterns, etc.
3. The students will write many conventional kinds of "literary" and linguistic papers, including:
 - a. abstracts
 - b. precis
 - c. summaries
 - d. synopses
 - e. book reviews
 - f. drama reviews
 - g. character analyses
 - h. editorial responses to manuscripts
 - i. prospectuses
 - j. folk etymologies
 - k. elementary quantitative stylistic analyses
 - l. journals and other biographia literaria
 - m. prefaces
 - n. study guides
 - o. essay tests
 - p. annotations
4. Each semester the students will write at least one sustained paper to be read not only in this class but also in at least one other class. The students will have to prepare a prospectus which pleases all assessors, however diverse they may be. In this class the tutors will be looking at all of the formal qualities of the project, evaluating strategies as intensely as we will evaluate surface correctness.

5. We will constantly try to define elusive boundaries:
 - a. between Literature and literature
 - b. between art and propaganda
 - c. between bias and objectivity
 - d. between reality and illusion
 - e. between spoken and written conventions
 - f. between golden prose and fool's golden prose.
6. We shall try to discover how writers establish their authority, and we shall challenge all such authority.
7. We shall look at some works in their contexts; others we shall study without reference to author or period or other matters of reputation, the better to judge the achievement for ourselves (cf. I. A. Richard's Practical Criticism).
8. Sometimes we shall prescribe styles or even points of view, as in the following sample assignments.

Retell this plot irreverently.

Attack this point arrogantly.

Look at this poem from the point of view of a militant Puritan.
Write a sociological analysis of the context that allows the poet to spend his time writing about this violet while leaving his illegitimate daughter in France or driving his son to suicide in America.

Read this critic's response to this poem and attack her subtly, while seeming at first to concur.

Such assignments are not intended to indoctrinate, but to help students develop a measure of artistic distance, the better to understand the integrity of their own points of view.

Set Up a Workers' Collective with Tutors in Your Writing Center!
Sound like a good idea? There's a book to help you do it. It's called No Bosses Here and is co-published by Vocations for Social Change, PO Box 211, Essex Station, Boston, MA 02112 and Alyson Publications, PO Box 2783, Boston, MA 02208. Cost is \$4.95. Students these days need a basic introduction to what working collectively is all about and this short, 120-page book provides just that. With chapters on "Work Collectives Today," "Decision Making and Meetings," "Dividing Collective Work," "Group Dynamics," "Dealing With Feelings," and "Collectives and Social Change," the book covers the basics in a clear, non-rhetorical and convincing manner. Students finally find out what they missed when they missed the 60's as they eagerly put these impressive working principles into practice.