

WR 100-I2
Kurt Vonnegut
Fall 2016
MWF 4:00pm-5:00pm

Instructor: Ken Alba
Office: 236 Bay State Road, Room 441
Office Hours: Monday, 2:30-3:30pm and by appointment
Contact: kenalba@bu.edu
Classroom: CAS 222

COURSE DESCRIPTION

WR 100 and WR 150 make up a two-semester sequence of writing courses required of most Boston University undergraduates. They are designed to help all students acquire skills and habits of mind essential both to their academic success and to their future personal, professional, and civic lives. WR 100 and WR 150 are taught as small, topic-based seminars. Different sections of these courses address a range of different topics. The specific topic of this section of WR 100 is the fiction of Kurt Vonnegut

In the introduction to his World War II novel *Mother Night*, Kurt Vonnegut says that “we are who we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be.” This course takes up this definition of personal identity as a focus, using the fiction of Kurt Vonnegut as an entry into that question: how does what we do relate to who we are? We will read one of his novels (*Mother Night*) and many of the short stories collected in *Welcome to the Monkey House*, alongside theoretical works by Judith Butler, John-Paul Sartre, and Friedrich Nietzsche (among others), an Intelligence Squared debate, and creative nonfiction by David Foster Wallace.

COURSE GOALS

Although they vary in topic, all sections of WR 100 and WR 150 have certain goals in common. In WR 100, you will develop your abilities to:

- craft substantive, motivated, balanced academic arguments
- write clear, correct, coherent prose
- read with understanding and engagement
- plan, draft, and revise efficiently and effectively
- evaluate and improve your own reading and writing processes
- respond productively to the writing of others
- express yourself verbally and converse thoughtfully about complex ideas.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

As a writing seminar, WR 100 requires both a good deal of reading and writing and your active involvement in a variety of class activities. Specific course requirements are:

- self-assessment
- additional exercises as assigned
- three major papers
- final portfolio
- one conference with your instructor
- attendance and participation

BLACKBOARD AND EMAIL

Our class has a Blackboard site that contains the syllabus, assignments, and other course-related materials. You can log in to our Blackboard page at <http://learn.bu.edu/>.

Please bookmark our course page in your browser and check it every day for announcements. I will also be emailing the whole class if there is a particularly important update or schedule change – make sure that your BU email works; set up forwarding if you use a different account.

Email Policy: I welcome your email communications. Please allow 48 hours for a response.

ASSIGNMENTS

You will be given a range of assignments in this course, including a self-assessment, various reading and writing exercises, three major papers, and a final portfolio. Much of this work will not be graded, but that does not mean it is unimportant. Students who prepare diligently for class, participate actively, and take the homework exercises and drafts seriously generally learn more and write better final papers than those who do not.

Self-Assessment: At the beginning of the semester, you will be asked to submit a written self-assessment in which you take stock of your reading and writing abilities and establish some personal goals you wish to pursue over the course of the semester. For grading purposes, your self-assessment will be considered your first exercise.

Exercises: We will use the term exercises to refer to various low-stakes assignments and activities that you will be asked to complete over the course of the semester. You will do some of these exercises in class; others will be given as homework. I recommend that you purchase a notebook to contain your inclass writing and that you bring this notebook with you to class each day. Out-of-class writing will generally be posted to Blackboard. Your exercises may not receive explicit grades, although you will receive credit for completing them on time. Your performance on these assignments may also affect your participation adjustment (see below).

Major Papers (drafts and final versions): We will use the term draft to refer to unfinished or preliminary versions of your three major papers. You will be required to write at least one draft of paper 1 and at least two drafts of papers 2 and 3. For papers 2 and 3, one of your drafts will receive comments from me, either in written or verbal form; the other will receive feedback from your classmates. Drafts will not receive explicit grades, although you will receive credit for completing them on time. Remember that you are more likely to write a better final paper if you write a substantive draft. Your performance on your drafts may also affect your participation adjustment (see below). Your course grade will be determined primarily by the quality of the final versions of your major papers. All drafts and final papers must be word-processed and be documented in either MLA or Chicago style. Please include a word count (available as a function on most word processors) at the end of all written work.

Portfolio: Throughout the semester, you will build an e-portfolio on Digication that will allow you to reflect on your experiences as you encounter course materials and craft and revise written work. When you submit Paper 1 and Project 2, you'll be asked to select a pair of artifacts to accompany your final draft and to write a short reflection. At the end of the semester, you will be asked to submit a final version of your portfolio that will cover the entire semester, containing your self-assessment, major papers (drafts and final versions), other supporting artifacts, and an introductory essay.

The portfolio provides you with an opportunity to document and reflect on your development as a reader and writer over the course of the semester. Your portfolio will contain work that has already been graded. This work will not be re-graded in the portfolio. Rather, your grade for the portfolio will be based on those things that make the portfolio itself a coherent work: the introduction, any additional framing (annotations, captions, etc.), the selection and arrangement of artifacts, and overall organization.

Electronic portfolios through Digication: Throughout the semester you will be adding to and refining a website of your own using the BU sponsored software Digication. By enrolling in the course you'll be able to log on to the central website: <http://bu.digication.com>

Week to week you will post material to the website, documenting your work in the course and enabling you, your peers, and the instructor to evaluate and reflect on your progress in a holistic way. All written assignments should follow standard MLA format and should be posted on your e-portfolio site by the date and time listed in the syllabus.

Please note that you often will be asked to bring a hard paper copy of your work to class for peer editing or in-class revision as well as posting it to your e-portfolio.

Format: Because you will be posting, reorganizing, and storing your work on Digication for yourself and others to access, you should be systematic in how you name and file your assignments. Doing so will help you keep track of your work so that you can draw on it when assembling your Final Portfolio. Please save your files in Microsoft Word format and use the following protocol to name the files you post:

login-assignment-draft#

For example, if I were a student in the class and were posting my first draft for the first paper, I would name my file "kalba-paper1-draft1.doc".

Sharing of Student Writing: Experienced writers routinely share their work with others, because they understand that the best way to improve a piece of writing is to test it out with actual readers. In this class, you will learn how to respond productively to the writing of others and how to use feedback from others to improve your own work. All students in the class will be required to share at least one draft of each paper. If you are concerned about sharing your writing, please talk with me about your concerns.

GRADING AND EVALUATION

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

Reading Responses: 5%
Paper 1: 15%
Paper 2: 25%
Paper 3: 35%
Final Portfolio: 15%
Participation: 5%

Paper grades include credit for drafts submitted.

Your final grade may also be adjusted to reflect your attendance.

Late and Missed Assignments: You are allotted two days of grace that can be applied to the submission of any of your final draft papers beyond the due dates indicated on the schedule below. This eliminates the need to request extensions and allows you some flexibility in managing your workflow. After you use up your days of grace, graded assignments will be penalized by one-third of a letter grade for each day they are late. Days of grace cannot be used for drafts or exercises. If you submit a homework exercise or draft late, I cannot promise to read it in time for my comments to be useful to you. If you do not turn in drafts, you are still responsible for turning in final versions of your papers when they are due. Please note too that we will regularly work with our exercises and drafts in class. If you are habitually late with your assignments, you will be unable to participate fully in the class.

Attendance: Since this course is a seminar, your regular attendance and participation are essential both to your own learning and to your classmates' learning.

You may miss three classes without penalty. Additionally, missed conference appointments will be counted as absences and, because it is impossible for you and for your peers to learn from a workshop if all students do not come prepared, you will be counted as absent if you come to a workshop without the required draft. Under ordinary circumstances, missing more than one week of class will lower your final grade. Missing more than two weeks of class may lead to a failing grade in the course. Note that these absences need not be consecutive.

The second week of absences (4-6) will lower the final course grade by a third of a letter for each class missed (e.g., B becomes B-, B- becomes C+). Seven or more absences (more than two weeks) will be grounds for an "F" in the course.

If you have a special obligation that will require you to miss several classes (e.g., varsity athletics, religious observances), please talk with me at the beginning of the semester.

CAS CENTER FOR WRITING

At the CAS Center for Writing (100 Bay State Road, 3rd floor with a satellite office at Mugar Library) students enrolled in WR courses can receive one-on-one consultations about their writing with welltrained tutors familiar with WR assignments. When you visit the center, you should expect to be actively involved in your session. Tutors will work with you at any stage in your writing process, but they will not edit or correct your paper for you. Rather, they will work with you to help you do your own best work. The center is a resource for all WR students. Whether you consider yourself to be a strong writer or a weak one, you can benefit from consulting with a tutor.

The CAS Center for Writing is open Monday through Friday. Hours for the current semester are posted on the website below (common hours are between 9 a.m. and 5:15 p.m. or 7:30 p.m.). While the center accepts walk-in visits, you are strongly encouraged to make an appointment in advance. Because of the high demand for consultations, students are limited to one reservation per week. You may schedule a session online:

<http://www.bu.edu/writingprogram/the-writing-center/>

You may also schedule a session in person at the CAS Center for Writing or by calling 617-358-1500. Cancellations must be made at least 9 hours in advance.

WR

The CAS Writing Program publishes an online journal of exemplary writing from WR courses. If you are interested in looking at samples of successful WR papers, or if you just want to read some good essays, I encourage you to visit the journal:

<http://www.bu.edu/writingprogram/journal/>

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is the passing off of another's words or ideas as your own, and it is a serious academic offense. Cases of plagiarism will be handled in accordance with the disciplinary procedures described in the College of Arts and Sciences Academic Conduct Code. All WR students are subject to the CAS code, which can be read online:

<http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/>

Penalties for plagiarism can range from failing an assignment or course to suspension or expulsion from the university. In this class, we will discuss conventions for using and citing sources in academic papers. If you have any questions about plagiarism, I invite you to speak with me.

RESOURCES

CAS Writing Program: Administers all WR courses and the CAS Center for Writing. You may contact the Writing Program if you have any concerns about your WR class.

100 Bay State Rd., 3rd Floor
617-358-1500

Boston University Libraries: Offer a wealth of online and print resources. Research Librarians will introduce you to the many resources the library offers in any field of research. They can work with you to develop a research plan and organize your sources. The Research Center welcomes you for walk-in consultations on the first floor of Mugar Memorial Library or at any other library on campus. Research appointments can be made at

<http://www.bu.edu/common/request-an-appointment/>.

Mugar Memorial Library
771 Commonwealth Avenue
Phone: 617-353-2700 <http://www.bu.edu/library>

Educational Resource Center: Offers tutorial assistance to all undergraduate students in a range of subjects, including writing. You should use the Writing Program's Center for Writing for your WR classes, but you may wish to visit the ERC for tutorial assistance in other subjects.

100 Bay State Rd, 5th floor
Phone: 617-353-7077
<http://www.bu.edu/erc>

CAS Academic Advising: A central resource for all questions concerning academic policy and practice in the College of Arts and Sciences. The office is headed by the Associate Dean for Student Academic Life and has a staff of fifteen faculty advisors and five academic counselors. All students can receive academic advice about and assistance through this office. Students who have not yet declared concentrations can receive pre-registration advising through this office.

100 Bay State Rd. 4th Floor
Email: casadv@bu.edu
Phone: 617-353-2400
<http://www.bu.edu/casadvising/>

Here are links to the advising offices of other BU colleges:

CFA: <http://www.bu.edu/cfa/resources/advising/>
CGS: <http://www.bu.edu/cgs/students/fact-sheets/academic-advising/>
COM: <http://www.bu.edu/com/current-students/student-services/>
ENG: <http://www.bu.edu/eng/current-students/ugrad/advising/>
SAR: <http://www.bu.edu/sargent/current-students/academic-services-center/>
SED: <http://www.bu.edu/sed/faculty-staff/handbook/admin-and-org/> (see Student Affairs

Offices)

SHA: <http://www.bu.edu/hospitality/academics/advising/>
SMG: <http://management.bu.edu/undergraduate-program/academics/advising/>

Office of Disability Services: Responsible for assisting students with disabilities. If you have a disability, you are strongly encouraged to register with this office. You may be entitled to special accommodations in your courses, such as additional time on tests, staggered homework assignments, or note-taking assistance. This office will give you a letter outlining the accommodations to which you are entitled that you can share with your teachers. If you require accommodations, you must present me with an official letter from Disability Services.

19 Deerfield Street, 2nd floor
Phone: 617-353-3658
<http://www.bu.edu/disability>

COURSE MATERIALS

Please purchase these exact editions of *Mother Night* and *Welcome to the Monkey House*. We will be referring to sections by their page number and that'll be more difficult if you have different editions. Your books can be purchased at the BU Bookstore or on Amazon.com.

Strunk, William. *The Elements of Style*, 4th ed. Ithaca, N.Y. Pearson. Print.

Turabian, Kate L., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *Student's Guide to Writing College Papers*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2010.

Vonnegut, Kurt. *Mother Night*. New York (2009). Random House. Print.

Vonnegut, Kurt. *Welcome to the Monkey House*. New York (2009). Random House. Print.

All other required readings will be posted on the Blackboard site. You will always be expected to print those materials and bring them to class on the day on which they are due. Failure to bring materials to class will negatively affect your grade.

Email Policy: I welcome your email communications. Please allow 48 hours for a response.

COURSE SCHEDULE

** Depending on class needs, this schedule may be altered. If you are late or absent from class, it is *your* responsibility to find out about any modifications to the schedule.

** Readings from Turabian's *Student's Guide to Writing College Papers* will be added as I assess class needs.

W 9/7: Course introduction; self-assessment assigned
Reading due: Syllabus

F 9/9: Paper 1 assigned
Assignment: Log into Blackboard
Reading due: KV's Wikipedia page (discussion of Wikipedia as a source to follow)
Writing due: Post self-assessment to Blackboard

M 9/12: *[Final day to add or drop a WR class]*
Final portfolio assigned
Reading due: The Declaration of Independence (selections)
Reading due: Wikipedia, "Dystopias"
Reading due: KV, "Harrison Bergeron" (7-14)

W 9/14: *Reading due:* Turabian, Chapter 5
Reading due: KV, "Welcome to the Monkey House" (30-51)

F 9/16: Introduction workshop: introductions as problem statements
Reading due: Turabian 6.1-6.3 and 7.2.3 – 7.2.7
Reading due: KV, "Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow" (315-)
Writing Due: Reading Response 1

M 9/19: Map or storyboard workshop
Reading due: Intelligence Squared Debate: "Should Assisted Suicide Be Legal?"
Reading due: Turabian Ch.8-9 and Ch. 12

W 9/21: *Assignment:* Map or storyboard for Paper 1 due **30 minutes before class**
Reading due: KV, "Deer in the Works," (222-238)
Writing due: Reading Response 2

F 9/23: Peer workshop on Paper 1
Reading due: KV, "The Euphio Question" (189-205)
Reading due: Turabian Ch. 12 and 15
Writing due: First draft of Paper 1

M 9/26: *Reading due:* KV, selections from *Player Piano*

Reading due: KV, "EPICAC" (297-305)

W 9/28: *Reading due:* KV, "Report on the Barnhouse Effect" (173-188)
In-class writing; sentence dissection focused on issues common to the class.

F 9/30: Assigned: Paper 2
Reading due: KV, "Miss Temptation" (75-89)
Writing due: Final draft of Paper 1. Bring a hard copy to class.

M 10/3: *Reading due:* KV, "Where I Live" (1-6)

Reading due: KV, "New Dictionary," on prescriptivism vs descriptivism (118-123)
Reading due: Stephen Fry, "On Language"
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J7E-aoXLZGY>

W 10/5: *Reading due:* Strunk and White, Chapter 4
Reading due: Geoffrey Nunberg, "The Decline of Grammar"
<http://www.theatlantic.com/past/docs/issues/97mar/halpern/nunberg.htm>
Reading due: Mark Halpern, "The War that Never Ends"
<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1997/03/a-war-that-neve-r-ends/376801/>

F 10/7: Writing Workshop: Troubleshooting common problems from Paper 1
Reading due: "Politics and the English Language," Orwell
<https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/orwell46.htm>
Writing due: Reading Response 3

T 10/11: [Substitute Monday schedule]
Reading due: "Tense Present," DFW, on prescriptivism vs. descriptivism.
<http://harpers.org/wp-content/uploads/HarpersMagazine-2001-04-0070913.pdf>

W 10/12: *Reading due:* Turabian readings on transitions and conclusions
Reading due: Strunk and White on transitions and conclusions
Reading due: KV, "Next Door" (pp)

F 10/14: *Reading due:* KV, "D.P." (161-172)
Writing due: First Draft Paper 2 due

M 10/17: Peer Workshop
Reading due: Selections from Stephen King, *On Writing*

W 10/19: Workshop on transitions and conclusions
Reading due: KV, "The Foster Portfolio" (59-74)
Writing due: Reading Response 4

F 10/21: *Reading due:* KV, "The Lie" (238-253)
Writing due: Second Draft Paper 2

M 10/24: *Reading due:* KV, "Unready to Wear," (254-269)
Reading due: KV, "The Hyannis Port Story" (147-160)

- W 10/26:** *Reading due:* KV, “Who Am I This Time,” (15-29)
- F 10/28:** *Reading due:* KV, “More Stately Mansions” (134-146)
Writing due: Final Draft of Paper 2
- M 10/31:** *Reading due:* Selections from “Existentialism is a Humanism,” J.P. Sartre
Reading due: “Working with a model from WR”
Reading due: Choose a sample student paper from WR
- W 11/2:** *Reading due:* KV, *Mother Night*, Introduction – ch5
Writing due: Reading Response 5
- F 11/4:** *Reading due:* Selections from Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution,”
Writing: Paper 3 assigned
- M 11/7:** *Reading due:* KV, *Mother Night*, Chapters 6-12
- W 11/9:** *Reading due:* KV, *Mother Night*, 13 – 20
Writing due: Reading Response 6
- F 11/11:** *Reading due:* KV, *Mother Night*, 20 - end
Reading due: Hannah Arendt, selections from “Eichmann in Jerusalem”
- M 11/14:** *Reading due:* Selections from Austin and Searle on performative speech acts
Writing due: Paper 3 Argument Map, Storyboard
- W 11/16:** Peer Review Workshop
Writing due: Paper 3 First Draft
- F 11/18:** Paper 3 Presentations
Reading due: KV, “The Kid Nobody Could Handle” (270-283)
- M 11/21:** Paper 3 Presentations
Reading due: KV, “Tom Edison’s Shaggy Dog” (111-117)
- W 11/23:** Paper 3 Presentations
Reading due: KV, “The Long Walk to Forever” (51-58)
- F 11/25:** Peer editing; sentence workshopping
Writing due: Paper 3 Second Draft
- M 11/28:** In-class writing; sentence workshopping
Reading due: KV, “All the King’s Horses” (90-110)
Reading due: Turabian Ch.14
- W 11/30:** **NO CLASS**
- F 12/2:** Reviewing Portfolio requirements
Writing due: Final draft of Paper 3

- M 12/5:** Portfolio Workshop
Reading due: KV, “The Manned Missiles” (284-296)
Writing due: First draft of final portfolio; emphasis on introduction, table of contents
- W 12/7:** *Reading due:* selections from KV, *Man Without a Country*
- F 12/9:** Introduction to WR150, What To Expect, What We Learned
- M 12/12:** Course evaluations, wrap-up
Writing due: Final draft of final portfolio