

FS102 W6: Academic Discourse II

Odd Fellows 203

MWF 8-8:50

Spring 2012

Prof. Ben Slote (bslote; x-3391)

Office: Bentley 201

Hours: T: 10:30-12; 2-4

W 9-10, F: 2-3 & by appt.

Inventing Appalachia

Geographic labels are rarely neutral. In this country as in any other, history and the work of culture layers geography with meaning that, for better or worse, helps define what people think of these designated places and their inhabitants. We will study this phenomenon as it relates to the sprawling region we are in fact inhabiting right now, “Appalachia.” The idea of “Appalachia” has come to mean something—or a number of things—that are enduringly distinctive, distorted, and yet rather important to the whole country’s self-definition. We will study the historical origins of this meaning, some of its more striking features, how specific representations of Appalachian life reinforce or complicate this picture of the region, and other historical realities of the area that may not match most people’s assumptions about it. You should leave the class knowing a lot about Appalachia—both the myths and the realities—and also something about how cultural meaning in general gets generated and whose interests it serves.

The course also means to be a practical extension of the work you did in FS101. To this end it is organized around learning objectives shared by all sections of FS102. Through our reading, speaking, and writing, you will

- participate in a sustained conversation with other academic writers and speakers;
- practice generating a thesis that addresses a clearly defined problem;
- practice supporting that thesis with appropriate reasoning and evidence; and
- communicate in progressively complex and nuanced ways.

Finally, because this is a “W” section of FS102, we will pay persistent attention to issues connected to writing: strategies for conceiving, organizing, writing and rewriting effective essays; common pitfalls to avoid in one’s prose; and the rules of grammar and punctuation that still obtain with standard English (no matter how often they are violated in an uncareful world). More than once we may depart from the syllabus to address these writing issues as they arise.

Required texts (available at the college bookstore):

Back Talk from Appalachia: Confronting Stereotypes. Dwight Billings, Gurney Norman, and Katherine Ledford, eds. Lexington: Univ. of Kentucky Press, 1999. (Designated *BTA* in the syllabus.)

Fred Chappell, *Look Back All the Green Valley.* NY: Picador, 1999.

James Dickey, *Deliverance.* NY: Dell, 1970.

Diana Hacker, *A Writer’s Reference, 7th Edition.* NY: Bedford, 2011.

Course Packet (designated as **P** in the syllabus)

Course schedule (subject to some improvisation):

1/18 W Introduction: region as identity

Where “Appalachia” Came From

1/20 F Murfree, “The Star in the Valley”(1878) and the *Atlantic Monthly*—handout

- 1/23 M Kingsolver, “Rose-Johnny”(1988) and *The Virginia Quarterly Review*—handout
First essay due (ungraded)
- 1/25 W Frost, “Our Contemporary Ancestors in the Southern Mountains” (1899) (P);
first speech assigned
- 1/27 F pop-cultural samplings; writing issues
- 1/30 M Eller, “Forward” to *Back Talk from Appalachia*; Lewis, “Beyond Isolation and
Homogeneity” (BTA)
- 2/1 W Shapiro, “The Local-Color Movement and the ‘Discovery’ of Appalachia” (P)
- 2/3 F **informal speeches**; discuss second essay; Graff handout about summarizing

Feuds

- 2/6 M Fox, *A Cumberland Vendetta* (*Century* magazine, 1894), chs. 1-9 (P)
- 2/8 W finish *A Cumberland Vendetta*; **informal speeches**
- 2/10 F Blee and Billings, “Where ‘Bloodshed Is a Pastime:’” Mountain Feuds and Appalachian
Stereotyping” (in BTA)

“Hillbillies”

- 2/13 M **informal speeches**; Harkins, “Introduction: Race, Class, Popular Culture, and the
‘Hillbilly’” (P)
- 2/15 W Harkins, “The Emergence of ‘Hillbilly’”(P); writing exercise/writing issues (1st ¶s)
- 2/17 F **informal speeches**; **second essay due** (essay due 2/20 for today’s speakers)
- 2/20 M “Beverly Hillbillies” (1962): Season 1, Episode 1; Season 1, Episode 7 (YouTube.com)
- 2/22 W Ballard, “Where Did Hillbillies Come From?” (BTA)
- 2/24 F Dickey, *Deliverance* (1970), “Before” – “September 14th” (pp. 3-89)
- 2/27 M *Deliverance*, “September 15th” (93-165)
- 2/29 W *Deliverance*, “September 16th” (167-240)
- 3/2 F finish *Deliverance*; writing exercise/writing issues
- 3/5 M No class; the movie *Deliverance* (1972) screening tba
- 3/7 W discuss the movie; Graff handout about arguments
- 3/9 F Harkins, “Epilogue: from *Deliverance* to Cyberspace: the Continuing Relevance of
‘Hillbilly’ in Contemporary America” (P)

Coal Mining

- 3/12 M Abramson, “Bituminous Coal Industry” (P); Cantrell, “Harlan County Mine War” (P);
third essay due
- 3/14 W discuss *Harlan County USA* (movie, screening tba); Biskind, “Harlan County, USA: The
Miners’ Struggle” (P)
- 3/16 F Maggard, “Coalfield Women Making History” (BTA)
- 3/17-3/25 Spring Break
- 3/26 M Massey Energy and the Upper Big Branch mining disaster of 2010 (handouts); second speech
and research essay assigned
- 3/28 W library visit, Jane Westenfeld, Reference Librarian
- 3/30 F **Hacker quiz**

Race and “Rednecks”

4/2	M	Inscoc, "Race and Racism in Nineteenth-Century Southern Appalachia: Myths, Realities, and Ambiguities" (P)
4/4	W	Foxworthy, "You Might Be a Redneck" (YouTube clips); Preliminary research proposals due (on Sakai)
4/6	F	Shelby, "The 'R' Word: What's So Funny (and Not So Funny) about Redneck Jokes" (BTA)
4/9	M	Chappell, <i>Look Back All the Green Valley</i> , Chs. 1-3
4/11	W	<i>Look Back</i> , Chs. 4-6
4/11	Th	Service learning reflection due (on Sakai)
4/13	F	<i>Look Back</i> , Chs. 7-9
4/16	M	finish <i>Look Back</i>
4/18 – 4/27		final speeches
4/30	M	About the final essay
5/7	M	Final essay due by 5 pm (in my department mailbox, Odd Fellows 205)

How course grades will be calculated:

Writing*	First essay (1/23)—ungraded		
	Second essay (2/17)		10%
	Third essay (3/12)		10%
	Final essay (5/7)		25%
	Informal writing: Hacker quiz (3/30); writing exercises (2/15,3/2), service learning reflection (4/10*)	(50%)	(25%)
Speeches	First speech		10%
	Second speech		15%
Class Participation**			20%

*Please note that you cannot qualify to pass the course unless you complete all the written work

** How I will evaluate class participation is described at the end of the syllabus.

COURSE POLICIES:

Attendance: This class will be discussion-based and collaborative, so you need to be here, ready to contribute. More than two unexcused absences will adversely affect your grade, **and if you have more than six unexcused absences, you cannot pass the course.** If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out from a classmate what work is upcoming and what work you need to make up. If you are an athlete who will miss classes for competitive events, please speak to me near the beginning of the semester and give me a copy of your travel schedule. If you need to miss class due to a religious observance, then please let me know in advance so we can make arrangements to cover material from that day. For further information, see <http://www.allegeny.edu/news/inw/holidays.php>.

Students with disabilities: students with disabilities who believe they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact Disability Services at 332-2898. Disability Services is part of the Learning Commons and is located in Pelletier Library. Please contact that office as soon as possible to ensure that such accommodations are implemented expeditiously.

Late Papers: The nature and timing of coursework in this class means that *there cannot be late papers*. If foreseeable circumstances prevent you from getting a paper in on time, get it in *early*. Unexcused late papers will be marked down one partial letter grade per class day late. For medical excuses, I need official documentation from the Health Center or your doctor. I'm no good at interpreting symptoms myself. And unless otherwise informed, **essays must be handed in as hard copy in class, not sent electronically.**

Documentation style for your essays: All students should use the MLA style for documenting sources in written work. MLA style is presented in Hacker's *A Writers Reference* and can also be found at <http://www.bedfordstmartins.com/hacker/resdoc/humanities/english.htm>.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the cardinal sin of the intellectual community. Any writing that makes unacknowledged use of the work of others (their words or ideas or organization), including material from the Internet, will receive a letter grade of F and will be sent to the Honor Committee, as required by the Faculty Handbook.

The Writing Center: All students—no matter their level of competency as writers—are encouraged to make use of the Learning Commons and the writing consultants there. For details see <http://learningcommons.allegheeny.edu/>

HOW I WILL EVALUATE CLASS PARTICIPATION:

While it is difficult to quantify the success of a student's contributions to class discussion (at our best we all contribute in unique ways), here are the general standards I will use to grade participation:

A range: Participation at this level is marked by its active nature, its consistency, and its quality. When **A** participants read an assignment, they *prepare* to participate in a class discussion; they read assignments fully, carefully, and critically enough to be ready not just to respond to my questions but also to initiate discussion with comments and questions of their own. Such participants will also come to class ready to make and argue assertions about the reading and to think out loud about its implications; they will attend to the comments of others in class, agree, elaborate or *civilly* disagree with them, bring our attention to passages from the reading to make their point, and at times connect such thinking with earlier readings or previous class discussions. In short, students who by their engagement in class discussion throughout the semester show themselves to be true students of the course material--persistently conscientious and inquiring--will get an **A** for their efforts. They will also make the course a lot better. (By the way, substituting quantity of participation for quality will not work.)

B range: Students who come to every class, have almost always done all the reading, and consistently respond to the questions of others in a way that demonstrates their command of the reading will earn a **B** participation grade. What separates this effort from an **A** one is not so much quantity (teachers are remarkably good at detecting bs) as the level of preparation--one's reading and thinking--that has gone on before one gets to class, especially the kind that enables students to *initiate* discussion. But you cannot get a **B** participation grade by just showing up, either, or by talking every once and a while.

C range: A **C** participant comes to almost all the classes, usually has done most of the reading most of the time, but not with the energy necessary to demonstrate through participation their ongoing engagement with the material. Such a discussant contributes infrequently, maybe one time every third or fourth class.

D range: Automatic pilot mode. You were physically there most of the time, spoke a few times all semester maybe, but that was it.

F: Not coming to class is the traditional route. Other variations: sleeping in class, not having your book, being routinely disruptive.

About being shy: Students who are reluctant to talk in class can partially compensate for their silence by e-mailing me comments and questions about the homework *before* the class discussion of it. If you define yourself as “shy,” though, please don’t convert this definition into permission not to talk. People get “writer’s block” but still must hand papers in on time; others have “test anxiety” and take tests. In this class, participating in discussions is an obligation as important as test and papers, so keeping mum isn’t really an option for those who expect to succeed.