

“Prizes, Ten Best Lists and Cultural Value”

Honors 150: Honors Composition I  
Autumn 2010  
California University of Pennsylvania  
3 credits

M. G. Aune

Office Hours:  
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Caveat Lector: Some may consider some material in this course offensive.

Honors 150/H3 10660  
TTh 2.00 – 3.15 PM  
Building A 144

Honors 150/H2 10659  
TTh 12.30 – 1.45 PM  
Building A 144

**Goals**

This course will focus on authority: how to recognize it and how to establish it. Establishing authority (ethos) for yourself as a writer and as a student is the key to success at university and beyond. In writing, authority has two elements. The first is formal: clarity and organization. Writing that fulfills the requirements of the assignment, is easy to read and understand, and well-structured has the best chance of communicating your ideas. The second is external. Locating reliable sources (research) that you can use, via quotation, paraphrase, and summary, adds to your authority. A strong, clear thesis requires both these elements. In this course, you will practice identifying authority in others' writings and creating it in your own.

**Objectives**

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- recognize and write a clear thesis statement;
- develop organized and cogent support for a clear thesis statement;
- write a variety of clear, integrated introductions and conclusions;
- write with a clear sense of audience;
- critically evaluate the usefulness of information obtained electronically, via web or library resources;
- critically evaluate and constructively respond to their own writing and that of their peers;
- continue to refine these skills in Honors 250;
- establish an effective system for writing argumentative essays for college level courses.

## Description

Though their meaning may seem straightforward, prizes and rankings, especially for those given for cultural work, are very complex mechanisms for generating meaning. For example, we often identify ourselves and others based on awards we have won or for which we have been nominated. We assume that someone who has won an award is qualitatively different from someone who has not. Awards can bring abstract and concrete remuneration, from the prestige of being a winner to the benefit of a cash prize.

Rankings or top ten lists, such as the one hundred movies you should see before you die (<http://movies.yahoo.com/feature/100-movies-to-see-before-you-die.html>), have similar functions but tend to be less formal and more idiosyncratic than institutional prizes, such as the Nobel, the Pulitzer, or the Academy awards.

In this class, we will investigate and think about how these awards and rankings function and why they are important. We will read, watch, and research texts and people that have won awards. We will examine rankings and generate lists of our own. We will pursue the questions this intellectual work will raise, including: What do these prizes mean? How are they awarded? Why do some people reject prizes? What is the relationship between the giver of the prize and the recipient? And all of these questions might be seen as informing one, over-arching question: how do we as a culture assign, exchange, and accumulate value?

## Methods

By the end of this course, we should have a better idea of how culture, and academic culture in particular, understands value. We will pursue our investigation through argumentative papers, classroom discussion, group projects, and occasional quizzes.

**Texts** (These are available at the campus bookshop and via most on-line booksellers. Be aware, the bookshop generally returns its books by the middle of the term, so be sure to buy them as soon as you are able.)

Toni Morrison. *Beloved*

Harold Pinter. *Betrayal*

Diana Hacker. *A Pocket Style Manual (PSM)*

Additional readings are available on the Desire2Learn site and listed on the calendar.

A dictionary, bring to every class

A flash drive dedicated to schoolwork

| Grading                              |            | Scale    |    | University Interpretation |
|--------------------------------------|------------|----------|----|---------------------------|
| Paper 1                              | 100 points | 100–94%  | A  | Superior Achievement      |
| Paper 2                              | 100 points | 90–93%   | A- |                           |
| Paper 3                              | 150 points | 87–89%   | B+ |                           |
| 10 Quizzes                           | 100 points | 84-86%   | B  | Above Average             |
| Group Portfolio                      | 150 points | 80-83%   | B- |                           |
| Editing Journal                      | 60 points  | 77-79%   | C+ | Average                   |
| Personal Portfolio                   | 50 points  | 74-76%   | C  |                           |
| Total                                | 710 points | 70-73%   | C- |                           |
| All scores                           |            | 60-69%   | D  | Below Average             |
| will be posted on the D2L gradebook. |            | Below 60 | F  | Failure                   |

### **Grade Guidelines**

These descriptions apply to the final grade in the class and the score on particular assignments.

A work is outstanding. It goes beyond the basic requirements of the assignment and the class. The work shows evidence of critical and original thinking. Ideas are clearly supported and explained.

B work is more than satisfactory. It shows understanding of the given task and an understanding of the rules for writing as set out in the syllabus. Thinking is clear, though not necessarily highly critical or highly original. Ideas are supported and explained, although not always clearly or consistently.

C work is satisfactory. It shows familiarity with though not a complete understanding or execution of the given task and rules for writing as set out in the syllabus. Thought shows inconsistent critical engagement or originality. Ideas are too broad and not clearly supported with evidence. Writing tends to summarize or describe rather than analyze.

D work is below average. It shows an inconsistent understanding and execution of the given task, text, and rules. Thought and writing are often disorganized and do not communicate an understanding of audience or genre. Paper seems to be written quickly with little attention to revision or proofreading.

F work is unsatisfactory. It shows little if any understanding of the given task, text, or rules. Thought and writing are disorganized and do not communicate an understanding of audience or genre.

### **Policies**

In the class, I will strive to observe the university's core values of integrity, civility, and responsibility. I have written the policies below with the belief that a mutual understanding and engagement with these core values will make this class more rewarding for all of us. By accepting this syllabus and attending this class, I expect that you have also agreed to abide by these policies.

### **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities reserve the right to self-identify; must register with the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) to receive services; will provide the appropriate notice from OSD for accommodations, which specifically involve faculty.

Requests for approval for reasonable accommodations should be directed to OSD. Approved accommodations will be recorded on the ODS Accommodation Approval notice and provided to the student. Students are expected to adhere to the ODS procedures for self-identifying, providing documentation and requesting accommodations in a timely manner. The OSD is located in Azorsky 105 and the telephone number is 724.938.5781.

### **Academic Honesty**

According to the University Bulletin, "[t]ruth and honesty are necessary prerequisites for all education, and students who attempt to improve their grades or class standing

through any form of academic dishonesty may be penalized by disciplinary action ranging from a verbal reprimand to a failing grade in the course or dismissal from the University. If the situation appears to merit a severe penalty, the professor will refer the matter to the appropriate dean or to the Provost. The student may appeal the penalty as outlined above with the Academic Integrity Committee hearing appeals above the level of Dean.”

I assume that all work you turn in for this course is yours, and any material that you have acquired from an outside source is documented properly. Failure to do so is considered plagiarism and, per University policy, may result in failure of the course or dismissal from the University. See *PSM 107-110* for more details.

### **Late Papers**

Late papers will lose ten points per day until they are turned in. You are responsible for turning in all work assigned in this class. Any assignment not turned in will receive a score of zero. Failure to turn in more than two assignments will result in failing this class.

### **Attendance and Participation**

According to the University Catalogue, “[r]egular class attendance is a prerequisite to successful class performance.” Important parts of the work for this course will be done in small and large groups. This means that your consistent presence is important to the success of the class as a whole. If you are unable to attend class, you must contact me via phone or email within twenty-four hours. You are still responsible for any work done or due in class that day. Similarly, you are responsible for contacting your group members if you miss a class. If you are more than fifteen minutes late to a class meeting or if you leave early, you will be considered absent.

Participation includes contributing to class discussion, prompt attendance, listening and responding constructively to your classmates, being prepared to discuss the readings, and bringing your books and writing material to every class meeting. If you attend class but are unprepared to discuss the homework, or do not have your books or writing material, you will be considered absent. If you accumulate more than three absences, you may lose one letter grade from your final grade. If you miss more than four classes, you will not pass the class. Missing a scheduled conference is equivalent to missing two class meetings.

This syllabus makes no distinctions between excused and unexcused absences. If you add this class late, for whatever reason, you will still be considered absent for the days you missed and responsible for the material covered on those days. If you are a member of a sports team or other university organization and must miss a course because of that commitment, you must have your coach or advisor contact me in writing (not via phone or email) at least two weeks before the absence.

### **Cell Phones**

Please turn off cell phones before class begins. If you are expecting an important call, turn your phone to silent mode. If the call arrives, quietly step into the hall to take it. If you use your phone during class, you will be asked to leave and marked absent for that day.

### **Paper Format**

Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are to be type-written, double-spaced, with one-inch margins, in twelve-point Times font. Your name, the date, the class, my name and the assignment are to be at the top of the first page. Do not forget to title your work. Any papers longer than one page must have page numbers and be stapled.

### **Quizzes**

There will be ten, brief, ten-item unannounced quizzes. They will consist of short answer and identification questions. They will cover the reading for that day and any terms and concepts discussed in previous classes. The quizzes will be handed out at the beginning of class and collected after fifteen minutes. Quizzes may not be made up.

### **Editing Journal**

This is to be kept in a blue book and will contain one entry for each paper: three total. After a paper is returned, make an entry for that paper in the blue book. The entry should 1.) describe any mechanical, format, or usage errors and their corrections. If you misspell a word, write out the misspelled version and the correct version. (I will note these errors with a check mark in the margin next to the line where the error occurs. You will have to identify the error yourself. It may be spelling, punctuation, etc. If you cannot locate the error, see me.) 2.) if there are any problems with MLA citations or the bibliography page, these should be noted as above, the original version and the correct version. 3.) note and respond to any content-based comments. 4.) include three to five sentences about the writing strategies that you found to be successful for this paper and those that you will repeat for the next paper, and any new strategies that will help you to improve your writing for your next paper. I expect you to refer to your own notes from your sideshadowing. 5.) include two or three sentences about the helpfulness (or lack thereof) of the peer review.

The goal of the editing journal is to create a critical record of your own writing so that you can better address your strengths and weaknesses. The editing journal, along with your writing narrative will become part of your portfolio for this class and your opportunity to reflect on your own writing. The score will be determined by the comprehensiveness and organization of your journal. Twenty points are possible for each entry for a total of sixty. I will collect and check the journals periodically so be sure to bring it to class every day.

### **Writing Narrative**

This is to be a one page, double spaced account of your writing process. It will have two parts. First, describe what about writing papers is most difficult for you and how you try to overcome that difficulty. Then describe what you find easiest about writing papers.

Second, in narrative style, describe how you set about writing a paper for a college course. Imagine a three to four page research paper is due on a Thursday. Describe when you start the paper, how you start it, and when you finish it. Include where you work (computer lab? in your room? Library?), how you save your work (on you computer? N drive? flash drive? other?), where do you print? Be sure to include any specific strategies you use such as brainstorming, outlining, asking a peer to review, proofreading, spell check, grammar check, the Writing Center. This is to be an accurate description of what you do, not what you think you should do or what you

want me to think that you do. Being honest in this is important to your own improvement.

This paper will count for twenty of the fifty possible points in your portfolio.

### **Paper 1 Compare/Contrast**

This paper will be a conventional literary analysis, designed to practice and refine your ability to conduct a close reading of a literary text, and write a authoritative, organized argumentative paper with an effective introduction and conclusion. In a three to four page paper, you will compare and/or contrast stories by Müller, Le Clézio, and/or Lessing. You will examine at least two stories, each by a different author and using the rhetorical strategy of comparison and/or contrast, establish and support a thesis that tells your reader something new about the stories. The paper should engage with the literary elements we have been discussing, such as theme, symbolism, metaphor/simile, structure, style or imagery. The thesis must be clear and strongly supported using quotations from the stories. A certain amount of summary will be necessary to support your thesis, but it should be kept to a minimum.

This paper will be evaluated based on the clarity of the thesis, the organization of support for the thesis, familiarity with the stories, use of literary elements and quotations, conformity to paper format rules, sense of authority and effectiveness of the introduction and conclusion.

This course regards writing as a process. The process of this paper will include an outline, a side shadow, and a peer review. Failure to complete one of these elements will result in the loss of ten points from your final score, up to a total of thirty.

On the day the final version of this paper is due, you will turn in the outline, the peer review sheet, the side-shadowed version, and the final version.

### **Paper 2 Reception Project**

This paper will be a three to four page analysis of the reception of *Betrayal*. The goal is to practice reading and evaluating critical work to determine if it is useful to you. As we have discussed in class, you will look at the writer's thesis and support, as well as the language used and sense of audience. Read the on-line, customer reviews from Amazon.com and determine what criteria are being used. Does the reader compare/contrast the book? Does the reader invoke his/her own experience? Once you have determined the criteria the reviewers have used, determine what value the reviewers are assigning the book. What do they seem to feel is important in a novel? Does the author's identity as a Nobel laureate come into play?

The paper must end with a one hundred word review and rating of *Betrayal* that you would contribute to Amazon.com. You do not have to post the review if you do not want to, however.

Your examination of the on-line reviews will be primary research. As such, you will need to document this work. In your text, you will have to quote, paraphrase, and/or summarize reviews and identify their sources. You will need to provide a works cited page in MLA format listing each of the reviews you are citing. The format rules for this can be found in *PSM* 127-54.

The paper will be evaluated on the knowledge of the text, the clarity of the conclusion, the use of quotations/paraphrases/summaries, and attention to format and usage rules. As with Paper 1, this paper should follow all the usual rules of format. The process of this paper will include an outline, a side shadow, and a peer review.

Failure to complete one of these elements will result in the loss of ten points from your final score, up to a total of thirty. On the day the final version of this paper is due, you will turn in the outline, peer review sheet, side-shadowed version, and final version.

### **Paper 3**

This paper will be a culmination of your work throughout the term. We have been looking at *Beloved* as a kind of case study for the cultural importance of prizes. In an argumentative, researched paper of five to seven pages, contribute to the discourse surrounding *Beloved* and the Pulitzer, NBA, or any other literary award. You may begin with any of several questions. What does *Beloved's* winning a literary prize tell us about the book? The author? The audience? The prize? If a novel wins a prize such as the Pulitzer, does that imply that the book's moral stance is validated? Are the criticisms/praise of the novel valid or not? If so, why or why not? How is Morrison's winning the Nobel prize related?

The paper should be argumentative in form, establishing a thesis, supporting it with evidence, acknowledging counter-arguments and concluding. You are expected to use outside sources including the essays we read in class, but you must cite the knowledge you acquired from the source and include a complete works cited page.

As with Paper 1, this paper should follow all the usual format rules. The process of this paper will include an outline, a side shadow, and a peer review. Failure to complete one of these elements will result in the loss of ten points from your final score, up to a total of thirty. On the day the final version of this paper is due, you will turn in the outline, the peer review sheet, the side-shadowed version, and the final version.

### **Personal Portfolio**

This is due on the last day of class. It should contain each of the three papers that you wrote, with my comments on them and the rubrics. It should also contain your writing narrative, completed editing journal, and all of the quizzes. You are to fill in the scores and I will check them against my own scores to be sure mine are accurate.

Most importantly, it should have a one to two page personal statement, following the format rules, in which you describe how your writing has progressed from the first paper to the last. You must cite specific examples of improvement or lack of improvement from your papers, writing narrative, and/or editing journal. Do not focus solely on the scores. Do not use the paper as an opportunity to evaluate the class (good or bad). There will be an opportunity for this in November. The personal statement is worth twenty of the fifty points in the portfolio.

Please assemble this in a paper folder, do not use three ring binders. Except for quizzes, points will be deducted for any missing items.

### **Group Project**

At the beginning of the semester, you will be randomly organized into five groups. Throughout the semester, you will work in these groups on informal and formal projects.

- 1.) Lead a Discussion (100 points). Your group will be responsible for leading a forty-five minute class discussion of the text assigned on the day of your discussion (see calendar). You may conduct the discussion in the way you see fit. In addition to the forty-five minute discussion, your group will make a ten to fifteen minute presentation on a particular cultural prize. The presentation must consist of a profile of the prize including its history, controversies, past winners, criteria for winning, method of

selecting a winner, frequency, amount of the award and most importantly, the cultural importance of the award. What does it tell us about what our culture values? Or does not value? Your group must inform me of which prize you have chosen: the Academy Awards, the Booker Prize, the Pulitzer Prize, the Golden Raspberry Award, the *Praemium Imperiale*, or the Polar Prize. At the end of your presentation your group must give me: a outline of your discussion and a written version of the prize you profiled (2-4 pages, following the rules for written work) You will be graded on equal participation of group members, preparation, clarity, organization, and class engagement.

Each group must meet at least twice outside of class for the project. Some time will also be provided in class for group work.

On the day of the discussion, each group member must turn in a *Group Member Evaluation Form* for each member. Each member must also fill out and turn in a *Peer Rating of Group Members*. If these forms are not turned in on time, ten points will be deducted from the final score. These forms are available for download from the D2L site.

2.) A prediction for the Nobel Prize in Literature for 2010 (50 points). This must be a list of the ten most likely candidates. As part of this prediction, you will be collaborating with the other groups and the other section of this class to create a display case in the Library devoted to the Nobel Prize in Literature and this year's award. The list is due on 23 September. Each group must also bring a written list of ideas for how to create a display in the library informing the campus community about the prize.

### **Calendar**

Subject to change. \*These texts are available for download from the D2L site or from the library on-line reserves. The bibliographic information is available on the D2L site.  
*PSM – Pocket Style Manual*

#### **Week 1**

31 August Introductions, Top Ten Children's Books

2 September Read & Discuss: "Oppressive Tango"\* Annotating, elements and structure of short story, Herta Müller, Nobel Prizes, establish groups

#### **Week 2**

7 September Literature Resource Center, Thesis Statements, Read & annotate: "My Family"\* and "The Intervillage Bus"\*

9 September Read & Discuss: "Yondaland"\* and "The Boy Who Had Never Seen the Sea"\* J.M.G. LeClézio

#### **Week 3**

14 September Introductions and conclusions, Read & Discuss: "Through the Tunnel"\* Doris Lessing

16 September Group 1 Presentation, Read & Discuss: "The Nuisance"\*

#### **Week 4**

21 September Due: Paper 1. Bring a paper copy, a copy on disk, and the outline.

23 September Due: Group Project, Nobel Prize Predictions and Display Project. Meet in lobby of the library, in front of the elevators.

**Week 5**

28 September Return Paper 1, Editing Journal, Conferences  
30 September Group 2 Presentation, Read & Discuss: *Betrayal* pp. 11-71

**Week 6**

5 October Meet in Library, on-line research ex  
7 October Read & Discuss: *Betrayal* pp. 75-138, Group 3 Presentation

**Week 7**

12 October Meet in Library, on-line research ex  
14 October Read & Discuss: Harold Pinter Poems\*, Christopher Hitchens, "Sinister Mediocrity"\*

**Week 8**

19 October Due: Paper 2  
21 October Study Day, No Class

**Week 9**

26 October Return Paper 2, Editing Journal, Conferences  
28 October Read & Discuss: *Beloved* pp. 3-59, Group 4 Presentation

**Week 10**

2 November Read & Discuss: *Beloved* pp. 60-99  
4 November Read & Discuss: *Beloved* pp. 100-56, Group 5 Presentation

**Week 11**

9 November Read & Discuss: *Beloved* pp. 157-95  
11 November Read & Discuss: *Beloved* pp. 199-256

**Week 12**

16 November Read & Discuss: *Beloved* pp. 257-324  
18 November Read & Discuss: Iannone "Toni Morrison's Career,"\* Iannone "Literature by Quota,"\* Bayles "Special Effects"\* and Cohen "Ideology Said to Split"\*

**Week 13**

23 November Read & Discuss: "Black Writers in Praise,"\* Atwood "Jaunted by Their Nightmares,"\* and Kakutani "Books of the Times: Review of *Beloved*"\*  
25 November No Class, Thanksgiving Break

**Week 14**

30 November Paper 3 due  
2 December Extra Day

**Week 15**

7 December Return Paper 3, Editing Journal, Conferences  
9 December Final class Due: Portfolio

### **Standard Academic Usage**

1. Titles of books, films, magazines and newspapers are in italics: *Beloved*, *New York Times*, *The Godfather*. See *PSM* 85-86, 71-72.
2. Write out all numbers that are two words or fewer: one hundred, 352. See *PSM* 84.
3. Put all foreign words in italics, *gaijin*. See *PSM* 86.
4. The first time you refer to a person, use his or her full name; after that use only the last name.
5. Avoid slang and clichés. See *PSM* 16-18.
6. Always assume that you should use third person (he, she, it, one) rather than the first person (I, we) or second person (you), unless you check with the instructor first.
7. Place periods and commas inside quotation marks. E.g. Shakespeare wrote, "To be or not to be." Not, Shakespeare wrote, "To be or not to be". See *PSM* 72.

### **Tips for Passing This (and any other) Class**

1. Always have your homework assignment read, annotated, and be ready to ask and answer questions about it.
2. When emailing your instructor, always use a salutation (Dear...), identify yourself by your full name, and use a closing (Sincerely...).
3. Do not wait until the last minute to write and print your papers.
4. Attend class punctually.
5. Get to know at least three other people.
6. Be familiar with D2L and all its features.
7. Visit the office hours of your instructor at least once per term.
8. Have a system for saving copies of all the papers you write, either on your own computer or on a flash drive.
9. Use a calendar to keep track of all your deadlines and assignments.