

**Writing 101:03 First-Year Writing Seminar**  
**Sustainability: Balancing Self, Community, and Environment**

**Spring 2009**

**MWF 9:15-10:20 a.m., Admin 211A**

**Professor: Jim Albrecht      Office: Admin 222-D, [albrecjm@plu.edu](mailto:albrecjm@plu.edu); 535-7698.**

**Office Hours: M 12:30-2:30, Tues. Noon-1:30, Friday, 12:30-1:30; and by appointment.**

**Writing Center (available to all students by appointment): 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Mortvedt Library, x8709.**

**Required Texts: (Available at the P.L.U. Bookstore).**

- \* Thoreau, Henry David. Walden and Resistance to Civil Government. Ed. William Rossi. (Norton Critical Edition). ISBN: 0-393-95905-8).
- \* Wackernagel, Mathis, and Rees, William. Our Ecological Footprint: Reducing Human Impact on the Earth. (New Society. ISBN: 0-86571-312-X).
- \* Pollan, Michael. The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals. (Penguin. ISBN: 1-59420-082-3).
- \* Ryan, John C., and Durning, Alan Thein. Stuff: The Secret Lives of Everyday Things. (Northwest Environment Watch. ISBN: 1-886093-04-0).
- \* Friedman, Thomas L. Hot, Flat, and Crowded: Why We Need a Green Revolution—and How it Can Renew America. (Farrar, Strauss & Giroux. ISBN: 978-0-374-16685-4).
- \* Lunsford, Andrea. Easy Writer: Pocket Guide. (Bedford/St. Martin's, 3rd edition. ISBN: 0312313181).
- \* *Selected supplemental handouts and excerpted readings posted on Sakai page for WRIT 101:03*

**Strongly recommended:** A college-level dictionary.

**The First-Year Experience Program:**

The First-Year Experience Program at P.L.U. is designed to help you with the transitions you are making as you adjust to college. It will assist you in cultivating your abilities as a student, teaching you skills you will need to participate actively in the ongoing conversation that is educated discourse, and it will encourage you to cultivate your ability to be a productive, thoughtful, and caring citizen, by helping you to develop an understanding of your place and purpose in society at large. Toward these ends, First-Year Experience seminars focus on the broad themes of thinking, literacy, and community. Each course is organized around a specific topic related to these larger themes. As you grapple with the questions raised by your course's topic, you will develop the ability to read, think, converse, and write in a more critical manner—abilities that will be essential in your college education, and in life beyond college.

**Critical Thinking:** You will learn to engage in critical thinking by:

- Articulating framing open-ended and generative questions for inquiry (both for our class discussions and in your own papers).
- Considering multiple perspectives on an issue.
- Recognizing and evaluating the assumptions behind ideas or opinions.
- Recognizing and evaluating the consequences of an idea.
- Seeing the thinking process as a means to framing conclusions and commitments that matter to you.

**Literacy:** You will learn to practice literacy by:

- Reading sophisticated texts carefully, actively, and imaginatively.
- Communicating clearly and persuasively in writing, conversation, and in oral presentations.
- Demonstrating “information literacy” in researching: the ability to recognize and define your information needs, to utilize appropriate library resources for finding such information, and to evaluate the information you find.

**Community:** You will learn to be an active and engaged member of our learning community by:

- Being prepared for and actively participating in our class sessions on a daily basis.
- Treating others with the respect they deserve – even when you disagree with them.
- Working effectively with other members of the class to define an agenda for study.
- Engaging with the ideas of others so that as a group we can work towards a more complex and sophisticated understanding of the texts and issues we study.

## **Course Description: Writing 101, First-Year Writing Seminar**

The goal of the First-Year Writing Seminar is to introduce you to the skills you need to write successfully at the university level. You will be asked to approach writing as an ongoing process of exploring and developing ideas, a process in which revision is central. Writing in conversation with the ideas of other writers, you will learn to explore and evaluate multiple perspectives on an issue so that you can formulate an informed position of your own. Finally, through this process of reflecting on important social issues, the ideas of other thinkers, and your own social position and intellectual assumptions, you will develop the tools and habits of mind necessary to help you critically shape your own values and life choices.

## **Our Theme: Sustainability—Balancing Self, Community, and Environment**

Environmental advocates of “sustainability” often argue that our ecological crises are at heart not technological problems, but cultural ones. Creating “an ecologically durable and decent society,” David Orr asserts, “will require us to confront the deeper cultural roots of our problems,” while “well-used landscapes and settled societies wherever they exist” teach us that the “surest signs” of ecological social design are “healthy, durable, resilient, just, and prosperous communities.” In this course, we will consider the interrelated challenges of creating healthy selves, communities, and environments. We’ll use as our departure point Thoreau’s Walden—which exhorts us to cultivate our lives through a more sustainable “economy” of value and purpose, and suggests that a more sustainable life requires and enables a renewed connection to nature. We’ll read, as well, contemporary theorists on environmental sustainability, and study aspects of the food industry in the U.S. as a complex example of our industrialized, consumer society’s ecological impact. Finally, we’ll discuss whether Thomas Friedman’s blueprint for moving toward an environmentally sustainable future envisions the combination of environmental and social health that Orr calls for, and consider what blend of collective and individual actions might be required. Our other main “text” will be P.L.U. itself: we will study the University’s ongoing efforts to make our campus more environmentally sustainable, and, through service projects with various units that provide and care for our campus and its inhabitants, we will strive to understand and contribute to the dynamics that sustain our community. And, of course, at every stage we’ll advance our learning by writing. You’ll practice various types of writing—expository and personal essays, a service journal, a group research and writing project, and (accompanying your portfolio), a final two-part reflective essay on what you’ve learned about the environmental crises we face, and about yourself as a writer.

## **Experiential, Community-Based Learning:**

A central component of our course is community service work you will perform with several University units that support the living, teaching and learning we all do on the PLU Campus. The goals of this service work are many:

- To gain first-hand knowledge and appreciation of the ecological dynamics of our PLU community—that is, of the environmental impacts you and I have as individuals in this community, and of the efforts various members of our community are undertaking to make our campus more sustainable.
- To gain a better understanding of PLU as a community and contribute to that community: a primary goal is to perform work that helps the offices we are partnering with complete necessary and beneficial tasks.
- To achieve, through the experiences of community service, a more concrete and complex understanding of the key ideas we are studying in this course. To better understand the challenges of creating more environmentally sustainable communities, and to consider how or why environmental sustainability may depend on healthy dynamics of communal responsibility, cooperation, and planning.

Our class will divide into work groups of three or four students (depending on your schedules) that will work together for the entire term. In your groups, you will spend 3-hours a week working with two different service partners, each for a 5-week stint. Thus, you will perform 30 total hours of community service over the course of the term. You will reflect on that experience in a journal, in our

class discussions, and in the written papers for our course. This service work is a required and essential part of our course. Successful completion of the course will require that you both satisfactorily complete the service work and reflect critically upon it in your written work for the course.

**\* NOTE: \* *If you do not wish to participate in this activity, you should drop this course and enroll in another section of Writing 101 or an F.Y.E. 190 Inquiry Seminar.***

The service placements focus on various aspects of the environmental impact we have as we work and live on the PLU campus (food, water, and recycling/waste). They are:

- Working with Dining Services staff to cut waste in the dining process (and/or deliver excess food to local food banks).
- Working in a student-run community garden on campus.
- Working with Grounds Maintenance staff on landscaping or irrigation.
- Working with the Environmental Services staff. on recycling efforts.

**Students with Special Needs:** If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible. If you have questions concerning the services available at P.L.U. for students with disabilities, please contact the Office of Counseling and Testing, Ramstad Hall 106, 535-7206.

## **Course Requirements and Rules:**

**1) Attendance and participation:** A successful writing seminar requires that your individual writing be in dialogue with the reading, discussion, writing and revision that we do as a group. Your classmates and I will expect that you have thoughtfully completed your assigned work outside of class so that you can be an active participant in class.

**\* NOTE \*:** *Three absences or more will affect your grade. More than three absences in the course may result in your failing the course.*

**2) Successful completion of all assigned papers/writing assignments.** Since we will focus on revision, it is essential that you complete your first drafts of papers on time. When your paper is being workshopped by the entire class, you must post your draft on our Sakai page by the deadline specified in the assignment. Otherwise, you are responsible for posting your draft (on Sakai) by the time specified in the assignment so that your peer group members and I can read it. You will receive grades on the revised version of each of our papers, and (potentially further revised) versions of each paper will be included in your final portfolio. (See below for a breakdown of how your total course grade will be calculated).

**3) Revision:** You will be expected to practice writing as an on-going process in which revision is central to developing, re-directing, and sharpening your arguments. First drafts will be required for each paper. We will discuss drafts in class, raise new issues for re-reading and additional writing, and discuss strategies for revising. A final draft that does not include substantive revisions will not receive a passing grade.

**4) Peer review groups:** You will be assigned to a peer review group, in which you will receive written feedback on each of your drafts and provide, in turn, written comments on others drafts. This process not only allows you to benefit from others' suggestions about your paper, but, by evaluating your classmates' drafts, you will develop the skills you need to evaluate your own writing. I will read these peer reviews along with each draft, and your comments on others' papers will factor into your course grade (see below).

**5) Successful completion of community service work.** (See above).

**6) Using Sakai:** We will be using a Sakai course page to facilitate communication in our seminar. I will regularly post course documents, assignments, and announcements on this page. You will use Sakai to share your drafts and comments with classmates and me. I will expect you to check in on the page regularly. To log onto Sakai from the P.L.U. homepage, go to “eResources” and under “Sakai” click onto “Sign in.” Enter your P.L.U. e-mail username and password. Once you’re logged on, you’ll find on the top menu bar a list of all the Sakai pages in which you are enrolled. Click on our class (WRIT 101:03 Spring 09), and follow the menu options to access various tools (view the syllabus, assignments, and daily announcements; send an email to the whole class or your peer group; post a draft a discussion forum, etc.).

**7) Final Portfolio:** At the end of the semester, you will submit a portfolio that presents your work for the term. Your portfolio will include:

**a)** A two-part introductory essay that reflects upon the work you’ve done in this course. First, what you’ve learned about sustainability, and, second what you’ve learned about writing: what you’ve achieved as a writer (with reference to specific papers), and what areas you still need to work on. This introductory essay is a kind of interpretive road-map to the portfolio: it should present an argument about what I—as your teacher and reader of your portfolio—will find in the portfolio.

**b)** A selection of your work from the semester. This selection should provide the evidence to back up the claims made in your introductory essay. It must include the revised copies (with my comments) of each of your papers. You may offer a further-revised version of any or all of these papers. (Any revised paper must have a one-paragraph attachment explaining what types of revisions you’ve made—to focus my review of your final revisions). In addition, you may—and should—include selections from any other written work you have done in the course: first drafts of papers (this may be helpful to illustrate how you have engaged the process of revision), peer review comments you’ve written on classmates’ papers, informal writing assignments, etc. Don’t give me everything! The portfolio is meant to be a selection of work you are presenting and reflecting on. But you should keep a folder of everything you write for the course, in anticipation of compiling your portfolio.

**Course Grades:** Your final course grade will be composed of the following:

15%: Attendance and participation

10%: Service Journal

40%: Paper Grades (10% each for Papers 1 through 4).

10%: Comments on Classmates’ Drafts in Peer Review Group

25%: Portfolio.

**A Note on Grades:** In grading, I will follow the official PLU definitions of letter grades:

A = excellent; B = good; C = satisfactory; D = Poor; E = Failing.

## Course Goals and Criteria for Evaluation:

The following are skills that we will work on in this course, and the skills on which you will be evaluated.

*NOTE: This is a list of goals for the entire course; we will build on these skills as the semester progresses, focusing on particular skills in successive papers. Particular criteria will be specified for each assignment. You will not be expected to fulfill all of these criteria in any one assignment; however, these are skills that you should strive to integrate in your work as the semester goes on, and as you continue in your development as a writer beyond our seminar.*

**1) Reading and Discussion:** You will be evaluated on your ability to: recognize and discuss significant issues and arguments raised by a text; ask productive questions (questions that lead to additional thinking and discussion) about a text and the larger issues it raises; and participate actively in a group discussion that moves toward a more complex understanding of an issue and the positions a writer takes on it.

**2) Group Work:** You will be evaluated on your ability to contribute to small-group discussions that help generate ideas and questions about a topic, and to complete tasks as a group. In our peer review sessions, you will be evaluated on your ability to provide your classmates with comments that raise specific questions about the substance of a draft's arguments and make specific suggestions about issues and ideas that might be engaged in the process of revising/developing those arguments.

**3) Papers:** You will be evaluated on your ability to write essays in which you:

**a)** sufficiently address the issues and questions outlined in the paper assignment.

**b)** effectively craft your presentation of information and persuasive arguments to your specific audience.

**c)** explain, discuss, and evaluate the ideas of other writers in order to explore and evaluate multiple perspectives on an issue and formulate an informed position of your own.

**d)** maintain a voice and opinion of your own when you are discussing the ideas of others.

**e)** reflect on your own experience in a productive and critical manner, describing, in sufficient detail, significant patterns or events in your life, and moving beyond mere description to offer an interpretation of those experiences.

**f)** bring your discussion of the ideas of other writers into dialogue with reflection on your own experience -- whenever possible, considering alternative perspectives in order to acknowledge and critically assess your own assumptions and values.

**g)** offer analysis of an issue or a text. "Analysis" can include:

-- observing and describing significant details, facts or patterns

-- drawing logical inferences from those details, facts or patterns

-- perceiving and making connections between ideas or arguments (which includes seeing tensions, conflicts, or inconsistencies)

-- applying an idea or theory to a particular situation or example

-- asking exploratory, evaluative, or critical questions

-- making an evaluative or critical assessment of an idea (based on the above steps)

-- Pursuing your discussion of an issue to a conclusion or to subsequent, related questions

**h)** write introductory and concluding paragraphs that are not formulaic or overly general, but instead offer an engaging and substantial opening and closing for your essay.

**i)** quote specific passages from other texts accurately, grammatically, and economically.

**j)** when appropriate, discuss, explain, and evaluate the ideas raised by a passage you quote.

**k)** move from one idea to the next in an organized and clear fashion, articulating connections and transitions when necessary.

**l)** write prose that is reasonably clear of spelling and grammatical errors. When a pattern of recurring error is pointed out to you, it is your responsibility to understand your error (with the help of your instructor and a grammar handbook), and then concentrate on eliminating it.

## Academic Integrity:

PLU's policy on academic integrity prohibits cheating and plagiarism and mandates minimum punishments that an instructor must levy on any student who has cheated or plagiarized. Most violations of academic integrity involve presenting the ideas or work of others as your own. In a writing seminar like ours, issues of academic integrity usually involve plagiarism. PLU's academic integrity policy stipulates that,

*“Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to:*

- Directly quoting the words of others without using quotation marks or indented format to identify them; or
- Using sources (published or unpublished) without identifying them, such as the Internet (and particularly making use of an Internet paper writing service); or
- Paraphrasing materials or ideas of others without identifying the sources.

If you are unsure about something that you want to do or the proper use of materials, then ask your instructor for clarification.” (Source: <http://www.plu.edu/academics/integ.html>.)

In our seminar, you will learn and practice the proper methods for quoting language borrowed from other writers' texts and for citing ideas paraphrased from them. With these skills under your belt, you will be expected to adhere to the University's standards of academic integrity.

An instructor who discovers a student has cheated or plagiarized is required to notify the student of the violation (in person if possible), and if necessary to refer the situation to an Academic Dishonesty Hearing Panel. P.L.U.'s policy requires that “[t]he minimum penalty grade for dishonesty in coursework that constitutes 30% or more of a course grade shall be a failing grade for the course. Dishonesty in other required course work shall result in a minimum penalty grade of zero for that work..”

**\* P.L.U.'s full policy on academic integrity (including what constitutes cheating other than plagiarism) may be viewed at <http://www.plu.edu/academics/integ.html>.**

## Course Units:

Specific assignments will be discussed in class and posted on Sakai.

Readings posted on Sakai indicated by (S).

### Unit I (Weeks 1-4)

#### **Thoreau's Walden: A sustainable life, and our connection to nature.**

Texts:

- Thoreau, Walden.
- Orr, excerpts from “Introduction” and “Human Ecology,” from The Nature of Design. (handout)

And, for introduction to Service-Learning:

- Bergman, “What I Learned from the Campus Plumber” (S).
- Orr, from Earth in Mind: “Designing Minds,” “Agriculture and the Liberal Arts,” and excerpt from “Reflections on Water and Oil.” Also review excerpts from The Nature of Design.

***First Service Placement begins, week of Monday, 2/23.***

**Paper1: Expository / Analysis Essay**

## **Unit II (Weeks 4-7)**

### **Sustainability: Theories and Practice**

#### **Texts:**

- Wackernagel and Rees, Our Ecological Footprint.
- Web exercises on calculating your ecological footprint.
- Ryan and Durning, Stuff: The Secret Lives of Everyday Things.
- Review Orr, “Introduction” and “Human Ecology” from The Nature of Design.

#### **Paper 2: Personal Essay**

*Service journals receive mid-term comments  
Second service placements begin week of 4/6*

## **Unit III (Weeks 8-11)**

### **Tracing our Environmental Impacts: The Complex Example of Food**

#### **Texts:**

- Pollan, The Omnivore’s Dilemma (Parts I & II).
- Ryan and Durning: Review selected pieces in Stuff.

#### **Paper 3: Group Research and Writing Project:**

**Tracing the Ecological (and Social) Footprint of “X” (a food commodity available in the U.C.)**

## **Unit IV (Weeks 11-14)**

### **Toward a Healthy Planet and Society: Collective and/or Individual Actions?**

#### **Texts:**

- Albrecht, on Dewey’s model of community from Reconstructing Individualism (S).
- Leopold, Aldo, “The Land Ethic” (S).
- Thomas Friedman, Hot, Flat and Crowded. (Selected chapters).

#### **Paper 4:**

**Personal Reflection Essay: (Due with Portfolio).**

#### **FINAL EXAM PERIOD: TUES, 5/19, 8:00-9:50 a.m.**

- Course Evaluations
- Portfolios Due

*NOTE: We will meet as a class during this period. Please note this when you plan your end-of-semester travel plans.*