

# Freshman Writing Seminar

Canvas Instructor  
Ames Library, Rm. 327

Meeting Times: MT TF 9:30 - 11:00  
Office Hours: W 9:30 - 11:00

This is a writing course designed to help you claim your own writing—to help you recover the sense of your own importance in your writing. It will help you find a writing voice that is comfortable, direct, original and at times eloquent. The basic premise of the course is that anyone who writes is a writer, and that class assignments are not practice exercises for the time when you will do real writing, but is in fact genuine writing itself—purposeful and authentic, and designed to move its readers—who are also real.

The course uses an assignment sequence in which each assignment builds on the previous ones, each exploring different distances and approaches to one general theme. This semester we will be using two books about the Dust Bowl era which depicts what happened to the people of that time and place when they were uprooted from what had been their home, and what happened when they tried to establish new roots in the West. We will look at this event in human history from a variety of angles and explore it in our own writing using a variety of modes. We will be focusing on the importance of that sense of place every person knows, as well as what happens when that sense of roots or place is destroyed.

However the center of the course will become what we write ourselves, not essays written by professionals. Thus we will learn to become each other's editors, telling what we think works well and what we think could be made ever better, and through helping each other, we will become better writers ourselves. We will learn all sorts of things, such as how to alter rhetorical distances to accommodate audience and purpose, how to vary voice, rhythm, sound, texture, echoes, and structure in order to achieve the effect we want. And we will answer the question: *How can I improve my style?* by figuring out just exactly what one's own style really is.

## Texts

- [Combining and Creating: Sentence Combining and Generative Rhetoric](#)
- [Reapers of the Dust](#)
- [The Bones of Plenty](#)

## Requirements

1. Attendance
2. Participation in class discussions, writing groups, full class workshops, written critiques of our classmate's writing
3. Five rough drafts, five final drafts, four final revisions
4. Writer's Notebook (I. In-class freewriting & outside class freewriting—details to follow; II. Sentence-combining exercises.)
5. Grammar mid-term and final
6. All assigned readings. You may expect quizzes on the readings from time to time so please stay current. Also you will be expected to discuss the reading in class and so you need to be prepared for that.

## Essays

On the day the **ROUGH DRAFT** is due please bring to class enough copies of your paper for everyone in your writing group. This is as important a due date as that for your final paper and will be scored accordingly. I will look at these during writing groups and give them back to you at the end of the hour.

Essays must be typed, double-spaced, with adequate margins, one side of the page only, and they must contain a title. Put your name, courses number and hour on the first page in the right hand corner. **NO** title pages or folders. **Please make sure you have a personal copy of all your final papers before you turn them in.**

## Portfolio

Last day of class: This will include a final revision of your best paper to share with the entire class, plus three other revised essays. You must include all four originals. You will also include an "Introduction" to your work in which you describe your life as a writer this semester.

## Sentence Combining (SC) Exercises

These assignments are to be completed in the first half of your writer's notebook. (The second half will contain your freewrites—both in class and out of class.) Be sure the two sections are clearly divided. And be sure that you clearly identify the assignments and the corresponding page number and chapters.