

# WRI315: *Advanced Composition*

## INFORMATION, CLASS POLICIES, AND SYLLABUS

Meeting Time and Place: Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:00-4:15 in BAC 151  
Professor: Richard (Rick) Hill / cell phone: 858-366-5221/ E-Mail: rhill@pointloma.edu  
Office: BAC 112/ Office Phone: 2670 /LJML Dept Phone: 2297  
Office Hours: *Open*: Tu- Th 4:30-5:30 & Wed 2:00-4:00 (except when department and faculty meetings intervene) *By Appointment*: M&F 2 – 5. Other times can be arranged as necessary.  
**Knock on the door with a question:** Anytime I'm in the office.

### REQUIRED TEXTS (Bring to class every day)

1. Glaser, Joe. *Understanding Style*. New York: Oxford UP, 2010. Be sure to get this edition—the red cover, not the dark blue one.
2. Strunk and White. *Elements of Style*. 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. We will use the 4<sup>th</sup> EDITION only.
- 3 Various essays available on the internet (listed on course calendar; **print them all or save them all to your computer by the second class session**).

**REQUIRED SUPPLIES:** Stapler, writing paper and pen for in-class assignments, two double-pocket folders. I write notes on the folders, so please get the kind that has a white, writable surface on the inside—not the slick plastic-coated or dark-colored inside kind. Also please write your name on the front and back of your folder for easy identification. Bring your supplies to class every day.

**REQUIRED EMAIL:** Students will receive some assignments, group meeting schedules and other instructions via e-mail. Please check PLNU email daily from the first day of class (twice daily is better). Grades will be viewable on CANVAS.

### COURSE RATIONALE and LEARNING OUTCOMES

WRI 315 is a course for students who (1) either plan to write in their vocation or plan to teach writing at the secondary level, and/or (2) enjoy writing and want to learn professional techniques for writing essays for publication. College-level writing skills and familiarity with basic essay structures is assumed. We will review rhetorical craft and focus on the primary goal of all advanced writers: to write brilliant, thought-provoking, and memorable essays: the kind that, no matter what the subject, your readers won't be able to stop reading once they start.

*We will work toward* (1) an understanding of the elements that make the essay a distinct literary genre, (2) an understanding and appreciation of writing as a *process*, (3) a writer's approach to reading and writing and (4) the development of personal writing style through advanced writing techniques. Students should finish the course with a solid grounding in rhetorical craft necessary to (1) write professional essays and (2) impart their knowledge of writing.

#### Official WRI315 Course Learning Outcomes

*Students who complete WRI 315 will be able to*

1. Identify aspects of writing theory and craft in the works of professional essayists.
2. Analyze written professional and peer compositions to determine efficacy of authors' writing techniques.
3. Apply professional writing techniques, including research, as a strategy to increase reader interest.
4. Craft essays using descriptive and evocative language in the "show don't tell" method, using scenes, dialogue and other advanced writing conventions.
5. Identify and demonstrate teaching methods for advanced Writing techniques via peer groups and presentations.
6. Format submissions for publication in a professional manner using strategies discussed in class.

*For a list of LJML Department Learning Outcomes, and other official policy messages from the PLNU administration and LJML department, see page 8.*

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**ACTIVITIES and EXPECTATIONS**

We will have lectures/seminars on craft and mechanics, use a workshop/conference approach to writing development, study style & technique in published writing, and discuss essays by accomplished writers. Students will write three substantial essays in assigned styles, develop three shorter pieces from assignments, freewrites or reflections, model established writers from our texts and beyond, and compose shorter pieces, including reviews and editorials. To keep up with this substantial writing requirement, you will need to budget *at least* the standard two hours outside of class for every hour in class.

To keep all the paper straight and help you get the most out of the class as the semester progresses, all class policies and expectations are detailed in the pages that follow. The goal for putting it all in writing is to avoid misunderstandings and help students earn the best grade they are capable of earning. **Please read each section of the syllabus carefully; then review as you take the syllabus quiz. It is each student's responsibility from the first day of class to know and follow the class policies.** You don't have to memorize anything, but to earn all possible credit, you should know the class policies and where to look for formatting guides, how to get credit for assignments, etc.

**CLASS POLICIES**

I. **Attendance Policy:** Since so much happens in the class discussions and hands-on group work, regular attendance is a must in seminar courses like this one. Here are the specific policies:

**Extra credit for perfect attendance:** Students who miss no classes or portions of classes all semester for ANY reason will have 10 extra credit points added to their final scores.

**Excused absences:** The only "excused" absences are those authorized by the Provost, usually for official school activities (sports, music, speech, etc.). Your coach or activity sponsor will notify the Provost if you are involved in an excusable activity; the Provost's office will then notify all your professors. Assignments for excused absence days must be turned in **on or before** the absence day unless other arrangements are made in advance.

**Absences with no grade penalty:** Students are allowed up to three absences for illness, personal business, family in town, oversleeping, or whatever, without grade penalty. No explanation is necessary for these absences.

**Excessive absences:** Students who miss more than three classes for any reason will have 50 points deducted for each absence over three. Students who miss five classes before midterm (8<sup>th</sup> week of classes) will be de-enrolled from the course. **Accumulating six absences at any point in the semester incurs an automatic de-enrollment, a W before midterm or WF grade after midterm.**

**Late arrivals & early departures:** It's better to show up late for class than not show up at all, but keep in mind that when figuring attendance points, late arrivals and early departures (10 minutes or less) will count as half-absences after the third occurrence. Late arrivals and early departures over 10 minutes will count as half-absences.

***Exceptions to the above:*** If you have a serious accident or illness, the attendance policy and assignment schedule will be modified, provided you notify me as soon as possible. **Please also notify me immediately if you have a schedule conflict that may cause you to be late for class more than three times in the semester.**

**CLASS POLICIES (continued)**

**II. Class Participation** is crucial, as the class will be run largely as a seminar. In a seminar course, saying “I’m not into class participation today” is like saying to your math professor “I’m not into quizzes and tests today.” Students should come prepared for class discussion of the assigned readings. When homework and drafts are due, students should be prepared and willing to (1) offer constructive criticism to peers and (2) take professor and peer criticism and use it. If you want to earn an A or B in the course, you should participate every day, preparing questions or comments in advance when appropriate.

**To help you know at all times what your grade is and to help avoid confusion at the end of the semester, each student is encouraged to keep a running log of class attendance and participation, plus a running total of scores on assignments.** If you keep up your log, you’ll generally do better in the class AND you can earn *extra credit* (up to five points per sheet) by turning in your **typed** log on the last class day of September, October, and December. See the log example on page 16.

**III. Writing Assignment Guidelines and Policies**

**\*\*Neatfreak alert! Do not throw away ANY written work for this class until you get your final course grade.\*\***

**1. Typed Writer’s Analyses from the assigned essays by other writers** (marked in the syllabus as “AN1, AN2, etc.) will be collected for most essay reading assignments and are due at the beginning of class. If you follow the format and show thoughtful engagement with the essay under discussion, you will receive all possible points for the assignment. Keep in mind that if you keep up with the smaller assignments, the resulting points will raise your grade percentage overall.

**Analysis Format (Also see example on page 15)**

Typed, half-page to full page, single spaced, blank space between paragraphs. Use 12 point, non-fancy font. At the top of the page, put ID and assignment information as illustrated below

Eartha McLoma, 25589  
WRI 315 / Hill  
September 3, 2016  
AN 1 Heath “Yardwork”

**Analysis Content**

**Short Paragraph one:** Brief overview of the writer’s style (1-3 sentences). This isn’t a lit class, so DON’T SUMMARIZE OR ANALYZE THE THESIS OR EXPOSITION OF THE ASSIGNMENT. Instead, write about the **technique** and **effect** of the writing: HOW the writing works to evoke reader understanding and response. See sample analysis on page 15 for examples.

**Short Paragraph two: Techniques I can use:** List two or three SPECIFIC WRITING techniques of this author that piqued your interest and/or helped get the point across—things like particular rhetorical devices, dialogue, repetition, etc. Number the techniques and give short examples of how the writer did it.

**Short Paragraph three: Techniques I won’t use:** What writing devices, style, etc. didn’t work so well for you in this piece? Give at least one example of what didn’t work and/or an example of what could have worked better.

**Short Paragraph four:** Any additional comments on the writing.

**Remember:** Do *not* do a “reader response” or other literary analysis of the essay; stick to comments on the writer’s approach and technique. Also, jump right into your analysis without a long introduction. A pithy half-page for the analysis is enough for full credit if you don’t pad with literary analysis or long intros.

**2. Understanding Style and Elements of Style Homework:** Half-page, typed single spaced exercise assignments from both books will be given regularly. If you follow the format and show thoughtful engagement with the assigned exercise, you can receive all possible points for the assignment, another grade percentage booster. On the other hand, if you blow through these assignments like busywork, the scores won’t help your final grade.

**Always read the *Understanding Style and Elements of Style* chapters carefully before you attempt the assignment—do not go straight to the exercise and wing it. This is not busy work, but high level exercises that will improve your writing if you apply yourself.**

### III. Writing Assignment Guidelines and Policies (continued)

**Homework Format:** Use the same header style as you do with the Analysis assignments: your name and student number; class number and my name, date, assignment number, and name of the chapter.

**A note on handwritten homework:** Handwritten homework will not be accepted except under extraordinary circumstances. This policy is designed to eliminate the practice of doing homework in class on the day it is due. But if for some emergency reason (broken typing finger, etc) you absolutely must do a handwritten homework assignment, *be sure to show it to me at the very beginning of class to receive credit for it.* Handwritten homework handed in after the first 2 minutes of class and homework emailed after class begins will be subject to the dropped scores policy (see below).

3. **Daily in-class writings:** We'll start most days with a 5-10 minute prompted writing. At least one of these writings will be developed into an essay. Neatness and coherency are not required; you will receive credit for the daily writings if (a) you write for the full prescribed writing period and (b) you turn the writing in with your daily folder.

#### **Essay Assignments**

- A. Three longer essays: 1000-1500 words, topic areas: (1) Personal-with-a-point and some research, (2) Vocational (Education, Law, Politics, History, Science, Psychology, or Sociology) with more research and with or without a personal angle and, (3) Faith or Philosophy with still more research, with or without a personal angle.
- B. Three shorter essays: 500-750 words, topic open. These are usually expansions of freewrites or responses.
- C. Five 250-500 mini-essays, including media (book, music, film) reviews, a character profile, an opinion piece, and a model or two, in which you emulate a published writer's *style and syntax*, using a topic of your own. Examples of how to model will be provided.

**Essay Mechanics and Packaging:** We're moving toward professional writing, so all essays must follow the "How to Send an Essay" model, which is the basic format used by professional writers when they send pieces to editors. Each of the longer and shorter essays (but not the mini-essays) must be preceded by a written précis (see attached models).

#### **How to put together and turn in a final draft package**

1. On Top: The final draft. To avoid your paper being handed back and counted late, use the "How to Send" format." Type or write (in ink) the assignment description (ex: "Short Essay #1 Final Draft) on the top of the first page of the final draft. You may use double-side printing on all drafts.
2. Below the final draft: at least one edited "proof" draft (wherein you print out a draft and edit it with a pen). This editing should be done AFTER your group workshop. Label this one "proof draft" in ink.
3. Next one down: the labeled "complete draft" that you turned in on the complete draft due date with peer feedback and signature(s).
4. Below the complete draft: any handwritten or typed rough drafts you did for the assignment. This part is optional, but recommended: the more effort I see, the better your grade for the process.
5. Bottom: At the bottom of the stack goes the précis that you turned in on the précis due date. To avoid a substantial grade penalty on the essay, the complete draft and précis must have been turned in on time as affirmed by my signature.

STAPLE EVERYTHING TOGETHER and put it in your folder to turn in. Use your required stapler and please do not turn in unstapled packages—they can get scattered and lost.

**PROOFREAD:** *Again, we are moving toward professional presentations to picky editors, so proper punctuation and grammar are essentials in your final draft.* Proofread carefully, use spell and grammar checkers, see a tutor, and/or see me during office hours if you have questions about mechanics. Essays that do not meet college writing standards (i.e., papers that show consistently incorrect punctuation, usage, or grammar and/or un-spellchecked work) will be returned for correction and be subject to the dropped homework score policy or late paper grading.

### III. Writing Assignment Guidelines and Policies (continued)

**EMAIL DRAFTS OF LONG AND SHORT ESSAYS:** Always send an e-mail copy of your final essay draft before the beginning of class on the final draft due date. You can also email homework by class time for credit if you are going to miss class. **You do NOT need to send email copies of homework if you turn in the hardcopy on time.**

**ESSAY GRADING:** Your enrollment in this class indicates that you're already a relatively good writer, but your grade will depend to a significant extent on how you apply what you learn in this class and thereby take your writing to a higher level. The aim here is to make the leap from perfunctory college writing for a professor to professional-level writing for volunteer readers who tend to stop reading if you don't keep their attention. There is a professional method for keeping that attention, and we will practice that method with determination. Every working writer knows that Edison got it right: "Inspiration usually follows perspiration."

Grading is done on a point system with variations on the following basic criteria: Mechanics, Organization, Content & Effort, Strategy & "Reader Take Away." To get an A or B on an essay, you **don't** have to be a naturally gifted writer with stunningly original and brilliant ideas. Brilliant essays are always welcome, but grades are based on your demonstration that you're (a) working hard and putting in the time it takes to learn the strategies, techniques and presentation of professional writers, and (b) following the assignment guidelines and taking the time and effort to make a professional presentation.

#### **LATE /MISSING WORK POLICIES AND DROPPED SCORES**

**Homework and Writer's Analyses:** You must print out assignment drafts and homework to receive credit—showing it to me on your computer is not an option. Late homework and Writer's Analyses will not be accepted. However, keeping in mind we all have issues now and then, the lowest two (from late, missing, or substandard work) scores will be dropped. You don't have to provide excuses for missing items; zeros will be dropped automatically as long as you haven't used up your two drops. Please don't ask for special dispensations if you do use both of your drops. Homework done but not printed or not brought to class on time applies under the dropped scores policies.

#### **Essay assignments:**

**Late/Missing components:** If you miss a précis date or don't send an e-mail copy of your paper by the beginning of class on the paper due date, 10% will be deducted from the final score. If you miss a complete draft date, 20% will be deducted from your final score. You shouldn't wait until the next class to turn in a late final draft; get it to me ASAP. You must print out and turn in drafts on time to receive credit.

**How to get credit for an assignment even if you miss a class:** Send any assignments due that day with a classmate, OR e-mail the assignment by the beginning of class. You will get credit if you (1) send or e-mail the work on the date due (by the beginning of class) AND (2) bring a paper copy of the emailed work by the NEXT class day after an absence. In other words, if you don't e-mail but just bring your work the next class day after an absence, or if you e-mail but don't bring the work by the next class day, it will not be credited and the dropped scores provision will apply if you have drops left.

**A note on computer problems:** Unexpected computer problems plague us all, but it is your responsibility to have a contingency plan if something goes wrong. Investigate campus options you can turn to, and find TWO alternate computer/printer sites you can use when your main unit malfunctions. Also, be sure to have a USB drive (or two) and use it, even if you save work on a PLNU drive, cloud drive, or whatever. Assignments turned in late due to computer problems will be subject to the dropped score provision or late paper discount.

**Late printing caution and policy:** Assignments are due at the *beginning* of class on the date due. Always allow for long lines and jammed printers in the campus computer labs—do not wait until a few minutes before class to print out your assignments. The PLNU/LJML phenomenon of half the class missing at the beginning of the hour on assignment due days has forced me to institute this policy: Coming to class late because of late printing will count against your "tardy" total and the dropped score provision or late paper discount will apply to your assignment.

**THE PRINTING PROBLEM SOLUTION:** If you're running late with a print job, don't panic—simply send the assignment by email, come to class on time, and print the assignment later that day. If you don't do this more than twice, it won't affect your grade.

**PLAGIARISM AND RECYCLING:** PLNU has adopted a zero tolerance policy toward all forms of cheating. Here is the policy for the LJML department and this class: Copying homework constitutes plagiarism. All essays must be written with no help beyond workshop suggestions from classmates. Copying words, phrases, and ideas from books or journals and failing to note quotes or attribute the material is plagiarism. Downloading material from the Internet without attribution, including sentences, phrases, and ideas, also constitutes plagiarism.

*For instance, if you find the short phrase "Scintillating prose presented with rare verve" in a book, article, or blog and drop it into your essay without quotation marks and attribution, you have committed plagiarism.* Follow the rules you learned in WRI110 for quoting and paraphrasing other authors, always giving due credit. NOTE: This does not mean use MLA Works Cited and parenthetical citations. We will do informal citations in the essays we write, and instruction will be given on how to do this. **CRUCIAL: Do not recycle or revise essays you have previously written in (or are currently writing for) other courses.**

**"I really didn't mean to plagiarize" is not an excuse for plagiarism. Any plagiarism, recycling, or copying (even from other students and even on homework assignments) will result in an F for the course and a referral to the academic dean for possible suspension or expulsion from PLNU.**

**EVALUATION:** Total points will be added and grades given according to the following scale. Total extra credit possible is 10 bonus attendance points and 15 points for turned-in participation logs. Over-limit absence points will be deducted from the total; extra credit will be added to the total. Please feel free to discuss your grade with me any time. Assignments and activities are weighted as follows:

#### Approximate Percentages

Exercises, Analyses, quizzes, class writings	35%
Three short essays + 3 mini-essays	25%
Three longer essays	30%
Final Exam	10%

#### Percentages to Letters

92 – 100%	= A	70 – 75.9%	= C
90 – 91.9%	= A-	68.5 – 69.9%	= C-
87 – 89.9%	= B+	65 – 68.4%	= D+
81 – 86.9%	= B	60 – 64.9%	= D
79 – 80.9%	= B-	58 – 59.9%	= D-
76 – 78.9%	= C+		

#### CLASSROOM DEPARTMENT GUIDELINES

Unless your clothing is ridiculously distracting (like the student in one of my classes who, for a club initiation, came to class dressed only in a Speedo bathing suit while handcuffed to another student), how you dress for class is your business, and you certainly don't have to check your personality at the door. Even so, general adult deportment is expected in this class. Please refrain from all of the following disruptive and/or distracting actions during official class time. Violators may be embarrassed by having attention called to them, counted absent, or invited to leave class.

1. Leaving your cell phone on. Turn it off unless you have health/ safety) reasons and notify the professor in *advance* that you need to leave it on. **Seriously, do absolutely no texting or checking incoming texts in class.** For emergency texts, leave class temporarily. But don't have too many emergencies.
2. Reading outside material (including *Point Weekly* and other school publications). Save for after class.
3. Doing work from other classes or engaging in any personal writing. See above.
4. Doing ANY non-WRI315 class activities on your laptop computer. Leave your computer off and closed unless we are doing specific computer activities as a class. Take notes and do writing exercises with pen and paper.
5. Holding private conversations during class discussions, while the professor is talking, or while someone is asking a question. If you have a question about class, ask the professor—he likes questions.
6. Showing up late and/or without books or other required materials more than twice in the semester. Bring your books every day.
7. Doing anything else that is obviously disruptive / distracting to other students or the professor.

**Other department guidelines:**

*Temporary departures:* If you have to leave class briefly to use the restroom or other imperative, you need not ask permission. But do let me know before class begins if you'll need to leave early and won't be back.

*Health Issues:* If you have a chronic, acute, or temporary health issue that requires you to sit in a particular area or stand for part of class, wear sunglasses in class, take prescribed medicine, leave class often, etc., I'll work with you if you let me know your situation in advance.

**CLASS DISCUSSION / OPEN FORUM POLICY**

This is college, where it is okay to speak your mind. Please feel free to say and write what you think about the issues we discuss—there are no "politically correct" or "politically incorrect" positions; we should all strive to respect one another's views as we learn to support our own with honest evidence, calm logic, and clear rhetoric. I have opinions like everyone else, but unlike some of the professors I met as a student, I have no axe to grind on social or cultural issues and no political views to which students must sign on to win my respect. I am interested only in helping you express your convictions, whatever they are, so feel free to disagree with me during class discussions—doing so won't affect your grade, honest.

**Don't be alarmed** if I ask you questions in class discussions about your position—I'm not interrogating you or necessarily disagreeing with you. Rather, I'm using the *Socratic Method* (look it up) to help you clarify your position. Feel free to Socratic me right back, and please don't hesitate to disagree with me or anyone else in class. As long as we are civilized about it, I say the more arguments (lively discussions) the better—practice makes perfect.

**FINAL EXAM:** The final will be a portfolio and an in-class presentation on finals day. Our scheduled final exam time is **Thursday, December 14, 4:30 pm -7:30 pm**. Since the final is a class activity, it cannot be rescheduled for individuals; therefore, **DO NOT BUY AIRLINE TICKETS OR OTHERWISE PLAN TO MISS THE SCHEDULED FINAL UNLESS YOU ARE PREPARED TO DROP ONE FULL LETTER GRADE (A- to B-, etc) FOR SKIPPING THE FINAL.**

AND FINALLY, if after reading all the above, you're still wondering about something, please ask. My job is to help you through this course of study, and my goal is to get you through it with minimal pain and maximum enjoyment and benefit.

NOTES / QUESTIONS:

**OFFICIAL POLICY STATEMENTS FROM PLNU ADMINISTRATION  
AND THE LJML DEPARTMENT**

**PLNU Mission Statement: To Teach ~ To Shape ~ To Send**

Point Loma Nazarene University exists to provide higher education in a vital Christian community where minds are engaged and challenged, character is modeled and formed, and service becomes an expression of faith. Being of Wesleyan heritage, we aspire to be a learning community where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.

**WRITING PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES**

*Students who complete the WRITING program will be able to:*

1. Apply creative and advanced skills in various forms and genres of writing.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of the conventions and terminology of creative and advanced writing within literary and non-literary texts.
3. Demonstrate knowledge of major literary-theoretical perspectives and terminology.
4. Develop connections between the literature and language studied and the contemporary world.
5. Engage in writing and editorial processes through campus publications and external internships.

**Official Message from the Vice-Provost on course attendance and changes in registration:** *It is the student's responsibility to maintain his/her class schedule. Should the need arise to drop this course (personal emergencies, poor performance, etc.), the student has the responsibility to follow through (provided the drop date meets the stated calendar deadline established by the university), not the instructor. Simply ceasing to attend this course or failing to follow through to arrange for a change of registration (drop/add) may easily result in a grade of F on the official transcript.*

**OFFICIAL ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS STATEMENT FROM THE UNIVERSITY**

"While all students are expected to meet the minimum academic standards for completion of this course as established by the instructor, students with disabilities may require academic accommodations. At Point Loma Nazarene University, students requesting academic accommodations must file documentation with the Disability Resource Center (DRC), located in the Bond Academic Center. Once the student files documentation, the Disability Resource Center will contact the student's instructors and provide written recommendations for reasonable and appropriate accommodations to meet the individual learning needs of the student. This policy assists the University in its commitment to full compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Act of 1990, and ADA Amendments Act of 2008, all of which prohibit discrimination against students with disabilities and guarantee all qualified students equal access to and benefits of PLNU programs and activities.

**OFFICIAL PUBLIC DISCOURSE STATEMENT:** *"Much of the work we will do in this class is cooperative, by nature of the class discussions and general feedback given to written work and/projects; thus you should think of all your writing and speaking for and in class as public, not private, discourse. By continuing in this class, you acknowledge that your work will be viewed by others in the class."*

**Official FERPA Statement:** "In compliance with federal law, neither PLNU student ID nor social security number should be used in publicly posted grades or returned sets of assignments without student written permission. This class will meet the federal requirements by (each faculty member choose one strategy to use: distributing all grades and papers individually; requesting and filing written student permission; or assigning each student a unique class ID number not identifiable on the alphabetic roster.). Also in compliance with FERPA, you will be the only person given information about your progress in this class unless you have designated others to receive it in the 'Information Release' section of the student portal. See 'Policy Statements' in the undergrad student catalog."

**Official PLNU COPYRIGHT POLICY**

Point Loma Nazarene University, as a non-profit educational institution, is entitled by law to use materials protected by the US Copyright Act for classroom education. Any use of those materials outside the class may violate the law.

## WRI 315 COURSE CALENDAR

Subject to Adjustment as Necessary—watch for email notices

ALL READING AND WRITING ASSIGNMENTS ARE DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS ON THE DATE LISTED

Abbreviations: US = *Understanding Style* / SW = *Strunk and White* / EX = Exercise in the *Understanding Style* Book.

HO = Handout / EM = Email / LE = Long Essay Assignment / SE = Short Essay Assignment / ME = Mini-Essay

AN = Analysis of assigned reading / ICW = In-class writing / TBA = To Be Announced / POV = Point of View

WEEK/ DATE	READING COMPLETED BY THE BEGINNING OF CLASS	WRITING ASSIGNMENT(S) DUE AT BEGINNING OF CLASS	TOPIC & LIKELY ACTIVITIES
Week 1 TH 8/31	1.Syllabus (HO & EM)	Syllabus Quiz The Syllabus is a contract. Study the policies. Understand the requirements. Read all the fine print.	What is Advanced writing? Groups. ICW:TBA
Week 2 TU 9/5	1.US Chapter 12 2. Kevin Heath “Yardwork” 3. David Foster Wallace, “Authority and American Usage”: page 1, the tiny print that starts with “Save up to 50% and ends with “Luv ya. Alot.”  <b>(All assigned essay readings are handouts or available online)</b>	AN1: Before reading the US chapter, write the first draft of a one-page analysis (AN) of the style and technique in the Heath essay--from a writer’s point of view (POV). See syllabus for directions and example of how to write an AN from a writer’s POV.  US1: After reading all of US chap 12, apply the “Your Writing” exercise and “Points to Remember” on pg 215 to your Heath analysis. <u>Start the application with pen-marked corrections on your first draft.</u>  AN2: Second draft of Heath analysis, incorporating the pen-marked corrections. . Turn in both drafts, with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> draft on top.  AN3: List 10 expressions in Wallace and why you think he included them.	What is style?  ICW:TBA  Print your essays from the internet by today
Week 2 TH 9/7	1. Dillard “Terwilliger Bunts One” aka “An American Childhood” 2. Sanders “Under the Influence”	AN4: AN of either Dillard or Sanders. Read both: In Paragraph 4 of you AN, compare style and/or technique of the two authors.	Character Sketch What do we mean by “Personal with a Point?”
Week 3 TU 9/12	1. US Preface, Chapter 1 & 2 2. SW Intro and CH 1 3. Wallace, Start at the first “Did you know” and stop at “Thesis Statement for the whole article.”	US2: Pick the hardest exercise in US chapter 1 or 2 and do it. Include a statement on why the one you picked is the hardest. Read the whole chapter before writing anything.  SW1: Type an idea or edict in CH 1 that you don’t understand or disagree with, then a paragraph explaining why. Bring for credit and class discussion.	ICW:TBA What kind of CH2 writer are you? Modeling the model & précis.
Week 3 TH 9/14	1. Twain, “Fennimore Cooper’s Literary Offenses.”	ME1: Any author we’ve read so far or a favorite writer. If you choose your own author, bring a copy of what you model. In a half-page or so (single spaced) <b>model the writer’s <i>style</i> and <i>syntax</i> VERY closely—subject for subject, verb for verb, comma for comma, etc. But do not model the subject matter; make it as different from the original as possible.</b>  Précis for Short Essay # 1 (SE1). Focus on a person you know.	ICW Précis Workshop Quiz on Twain
Week 4 TU 9/19	1. LaMott “Shitty First Drafts” 2. Didion “Why I Write”	SE1 Short essay # 1. Complete draft for workshop. Workshop may be done during class time or outside. Attending the lecture is optional for you, but I have to be there. Be sure to have at least two readers SIGN and DATE your draft AN 5 on Didion or LaMott. In paragraph 4 of your analysis, compare the two from a writer’s POV	Visiting Scholar Jim McWilliams speaking on “The Middle Passage in LIT. 3-4 in Colt Hall
Week 4 TH 9/21	1. SW CH 52.	SW 2: Type a paragraph discussing an idea or edict in CH5 that you (a) don’t understand after careful reading or (b) disagree with after careful reading or (c) wildly applaud. Bring for credit and class discussion.  SE1: Final Draft, Short Essay # 1. Don’t forget to send your e-mail copy.	

## WRI 315 COURSE CALENDAR

Subject to Adjustment as Necessary—watch for email notices

WEEK/ DATE	READING COMPLETED BY THE BEGINNING OF CLASS	WRITING ASSIGNMENT(S) DUE AT BEGINNING OF CLASS	TOPIC & LIKELY ACTIVITIES
Week 5 TU 9/26	1. US Chapter 3 + Appendix B	1. US3: Review Appendix B: note items you're not sure about, type a few questions, and bring the questions to class. You must turn in something for this assignment; if you read the chapter and are sure of everything, write a question on some other aspect of punctuation and grammar that you're either still NOT quite sure of or disagree with.  2. US4: Pick a short (1-2 paragraphs) passage from any of your previous writing from other classes that exemplifies one of the problems in Chapter 3. Rewrite the passage. Show both versions on one page.	ICW Pesky grammar questions SEPTEMBER EXTRA CREDIT LOG DUE
Week 5 TH 9/28	US Chapter 3	1. Précis for Long Essay #1: Personal with a point, using some outside-your-brain research: interviews, primary readings, etc. etc.  2. US5: Makeover 1, CH 3 p53-54. Read the whole chapter before you do the makeover.	Poetry on Point: 3-3:45; class meeting 3:50-4:15. Workshop on Overwriting.
Week 6 TU 10/3	SW Reading: CH 2	LE1: Long Essay #1. Personal with a Point. Complete draft for workshop. Be sure to have at least two classmate readers SIGN and DATE your draft.  SW3: Type an idea or edict in SW CH 2 you don't understand or disagree with after careful reading and bring for credit & class discussion.	
Week 6 TH 10/5		LE1: Long Essay #1. Final draft. Turn in all drafts with package. Don't forget to send your e-mail copy.  Précis for SE2, Short Essay # 2. Any topic expanded from a notebook item or freewrite.	
Week 7 TU 10/10	1. Tom Wolfe "The Last American Hero is Junior Johnson Yes!" 2. Tom Wolfe: "The Me Decade"	SE2: Short essay #2. Complete draft for workshop. Be sure to have at least two readers SIGN and DATE your draft.	ICW TBA. Tom Wolfe Quiz on today's reading.
Week 7 TH 10/12	1. Tom Wolfe "The Birth of the New Journalism" 2. Tom Wolfe: "Sorry, Your Soul Just Died"	AN 6 & AN 7: Full page AN of Wolfe. Discuss all four essays we've read with this question in mind: What techniques did Wolfe keep from his early writing ("Junior Johnson") to his later ("Sorry, Your Soul Just Died")? What's still working? Give an overall analysis from a writer's POV.	POETRY DAY: PLAN TBA
Week 8 TU 10/17	1. US Chapter 4 King, "Why We Crave Horror Movies"	SE2: Final Draft package. D.F.T.E-M. (ask in class if you can't guess what these initials stand for)  US 6: Makeover 1, US pg 72	A Rebuttal Method
Week 8 TH 10/19	1. Op-Eds: Read 3 editorial or opinion piece in off-campus newspapers or news magazines.	ME2 OP ED or Rebuttal. Complete draft for workshop. Closely model technique and style (not content) from one of the OP-ED authors you have read to do your own 250-word Op-Ed piece on a local (PLNU) topic. OR do a rebuttal using the rebuttal format.	TBA
Week 9 TU 10/24	SW Reading CH 3 US Chapter 5	SW 4: Type a Comment on the "Few Matters of Form" for credit & class discussion.  US 7: Makeover pg 87-88  ME 2: Final draft package	ICW: Avoiding clichés like the plague.
Week 9 TH 10/26	1. SW Reading CH 4  2. Bring two reviews by other authors to class, one of a non-fiction book, preferably in your field of interest, and one of any other media (book, music, film, art, food). Find short, professional, published reviews by paid reviewers in magazines rather than amateur opinions online.	AN 8: AN of your book review  AN 9: AN of your other media review  ME 3 Review: Pick your own book, movie, restaurant, amusement park, concert, CD, etc. etc. and review, using guidelines. Type and bring topic and rough notes.  OCTOBER EXTRA CREDIT LOG DUE	Review Basics and guidelines.  Nevermind the <i>New York Times Review of Books</i> or others of that length that summarize the item under review

**WRI 315 COURSE CALENDAR**  
**Subject to Adjustment as Necessary—watch for email notices**

WEEK/ DATE	READING COMPLETED BY THE BEGINNING OF CLASS	WRITING ASSIGNMENT(S) DUE AT BEGINNING OF CLASS	TOPIC & LIKELY ACTIVITIES
Week 10 TU 10/31	Orwell "Politics & the English Language" and "Shooting an Elephant"	AN 10 on both Orwell's (one page) Extra credit participation Log II due	
Week 10 TH 11/2	<i>Bryson, Short History of Nearly Everything</i> INTRO and CH 1	Take notes on the reading for quiz and discussion LE2 Précis: Long Essay on Education, Law, Politics, Science, or Society. ME REVIEW Final draft	Last day to drop with no record is 11/8.
Week 11 TU 11/7	<i>Bryson, Short History of Nearly Everything</i> CH 2 & 3	LE2 Long Essay on Education, Law, Politics, Science, or Society. Complete Draft For Workshop	ICW Workshop
Week 11 TH 11/9		E8: Long Essay # 2. Final Draft Package. Remember to send your e-mail copy.	Poetry Day author 3-4 in Fermanian. Also 7-8 reading.
Week 12 TU 11/14	1.US Chapter 7 2. C.S. Lewis "The Funeral of a Great Myth" <a href="http://fpb.livejournal.com/297710.html">http://fpb.livejournal.com/297710.html</a> 3. Davidman "Gods Made with Hands"	US 8: Makeover pg 120  AN 11 on Davidman or Lewis. In paragraph 4, compare the two. Précis for Short essay # 3. Open Topic	ICW
Week 12 TH 11/16	1. Dillard "Sight Into Insight"	SE3: Short Essay #3: Open topic. Complete draft for workshop	ICW Workshop
Week 13 TU 11/21	1. Kevin Heath, "Breathing Room" 2 Hardin, "Lifeboat Ethics"	SE3: Final Draft Package Précis for LE3: Faith or Philosophy	ICW Reading Quiz
Week 13 TH 11/23	H A P P Y T H A N K S G I V I N G		Eat big; write big
Week 14 TU 11/28	US Chapter 8 US Chapter 10	US 9: Makeover p 139-140 OR US CH 10 exercise 8, #s 1-3 pp 174-175  Two pages (minimum) typed rough draft of LE3: Faith or Philosophy	ICW. Final Exam Info Cover and Query Letters
Week 14 TH 11/30		LE3: Faith or Philosophy: complete draft for workshop	ICW Workshop
Week 15 TU 12/5		LE3: another draft for workshop	Workshop ICW
Week 15 TH 12/7		LE3: Final Draft package DFTSEM Extra credit participation log 3	Class Wrap Practice for the final
Finals Week TH 12/14 4:30pm- 7:00 pm	Final exam; location TBA	For the final, bring your favorite author quote on writing, cover letter, and complete rewrite package in your folder	Have a blessed Christmas

# WRI 315 / SAMPLE PRECIS

Sterling O'Loma  
WRI 315 /Dr. Rick Hill  
September 19, 2017

## Precis: Short Essay #1

**Tentative Title:** “If Anybody Asks, Your Dad’s name is Gerald”

**Topic:** My stepdad, the ethical corner-cutter

**Theme:** Parents affect our perception of and behavior in the world more than we think they do.

**Genre, Strategy, Style:** Personal essay. Unfold the theme through quick family stories—the blue chip stamp scheme, the coupon scheme, buying and abandoning houses, multiple names and IDs, five schools in the first grade, etc. Never being able to tell friends we were moving.

Use the OBJECTIVE REPORTER approach, holding conclusions till the end or letting text speak for itself.

**Goal:** a loving but honest portrait of a complex personality and how it affected the family, collectively and individually.

### NOTES, POSSIBILITIES:

Family Positives: Adventure, family unity, respect for survival skills, great stories to tell later.

Family Negatives: Unfounded sense of superiority, suspicion, having to overcome the “I don’t have to follow the rules” attitude.

Dad Bio: Thread through the anecdotes--no more than a short paragraph at a time.

Quotes from family members. Casually interview sis, bro, mom: their versions of the stories I remember + stories I don’t remember. Double check some event dates on the internet, etc.

**NOTE from RH:** *Be careful—this précis started me on a 500 page, 8-year book . . .*

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About 625 words  
 © Richard Hill

Here's How to Prepare an Essay Manuscript  
 by Rick Hill

Here's a model for submitting all your essays in this class, beginning with the first model essay assignment. This model will also work for submitting essays to magazines. You may see variations to my suggestions here and there, and you should always go by the guidelines of the individual magazines, which may occasionally deviate from this default mode. But if you don't hear otherwise, this way will work, and, again, it is the required format for all class essays.

**Getting the Heading Right**

Starting in the top left corner, type your name, address, phone number, and e-mail. If you use a pen name or nickname for the story, you'll type that under your title. Up here should be the name you cash checks by. Editors who pay for stories need a social security number; you might as well include it. For this class, you can use your student number instead.

In the top right corner, put the **approximate** number of words (**rounding off in increments of 25**) right after the word "About." Directly under your word count, type your name with a "©" in front of it (in Microsoft Word, typing a "(c)" will get you a "©"). This copyright symbol tells the editor you're offering North American serial rights, which means that if the magazine buys it, they get to print it once for their money. Sometimes magazine guidelines say "buys all rights," which means they own the story forever and can print it all they want without even checking with you first. If the magazine you're sending to does have an "all rights," policy, then you have to decide if you want to sell them the story for all time. Usually it's worth it to do so in order to be published, especially for a new author. If you do decide to sell all rights, put the words "copyright optional" or "all rights offered" instead of your name and the little copyright sign.

[USE THIS HEADER:] Your Name / How to Send / 2

### **How to Title**

Once you have the top matter squared away, space down a few double spaces to a bit above the middle of the page. Center your title in a regular font (no caps, bold, italic, quote marks etc.). Underneath the title, center “by” (lower-case b) followed by the name you want used in the publication—either the same name as at the top, or a nickname, or a pen name. (Nick Danger? Lance Starfire? Tiffany La Amour? Sarah Shiloh?)

Now for the body of the essay. Double space again, go back to left justified, indent your first paragraph, and start typing. All essays should be sent double spaced, with one-inch margins, regular size type, and regular typing paper, on one side of the page. It’s best not to full-justify text. A few neat handwritten corrections used to be okay, but in the age of computers, editors expect no crossouts or additions, and they’re sticklers for well-proofread copy. Your essays may use subheads, as this model does, if they work help with clarity and transition.

### **Second Page Header**

Starting with page two of your story, you should have a header with your last name, a short title (or “slugline”), and the page number in the top right corner. Some people put the slugline on the right and the page number on the left. Either way is okay; just be consistent. After the header, simply continue typing page after page with headers until the end. I used double-side printing in this example and you can double-side your class assignments to save paper, but when you send to editors, you should print on one side of the page only. When you get to the end of the essay (as I have gotten to the end of this model) you should either write “The End” or the symbol # # #, like so:

# # #

## WRI315 / MODEL FOR ESSAY ANALYSIS

Ferd Lomano 34225  
WRI 315 / Professor Hill  
November 27, 2016

A19: Analysis of Shelby Steele's "On Being Black and Middle-Class."

### 1. Overview

Steele's prose communicates clearly without trying to be artistic. From the helpful insertion of the explanatory phrase "black like myself" in the first sentence to his copious use of clear topic sentences and transitions, to his straightforward conclusion with clear recommendation on what needs to be done about the problem, he is obviously trying (and succeeding) in keeping the reader focused. There are more exciting ways to write an essay of this kind, but I'll try to follow his lead in putting clarity first.

### 2. What I can use

The use of the "friend" in paragraph one is a good device to set up the essay. It's hard to tell if the friend is a real friend or a composite of several friends, or just a voice for many points of view. But in any case we get to hear all the objections to Steele's points right away. We know that he is aware of and has thought about these points, so his credibility is enhanced. Steele is a black college professor, so having his "friend" quote Malcolm X on black college professors sets him (Steele) a challenge that also piques the reader's curiosity on how well the conservative black author will handle X's point about racism.

### 3. What I won't use

This essay is straight exposition, which is okay, but several places could have been more convincing if he used dialogue—what the friend said, what the teacher said, etc. could have opened up the essay.

### 4. Other Comments

Back to transitions: Steel uses lots of conjunctions, not only as sentence starters but as paragraph starters ("Still, hate or love aside"; "But the process of identification is usually dialectical"). This method makes the essay seem lighter, more fluid—a good thing with such a "heavy" subject. He also uses white space as transitions. After each white space comes an anecdote or summary, which serves to show that we're getting to more important points with each new section.

**WRI 315 / ADVANCED COMPOSITION / SAMPLE LOG SHEET**

Lance Lomaxelsior 27687

Writing 315 / Dr. Hill

October 1, 2017

**SEPTEMBER PARTICIPATION LOG**Classes Missed this month: Sept 19.Classes Late this month Sept 9, Sept 11Homework Missed this month: A3, US 4**Participation**

<u>Date</u>	<u>What I said in Class</u>	<u>Other participation</u>	<u>Running total of assignment points so far</u> (Sample--not accurate)
9/6	Asked two questions about the syllabus.		
9/13	Read my model in class.		16/20
9/15	Answered pronoun question. Brought up use of hyperbole in Twain.	Writer/Speaker for my group.	38/40
9/21	Made connections between Orwell's speaker and <i>Catcher in the Rye</i> .		66/75
9/23	Gave four examples of verisimilitude in Didion.	Brought in a piece of writing that contradicted advice on point of view in <i>Elements of Style</i> .	112/125
9/25			122/135
9/27	MISSED CLASS - e-mailed work		167/185
9/25	Answered the "what was the motive" question + 2 questions on the US exercises overhead.	Conference with Professor ---look over my rough draft of SE1	210/2/35
9/30	Read my in-class writing.		220/345

(All questions are adapted from actual interactions with previous WRI315 students)

I. Circle T for true or F for False.

1. **T F** Since this is an advanced writing course, attendance and participation are not a big issues. Talent is everything.
2. **T F** Homework should be typed, but it's okay to handwrite and turn in as usual if you have computer trouble.
3. **T F** If you don't get around to writing an AN assignment before class, it's okay to type it on your laptop during class and show the professor the completed assignment on the computer screen.
4. **T F** If a student becomes confused about what is due, s/he should ask anyone but the professor—it's important that he not suspect that you need clarification.
5. **T F** If a student has car trouble, the late work policy will not apply.
6. **T F** If you miss a précis or draft due date, the final essay grade will be substantially lower.
7. **T F** Students should bring the textbooks and all supplies to class every day.
8. **T F** If a student does the day's work but leaves it in the dorm, the dropped score policy will apply.
9. **T F** Participation logs are mandatory in this class.
10. **T F** For the AN assignments, students should use a proper introduction of the author's place in the literary canon, then give a formal literary analysis of the content, keeping in mind culture, race, gender, and other issues.
11. **T F** After the assignment drops are used, students should expect the professor to drop more sheets and assignments if there are good reasons for not getting them in.
12. **T F** When *Understanding Style* and *Elements of Style* homework is due, students should go directly to the questions and skim the chapter only if necessary.
13. **T F** The syllabus is set in stone; anything else assigned by the professor in class is optional since it isn't on the original syllabus.

II. Please answer each question in 10 words or fewer. Complete sentences are not necessary.

14. Where on the syllabus can you find the information on how to contact the professor at work, by e-mail, and by phone?
15. According to the syllabus, what is a "proof draft?"
16. According to the syllabus, how much time should you budget (at least) for reading and writing in order to keep up with the class?
17. What happens to your grade if you just don't feel like writing during the writing period at the beginning of each class?

18. If you miss or forget or do poorly on an AN assignment but get perfect scores on all the other sheets, how will the poor score affect your final grade?

19. What is the policy on late arrivals (“tardies”) and early departures?

20. What happens to a student who misses 4 classes before midterm?

21. What happens to a student who misses 6 classes in the entire term?

22. If you haven’t printed your assignment and your printer breaks down 15 minutes before class and/or the school printer is down, what should you do to insure full attendance and grade credit?

23. According to the assignment sheet, what is a “model?”

24. What happens if the final draft of your essay is not presented in the “How to send” format?

25. Which two ways can a student earn extra credit?

26. What should you do if you want to get credit for a homework assignment or essay due on a day you miss class?

27. If you keep a low profile, is it okay to have private conversation or text while the professor or another student is addressing the class?

29. What should students do by the second class day with the assigned essays for the course?

30. Why should you get the kind of double-pocket folder that has a white, writable surface on the inside rather than the slick plastic-coated or dark-colored inside kind?

31. If you have done the day’s reading and disagree with Hill’s point of view on a philosophical point, is it okay to take issue with the professor? What effect will disagreeing out loud with the teacher have on your final grade?

BONUS: After reading the syllabus carefully and taking this quiz, I have the following questions about the course:

## Yard Work

By Kevin Heath

Mowing the lawn was a man's job in my family. Neither my mother nor my sister ever cut the grass, nor for a very long time did I, not until my mid teens, very late in life compared with my friends. Their fathers put them to it as soon as they could push a mower, and while excited to have the job, they met with trouble now and again: a shoe top split open like a tennis ball, a rock shot into the siding. The last was a phenomenon that my father dealt with soberly. He permitted no one to come within twenty-five feet of him while he mowed lest an eye be put out or worse, some Goliath-like blow. He had a fertile imagination for worst-case scenarios, my dad. He played the odds. If I needed to speak with him while he was mowing, I stood in the yard until he saw me. I signaled, he idled down the mower, I approached.

When I finally began mowing our lawn, I was sloppy. Sometimes my mind wandered and other times fixed itself so hyper-acutely to the task at hand that just pushing a lawnmower in a straight line became a drill in steadiness, chancy, like trying to walk while balancing a book on one's head. I swayed. I converged. Irregularities camouflaged by the grass—mounds, roots—jarred me off course. I would finish a row only to look back dumbfounded at the strip of grass I'd left uncut and the snaky line the wheels had made. I lacked some power of concentration that my father possessed. Maybe I took after my fluttery mother, an absent minded driver, who steered a car in an arcing, discursive way. She seemed to always be drifting back to her point.

I regretted that I couldn't mow the lawn better because I was a dutiful son, eager enough to please, but also fundamentally lazy. In the summers, I watched hours of television in our basement and I can remember the buzz of the mower closing in, and the pit of my stomach hardening whenever the mower reached the window wells, hovering there like a great mechanical hornet or some satellite pausing long enough to snap intelligence photos. It was my conscience come to call. Even today, I hear a lawnmower and my heart sinks because the sound summons the uncomfortable, momentary notion that I should be out there helping. From the top of the basement stairs, my mother urged me to get up and *do* something, spot my dad for awhile so he wouldn't have a heat stroke and I wouldn't go blind from watching television in the dark. I'd shamble out obediently, blinkingly, into the stifling air, wait for my father to come around, and then shout at him over the clamor of the mower.

"MOM SAYS I SHOULD TAKE IT FROM HERE!"

"TELL HER I'VE JUST GOT THE BACK TO FINISH!"

The lawn was my father's primary aesthetic outlet. Nothing else, with the possible exception of cleaning the car, gave him such a degree of artistic satisfaction. We moved often when I was growing up, and each house became a place to invoke old landscaping motifs and experiment with new ones. He came to believe in berms to such a degree that he clustered the backyard of our last house with all manner of humps and knolls, spaced so as to seem random topographical changes. In contrast to the billiard table plane of the surrounding lawns in that subdivision, ours undulated, bulged, heaved—the earth's crust surging under our yard alone. My father believed in watering in the morning and evening, and to this day uses the curious sprinkler he owned when I was young—part

tractor, part helicopter. It creeps around the yard as imperceptibly as a minute hand, guided by its front wheel, which is grooved to hug the garden hose. My father believed in split-rail fences and copious tree-planting and concrete patios. My and my sister's handprints and initials are on patios in three states.

When it came to yard work, my father was a man of habitual action. He had a set of lawn-mowing clothes: a pair of beat-up brown dress shoes tinted by grass stains around the edges; a clingy, double-knit golf shirt with wide collars and a penguin on the breast pocket. On warm days he put on cotton swimming trunks that fit him when he was trimmer. In the 1970s when he surprised us all by growing sideburns and a moustache, he added a straw cowboy hat he'd bought at K-Mart and that he'd decorated with a blue bandanna—inspired by a run of Burt Reynolds' movies playing then. I loved my father, so I took the outfit on the face of things: there he was mowing the backyard, *Smokey and the Bandit* meets *Marcus Welby, M.D.*, with shiny-smooth legs and fleur-de-lis swimming trunks that had ripped at the hem. But I think about his anti-fashion now when I get dressed to mow. I am compulsive at the other end of the spectrum and stand gaping in my closet and dresser drawers for minutes, waiting for the spirit to move. What do I want to wear *this* time?

As a boy, worse yet a teenager, I never fully understood my father's concern about the lawn, and I now find that to my disadvantage, seeing that I've become more concerned about mine. Mowing the lawn seemed necessary, of course, but not worth the attention he gave it, nor was I interested then in the issues that were at the bottom of it—why it satisfied him, what it said about him, about men in general, how it altered our relationship, what it might have taught me had I paid more attention, asked questions. The embarrassing state of my own lawn has got me thinking about all this. Unlike any of my father's yards, mine has a blotchy, grafted quality to it—moss and scrubby grass, a peninsular section of thick clover, and where I planted new seed, the grass has grown in too lushly and is a different variety with broad blades that are a shade of optic green.

My yard's problems bug me, more so because I feel weak-willed to do anything other than the minimum. Once a week I cut the lawn with a demolition derby mower, a hand-me-down from the in-laws, and deal with a reflexive, nagging sense that as a son of a man with well-kept lawns, I should be doing more. But there's the rub. I didn't ask. I don't remember him offering. I have a standard fixed in my mind, but no wherewithal to achieve it. Ditto for some of the rest of my life. My father was successful, a star athlete and later a college president, but what to do with that now? Every interview he gave on television, every meeting with a governor, every speech, every commendation from an alma mater that exhilarated me as a boy is shaded around the edges these days with this lengthening self-doubt cast by the inferences one can't help but draw from the father's life to the son's. "Like father, like son" as changing mood and mood changer: in the indicative when one is a boy, the imperative when one is a teen, and for some, the subjunctive when one is an adult. Were it not so. I'm stuck between where my father has gone and where I am. In this case, figuratively and literally, the grass is greener on the other side.

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When there was sufficient rain and growth, my father mowed the lawn twice a week. He never let the blade get dull. He had extras hanging in the garage and sharpened them on the motorized blade sharpener bolted to the workbench he kept in the garage. It was a hypnotizing procedure to watch, particularly at night. My father moved the blade edges slowly across the wheel. The low hum from the machine would rise like a siren for a moment when the blade touched the wheel. A comet's tail of white sparks cascaded down and were extinguished on the concrete. He examined the blade edge, tested it with the flat of his thumb, guided the blade over the wheel a second time. He never set the mower's wheels so low that the blade would cut the grass too short. You *trim* the lawn; you do not cut it. When we drove around town, he was as alert as a hunting dog to yards we passed and was never lax to point out yellowish-green grass—the telltale sign of a mower set too low.

My father had no hobbies outside the home and no close friends, no friends at all that I remember, except me. He was like most of the fathers I knew whose individual lives had long been lost or forgotten or simply absorbed into the family. He golfed. But when he golfed, he took me along. He fished, but generally when I asked him to. His avocation was the lawn and the lawnmower. But for all the time he spent maintaining the mower, he knew next to nothing about how the mower worked. The time spent sharpening blades and seeing to the mower's cleanliness was illusionary, a ritual. When the mower did fail, we hoisted it into the car trunk and took it to mysterious places on the edges of the towns where we lived, the country of small-engine repairmen. Lawnmower fundamentalists, men my father must have felt a kinship with, fixed our mowers—in barns, in sheds, on back porches, in front yards—and with hardly a word between my father and them.

"Won't start," my father might say.

"Won't start, huh?" would come the reply, the both of them staring at the machine.

Outside of the repairmen, I don't remember my father talking to another man about his lawn, nor do I remember any other man in our neighborhood talking to my father about his. Yet there were times when four or five men were simultaneously at work mowing their lawns, fertilizing their lawns, edging, trimming, spading, seeding, smoking a cigarette while soaking a bank of phlox. They never acknowledged each other. They hardly ever looked up. They carried out their duties like woodsmen from some time in the past when there were no neighbors. My father's life, a man's life, struck me then, as it does now, as an incremental act of withdrawal from the community, a series of doors and windows and shutters and lids quietly closing until it was just you and the family, you and your wife, and, in the end, finally just you.

My solitary father. He is given to putting distance between himself and the rest of us. No one comes

near a man who's mowing; it's an exclusionary state of being. It is the tableau of my father: cut off by all that noise, walking up one row and then down another, singularly, a man with his own life and troubles, brooding, slightly hunched over, working his way further and further from the house, me, us. In my family, nothing had the dramatic force of lawn mowing, which separated one of us from the rest and left us there to be contemplated.

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Yesterday I mowed the yard for the first time this season, and this morning my hands still smell like gasoline. Early spring is a testy period for me, full of spirits. The smell of my hands, the smell of cut grass, the smell in the shed where I keep the lawnmower, the sound of mowers off in the distance—all raise ghosts. My lawn has the April mange—bare patches and tufts of grass. The perennials aren't up or, where they are, they're nothing more than tips in the dirt. I become aware of the inattention I've given the lawn and aware of my father, who, when he visits and sees the patchy, thatchy, irregular condition of the grass, keeps his amazement to himself.

It discourages me, too, this yard, but like the other areas of my life, I'm on my own. I can't sharpen a blade. I raise or lower the mower's wheels at the risk of minor bodily harm; when finished, I'm as scraped up of knuckle and shin as if I've taken a spill on a bike. I'm not exactly clear on when to fertilize. I have no idea how to revive a dying section of grass near the fence that has up and surrendered to something subterranean. And it's too late to ask. That door has shut. Whatever is doing its subterranean work in me, in my father, though no longer spreading, is past treating. And besides, the whole thing would take years for him to explain and years for me to understand. More likely it's beyond explanation. No son quite knows what to do with his father and no father quite knows what to do with his son. Like my Dad, the unmechanical son of a mechanic father, like me and my son, we just have to learn things for ourselves.

So no hard feelings. Nobody's to blame. Really. These are conditional days when it comes to manhood, and rites of passage are, it turns out, provisional, if existent at all. The truth is that, like most of my generation, I've gone through nothing much more trying than the earning of a driver's license and a handful of diplomas. My life has been so seamless, so undisturbed, that it seems foreshortened. I don't feel significantly different at thirty-five than I did at ten and am genuinely taken aback when I realize that I am as old as my father was when I was about as old as my son is now—my son who, with a toy mower that blows bubbles for exhaust, follows me around the yard when I mow. We pass each other occasionally, walking up and down our separate rows. The expression he wears while mowing is an imitation of mine, inherited from my father: tight-lipped, serious. I give my boy a wink and a thumb's-up as he approaches. He sees me and keeps going, two hands on the mower, eyes on the grass in front of him, all business for the moment.