

## **ENGLISH 475/575: SPECIAL TOPICS**

### **DICKINSON/FROST**

#### **Description**

Along with Edgar Allan Poe, Emily Dickinson and Robert Frost are probably the poets whose names have, rightly or wrongly, become iconic in the popular imagination. The class will explore possible reasons for this endurance by analyzing and assessing a wide range of their work, both the poems that are typically anthologized as well as their less familiar writing. In a general sense, we might say that Dickinson, ahead of her time, was looking forward, while Frost, writing in an age when poets were “modernizing” themselves, was looking back. English 212 is a prerequisite, but otherwise the class requires no prior knowledge of the two poets. The class, however, does require regular attendance, daily participation, and good writing skills. The class also presumes your competent use of current MLA format and documentation. Weekly reading assignments will always (and only) be announced in class.

#### **Texts**

The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson.

The Poetry of Robert Frost.

#### **Course Assignments and Evaluation**

20% Eight Quizzes

20% Four Response Papers

10% Research Folder

50% Research Essay (10 or more pages)

\*The requirements of each assignment will always be discussed in class.

#### **Course Policies**

If you have questions about the syllabus or any course policies, ask them in class or speak to me in my office no later than the end of the first week of the quarter. If you do not ask questions or contact me to clarify a policy within the first week, I will assume that you understand your course's requirements and have read and agree to abide by all of these policies.

## Overview

Basically, just be considerate and use your common sense: Always set your phone on silent and put it away, go to class, be on time, pay attention, take notes, ask questions, work hard on your essays, hand them in on time, read all assignments, and study carefully for your tests. Practice these habits and you should be pleased—or at least satisfied—with your final grade.

## Attendance

Part of your final grade is determined by your ability to attend class, work through the readings, and participate in class activities. Irregular attendance will result in a poor or failing grade for the class:

Students enrolled in any course who miss a class during which writing, active participation or collaboration is required will have up to one full letter grade (as many as 10 points) deducted from the major essay folder or major assignment due immediately following the unexcused absence. In other words, if an exercise or document is required with your major essay or project and you do not have it because you were absent, your work simply is not eligible for all possible 100 points. Accordingly, students who miss two or three of these assignments within a particular writing workshop will have as many as two or three letter grades deducted from the major assignment due at the conclusion of that writing process.

Students enrolled in any course who miss more than 10% of scheduled meetings, which is more than two T-Th/M-W classes or more than three M-W-F classes, will have one full letter grade automatically deducted from their final quarter averages.

Excusable absences are limited to the following circumstances. If you want me to remove an unexcused absence or you want to be eligible for the points you missed on an in-class assignment, you must meet one of the criteria listed below within one week of your return to class:

1. If you miss class due to a university-sanctioned event, you must provide your original copy of official verification written on university letterhead. Students should only enroll in my courses if their schedules allow them to participate in class activities and assignments during regularly scheduled meetings. However, be aware that because some assignments are unannounced and require class participation or collaboration with a group, they simply cannot be “made up” or completed outside of class.

2. If you experience a serious illness or injury that requires hospitalization or prevents you from going to class for a week or more, you must provide documentation such as a dated letter that

includes a time period for recovery, your name and the name and phone number of the official writing it.

3. If you are called away by a funeral, you must provide documentation in the form of a dated obituary or announcement or a note from someone presiding over the service that includes your name and the name and phone number of the person writing it.

4. If you have a chronic condition or other special need that requires modification of any of these policies, present your information to Student Services for an official letter of verification.

Please do not give me notes from clinics or offices documenting the various conflicts that affect us all. I do not remove absences for any of life's minor problems or complexities. You should schedule appointments around (not during) my classes. I sympathize with those who miss class for legitimate reasons, but such unforeseen events are why you may miss a class or two without automatically compromising your standing in the course. In other words, you should make every reasonable effort to attend every class. That way, when something unavoidable or unexpected happens, (allergies, car trouble, bad weather, identity crisis, amnesia), you have the option of missing class without the absence seriously affecting your final grade in the course.

## **Punctuality**

If you can attend class, you can attend on time. Please do not come to my classes late. If a scheduling problem or time constraint prevents you from being punctual, you should not be enrolled in this class. Likewise, please do not leave my classes early. Leaving class early is no less an interruption than arriving late and will not be tolerated. Possibly the most inconsiderate and inexcusable choice you could make would be to have your phone in view or on vibrate, check an incoming text, and then walk out of the classroom to respond only to return to class a few minutes later. If you are awaiting a text or call that is so imperative or dire that you have to ignore these policies, no matter the situation or your personal circumstances, you should not be enrolled in this class. I mark a person who arrives late, leaves early, or leaves in the middle of class and returns as ABSENT. I also take that pattern into consideration when I read the student's work. Whatever reason you may have for arriving late or leaving early (appointment, interview, work, another exam, traffic, etc.), choosing to interrupt the class in this way will negatively impact your final grade.

## **Class Demeanor**

Understand that your credibility as a writer is tied to your credibility in the classroom. For incoming students in particular, it is your job to establish your reputation as a credible writer and serious person worthy of respect. Careless behavior damages a student's credibility in the same way that careless writing damages a student's credibility. There is no such thing as a message

without a source, or a context. In this case, your writing is the message, and YOU are the source and context of that writing. Your attendance, promptness, preparation, willingness to participate in a meaningful way, ability to hand in all the work, foresight to complete the work on time, and consideration of others are all factors that create a context, or background, for the reader of your essays and exams. Yet again, I want to emphasize that while in my class, your phone is your sworn enemy. Treat it as such. I should NEVER see it or hear it during class—and neither should you. Do not chat with the person sitting next to you while I am talking. Do not take out a book or materials you are using in another class. Do not go online without my permission. If you are inconsiderate in any of these ways, please spend your valuable time elsewhere to ensure that the class will not disturb you.

### **Missed Work**

If you do happen to miss a class, refer to the schedule, contact another class member, or see me during office hours. I do not, however, repeat or post lecture material, which is often conversational or anecdotal in nature.

1. Quizzes cannot be made up without documentation that qualifies as an excused absence under my attendance policy.
2. If you miss an exam for a reason that qualifies as an excused absence under my attendance policy, you must present the required documentation, make arrangements with me to schedule an alternate test date, and take the exam within one week of your return to be eligible for a grade.
3. If you miss daily in-class work that is handed in or initialed at the end of class due to an unexcused absence, the work is not eligible for points. Collaborative in-class assignments such as peer reviews and group reports cannot be made up.
4. If you are unable to complete daily in-class work because you are unprepared (you do not have your books, or files, or papers), the work is not eligible for a grade. Further, students who come to class unable or unwilling to work seriously on an assignment will not receive credit for attending. In other words, no “going through the motions”: you must be cognitively present as well as physically present.
5. If you add the class late or do not begin attending until the second or third time we meet, you are entirely responsible not only for the assignments you missed, but for these course policies as well. Adding a class or beginning to attend after it has already met is a choice that you make, not one that I make. If you are not prepared to do well on an assignment because you did not attend the first or second class, I am not obliged to repeat course content, modify an assignment or its due date, explain course policies, or make other exceptions or exemptions.

6. If you stop attending before the final scheduled class, you may not take the final exam early (or late) unless you provide documentation that falls within my excused absence policy.

## Essay Requirements

1. Essays are evaluated on a scale from 0 to 100: 0-59=F, 60-69=D, 70-79=C, 80-89=B, 90-100=A.

2. Essays in all courses must reflect correct MLA format and documentation style as they appear in the most recent edition of the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. Essays that do not use correct MLA format and documentation style are not eligible for a grade higher than D.

3. English 101 and 102 essays must be 2-3 pages. The 102 research paper must be 8-10 pages. By “pages,” I mean full pages of your writing properly formatted according to current MLA specifications, not half pages, mostly blank pages, title pages, page-length block quotations, or Works Cited pages.

4. English 212 essays must be 3-4 pages.

5. 400-level literature essays must be 10-12 pages. English 212 is a prerequisite for enrolling in a 400-level American literature course. You should only enroll if you have demonstrated your writing competency in previous English courses and are prepared to do the required reading. These courses require that you successfully apply the research and analysis skills that you studied in your earlier English sequence of courses; as with English 212, they presume basic college-level writing competency.

6. Graduate student essays must be 15-20 pages. Graduate-level writing should reflect the control of the mature writer; essays should demonstrate both rhetorical sophistication as well as intellectual creativity.

7. Essays less than the required length for a particular course level or assignment are not eligible for a grade higher than D. If 8-10 pages of writing are required, for example, do not hand in 7 ½ pages.

8. Essays in any course with more than one major error in grammar, punctuation, or documentation are not eligible for a grade higher than D. Major errors include fragments, fused sentences, incorrect case or mood, and subject-verb agreement errors. Other important but less serious errors include misused apostrophes, lack of pronoun-antecedent agreement or incorrect pronoun reference, misuse of adjectives/adverbs, comma splices, and lack of parallelism, among others. Essays that contain more than one such second-order error are not eligible for a grade higher than a C.

9. Essays in any course that do not address the specific assignment are not eligible for a grade higher than a D.

10. Late essays are penalized one letter grade (10 points) for each class period they are late. Essays are considered late after I call for them at the beginning of the class they are due. So if you hand in an essay, for example, five minutes after I have collected them, the essay has already lost one letter grade.

11. In-class Freshman Composition Essay or Folder One handed in without the following documents will be returned ungraded to students: a signed current plagiarism statement (contained in the Freshman Composition Course Packet) and a signed and dated statement that a student understands the requirements and policies of the course as they appear in this document. Essays or Folders that I return without a grade because they are missing one or more of these items are subject to the late policy of one letter grade for each class period they are late.

12. All required essays must be handed in to pass the course, even if an essay is so late it will receive a grade in the F range (0-59). If your syllabus, for example, states that five essays are required but you only hand in four, you fail the course. It makes no difference what grades you received on the essays you handed in or their percentages of the final grade.

13. Often I require all supporting work (notes, outlines, rough drafts, peer reviews, photocopies/printouts of quoted material, digital submission of essay) as well as the final typed version of an essay. If a student does not hand all the work that I ask for which documents the writing process, the essay automatically receives a grade equal to the amount of missing or poorly developed supporting work, which is typically one letter grade (10 points) per item.

14. All students will be expected to submit all essays to Turnitin.com. Essay grades will not be recorded until essays have been uploaded to Turnitin.com. If I suspect an essay written for another class has been handed in as an original assignment written specifically for my class, it is my custom to send it through Turnitin or an additional plagiarism website as well as access the student's transcript to see which English courses the student has completed and then to circulate the work to the appropriate faculty members. If academic misconduct is confirmed, I change the essay grade to a failing grade of zero. Handing in part or all of someone else's work will earn you an F for the essay, an F in the class, and a letter reporting you to Tech's Academic Honor Court, which could ultimately lead to suspension or expulsion.

15. I keep your graded exams and term papers in my office for thirty days into the following quarter. You are responsible for keeping all work during the quarter. You are required to submit this work behind your final in-class essay.

## **Online Courses**

In addition to the above course policies, students who enroll in an online course of mine must:

1. Understand my instructions about how to get started and where to find various course materials.
2. Interact with the instructor and other students using appropriate etiquette and level of formality for online discussions, questions, comments, and email. If you would not put it in a graded essay for a writing class, do not put it on a discussion board or in an email.
3. Respond to my self-introduction, provide one of their own, and respond to those of other class members.
4. Take responsibility that they have met the stated prerequisite course or courses.
5. Meet the minimum required hardware and technical skills: daily access to a reliable laptop or desktop with Internet access; Microsoft Word; an Adobe Reader download; a Flash player; and a current Louisiana Tech email address that you check daily.
6. Confirm that they understand the learning objectives, assessment criteria, assignment values, and grading scale of the course.
7. Respond to weekly assignments within the allotted time frame and according to the deadlines provided.
8. Request additional directions if they have questions concerning an upcoming assignment.
9. Request additional feedback concerning graded work if the reasons provided for a grade are not understood.
10. Request an office visit or telephone conference—immediately—if either these assignment directions or grade justifications cannot be resolved online.
11. Purchase and have access to all instructional materials no later than the first day of class, such as textbooks or reading material put on e-reserve in Prescott Memorial Library.
12. Be aware that I will evaluate and return all major course assignments within one week of their submission, and reply to less consequential group postings or individual emails within 24 hours, but usually much sooner.
13. Agree that technology-related problems, such as a “crashed” hard drive, a non-Louisiana Tech Internet provider, aging or non-compatible software programs, or other issues unrelated to my ability to provide course content or receive your work are not justifiable reasons for not participating, not submitting required work, or submitting work late.
14. Realize and be clear that this course is not one in which you set the schedule or work at your own pace over the course of the entire term. I will be directing your progress and functioning as

the group's course facilitator, instructing you how to use your textbooks and where to go online in order to fulfill the requirements of each assignment. Each set of directions demands 1) a serious time commitment to a body of reading, 2) an online research investigation that you document, and 3) the production of original work that almost always requires discursive analysis and evaluation on your part. I am not, in other words, telling you to go read something and then giving you a multiple choice quiz or simply asking you to create and submit a "graphic" of some sort. Further, the course has specific weekly checkpoints and deadlines. Not meeting those is no different from not going to class and not handing in work.

### **Additional University Policy Statements**

1. Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Students needing testing or classroom accommodations based on a disability should discuss those needs with me during the first week of class and take responsibility for arranging alternate testing times and sites a minimum of two class periods before each exam or major assignment.

2. Honor Code: In accordance with the Academic Honor Code, students pledge the following: "Being a student of a higher standard, I pledge to embody the principles of academic integrity."

3. Internet Access: If in the event of a natural disaster or other event that prevents the continuation of regular campus classroom meetings, courses will continue and the quarter will be concluded, if necessary, by meeting online through Blackboard, email, Moodle, or other open source software.

4. The Emergency Notification System: All Louisiana Tech students are strongly encouraged to enroll and update their contact information in the Emergency Notification System. It takes just a few seconds to ensure you are able to receive important text and voice alerts in the event of a campus emergency.

### **Suggestions for Revising and Editing Your Essays**

The following suggestions reflect some of the most common pitfalls of college writing. Some of them are obvious, while others you may not always consider. All of them, however, go toward establishing the credibility of your essay. If you set aside some time to use them as a checklist before handing in your paper, the likelihood of making a better grade is greatly increased.

1. Follow all the basic requirements concerning MLA format, length, and submission requirements as they appear in this document to avoid losing points or becoming ineligible for a passing grade.

2. Hand your essays in on time.



3. Proofread your essay for word-processing errors such as duplications of words, missing words, unnecessary spacing, or needed spacing between words. Correct mistakes of any sort, no matter how small.
4. Check the spelling of your finished work using your WP program. Now go to a college dictionary and look up every word in your essay that you are not absolutely certain has been used correctly. Many homonyms are commonly confused, and word-processors usually do not recognize these errors. Some of the most obvious include the following: its / it's, their / there, to / too, affect / effect, accept / except, and so on.
5. Avoid beginning your sentences with "it" or "there." Beginning a sentence in this fashion often reflects repetition, carelessness, and lack of control in an essay.
6. Unless otherwise specified, write using a formal or semi-formal tone. The register, or level of formality, should be appropriate for the essay's purpose and audience. This means that you want to avoid slang, regionalisms, and colloquial or clichéd language.
7. Cut words and phrases from your essay that are not needed to develop a thought. You want to be specific, but you also want to be concise. A good way to begin cutting dead wood from your writing is to look for words we often use in our informal, everyday speech patterns but that do not belong in essays when used unconsciously. Some examples include "basically," "really," "definitely," "totally," "very," "a lot," and "thing(s)."
8. Avoid using "etc." to conclude a sentence. "Etc." is the abbreviated form of *et cetera*, meaning "and other things." However, the contemporary college use of the term often means "I can't think of another example to add to this list at the moment so this is how I will stop."
9. When you use a direct quotation, ALWAYS attach it to your own writing in some way. At the very least, use a comma or colon ("So-and-so argue that," or "He argues the following:"). Do not let a quotation stand alone in the middle of the paragraph. Better yet, vary the sentence structure and verbs you use when integrating your direct quotations.
10. Within the framework of the assignment, choose a topic or approach that you think is original. That way, your essay is less likely to be judged against twenty other papers with a similar thesis.
11. If the essay treats literature, be certain that your thesis forces you to analyze the work in some way rather than merely summarizing events. Assume your reader has read the material you are discussing.
12. Always use specific references and direct quotations to support your work, but do not cite passages in lengthy block quotations without a good reason. In fact, avoid over-quoting sources

in any manner. Your instructor wants to see that you can use sources judiciously and with a rhetorical purpose, not merely that you can quote from a source.

13. Avoid referring to your own essay: “This essay will argue three things.” *Think* in those terms, but don’t write it down.

14. Avoid making general, unsupported statements that do not progress your line of reasoning: “throughout history,” “in today’s society,” “everyone knows that,” or “this has always been the case.”

15. Do not title your essay “Essay #1” or “A Rose for Emily” or “Essay on ‘A Rose for Emily’.” Give your title some thought. After all, it is the first part of your essay that your reader evaluates.

16. Conclude in a manner that does more than simply repeats what you said in the introduction. Give your conclusion some thought. After all, it is the last part of your essay that your reader evaluates (You may want to give the middle parts some thought, too).

17. When writing a timed in-class essay, use all of the time you are allotted. If you write for thirty minutes and then decide you are finished, you may want to reconsider. The purpose of an in-class essay is to respond as specifically and thoroughly as you can within the time you are given. It is your chance to show off what you know and how you are able to apply that knowledge and writing skill to a particular exam topic. If your hand is not cramped and you are not struggling to finish just one more sentence before I call time, then you probably did not prepare well enough to earn a grade of A or B on the writing.

### **Additional Revision Suggestions for Students in 400/500-Level Courses**

1. Do not use initial or terminal ellipses. Only use them to indicate elided material within the quotation you present.

2. Ensure that all bibliographic material is contained in the works cited page or pages, but never in the essay itself or in the footnotes.

3. Use notes sparingly, if at all. If you use them, the reader should clearly understand why the remarks do not belong in the essay itself but provide helpful context.

4. Avoid expletive constructions (For example: It is important to note . . . There are . . .)

5. Don’t ever end paragraphs with quotations from critics. Only rarely end with a quotation from an author whose work you are analyzing. In most cases, paragraphs should end in the voice of the writer.

6. Avoid demonstratives without a noun prior to the verb (For example: “This is . . .” rather than “This book is . . .”)
  7. Avoid incomplete comparatives (For example: This was a better strategy—better than what?)
  8. Avoid parenthetical comments in sentences. Include remarks in the sentences outright or relegate the information to a footnote if tangential.
  9. Use em-dashes (—) for long dashes and en-dashes (-) for hyphens.
  10. Punctuation following an italicized word, as in a book title, is roman (as in Who wrote *Absalom, Absalom!*? or Who wrote *The Descendant*?).
  11. Indicate decades numerically, without an apostrophe (The 1850s experienced a renaissance in American writing). Do not abbreviate (the 1850s, rather than the ’50s).
  12. Write out the names of centuries, such as the twentieth century, rather than the 20th century.
  13. Works Cited: Only include sources actually cited in the body of the essay.
  14. Avoid using abbreviations, particularly for titles (*Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, not *Huck Finn*).
  15. Always observe distinction between that/which, where/in which, and then/than.
  16. Use italics for emphasis only to point to a word or phrase as such, draw attention to syntax, or clarify meaning; do not use italics merely to stress a main point.
  17. Use only one space, not two, between sentences.
  18. Cite the best texts for all of your quotations and references: a scholarly edition or a first edition.
  19. Always cite original texts unless impossible to do so.
  20. Avoid, when possible, corrupting quotations by inserting or interspersing words, especially at the beginning of passages. For example: it “is not possible,” rather than “[it] is not possible.”
- \*If you have a question not answered by these course policies, please don’t hesitate to ask it before class, during class, after class, or during my office hours. Email me if you have an emergency or an unusual circumstance, but please do not email me with questions addressed by the syllabus and course policies.

