

LAGUARDIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

Course and Section: ENG101.0774 – Introduction to Expository Writing
CUNY First Code: 52082
Instructor: Dr. Demetrios Kapetanakos
Meeting days, time, and room: Tuesdays 9:15-11:30AM in E262, Thursdays 9:15-11:30 in E-232
Office: E-103EE
Telephone: (718) 482-5670
Department Office: (718) 482-5656
E-mail: dkapetanakos@lagcc.cuny.edu (E-mail is the best way to reach me.)
Office hours: Tuesdays 11:45-12:45 (or by appointment)

Course description:

In recent years, the public debates on education have focused on several hot topic issues that aim to raise student achievement with limited resources from the taxpayer. The fights on schooling in the K-12 years have centered on increasing the number of charter schools, weakening teacher tenure and establishing merit pay, and implementing Common Core and its culture of constant testing. With the high cost of college degrees and the debt associated with it hanging over the economy like Damocles' sword, many wonder whether college as it is presently structured continues to be pertinent to the contemporary workforce. Some go as far to question whether college is even necessary. New strategies have been implemented to reduce the cost of education. MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) allow exponentially more students to get information from a single source. The hiring of part-time adjuncts rather than full-time tenure-track professors allows universities to save money by handing out smaller salaries and fewer benefits. These fraught debates raise the question of how do we approach education right now. Americans' conviction in free market principles has transformed public opinion on education. How can we bring this entrepreneurial spirit to education? Can corporations provide new approaches? How could we get rid of the bureaucratic waste that eats up so much of the taxpayers' money? In this course, we will explore the relationship between capital and education both on the elementary and higher levels. For the first half of the semester, we will study the debate between Diane Ravitch, Professor of Education at NYU and critic of these educational approaches, and Michelle Rhee, former superintendent of Washington DC schools and advocate of these changes. Their contrasting approaches highlight the views on public education. Through discussions and low-stake writing, you will learn the elements of the academic essay and develop strategies to tackle your writing assignments. The second half of the semester will focus on these various debates in higher education. They are going to be the jumping off point for you to explore these topics in greater depth and introduce you to the research process.

Course materials:

The only required text is Diane Ravitch's book *Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools*. Copies are available for purchase in the LaGuardia bookstore. Any other reading materials will be posted on the course ePortfolio.

I also want to point out Purdue University's Online Writing Lab website. It is an excellent website that covers the basics of writing, including grammar, structure, and citations: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/> I will refer to it throughout the semester. You should also invest in a good dictionary that you could use in all your courses.

Course requirements:

The assignments in this class are designed for you to explore the ideas presented by the selected authors, to respond to them using your own perspectives, and to learn how to formally present these arguments in various types of formal and informal writing. It is important to keep up with the work because all of the assignments build upon one another to provide a total view of the writing process. Below is a short description of the assignments with their percentage value of the final grade. Remember, the assignments must be submitted on time. Points will be taken off if you do not complete the assignment properly. For every day that it is late, I will deduct one percentage point. If you do not submit an assignment, you will not receive any of the possible points. In case of an emergency, get in touch with me ASAP to discuss the situation and make other arrangements.

Assignments on the Ravitch/Rhee debate on education

The assignments for the first half of the semester will deal with the Diane Ravitch/Michelle Rhee debate. You will be assigned in pairs a chapter in Diane Ravitch's *The Reign of Error*. You will take ten minutes to present the major points in the chapter, contextualize the argument in a larger framework, provide your perspective on the text, and provide three or four questions to spark classroom discussion. There will be no make-ups for this assignment. You are also required to submit a 600 word essay that captures the different components of your presentation. It is due on the day of the presentation. This will constitute **15% of your final grade** (5% for the presentation and 10% for the accompanying essay.) This first section of the course will culminate in a compare-contrast essay asking you to consider the two figures' ideas and to draw conclusions on their positions. This essay will be at least 1000 words-long. This will make up **15% of your final grade**. You will be allowed to revise for a higher grade if you received a B- or lower. I will then average the new grade with the old one. However, it must be a completely rewritten paper to be considered for a higher grade. I will not accept it if you simply correct the errors I pointed out.

Research assignments on the state of higher education in the United States

The topics that deal with various aspects of higher education will lay the foundation for the research project. The entire class will be broken up into four groups and assigned a different topic. Each group will create an annotated bibliography capturing various angles and data that is pertinent to the subject. Each student will be responsible for finding two articles, hyperlinking them to the course ePortfolio, and then providing a summary and brief analysis of the piece. You will be graded for the quality of the article and your write-up. Together we will be establishing a resource from which the entire class could use for the research paper. This major project will ask you to take a position, to explain the relationship between capital and education, and to use information/ arguments from at least two sources on the annotated bibliography. It must be at least 1200 words long. Remember, your assigned topic does not necessarily have to be the same as that for your research paper. The annotated bibliography will count for **10% of your final grade** and the research paper will count for **20% of your final grade**.

Low stakes assignments

Throughout the semester, you will be required to complete 5 out of ten short responses that you will post on your personal ePortfolios. These are short responses to questions I will provide in the previous class. You must complete at least 2 by spring break. They are an opportunity for you to jot down quick reactions to the readings and to provide possible avenues for further explorations in your major essays. Each one has to be at least 200 words long and will only be accepted on the due date. There are no extensions. These posts will make up **10% of your final grade**. Throughout the semester, there will be various in-class low-stakes assignments that you will allow you to engage with the readings and practice your writing, reading, and critical thinking skills. If you complete 80% of these assignments, you will receive all **10 points toward your final grade**.

ePortfolio Work

An important component of the course is the creation of an ePortfolio on which you will each post all of your high-stakes and low-stakes assignments. You will receive instructions on the expectations and the format of the ePortfolio throughout the semester. The purpose of this digital space is for you to put all of your thoughts together and capture your process in one place. This includes your reading response posts, your essays, your outlines, your drafts, and your final products. The writing process is messy and inevitably this will be reflected in your course ePortfolio. I will be checking up on your ePortfolios throughout the semester and I will be grading your assignments there. The creation and use of this personal ePortfolio throughout the semester will make up **5% of the final grade**. At the end of the semester, we will discuss how to select your most exemplary work from the course and present it to the public. You will post two or three pieces of writing that most represent your best work and post it onto your LaGuardia ePortfolio. This will count for **5% of your final grade**. You will also write a 600-word final reflection. In it I want you to present any final thoughts on the issues presented in the course, the development of your writing process, and the ways you have or have not changed over the semester. I also want you to include a short explanation of your reasoning behind your sample writing selection. You will post this reflection on your LaGuardia ePortfolio. This will make up **10% of the final grade**.

Based on your numerical total, the breakdown of grades is as follows:

A=	A-=	B+=	B=	B-=	C+=	C=	C-=	D=	F=
93.0-100	90.0-92.9	87.0-89.9	84.0-86.9	80.0-83.9	77.0-79.9	73.0-76.9	70.0-72.9	65.0-69.9	0-64.9

Course schedule:

(This is a tentative schedule. I will tweak the readings, the topics, and the assignments depending on the direction of the course.)

Date	In-class topics	Assignments due
Thursday – 3/5	Introduction to the course Creation of ePortfolios	
Tuesday – 3/10	Discussion of Governor Andrew Cuomo’s 2015 “State of the State” speech	Read the short excerpt of Governor Cuomo’s speech Read Khan’s “The Battle of Education Reform”
Thursday – 3/12	Discussion of the players	Read Ravitch, chapters 1&2 <i>Post #1 is due</i>
Tuesday – 3/17	Discussion of the language	Read Ravitch, chapters 3, 4, 15 <i>Post #2 is due</i>
Thursday – 3/19	Testing and Achievement	Read Ravitch, chapters 5&6 Read Rhee’s “Opting out of standardized tests? Wrong answer” <i>Post #3 is due</i>
Tuesday – 3/24	Discussion of the role of testing in schools	
Thursday – 3/26	Teachers and Tenure	Read Ravitch, chapters 13&14 Read NPR Ed’s “Q&A: Michelle Rhee on Teacher Tenure Challenges” <i>Post #4 is due</i>
Tuesday – 3/31	Discussion of the fight against tenure	Read Agnew’s “Tenure is not the problem: Debunking education reform myths-and providing a real path forward”
Thursday – 4/2	Screening of <i>Waiting for Superman</i>	Watch Frontline documentary “The Education of Michelle Rhee”
Friday 4/3 – Sunday 4/12	SPRING RECESS – No Classes	

Tuesday – 4/14	Discussion of film	Submit essay #2 (Ravitch vs. Rhee)
Thursday – 4/16	The Politics of the Charter Schools	Read Ravitch chapter 16 Read Williams' "What Charter Schools Are Getting Right And Why They Top Our High School Rankings" Listen to The Bryan Lehrer Show segment "Explaining the Charter School Battle Lines" Post #5 is due
Tuesday – 4/21	Discussion of Charter Schools	Read Bryant's "Exposing the Charter School Lie: Michelle Rhee, Louis CK and the year phony education reform revealed its true colors"
Thursday – 4/23	What is at stake with education here in the United States?	Read Bryant's "Koch Brothers/ Charter school nightmare: 'White kids get to go to a school with a Montessori approach while children of color get eye control'" Deadline for annotated bibliography Post #6 is due
Tuesday – 4/28	Evaluation of first half of the semester	
Thursday – 4/30	What does the future of colleges look like?	Read Wood's "The Future of College?" Listen to On Point Radio's "Should Everybody Go to College?" Post #7 is due
Tuesday – 5/5	Continued discussion of the future of the academy	
Thursday – 5/7	The place of community colleges in the American society	Read the White House's Brief "Building American Skills Through Community College" Listen to On Point Radio's "Community Colleges On America's Front Line" Post #8 is due
Tuesday – 5/12	Continued discussion of community colleges	Read Fain's "Aggressive Pragmatism"
Thursday – 5/14	The Outsourcing of Academia (Adjuncts vs. Fulltimers)	Read Cottom's "The New Old Labor Crisis" Read Schuman's "Hit 'Em Where It Hurts" Read "Scott Walker's con game: why his university cuts will hurt students and over-worked adjuncts the most" Read "Scott Walker to UW Faculty: Work More than 14 hours a week" Post #9 is due
Tuesday – 5/19	Continued discussion of adjuncts and their place in the university	Read Flaherty's "Don't Call Me That"
Thursday – 5/21	Higher Education in the Internet Age (MOOCs)	Read Pappano's "The Year of the MOOC" Read Friedman's "Revolution Hits the University" Read Parr's "Not Staying the Course" Post #10 is due
Tuesday – 5/26	Continued discussion of MOOCs and their future	
Thursday – 5/28	Final ePortfolio workshop: Cleaning up the messiness	
Tuesday – 6/2	Final in-class reflection	Submit final research essay
Tuesday – 6/9	Final grade consultations	Bring in the course checklist to the meeting

COURSE POLICIES:

- 1. ATTENDANCE:** Attendance is mandatory for all classes. **Missing more than 10 contact hours will result in an automatic final “F” grade for the course.** If you will have to miss class because of a serious illness or an emergency, please notify me as early as possible to discuss the missed material.
- 2. OFFICE HOURS:** I strongly encourage you to visit me during office hours for any help or advice. If you can’t make my office hours, then schedule an appointment with me via email. I will check my e-mail at least once a day during the week and once during the weekend.
- 3. LATENESS:** Please come to class on time. Class begins promptly. **I will pay attention to the number of hours you miss. If you are late more than the 10 contact hours, you will fail the class.**

PROPER BEHAVIOR: **Respect towards the instructor and towards fellow classmates is of the utmost importance in this course.** Therefore, walking in and out of class, leaving class early, eating in class, talking during the lecture, and other forms of disruptive behavior will negatively affect your final grade. **Please remember to turn your cell phone off before coming to class. Texting on your cell phone is not allowed either.** I respect you enough to give you my full attention during class; do the same for me and your classmates.

STATEMENT OF COLLEGE POLICY ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Academic Dishonesty is prohibited in the City University of New York and is punishable by penalties ranging from a grade of “F” on the assignment to an “F” in the course, or suspension or expulsion from the College. Forms of academic dishonesty include cheating, plagiarism, obtaining unfair advantage, and the falsification of records and official documents. Please review the brochure detailing these infractions and the repercussions of these actions.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Under Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, LaGuardia Community College has an implicit responsibility to ensure that students with disabilities have equal access to its programs and services, and that the rights of students with disabilities are not denied. The Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) provides advocacy to ensure access to all college programs and facilitates the transition to college life for students with disabilities. All students are required to register with supporting documentation. Appropriate accommodations and services are determined and include:

- academic, career and personal counseling
- priority registration
- academic advisement
- support services such as assistive technology and tutors; proctoring exams for students.

DECLARATION OF PLURALISM

LaGuardia Community College is a diverse community of students, faculty and staff. As a pluralist campus, we celebrate differences among individuals and groups. We strive to respect diversity as reflected in such areas as race, culture, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, sexual orientation, disability and social class.

CHECKLIST FOR COURSE

(Bring this completed form to the final grade consultation)

Question:	Yes	Points	No	Points	Total
1. Did I complete my presentation according to the instructions? (5pts)					
2. Did I complete the presentation essay according to the instructions and submit it on time? (10 pts.)					
3. Did I complete the Ravitch/Rhee essay according to the instructions and submit it on time? (10 pts)					
4. Did I find two good sources, write them up, and post them to the course ePortfolio according to the instructions and submit it on time? (10pts)					
5. Did I complete the research project according to the instructions and submit it on time? (20 pts)					
6. Did I complete the 5 blog posts according to the instructions and submit them on time? (10 pts) (REMEMBER, TWO ARE REQUIRED TO BE POSTED BEFORE THE BREAK)					
7. Did I complete 80% of the low-stakes assignments? (10 pts)					
8. Did I create a personal ePortfolio according to the instructions? (5 pts)					
9. Did I post two or three samples of writing to my LaGuardia ePortfolio according to the instructions? (5 pts)					
10. Did I complete the final reflection according to the instructions and submit it on time? (10 pts)					
Total points					
Extra question: Did I exceed the number of absences described in the syllabus? If so, how many absences did I go over? Multiply that number by 5 and subtract from your total points.					