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**UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY**  
**ENG 104 - Writing: an Accelerated Foundational Course · Spring 2009**  
**“The Rhetoric of Paranoia”**

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### Contact Information

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### Course Description

“No matter how paranoid you are, you’re not paranoid enough.”

This line, from an episode of *The X-Files*, could easily have been penned by any number of American novelists, screenwriters, and advertising copywriters over the last fifty years. Just as the fictional FBI agents of TV’s *The X-Files* investigate alien abductions, mind control, genetic mutations, and government cover-ups, American writers and filmmakers in the past decades explored related fears about identity, science, and politics. In this course we will not only examine how different texts employ (and justify) the rhetoric of paranoia, but through our writing we will also explore our own anxieties about technology, religion, government, and identity.

Much of the material will come from today’s newspapers, magazines, television, and the internet. However, our approach towards the readings will always be “rhetorical”: that is, we will examine how each discourse is a writer’s calculated response to a rhetorical situation. We will focus on techniques of sound analysis and the rules of evidence, and learn how to recognize propaganda, hate literature, half-truths, hype, and emotional appeals; in other words, to sort out trash from truth.

Because this is first and foremost a writing course, our primary purpose will be to hone your critical reading and writing abilities and to prepare you for the writing demands of the university. Thus we will have frequent reviews of grammar and punctuation, learn basic research skills and proper methods of citation, and complete writing assignments designed to help you produce essays of the caliber required for your success at the university. Finally, this course emphasizes the process of revision and provides ample opportunities for individual conferences and peer review.

This is not a course that wallows in conspiracy theories and extraterrestrial sightings. Quite the opposite. This is a writing course that uses the study of paranoia as a useful exercise to promote sound thinking and clear communication.

### Required Texts

*Award Winning Essays.*  
*The Engaged Citizen.*  
*The St. Martin’s Handbook.6th ed.*

### Assignments and Grading

Grades throughout the semester will be based upon the following four-point scale:

A=3.5-4.0; B=2.5-3.4; C=1.5-2.4; D=0.5-1.4; E=0.0-0.4

Your final course grade will be derived from the following components (all dates tentative):

20%	Attendance/Class participation/Homework
10%	Essay 1 (5 pages) – Feb. 17
15%	Essay 2 (5 pages) – Mar. 12
40%	Essay 3 (10 pages) – Apr. 7
15%	Essay 4 (5 pages) – May 5

## Class Participation

Several components comprise your overall participation grade. In addition to attending class, being on time, and being prepared, you will also be expected to submit homework, offer quality workshop and peer review comments, write responses, and conscientiously perform in-class writing activities.

You are required to sign up for a time to have your writing be the focus of a full-class workshop. For this workshop, you must photocopy and distribute to everyone in the class a typed copy of your essay draft during the class period prior to the one in which the writing will be critiqued. Come to class with your working draft copied and ready to hand out. Although this writing may be a draft, it must also be sufficiently developed that the class will enjoy working on it. If you have questions about this, just ask me. **Please note: if you should fail to participate on the date you sign up for, you may not be given an alternate date.** Deadlines must be met; otherwise the class will be left with less to think about and discuss for that day. **Moreover, failure to participate in having your work critiqued in a full-class workshop may result in a failing class participation grade.**

As a reader of workshop drafts, you will receive a participation grade that reflects how you make every effort to respond to your peers' writing. You will receive drafts from your classmates prior to the workshop, and it is your responsibility to make as many written suggestions and comments on that draft as possible so that the writer will have concrete ideas for revision. We will learn in class how to make these suggestions and comments. Failing to provide a considerable number of quality responses for the writer or failing to respond at all is inappropriate for this class.

## General Policies

The course web page contains a complete listing of assignments, schedules, and other supplemental material for this course. It will be updated regularly and you are responsible for all information contained on it.

Class begins when I take roll. If you aren't in class then, you're absent. All written assignments must be on my desk before then or they will be considered late and will be subject to the specific penalties outlined below.

All out-of-class writing assignments—including homework—must be typed in a 12-pt. font and must conform to MLA guidelines for style and documentation of sources; no hand-written submissions will be accepted. I do not accept homework, drafts, or essay assignments via e-mail.

Unless you plan on feeding everyone, no food of any kind allowed in class.

Turn off your cell phones. If I catch you using one in class you will be asked to leave.

Regular attendance is essential in all classes and you are held accountable for every class meeting, whether absent or present, for whatever reason. Each day that you attend class on time, you will receive four (4) points for attendance that day; otherwise, you will receive none. Your final attendance grade will be the sum of your daily points divided by the number of class sessions (on a four-point scale). Three (3) consecutive unexcused absences will reduce your course grade by one letter-grade, whereas missing six (6) times total—excused or otherwise—will deny you credit for the course. This policy is not negotiable under any circumstance. On the other hand, why you're gone is your business, not mine, and you are not obligated to explain your absence in any way. In any event, no absence can be designated "excused" until documentation has been provided and verified. See *Student Rights and Responsibilities* for the University's policy on absences.

Late essay assignments will be marked down one letter grade for each calendar day they're late up to one week, after which they will no longer be accepted for credit. Other late assignments (homework, etc.) will simply earn no credit.

I am always happy to discuss graded assignments with you; however, you must wait at least 24 hours after I return an assignment before you can discuss it with me. This will give you an opportunity to read my comments thoroughly, and it will also allow you to bring specific and focused questions to a meeting with me.

Feel free to come to my office during the above hours if you have any concerns about the class. If you cannot make it during scheduled office hours, let me know and we'll make other arrangements. You can also send me e-mail whenever you want; I'll try to respond quickly, but keep in mind that I'm usually only in the office two days per week.