

# The Composition of Cultural Noise

Course Number: 50:350:099:03  
Basic Reading and Writing Skills  
Fall 2007  
9:30-10:50, Tuesdays and Thursdays  
Armitage 108

Instructor: Elizabeth (Betsy) Allen  
Office: Armitage 477  
Email: [elizalle@camden.rutgers.edu](mailto:elizalle@camden.rutgers.edu)  
Office Hours: Tuesdays 2-4 p.m.



## Course Description:

As a nation comprised primarily of immigrant people, American society can be a noisy conglomerate of languages, customs, values, and perspectives. While finding one's place within this cultural cacophony can be frustrating for the newly arrived, beginning a journey in a foreign land can also be a hope-filled time of promise and opportunity. As a newly arrived scholar from high school immigrating to the university, you too will find the process of acclimation challenging as you learn the ways of communication, behavior and thinking particular to academic scholarship. In this course we will explore the themes of migration, cultural encounter and translation of meaning by reading Joanne Harris' *Chocolat* (required freshman reading), Fae Myenne Ng's *Bone*, and several other shorter pieces available through the library's e-reserve. This literature will also allow us to critically reflect upon the concept of cultural transition and the parallel journey you are making with these characters as immigrants to college culture and writing.

## Course Objectives

*By the end of this course students will be able to:*

- Identify and employ the basic structure of the analytic paper, by developing ideas from response papers into three page essays, complete with introduction and thesis unified body paragraphs, and conclusion.
- Plan, organize, and revise multiple drafts of a piece of writing to create meaningful and cohesive prose appropriate for an academic audience.
- Apply close reading skills to a text in order to understand figurative language, theme and sub-text.
- Identify the main ideas of readings and the work of peers, writing retrospective outlines for each.
- Adapt writing to meet the particular needs and interests of audience and context.
- Identify the unifying principle of paragraphs and employ this principle in his/her own writing.
- Manage the flow of information in the paragraph and sentence, learning to revise sentences according to principles of style.
- Internalize self-correcting measures for grammatical, syntactical, and mechanical errors.

## Required Texts and Materials:

Joanne Harris, *Chocolat* (required reading for all freshmen)

Fae Myenne Ng, *Bone*

Various readings available through the library's e-reserve

Lester Faigley, *The Brief Penguin Handbook*, Second Edition

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary

A three ring binder, a hole puncher, loose leaf paper and dividers

**Grading:** This is a pass/fail course. However, I will assign percentages to your assignments so that you have a good understanding of your progression this semester as well as to prepare you for the grading you will encounter in Composition 101.

- 10% Attendance and participation
- 10% Homework, journal entries, notebook checks, and quizzes
- 10% *Chocolat* Letter
- 20% Reflective Paper
- 20% Position Paper
- 10% Genre Translation Project
- 20% Final Portfolio

**Attendance and Participation (10%):** Attendance for this course is mandatory. Three or more unexcused absences will result in a zero for this portion of your grade. Six or more unexcused absences will result in failure of the course. An excused absence entails a medical or family emergency with documentation as evidence of your absence. Lateness in excess of ten minutes to class will count as an unexcused absence. Additionally, you are expected to come prepared to each and every class, having completed the necessary readings and assignments prior to the class start time. I expect you to engage in class discussion, ask questions when you do not understand, and to always demonstrate patience and respect with your classmates and me.

**Homework, Journal Entries, Notebook Checks, and Reading Quizzes (10%):**

- There will be times that I will assign homework from the Faigley Handbook or other texts that are not listed on the syllabus. I will announce these assignments in class as well as post the assignment and due date on Sakai (under “Announcements”).
- Through out the semester you will write several journal entries addressing questions related to our discussion and study in class. These entries should be one-page in length, typed, double-spaced and placed in your three ring binder under the “Journal” section.
- As part of this course you are required to keep a three-ring binder with section dividers. You are responsible for keeping your class material organized and up to date. These notebooks will be checked 3 times during the semester for a total of 30 points (a possible 10 points per check).
- There will be a quiz in class everyday there is a reading assignment. It is, therefore, imperative that you keep up with readings and come to class on time. Students who do not arrive in time to take the quiz (within the first ten minutes of class) and do not have an excused absence, may not make up any missed quizzes.

***Chocolat* Letter, Reflective Paper, Position Paper (50%):** These three page compositions constitute a total of 50% of your final grade. In this course we stress the importance of composing responses and arguments in stages. Therefore, each of these papers will require two drafts, a writing conference and a final paper. See the course schedule below for the due dates for the various stages of each of these writings. Also note that you will at times be required to submit drafts through your drop-box in Sakai. This will be announced both in class and on Sakai. Be sure you understand how to upload a document to your drop-box prior to the assignment due date.

**Genre Translation Project (10%):** In keeping with our theme of cultural adaptation, toward the end of the semester you will be asked to select one of your three page essays and translate it into a different genre. For instance, if you wrote a letter from Armande to Vianne advising her how to survive in the town of Lansquenet for your *Chocolat* letter assignment, you might consider making a how-to pamphlet for witch survival in provincial France. Who would be interested in such a work? What kind of language would you use for your audience? Would you adopt a mystical, cautionary or sales-pitch tone? What is your intended message as the author? What kind of outside research do you need to pursue? We will discuss the details of this project in class and help each other come up with creative ideas. You must write a one-page paper describing the audience and context considerations you made when adapting this text and make a 5 minute presentation to the class about your project.

**Final Portfolio (20%):** You must attend the final exam period and turn in a writing portfolio as presentation of your work this semester. Submit clean copies of your three major essays (the letter by a character from *Chocolat*, reflective and position papers), as well as a one page description of your genre project. Your portfolio should have a report cover, a table of contents, and a letter to the review committee commenting on your journey as an immigrant to the university this semester. Be sure to give your reviewers a clear idea of your progression and depth of development as a writer.

**Assignment Due Dates:** You will notice on the class schedule that certain drafts are due on days we do not have class. First drafts due on Wednesdays must be uploaded to your Sakai in-box by 5p.m. that day. All other drafts should be printed out and placed in my mailbox, located on the fourth floor of Armitage Hall, by 5 p.m. the day indicated on the class schedule.

**Late Paper Policy:** Each day that a paper is late will result in a 20% grade reduction. I will not accept late papers that are more than 5 calendar days late. Under no circumstances will I accept papers by email. Failure to turn in a draft at any stage of the drafting process (as stated on the course schedule attached) or failure to attend a scheduled writing conference with me will also result in a 20% reduction on the final grade of that assignment.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism of any assignment (which includes using your own work from an assignment in another course, presenting someone else's words or ideas as your own, failure to cite/ document sources, cutting and pasting from online sources and buying papers online) will result in an F for that assignment, possible failure of this course, and even possible expulsion from the university.

**Computer Lab Days:** Occasionally I will schedule our class time in a computer lab. I will notify you in class as well as through Sakai when there is a room change.

#### **Sakai and MyCompLab:**

You are required to use Sakai and MyCompLab through out the semester for turning in assignments. We will go over how to use these websites during the first two weeks of class. After that instruction, you are responsible for coming to my office with any questions regarding how to use these programs. Technical difficulties or not understanding how to turn in assignments through these programs are not excuses for late or missing work. Remember to start your assignments prior to the due date and to keep an electronic copy of ALL your coursework to avoid such issues. I will not accept assignments through email.

**The Robeson Library E-Reserve:** Several of your readings for this course are available through the library's e-reserve. Go to <http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/>. Then click on "Reserves," and search by my name "Allen." Click on your course and select the readings you will need. You can print these out at any computer lab on campus as well as from home.

#### **Important Web sites for this course:**

[www.mycomplab.com](http://www.mycomplab.com)

[www.libraries.rutgers.edu](http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu)

[wire.rutgers.edu](http://wire.rutgers.edu)

[sakai.rutgers.edu](http://sakai.rutgers.edu) (check this address)

Disclaimer: I reserve the right to make changes to this syllabus as necessary with advanced notice to students both in class and via Sakai announcements.

# Class Schedule

**September 4:** Welcome

**September 6:** *Chocolat* chapters 5-7 (inclusive)

**September 11:** *Chocolat* chapters 8-18

**September 13:** Computer Lab Day

**September 18:** Writing Workshop Day

**DUE Wednesday, September 19 by 5 p.m.:**

**Chocolat Letter Draft 1 (1 page)**

**September 20:** *Chocolat* chapters 18-27

**September 25:** Grammar Workshop Day

**September 27:** *Chocolat* chapters 28-39

**October 2:** Writing Conferences in my office. Bring your **Chocolat Letter Draft 2 (2 pages)**.

**October 4:** Print out and read the following three poems from e-reserve prior to class:

- Langston Hughes, “The Negro Speaks of Rivers” and “I, Too, Sing America”
- Walt Whitman, “I Hear America Singing”

**October 9:** *Bone* chapters 1-4

**DUE Wednesday, October 10th by 5 p.m.:**

**Literary Character Letter Final Draft (3 pages)**

**October 11:** Grammar Workshop

**October 16:** *Bone* chapters 5-8

**October 18:** Writing Workshop

**October 23:** *Bone* chapters 9-11

**DUE Wednesday, October 24 by 5 p.m.:**

**Position Paper Draft 1 (1 page)**

**October 25:** Print out from the library e-reserve and read prior to class: Marilyn Chin, “How I Got that Name”

**October 30:** *Bone* chapters 12-14

**November 1:** Writing Conferences in my office. **Bring Position Paper Draft 2 (2 pages)**.

**November 6:** Film *El Norte* in class

**DUE Wednesday, November 7 by 5 p.m.:**

**Position Paper Final Draft (3 pages).**

**November 8:** *El Norte* discussion

**November 13:** Print out and read the following poem and short story prior to class: Emma Lazarus, “The New Colossus” and Lynne Sharon Schwartz, “The Melting Pot”

**DUE Wednesday, November 14 by 5 p.m.:**

**Reflective Essay Draft 1 (1 page).**

**November 15:** Print out and read Ruth Behar, “Biography in the Shadow” prior to class.

**November 20:** Writing Conferences in my office. **Bring Reflective Essay Draft 2 (2 pages)**.

**November 27:** Writing Workshop

**DUE Wednesday, November 28 by 5 p.m.:**

**Reflective Essay Final Draft (3 pages)**

**November 29:** Class time to work on Genre Projects

**December 4:** Genre Project Presentations

**November 6:** Genre Project Presentations

**November 11:** Portfolio and Cover Letter Critique

**Final Exam:** Tuesday, December 18<sup>th</sup> from 9am-12pm in Armitage 108.

**Welcome Aboard. Your journey into the world of university scholarship begins now. Here’s to a productive semester!**