

life of Boston and its various neighborhoods. Finally, we will write *about* the city, exploring various representations of Boston (and its problems, perils, and promises) from a range of personal and disciplinary perspectives—including and especially our own. Because this is an experiential education course, we will make various forays into the city. The course is designed for students with interests in nonfiction writing, rhetoric, creative writing, and literature.

Learning Goals: This is first and foremost a writing course, which means that your writing is at the center of our work together. Our overarching goal is *to practice and study writing in multiple forms and genres, across various media, for a range of audiences and contexts*. To support that goal, we will pursue several others:

- to develop an understanding of how Boston is constructed in and by disciplinary, educational, and public discourses and writing practices
- to participate in and form writing collaborations and communities
- to make productive connections (in keeping with Northeastern’s experiential education philosophy) between coursework and experiences outside the classroom

Note on Experiential Component of Course: This is an Experiential Education course, and several of our class sessions will be held off campus. We will meet, for example, at 826 Boston (<http://826boston.org/>), a nonprofit tutoring and writing center for kids located in Roxbury, and at Mission Hill School (<http://www.missionhillschool.org/>). These meetings will overlap with our class times, but I’ll also ask you to explore the neighborhoods of the city on your own time. If you anticipate that moving around the city will create difficulties for you, please let me know at the beginning of the semester.

Note on Technology: We will be working with various online technologies, including Blackboard blogs, electronic portfolios, and (perhaps) a class website or wiki. These activities do not require significant previous experience in digital composing and publishing, but they do require regular and frequent availability of computers with Internet access. If you anticipate this will present difficulties for you, please let me know at the beginning of the semester.

The Work

Engaged Participation: This is a small, interactive course and our sessions will be devoted mainly to discussion and activities. Therefore, I expect everyone to come to class (or to report to our alternative site) on time and prepared—meaning, having completed the reading or writing assigned for that day and having them in hand—and to contribute *regularly* and *productively* to our collaborative work. Moreover, I expect everyone to help shape the learning environment to promote this kind of participation by all members. This means supporting open, searching discussions in which we don’t shy away from hard questions or challenging, new, or controversial ideas. It means engaging a range of perspectives and positions with intellectual respect and integrity. It means being emboldened and emboldening others to try out ideas and take risks. I will consult with each of you during the semester about your contributions to the course.

Besides regular contributions to class discussions and activities, one activity, while not graded separately, is especially important to your participation grade. Because feedback is important to writers, **peer review** is an integral part of this course. Failure to participate in a peer review session will result in a final participation grade not higher than a “C”; two missed peer review sessions will result in an “F” for participation.

Inquiry blog: Throughout the semester, you will keep a blog on our Blackboard course site. The purpose of the blog is to provide you with a space where you can *make sense* of our experiences in this course and the ideas we take up—by reflecting on our work together and with others, working with the readings, commenting or extending classroom discussion, generating ideas for and drafts of projects, trying out ideas that strike you without warning, collecting intriguing “found texts,” experimenting with various media...etc. I’ll occasionally provide optional prompts, but I will not set deadlines for individual activities on the blogs. Instead, each week (that is, before by 5pm Friday, starting Week 2), you will be responsible for writing a minimum of 500 words—in as many weekly entries as you wish—as well as posting brief comments to the blogs of two of your colleagues per week. Though I won’t respond to every one of your posts—I will comment occasionally—you should always feel free to ask me to respond to anything you’ve written on the blog. Your cumulative grade for the blog will be based upon your thoughtful completion of this informal but substantive writing and weekly commenting; I won’t grade individual entries or evaluate the writing for grammar, mechanics, organization, etc. The blog should be a place where you feel free to try out ideas, take risks, and explore without worrying about polishing your prose, as you will in your formal writing for the course. I do expect that you will address each of the course readings in your blog, but you should go well beyond individual “reading responses” to include more expansive, connected thinking. I also advise at least occasional close work with course texts, especially ones you find difficult and/or unfamiliar.

Three projects: There will be three main writing projects for this course. The first—writing *with* the city—will involve your participation in and reflection on a community-based writing project sponsored by a Boston organization devoted to writing and writers. I have organized a collaboration with 826 Boston—a nonprofit that provides a variety of programs to support the writing of underserved kids in the area—that will involve tutoring and writing alongside kids at Mission Hill School. Several of our class sessions will take place at MHS, rather than on the NU campus. Jess Pauszek, our Service-Learning Teaching Assistant, will be helping to oversee this work. The second project—writing *in* the city—will be a multimedia/multimodal documentary/analysis of how writing functions in one of the city’s social spaces (a neighborhood, an organization, a public place such as a park or a common, etc.). The third project—writing *about* the city—will be an open-genre piece that draws on your own experience of Boston (and perhaps some basic observational or archival research) to illuminate a larger social or cultural aspect of the city. The second and third projects will be composed in and as an electronic portfolio. I will provide detailed handouts for each project. Each draft will be accompanied by a reflective writer’s note and each revision will be accompanied by a revision memo. In addition, each revision must have been peer reviewed, or I will not accept it.

Book/film talk: Each of us will choose a novel or film in which Boston is significantly featured and report to each other, in the form of a 5-7 minute book/film talk just before Spring Break, about how the city is figured in the text. In this talk, you should answer questions such as the following: *What role does the city play in the narrative? What characteristics of Boston are most prominent? What spaces or neighborhoods are featured? Which Bostonians are portrayed and how? Are any of the city’s problems, tensions, issues, etc. explored? Is the portrayal of the city realistic, and is it meant to be? How does it compare to your own experience of Boston?* Together, these talks will allow us to appreciate the various ways in which Boston is represented in these genres. You might want to use this as an opportunity to read a book or watch a film that you’ve never had a chance to check out—and perhaps might not otherwise. (I’ve decided to read the very first Spenser novel by Robert B. Parker, for instance; I’m not much of a crime fiction reader in general, but I know Boston and Northeastern are integral to the plot of this novel.) Wikipedia has a decent list of fictional portrayals of Boston:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boston_in_fiction.

Electronic Portfolios: We will be using an electronic portfolio platform—Digication—for the second and third projects. This will allow you to compose multimedia/multimodal projects that combine alphabetic text with image, video, audio, etc. In addition to providing rich portraits of your engagement in and with the city, the eportfolios—along with the blogs—will also allow us to consider important questions about what it means to “compose” (to “write”) in the twenty-first century. You may also be composing a final eportfolio at the end of the course, but we may opt instead to produce a course website or wiki based on our explorations of Boston.

Policies & Resources

Attendance: Because the success of the class depends upon everyone’s active participation, I expect you attend each class session. You are allowed two “cuts” (unexcused absences) without penalty. Further unexcused absences will result in a one-notch reduction in your final grade (e.g., B to B- or C+ to C). If you miss six or more classes—for any reason, including excused absences—I will suggest you withdraw from the course because otherwise, you will fail. This attendance policy applies to both our sessions on campus and at Mission Hill School and it includes late arrivals except under extremely unusual circumstances. If you arrive late, you may participate in and receive credit for the activities in which you participate, but you will be marked absent. If you miss class, you are responsible for keeping up with the work; please consult the syllabus or contact a classmate or come to my office hours to see what you missed. (Note: please don’t send an email with the message, “Did I miss anything today?” Assume you did and take the proper measures to learn about and get caught up on it.)

Late work: Only on-time blog entries are counted toward your blog grade. (Do not get behind with the idea that you will “catch up.”) Late project drafts are not accepted and the final project grade (and participation grade) will suffer as a result; late revisions will lose a full grade *per day* (not class period). Late work on any aspect of the community-based writing project may result in failure of that project because others will be relying on you to get your work done on time.

Grades: Your final grade will be determined as follows:

- ✓ Engaged participation: 15%
- ✓ Inquiry blog, including commenting: 15%
- ✓ Three projects: 20% each = 60%
- ✓ Book/film talk: 5%
- ✓ Final electronic portfolio or contributions to class website or wiki: 5%

We will discuss specific grading criteria for each project; for now, please note that **A**s are reserved for truly outstanding work (insightful, distinctive, exceedingly well-written); **B**s indicate work that is very good (thoughtful, thorough, generally well-written); **C**s indicate work that completes the assignment but may be thin, unimaginative, superficial, and/or perfunctory; **D**s indicate work that is incomplete, that betray a misunderstanding of the assignment, or is otherwise significantly flawed; **F**s indicate work that is significantly incomplete, missing, or deeply flawed.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: I am committed to creating classrooms in which students with disabilities are fully accommodated. Resources for students with disabilities are available through the Disability Resource Center, 20 Dodge Hall, 617.373.2675, 617.373.2730 TTY, www.access-disability-deaf.neu.edu.

Academic Honesty/Integrity: The NU Academic Integrity Policy may be found at <http://www.northeastern.edu/osccr/academicintegrity/index.html>. Please note that this policy is inclusive of but extends beyond plagiarism and that it applies to all aspects of academic work connected to the university. Whether on campus or at another site in the city, we are all responsible to upholding academic honesty and integrity. Because academic dishonesty undermines the very spirit of academic work, my policy is to take full advantage of university sanctions, including reports to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution. With respect to plagiarism, please note that improper citation of any source, in addition of course to presenting someone else's work as your own, constitutes plagiarism. I will provide some instruction on working with sources, but it is your responsibility to cite sources appropriately, accurately, and completely.

Writing Center: The Northeastern University Writing Center is located in 412 Holmes (x4549; for current hours see <http://www.northeastern.edu/english/writing-center/>) in the English Department and offers free and friendly help for any level writer, including help with reading complex texts, conceptualizing a writing project, refining your writing process (i.e., planning, researching, organization, drafting, revising, and editing), and using sources effectively. You can receive feedback face-to-face during regular hours or via email/online response. Questions about the Writing Center can be directed to Assistant Director Genie Giaimo <giaimo.g@husky.neu.edu> or to Professor Neal Lerner <n.lerner@neu.edu>, Writing Center Director.

Blackboard: We will use our Blackboard site as an online repository for course information (including this syllabus) and announcements, for discussion boards and blogs, and perhaps for file exchanges for peer review. I will also use Blackboard to contact you via email, so please ensure that your proper email address is associated with Blackboard.

Tentative Schedule

Date	Reading	Due	Notes
M, Jan 9			Introduction to course, each other; discussion & questions on syllabus; visit planning
W, Jan 11			Tutor training at 826 Boston
R, Jan 12			Meet at Mission Hill School
M, Jan 16	No Classes—MLK Holiday		
W, Jan 18	Gillespie and Lerner (PDF)		Discuss Project 1
R, Jan 19		Interview subjects identified	Meet at Mission Hill School
M, Jan 23	Weiss (2 PDFs; Pt.2 may be		

	skimmed)		
W, Jan 25		Draft interview guides	
R, Jan 26			Meet at Mission Hill School
M, Jan 30	Reading TBA from <i>Writing and Community Engagement</i>		
W, Feb 1			
R, Feb 2			Meet at Mission Hill School
M, Feb 6	Reading TBA from <i>Writing and Community Engagement</i>		
W, Feb 8		Interview transcripts	
R, Feb 9			Meet at Mission Hill School
M, Feb 13	Pauszek, “Engaging Communities, Encouraging Language” (PDF)		
W, Feb 15		Draft narratives	Peer review
R, Feb 16			Meet at Mission Hill School
M, Feb 20	No Classes—Presidents Day		
W, Feb 22	DeCerteau (PDF)	Interviews and narratives	Seeing the City
R, Feb 23	Lauer (PDF) Robinson: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDZFcDGpL4U	Walking reports	Multimodal/multimedia OccupyBoston website
M, Feb 27	Small (PDF) Sullivan, et al.: http://nuweb.neu.edu/psullivan/main.html		Analyzing people, writing
W, Feb 29		Book/film talks	

R, Mar 1		Book/film talks	
Mar 5 – Mar 9	Spring Break		
M, Mar 12			Workshop/Peer review discussion
W, Mar 14		Project 2 draft	Peer review
R, Mar 15	MacDonald, <i>AS</i> , Chs. 1-2		
M, Mar 19	MacDonald, <i>AS</i> , Chs. 3-5		
W, Mar 21	MacDonald, <i>AS</i> , Chs. 6-8	Project 2 eportfolio	
R, Mar 22	MacDonald, <i>AS</i> , 9-11		
M, Mar 26	Formisano (PDF)		
W, Mar 28	BBDP website: http://bbdplearningnetwork.wordpress.com/		
R, Mar 29	Intro (<i>TGC</i>); Jackson (<i>TGC</i>)		
M, Apr 2	Powell (<i>TGC</i>); Kay (<i>TGC</i>)		
W, Apr 4	Morgenroth (<i>TGC</i>); MacDonald (<i>TGC</i>)		
R, Apr 5		Project 3 draft	Peer review
M, Apr 9			
W, Apr 11			Eportfolio presentations or work on class website/wiki
R, Apr 12		Project 3 eportfolio	Eportfolio presentations or work on class website/wiki
M, Apr 16	Patriots Day—No Class		
W, Apr 18		Final eportfolios or contributions to class website/wiki	Wrap-up Evaluations