DESCRIPTION
I’ve designed this course to help us become better writers, researchers, readers, and collaborators according to a single guiding principle: be interesting. One part of being interesting is talking about obviously unusual things, such as manticores, witch hunting, vampiric garden tools, or the longstanding issue of dragons in public parks.

But the wrong person can drain the blood from any topic, just as the right person can produce a fascinating discussion of perfectly ordinary arithmetic, deep space, dental structures, or touch-typing. So we will strive to be the right kinds of researchers, writers, and presenters.

This requires intentional practice, guidance, and collaboration that I’ve designed this course to provide.

GOALS
I’ve divided this course into several units driven by a series of questions to which, by semester’s end, we should have practical, compelling answers. They are:

- What does interesting, researched writing and presentation look like?
- Which kinds, types, or methods of research make writing more interesting?
- What is good research, and how do I know I’m doing it?
- By what processes or practices do I become a better, more interesting writer and presenter?
- To the extent these practices include research, collaboration, and reading, by what processes or practices do I become a better researcher, collaborator, and reader?
EXPECTATIONS
Earlham’s education is for sound reasons consistently ranked among the world’s top ten. This means that we have every reason to expect the best course on the planet from one another.

One counterintuitive implication of this is that I have no interest in rewarding or punishing you. Grades in this course are communication, or shorthand for how your work relates to my expectations and those of your classmates. Our discussions are about creating a great environment for the class as a whole, and not necessarily for you (or anyone else) specifically.

ACADEMIC HONESTY
Part of learning is practice, and practice means work. You should learn from the work you do for this course, and other people should learn from the work you do in this course. Academic honesty means being clear and direct regarding your work and your learning.

When truthful, statements such as “I did not do the reading,” “I learned a different method for discovering sources in another course,” or “I had difficulty understanding this article, even though I worked with it for hours” are all wonderful (and sometimes difficult) examples of academic honesty. Regardless, they are what I expect from you.

Academic dishonesty is, in contrast, any activity that compromises this relationship between work and learning; it includes falsifying information, pretending to knowledge, skills, or experience, taking credit for the work of others, misrepresenting the success of a method or process, or withholding information to dishonest effect (e.g. not volunteering that you could not get access to an article, complete the reading, etc.).

Academic dishonesty is at least corrosive to our community and to our shared learning. At worst it creates or circulates misinformation that can squander charitable investments, build unsafe stages, or lead to brutal and meaningless injustice. It risks dangerous and colossal waste.

In short: we should expect nothing less than the best course on the planet from one another. And academic dishonesty is a problem (or the symptom of problems) characterized by painful solutions.

ATTENDANCE
I expect you to be fully present during every class session. This means that you’re here, prepared, and ready to participate.

You, on the other hand, should expect every class session to be interesting, compelling, and educational.

All together, this means that:

★ You may miss one full week of classes (read: three) without penalty. Each subsequent missed class will penalize your final mark by one-third of one letter grade (e.g. a B+ becomes a B). Relative to this policy, I will excuse absences for college-sponsored events, religious holidays, and for extraordinary circumstances.

★ If you miss more than two weeks worth of class sessions for any reason, I will not issue you a passing grade for the course. If any extraordinary circumstances are in play, I will help you negotiate some solution with the college (such as medical leave).

★ If any of our class sessions is anything other than interesting and compelling for you, let me know. If there’s a problem with the class or my management of it, I want to fix it. If there’s something we can improve, I want to improve it. Feedback is too important to keep to yourself.

ASSIGNMENTS
Our assignment descriptions are on Moodle; unless otherwise specified, our assignments should be submitted through Moodle.

If you have any questions about any of our assignments, let me know they moment they enter your mind; class, however, may not be the best time to ask about them since by doing so you commandeer the time of every other student in the room. So be conscientious.

Also, speak to Donna Keesling in Academic Support about accommodations if you believe you need them. You should do so as early in the semester as possible.

Late or Missing Work
Most of the work we do is meant to drive class discussion and therefore become significantly less useful after deadline. For that reason, all late assignments will receive a 60%, regardless of whether they are a day, a week, or a month late. Missing work receives a 0%.

I will allow every student one 48-hour extension on one non group-work assignment. Use this wisely.

TIME COMMITMENTS
This is a four-credit course. This means that you should expect to commit twelve hours per week
to it. Three of these hours are our class sessions; you should plan on spending an additional nine hours per week on reading, writing, and research.

**GRADES**

Our assignments are graded on a point system, with total earned points divided by total possible points yielding a percentage at semester’s end. Major grade divisions are at ten-percentile intervals (e.g. 90%, 80%, etc.) with minor grade divisions comprising the three percentage points at the top and bottom of each major grade range (e.g. the range from 90% to just under 93% describes an A-, and a 97% or higher describes an A+).

Our final mark will comprise about 1000 points for the semester. Of these, 500 are for our four major writing assignments/presentations, which are worth anywhere from 100-150 points each.

Another 255 points are for participation, which here means the extent to which your participation has improved that class session (at five points each).

The remaining points (approximately 350) are divided among our shorter assignments: presentations, response papers, drafts, and the like.

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**Instructor:** Nate Eastman (eastmna), Carp. 307, x1507. **Meeting Time:** 9:00-9:50 MWF in Carpenter 213. **Office Hours:** 10:00-12:00 TR. **Required Texts:** Pare’s *On Monsters and Marvels*, Roach’s *Gulp*, Tyson’s *Death by Black Hole.*
## COURSE SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>ASSIGNMENT</th>
<th>BRING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>Introduction, in which we meet each other, Tannekin Skinker, and the Horsham Dragon.</td>
<td>Get the books if you haven’t already. You’ll need them immediately and we will use them all.</td>
<td>DBBH. This section is on Moodle in case your book’s not yet in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>What does interesting, researched writing look like? (1.1)</td>
<td><em>Death by Black Hole</em> to p. 37. <em>Response #1.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>What does interesting, researched writing look like? (1.2)</td>
<td>“Confessions in Stone” (<em>SIF</em> pp. 61-91; on Moodle). <em>Response #2.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>What does interesting, researched writing look like? (1.3)</td>
<td><em>Gulp</em> to p. 37. <em>Response #3.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>What is good research, and how do I know I’m doing it? (1.1)</td>
<td>Meet in Lilly Library Reference Lab.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>What is good research, and how do I know I’m doing it? (1.2)</td>
<td><em>Response #4.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>What is good research, and how do I know I’m doing it? (1.3)</td>
<td><em>Response #5.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>Which kinds, types, or methods of research make writing more interesting? (1.1)</td>
<td><em>Proposal for Project #1.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>Which kinds, types, or methods of research make writing more interesting? (1.2)</td>
<td><em>Rough Draft of Project #1.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Which kinds, types, or methods of research make writing more interesting? (1.3)</td>
<td><em>Final Draft of Project #1.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>By what processes or practices do I become a better, more interesting writer? (1.1)</td>
<td><em>Project #1 Assessment.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*DBBH* stands for *Death by Black Hole*. *SIF* refers to *Sons and Lovers in Foreign Lands*.
2.6 Practice: Topics in Astrophysics, 1515-2015 (1.1)  
The Man in the Moone to p.46.

2.8 Practice: Topics in Astrophysics, 1515-2015 (1.2)  
The Man in the Moone to end.
Response #6.

2.10 By what processes or practices do I become a better, more interesting writer? (1.2)  
Project #1 Review Session

2.13 Practice: Topics in Astrophysics, 1515-2015 (1.3)  
DBBH 48-110. Response #7.

2.15 Practice: Topics in Astrophysics, 1515-2015 (1.4)  

2.17 Practice: Topics in Astrophysics, 1515-2015 (1.5)  
DBBH 185-248.

2.20 Practice: Topics in Astrophysics, 1515-2015 (1.6)  

2.22 Practice: Topics in Astrophysics, 1515-2015 (1.7)  

**EARLY SEMESTER BREAK (2.23-2.26)**

2.27 Practice: Topics in Astrophysics, 1515-2015 (1.8)  
Research Session on Astrophysics (1).

3.1 Practice: Topics in Astrophysics, 1515-2015 (1.9)  
Research Session on Astrophysics (2). Response #11.
Proposal for Project #2.

3.3 Which kinds, types, or methods of research make writing more interesting? (2.1)  

3.6 Which kinds, types, or methods of research make writing more interesting? (2.2)  
Rough Draft of Project #2.

3.8 Which kinds, types, or methods of research make writing more interesting? (2.3)  
Final Draft of Project #2.

3.10 By what processes or practices do I become a better, more interesting writer? (2.1)  
Project #2 Assessment.

3.12 By what processes or practices do I become a better, more interesting writer? (2.2)  
Project #2 Review Session.

3.15 Practice: Topics in Biology, 1515-2015 (1.1)  
Monsters and Marvels to p. 37.
Response #12.

3.17 Practice: Topics in Biology, 1515-2015 (1.2)  
Monsters and Marvels to p. 84.

**SPRING BREAK (3.18-3.26)**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Pages</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Practice: Topics in Biology, 1515-2015</td>
<td>Gulp to p. 268.</td>
<td>Gulp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>Practice: Topics in Biology, 1515-2015</td>
<td>Research Session on Biology.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>Which kinds, types, or methods of research make writing more interesting?</td>
<td>Proposal for Project #3.</td>
<td>Your proposal for Project #3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>Which kinds, types, or methods of research make writing more interesting?</td>
<td>Rough Draft of Project #3.</td>
<td>A complete draft of your article, or your presentation notes, plus supporting materials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>Which kinds, types, or methods of research make writing more interesting?</td>
<td>Final Draft of Project #3.</td>
<td>Your presentation materials. Your articles are to be submitted via Moodle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>By what processes or practices do I become a better, more interesting writer?</td>
<td>Project #3 Assessment.</td>
<td>Your project #1, #2, or #3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.19</td>
<td><strong>EPIC Expo: A Celebration of Excellence</strong></td>
<td>Project Presentation/Display</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>By what processes or practices do I become a better, more interesting writer?</td>
<td>Project #3 Review Session.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>Which kinds, types, or methods of research make writing more interesting?</td>
<td>Proposal for Project #4.</td>
<td>A complete draft of your article, or your presentation notes, plus supporting materials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>Which kinds, types, or methods of research make writing more interesting?</td>
<td>Rough Draft of Project #4.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td><strong>No Class! (It’s Finals Week)</strong> What I’ve Learned.</td>
<td>Final Draft of Project #4. Article #4 Assessment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

RESPONSE #1 (10 POINTS)
This response, as well as the next two, are simple. Given your reading in DBBH, I’d like you to answer the following questions:

★ Which passages from or parts of Neil deGrasse Tyson’s writing most interested you? Why do you think they did?
★ Which parts of his writing least interested you? Why?
★ Do you know a specific person who would find this reading engaging? Who is he or she, and on what basis do you think so?
★ What things does he do well that you would also like to do in your own writing?
★ What mistakes does he make in his writing that you would like to avoid in your own?

RESPONSE #2 (10)
Given your reading in DBBH and StF, I’d like you to answer the following questions:

★ Which of these pieces did you find more engaging overall, and why?
★ Which specific things do you think DFW does better (i.e. in a more interesting or engaging way) than NdIT? You might consider what each piece tries to accomplish, the personality suggested by each author’s word choice and sentence/paragraph structure, and their orientation to research and information (i.e. how each of them claims to know what they know).
★ Which specific things do you think NdIT does in a more interesting or engaging way than NdIT?
★ What things does DFW do well that you would also like to do in your own writing?
★ What mistakes does DFW make in his writing that you would like to avoid in your own?

RESPONSE #3 (10)
Given your reading in DBBH, StF, and Gulp, I’d like you to answer the following questions:

★ What are your favorite moments (i.e. passages or quotes) from these three pieces of writing?
★ Which specific aspects or qualities from these pieces of would you most like to develop in your own work?
★ Which aspects or qualities of these pieces would you like to improve on in your own work (e.g. “Mary Roach’s writing tries to be casual and quirky, which I like, but I want to do casual and quirky better than she does”).
★ What dangers, pitfalls, or otherwise ineffective qualities of writing do you see in these pieces that you would like to entirely avoid in your own work?

RESPONSE #4 (10+)
Now that we’ve spent some time getting familiar with our library personnel and databases, I’d like you to locate at least two primary sources, one related to each of (a) hog-faced gentlewomen residing in or around London, and (b) the dragon described in True and Wonderfull (hint: this is sometimes known as the Horsham or Sussex Dragon). Your primary sources may be no more recent than 1917.

Scoring for this response will be governed by three basic rules:

★ Half of your score is completing the assignment, and half is finding the best source: think the earliest, the strangest, or the most comprehensive.
★ There is no ceiling for the score (i.e. extra credit is possible); the more interesting your best source, the higher your score. For our purposes, an “interesting” source is likely to support or allow a more interesting piece of writing.
★ There will be non-grade-based (i.e. prestige) prizes for the best sources. Past prizes have included comics drawn by an artist in some advanced state of mental distress as well as hamburger chewing gum.

Completing this response entails:
* Submitting a list of your sources, and a brief description of where and how you found them, on Moodle.
* Bringing your single favorite source to class on 1.23 in such a form that you can show it to other people and talk about what makes it your favorite. Printouts are fine, or you can have it on a laptop or tablet. Phones are inconveniently small-screened for the task.

We are teaching collaboration in this course, so you are free to collaborate with other course members (or anyone else) on any aspect of this (or any other) assignment.

**RESPONSE #5 (10+)**

For this response, we’ll focus on finding a broader array of sources on unusual topics by using our library databases and other powerful resources. So for our class session on 1.27, I would like you to find one academic article or primary source on one of the following topics:

* Non-human vampires (such as melons, garden tools, or animals).
* Man-eating plants (such as the ya-te-veo).
* Any attempt, scientific or otherwise, to create a hybrid of humans and non-human primates (gorillas, chimpanzees, etc.) before 1976.
* Popobawa (a Zanzibarian bat demon).
* Professional gluttons, competitive eaters, or gastronomical entertainers earlier than 1916.
* Spontaneous human combustion.

As with the last response:

* There is no ceiling for the score (i.e. extra credit is possible); the more interesting your source or article, the higher your score. For our purposes, an “interesting” source is likely to support or allow a more interesting piece of writing.
* Source duplication within the class will halve both scores. That is, a source someone else finds is less valuable than a source nobody else finds, so there is powerful incentive to find obscure or difficult-to-locate sources.
* There will be a non-grade-based (i.e. prestige) prizes for the most interesting single source or article.

Completing this response entails:

* Submitting a citation for your source, and a brief description of where and how you found it, on Moodle.
* Bringing your complete source to our class session on 1.27. Photocopies, printouts, and other physical reproductions are permissible; because our class activity involves the class rapidly exchanging and evaluating sources, electronic copies of sources or simple citations are insufficient to the assignment. Anyone can find a picture of the ya-te-veo page from Buel’s *Sea and Land*; a complete source is at least the chapter that contains it.

This is not an evening-before-it’s-due response. I’ve chosen these topics so that finding a good source will mean consulting with a librarian and (almost certainly) requesting a copy of your source or article from an archive, repository, or university research holding.

**PROPOSAL FOR PROJECT #1 (25)**

For our first project, I would like you to do one of the following:

(a) Write a 1500-word article (for the publication of your choice) on any one of the topics we’ve researched for Responses #4 and #5, and which attempts the writing techniques you’ve described in Response #3.

(b) Produce a five-minute presentation, performance, or multimodal piece (for instance, a video, newscast, audio or video documentary) on any one of the topics we’ve researched for Responses #4 and #5.

(c) Create a 2000-word TWINE on any one of the topics we’ve researched for Responses #4 and #5. That TWINE is playable (rather than simply readable or viewable) allows possibilities for this
assignment option that are difficult to specify or enumerate outside of our TWINE instruction (if
you exercise this option, that instruction should take about a half hour).

This article proposal is not a draft; instead, it’s a statement of what you intend to create and how (i.e. in
what style and with which collaborators) you intend to create it. In class, we’ll discuss these proposals so
that (a) you can refine the focus of your piece after discussion (in case anyone has an idea you’d like to steal)
and (b) catch any obvious problems with your approach.

Your proposal should describe:

★ Which topic you plan to work with and which medium or media you intend to use.
★ Which sources you plan to use for this piece. Your article must use at least two academic sources
(primary texts or peer-reviewed articles), but may also incorporate non-academic sources so long as
these are well-contextualized (based on Response #4 or #5).
★ The aspects or qualities you would most like your piece to have (based on Response #3).

PROJECT #1 (100)

For this article, I would like you to create the article, presentation, or TWINE described in your proposal. Whichever option you choose, you ought use at least three academic sources (either primary sources or
peer-reviewed articles), and ought follow our first and most important rule: be interesting.

While it may at first seem sufficient for a piece like this to be expository (i.e. “there are legends of
vampiric melons”), simple exposition is not generally interesting; instead, interesting expository pieces make
some kind of implicit or explicit claim: “the conventional preparation of lobsters seems unusually cruel,”
“stage gluttony has moved from being theatrical to being competitive,” or “the human alimentary system is
complicated in unexpected ways.” Look to our readings for examples.

It is also possible to write a piece that involves original research – for instance, one that claims that the
Horsham or Sussex Dragon reports likely originated with the escape of a crocodile monitor from a ship that
had recently returned from New Zealand. It’s fine to write this kind of piece, so long as it remains
interesting and credible. A common pitfall, best avoided, is to drive your piece with a controversial and
speculative thesis with little basis in evidence.

PROJECT #1 ASSESSMENT (25)

For this piece, I would like you to re-read your article or review your project, revisit your proposal, and
reflect on the work you’ve undertaken. Then, I’d like you to write a short piece that answers the following
questions:

★ Which parts (as in quotable pieces) of your project do you either like best or do you believe are most
interesting?
★ Which parts (as in quotable pieces) of your project do you either like least or do you believe are less
engaging or outright broken?
★ Which aspects (as in qualities) of your project do you like most?
★ Which aspects (as in qualities) of your project do you like least?
★ When you consider the process by which you researched, developed, and created this project, what
would you change?
★ Assuming that you will create another, similar project later this semester, which one thing would you
like it to do better than this one?