

Eng 121: English Composition II: On Beauty & Justice

Lehman College, City University of New York | Section: E402 | Fall 2020

M (asynchronous) & **W (synchronous)** 9:00am-10:40am. Online. 4 credits; 4 hours

Professor Matt Caprioli (he/his/him)

matt.caprioli@lehman.cuny.edu

Office Hours: M - 11:00am-12:30pm; W - 4:00pm-5:30pm; F - 2:00-3:30pm

[Assignments](#)

[Calendar of lectures, readings & assignments](#)

[Important statements](#)

Welcome!

You've made it through ENG111! Take a moment to really appreciate your achievements.

About your course:

What's beautiful? What's ugly? These simple questions are succinct ways to ask what (and who) matters. This course looks at notions of beauty through an academic, political, and economic lens. Answering what is beautiful then moves us closer to understanding how the world is shaped, and how we can in turn shape the world. There's no clear answer to what is beautiful, which makes "beauty" and its flipside useful for ENG 121. This required course is meant to build your research-based writing, which requires improving our skills in analytical and creative thinking. It will fortify your research methods, source evaluation, audience analysis, and ability to convey yourself in a compelling and memorable manner. This is an exciting topic that has no wrong answers. The only bad thing is to stop asking questions. I look forward to learning from and working with you this semester.

Official description: Focus on all aspects of reading and writing, with particular attention to summary, critical responses to short texts, argumentative development in paragraphs and essays, and the rewriting process. Emphasis on organization, language, accuracy, grammar, and mechanics. Classroom instruction supplemented by individual conferences on drafts with instructor, library resources sessions, and appropriate use of available technology.

Learning objectives & outcomes:

After this course, you will be far better equipped at understanding how critical thinking, research, and excellent writing inform your work at Lehman and your future career.

Specifically you will:

- Grow your awareness of various forms of academic writing
- Examine and critique written and visual texts through several academic lens
- Assess your own writing
- Give appropriate and helpful feedback to others
- Extend your current writing abilities and know where to improve in the future
- Build your vocabulary, grammar, and general knowledge of creative, critical, and functional writing.

Required Course Materials:

- No required textbook
- Internet access

Critical links

- [Course link](#)
 - <https://mattcap.com/eng121/>
 - Password: lehmanpartyrock
- [Microsoft Teams](#)
- [Weekly Zoom meetings Wednesday from 9-10:40am](#)
 - <https://zoom.us/j/95280447252?pwd=K0ZzS1FSQ0dscUJKTGd6emY3a0ZyZz09>
- [Groups](#)

Assignments

Listed in order of due date

Participation:

- Due: 8/26 - 12/16
- 20 points
- Assessed by: record of attendance; practice of listening and responding to peers; thoughtful contributions to class discussion; focused effort to complete all in-class writing assignments; reflection paragraphs
- **Guidance on reflection/argument/research paragraphs:** For most weeks, students respond to any reading by Sunday at 11pm. Students can send in a 3-7 line reflection paragraph directly to the professor that answers:
 - 1) what is the reading about
 - 2) what did the student like or dislike *or* did the student have to look anything up and what was the researched item
 - 3) Did anything surprise the student *or* does the reading/podcast relate to something else in class?

If they wish, students can change the questions they answer during the course, but it must be 3-7 sentences. Peers or the professor will provide feedback with track changes to all written reflections. Students send all reflections as a Word document. Students include their name and the reading they are responding to at the top of the paper. Students follow the basics of MLA in formatting. Students can send their reflections in early. As the course prepares for the argumentative and research papers, these reflections will ask students to practice their argument and research skills. More detail on argument or research-based reflection paragraphs is provided each week under "Calendar of Lectures, Readings & Assignments."

Expository presentation:

- [Due 10/14](#) (click to go to due date in calendar)

- 10 points
- Students present for 3-5 minutes on one aspect of beauty or justice that the class has covered through Week 8. PowerPoint is mandatory. Presenters include their email on the last slide so peers can submit feedback directly to them. Presenters incorporate this feedback into their expository paper.

Expository paper:

- [Due 10/28](#)
- 15 points
- This five-page paper refines what was covered in the expository presentation on 10/14. Students will be graded on how well they demonstrate the lessons discussed in “Engaging Sources” by Kate L. Turabian (65-73) [discussed on 9/30]. They will also be graded on how they incorporate feedback from the class.

1.0 Reflection essay on short story or nonfiction piece:

- [Due 11/11](#)
- 10 points
- Students select one reading or podcast from class to write a 5-page paper on. The reading can be from any genre. The reflection can take the form of a personal essay, an outward-looking essay, an argumentative essay, or an academic essay. Students will be graded on how well they demonstrate engagement with and understanding of the material. They will also be graded on how well they exhibit writing principles outlined in Pinker, Bly, Crowley & Hawhee, Turabian, Moran, and Gill.

2.0 Reflection essay on short story or nonfiction piece:

- [Due 11/25](#)
- 15 points
- Students revise their 1.0 reflection essay. They will be graded on how well they implement the lessons in “Method” by Jack Hart in A Writer’s Coach and “Polishing Your Essay” by C.M. Gill in Essential Writing Skills (160-190)

Research paper:

- [Due 12/16](#)
- 30 points
- Students write a ten-page research paper on an aspect of “beauty” and/or “justice.” Student’s own interests and initial research will determine the exact topic. Students will be graded on the strength of their sources, the quality of their writing, and the breadth of their thinking on the page. They will also be assessed on how well they implement the research principles described in Gill and Turabian.

=100 total possible points

A 94-100 (4.0), A- 90-93 (3.7), B+ 87-89 (3.3), B 83-86 (3.0), B- 80-82 (2.7), C+ 77-79 (2.3), C 73-76 (2.0), C- 70-72 (1.7), D 65-69 (1.0), F 0-64 (0.0)

Grading Policies:

As with many professional environments, I do not accept any late work except under extraordinary circumstances. This means that all late work receives a zero. However, I am generous when it comes to extra credit. Unless otherwise specified, all extra credit opportunities are worth five points.

They include:

- A 10% grade increase for every assignment handed one week early.
- Writing one article for Lehman's student newspaper, *The Meridian*.
- Contributing one piece to Lehman's radio program, *The Underground Radio*.
- Earning a professional certificate through LinkedIn, HubSpot, Microsoft, or Google that is cleared with the professor.
- Completing Norton/Write segment on sentences, language, or punctuation/mechanics.

Calendar of Lectures, Readings & Assignments

All assignments, with the exception of in-class presentations, are due by Sunday at 11pm.

Assignment due dates are marked in cyan.

Week 1 - Introductions

W - 8/26 - live

- Why study English composition, or notions of beauty and justice?
- What writing principles will instantly make you a better writer?
- Why is "intellectual honesty" important?
- How does this course fit into your professional and personal goals?

First reflection is emailed to professor by 11pm on Sunday (8/30).

Week 2 - Contemporary Beauty

W - 9/2 - live

Required reading by the start of class:

- Read "[A Window Onto the World](#)" by Steven Pinker in *The Sense of Style*

Selected reading by the start of class:

- Read and respond to **one** of the following:
 - [“Sabrina & Corina”](#) by Kali Fajardo-Anstine
 - [“Chance the Rapper’s Golden Year”](#) by Hanif Abdurraqib & preface to [They Can’t Kill Us Till They Kill Us](#)
 - [“On Beauty,”](#) a poem by Nick Laird
- Read and respond to **one** of the following:
 - Excerpt from [On Beauty and Being Just](#) by Elaine Scarry (1-12)
 - Excerpt from [Ugliness: a Cultural History](#) by Gretchen Henderson
 - [“Bad English”](#) by Cathy Park Hong in [Minor Feelings](#)

Agenda

- Review & discuss “A Window Onto the World”
- Present readings (*Fajardo-Anstine, Abdurraqib, Laird, Scarry, Henderson, Hong*)
- Does beauty matter?
- Are writing and beauty related?
- Who determines what is ugly?

Week 3 - Contemporary Beauty

W - 9/9 - live

Required reading by the start of class:

- Read [“Shitty First Drafts”](#) and [“Perfectionism”](#) by Anne Lamott

Selected reading by the start of class:

- Engage and respond to **one** of the following:
 - [The Long Distance Between Poems](#) by Jericho Brown
 - [Interview with Toni Morrison](#), The Paris Review
 - [“Writer, Reader, Words”](#) by Jeanette Winterson in [Art Objects](#)
- Read and respond to **one** of the following:
 - Introduction to [The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F**K](#) by Mark Manson
 - [“How I Knew I Wanted to Be A Writer”](#) lecture by Cristina Henríquez
 - [“The Real First Sans Giving Day”](#) by Richard Blanco in [The Prince of Los Cocuyos](#)

Agenda

- Review & discuss “Shitty First Drafts” and “Perfectionism”
- Present readings (Brown, Morrison, Winterson, Manson, Henríquez, Blanco)
- Should people work to experience beauty, or should it be perceived instantly?
- Is the expression “less is more” accurate or fair?
- Does beauty vary across ethnicities?

Second reflection on Week 2 OR Week 3 is emailed to professor by 11pm on Sunday (9/13).

Week 4 - Ancient Conceptions of Beauty

W - 9/16 - live

Required reading by the start of class:

- [“Writing to Communicate”](#) by Robert Bly in [The Copywriter’s Handbook](#) (44-61)
- The Little Seagull Handbook: W-13 - Reflections (70-73)
- Excerpts from [Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students](#) by Sharon Crowley and Debra Hawhee
 - Bottom of page 19-21 “On Ideology and the Commonplaces”
 - Middle of page 140-143 “Using Common Topics and Commonplaces to Invent Arguments”
- Excerpts from [The Pillow Book](#) by Sei Shōnagon. Required: [6] about the Emperor’s Dog to [39] on elegant things.
- Excerpts from [The Mayan Popol Vuh](#) (Reading opening Preface& Introduction paragraphs, then excerpts from Part 1 & 2)
- “The Realm of Beauty” by G.H. Gombrich in [The Story of Art](#) (21 until first paragraph on 27. Look up paintings you don’t know!)

Agenda

- Review & discuss “Ancient Rhetorics” and “Writing to Communicate”
- Present readings (Scarry, Shōnagon, Virgil, Gombrich, Popol Vuh)
- How do Bly’s 11 principles relate to expository communication?
- Are memes and commonplaces the same thing?
- Is beauty lifesaving as Scarry maintains?
- How did ancient conceptions of beauty differ from modern conceptions?

Third reflection is emailed to professor by 11pm on Sunday (9/20).

Week 5 - Beauty & Business

W - 9/23 - live

Required reading by the start of class:

- [“Doing Your Research”](#) by Kate L. Turabian (52-64)
- The Little Seagull Handbook: [R-4 - Integrating Sources, Avoiding Plagiarism](#) (107-118)
- Chapter one of [American Plastic](#) by Laurie Essig (3-26)

Agenda

- Is there a connection between credit cards and beauty?
- Should businesses care about beauty and justice?
- What advice would you give to someone who wants to avoid plagiarism? What would you tell them if they ask about integrating sources?

Week 6 – Beauty & Business

W - 9/30 - live

Required reading by the start of class:

- [“Writing that Works”](#) by Kenneth Roman and Joel Raphaelson in [Writing that Works: How to Communicate Effectively in Business](#) (5-10)
- Chapter 1 to [Lean Impact: How to Innovate for Radically Greater Social Good](#) by Ann Mei Chang (10-25)
- [“Engaging Sources”](#) by Kate L. Turabian (65-73)

Agenda

- What is good business writing?
- Do businesses have social responsibilities?
- What is a “beautiful” business solution?
- For your expository paper and research paper, how will you engage sources?

Week 7 - Beauty & Gender

W - 10/7 - live

Required reading by the start of class:

- Read [“What Is Cultural Analysis”](#) in [Writing about Movies](#)
- [“Delivering Your Research as a Presentation”](#) by Kate L. Turabian (161-166)
- [“Boys, Girls & Bodies”](#) by Kim Addonizio in [Ordinary Genius](#) (99-108)

Agenda

- Why can a presentation help you write a better paper?
- What does Addonizio argue?
- How would you define cultural analysis?

Week 8 – Expository presentations

W - 10/14 – live

10/14 --- classes follow a Monday schedule; doesn't impact us

Agenda

- [Expository presentations delivered in class](#)

Week 9 – Beauty & Gender

W - 10/21 - live

Required reading by the start of class:

- [“Working Toward an Answer”](#) by Kate L. Turabian in [Student’s Guide to Writing College Papers](#)
- [“Things We Lost in the Fire”](#) by Mariana Enriquez
- Poems from Kevin Young in [Brown](#)

Agenda

- What will you write your research paper about?
- What is feminism?
- How would you explain the Enriquez reading to a close friend?

Week 10 – Beauty & Privilege

W - 10/28 – live

Required reading by the start of class:

- [“Composing Your Essay”](#) by C.M. Gill in [Essential Writing Skills](#) (52-88)
- [“Race, Class, & Privilege”](#) by Kim Addonizio in [Ordinary Genius](#) (164-169)
- [“The American Exception”](#) by Zadie Smith in [Intimations](#)

Agenda

- [Expository paper due by start of class](#)
- What guidance does Gill provide in writing a college essay?
- How does Addonizio define privilege?
- What is Smith’s main contention in “The American Exception?”

Week 11 - Beauty & Personal Narratives

W - 11/4 - live

Required reading by the start of class:

- [“Method”](#) by Jack Hart in [A Writer’s Coach](#)
- The Little Seagull Handbook: [Personal Narratives](#) (58-61)
- [“Coronavirus Notebook: Finding Solace, and Connection, in Classic Books”](#) by Michiko Kakutani

Agenda

- Why does Kakutani mention Daniel Defoe?
- What advice do the Little Seagull authors give in writing a personal narrative?
- What was most useful to you in the Hart reading?

Week 12 - Beauty & Personal Narratives

W - 11/11 - live

Required reading by the start of class:

- [“Their Ideas”](#) by C.M. Gill in [Essential Writing Skills](#) (89-122)
- [“When You Learn the Alphabet”](#) by Kendra Allen
- Excerpts from [Hunger of Memory](#) by Richard Rodriguez

Agenda

- **1.0 Reflection Essay Due at the start of class**
- How does Gill suggest student writers refer to scholars?
- Why does Allen organize her essay with the alphabet?
- What arguments does Rodriguez present for a monolingual education?

Week 13 - Beauty and Economics

W - 11/18 - live

Required reading by the start of class:

- [“Polishing Your Essay”](#) by C.M. Gill in [Essential Writing Skills](#) (160-190)
- [“Arts of the Possible”](#) by Adrienne Rich
- Excerpt from [Drop the Ball](#) by Tiffany Dufu

Week 14 - Beauty and Environment

W - 11/25 - live

Required reading by the start of class:

- [“Understanding the Research”](#) by C.M. Gill in [Essential Writing Skills](#) (123-158)
- [“My Murderer’s Futon”](#) by Sarah Viren in [Mine](#)
- [“The Price of Wealth, the Cost of Care”](#) by Toni Morrison

Agenda

- **2.0 Reflection Essay Due at the start of class**
- Who was the murderer in Viren's essay?
- What is the price of wealth, according to Morrison?
- How does Gill suggest students go about understanding scholarly research?

[11/26-29 no classes, Thanksgiving]

Week 15 - Beauty and Community

W - 12/2- live

Required reading by the start of class:

- "[Pangs of Love](#)" by David Wong Louie
- "[A Woman with a Little Dog](#)" & "[A Hovering Young Man](#)" by Zadie Smith in Intimations

Agenda

- How does Louie portray the protagonist's mother?
- Who is the woman with a little dog?
- Does Smith feel sympathy for the "hovering young man?"

Week 16 - Beauty and the Arts

W - 12/9- live

Required reading by the start of class:

- "[Carceral Aesthetics: Nicole R. Fleetwood in conversation with Rachel Kushner](#)" in *Artforum*
- "[The Last Class](#)" by Anne Lamott in Bird by Bird

Agenda

- Who is Nicole R. Fleetwood? How does she define "carceral aesthetics?"
- What is a quote from the Lamott reading that impacted you?

Week 17 - Finals

W - 12/16 - live

- **Research papers due by the start of class**
- Discussion of research papers
- Next step for your college career
- Gifts
- A toast!

Important Statements:

Absences

All absences are considered unexcused. Your peers need you to be present to read their work and discuss concepts with them. Some absences are unavoidable, but try to be as courteous to others as you can by showing up on time. **Four absences will result in the deduction of a full letter grade.** These absences can be made up with extra credit, but it will not replenish all deducted credits. Absence is the most common reason for not graduating. Stay strong and avoid being absent!

Academic integrity/ Plagiarism

Lehman takes plagiarism seriously, as do all higher education organizations and private institutions. You were admitted into Lehman because you have the ability to excel on your own. Plagiarism is a breach of this trust. It also makes no economic sense and is reason to be fired in a professional setting. Why, your boss may ask, should I employ you when there are others who can actually do their own work?

You should familiarize yourself with Lehman's standards regarding academic integrity [here](http://lehman.smartcatalogiq.com/2017-2019/Undergraduate-Bulletin/Academic-Services-and-Policies/Academic-Integrity):
<http://lehman.smartcatalogiq.com/2017-2019/Undergraduate-Bulletin/Academic-Services-and-Policies/Academic-Integrity>

Anti-racism

Lehman College is committed to ending implicit and structural bias in its operations and curricula. The English department, in particular, aims to decolonize its curriculum to enable thinkers from all walks of life to share their valuable perspectives that have historically been repressed. As your professor, I aim to expand my syllabi and welcome suggestions for writers, speakers, or artists who are underrepresented and should visit the class or appear on the syllabus. I also encourage honest, critical thought on race and other key societal issues we read about every day. I ask everyone be respectful and assume the best in your fellow classmates. Everyone deserves space to learn and make mistakes; I ask that everyone do their best to remain supportive rather than castigatory. With that said, I will not hesitate to stop and escalate to the Department's Chair and The Office of Compliance and Diversity any behavior that harms other students.

Communication

Email: If you have any questions, please feel free to email me at any time. I am also available on Microsoft Teams. I will respond to everything within one business day. Please note that I do not check my Lehman email after 5pm.

Conduct expectations

Be discreet with eating food. No sleeping. Do not work on assignments due at the start of classes.

Counseling and support

[The Counseling Center](#) is offering virtual services for registered Lehman College students. Students can call (718-960-8761) or email counseling.center@lehman.cuny.edu with their name, EMPLID, email address, telephone number, & days and times they are available. A counselor will follow up with the student as soon as possible. Contact the professor for more information about NY state Mental Health Covid Coping Circles. The [Lehman Library research guides](#) site includes a compilation of Wellness resources: https://libguides.lehman.edu/arts_and_wellness_coronavirus

Disabilities

The [mission](#) of the Office of Student Disability Services (SDS) is to offer students with disabilities equal access to all Lehman programs and activities in a climate that is welcoming and conducive to individual growth. Students with disabilities who may need classroom accommodations or [assistive technologies](#) are encouraged to [register](#) with the Office of Student Disability services. For more information, call 718-960-8441.

English advising page

While all of your professors are willing to advise you on your college career and professional plans, you may want additional input. <https://www.lehman.edu/academics/arts-humanities/english/advising-faqs.php>

Immigration

Undocumented students have the right to an education and to live free from of deportation. If you have any concerns in that regard, feel free to discuss them with me. There are many resources on campus, throughout CUNY and NYC, and I am happy to point you toward additional resources. All communication around immigration is confidential.

International students

The [International Student and Scholar Office](#) is dedicated to providing services, programs and activities that facilitate U.S immigration compliance and cross-cultural learning experiences to students and scholars in meeting their academic, personal growth and professional goals.

IT Help Desk

The Lehman help desk is responsive and knowledgeable; they're always happy to help with any technical issues or questions: <http://www.lehman.edu/itr/help-desk.php>.

Late Policy

This course will prepare you for every future course at Lehman, and especially your professional life. Just as a boss would frown on you being late for work, so will tardiness be factored into your participation final grade.

Lehman Resources during Covid-19

[Lehman's Coronavirus Resources site](#) has an invaluable Student Resources page, which includes information on laptop loans and WiFi access: <http://lehman.edu/coronavirus/student.php> .

Title IX

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 protects individuals from discrimination based on sex in any educational program receiving federal financial assistance. Sexual harassment, which includes acts of sexual violence, is a form of sex discrimination prohibited by Title IX, and is considered a Civil Rights offense. Lehman College encourages anyone experiencing harassment, discrimination or sexual misconduct to talk to a faculty member, counselor, or staff; confidential resources are available through the Lehman Counseling Center at (718) 960-8761.

Tutoring & Student Services

The Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) and the Science Learning Center (SLC): Lehman College has two tutoring centers on campus. The ACE provides appointment based and drop-in tutoring in the humanities, social sciences, and writing, as well as general writing skills and test preparation workshops for the CPE. The SCL provides drop-in tutoring for natural and computer science courses. More information about the ACE and the SLC is available on their website at <http://www.lehman.edu/issp>, or by calling ACE at 718-960-8175, and the SLC at 718-960-7707.