

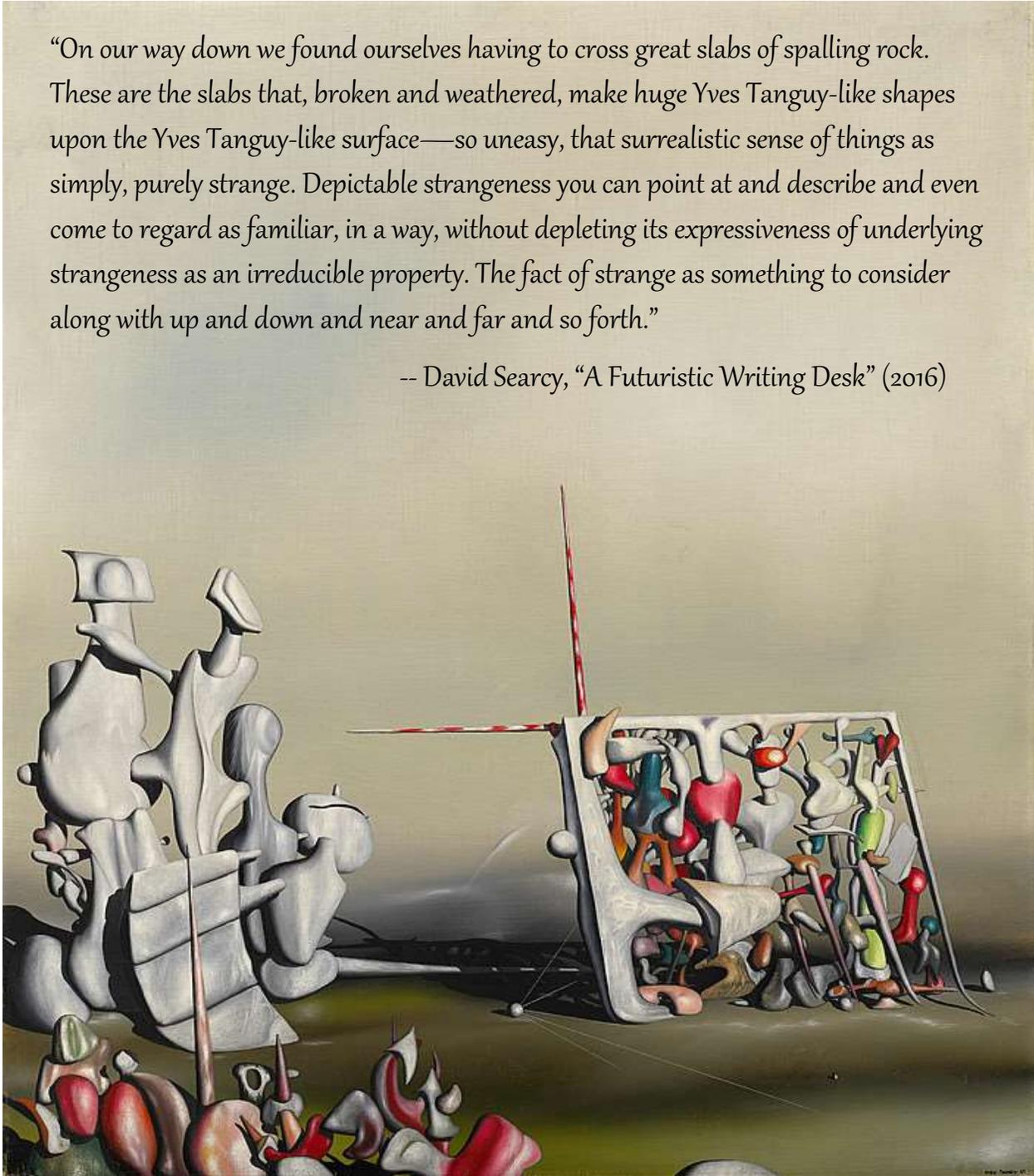
**ENGL 273 – The Essay**  
**Spring 2016, Hendrix College**

Dr. Alex Vernon  
office hours: MWF 2:00-3:00; TTh 10-11:00; & by appt.  
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“On our way down we found ourselves having to cross great slabs of spalling rock. These are the slabs that, broken and weathered, make huge Yves Tanguy-like shapes upon the Yves Tanguy-like surface—so uneasy, that surrealistic sense of things as simply, purely strange. Depictable strangeness you can point at and describe and even come to regard as familiar, in a way, without depleting its expressiveness of underlying strangeness as an irreducible property. The fact of strange as something to consider along with up and down and near and far and so forth.”

-- David Searcy, “A Futuristic Writing Desk” (2016)



Yves Tanguy, *There, Motion Has Not Yet Ceased (Là ne finit pas encore le mouvement)*, 1945

1	Tue, 19 Jan	Tony D'Souza, " <a href="#">Ivory Coast, 2000</a> " ( <i>New Yorker</i> 12/6/06)
2	Thu, 21 Jan	David Searcy, " <a href="#">The Hudson River School</a> " WE 1.1
3	Tue, 26 Jan	Annie Dillard, " <a href="#">Living Like Weasels</a> " John Berger, " <a href="#">Ape Theatre</a> " WE 1.2
4	Thu, 28 Jan	John Edgar Wideman, " <a href="#">Looking at Emmett Till</a> " Tom Junod, " <a href="#">The Falling Man</a> " WE 1.3
5	Tue, 2 Feb	WE 1.4
6	Thu, 4 Feb	Lia Purpura, " <a href="#">On Not Hurting a Fly</a> " WE 1.5
7	Tue, 9 Feb	Richard Schechner, " <a href="#">9/11 as Avant-Garde Art?</a> " WE 1.6
8	Thu, 11 Feb	1 <sup>st</sup> draft
	Mon, 15 Feb	MIDWINTER BREAK
9	Tue, 16 Feb	student model essays: Kathleen McClure, " <a href="#">Marlboro Man and Migrant Mother</a> " Samara Hennet, " <a href="#">Incidental Trees</a> " ( <b>option</b> for those working with Junod, <b>not</b> for class: John Hardin, " <a href="#">Urban Warfare</a> ")
10	Thu, 18 Feb	SICK DAY
11	Tue, 23 Feb	2 <sup>nd</sup> draft
12	Thu, 25 Feb	Essay #1 Due
13	Tue, 1 Mar	Terry Tempest Williams, " <a href="#">The Shark in the Mind of One Contemplating Wilderness</a> "
14	Thu, 3 Mar	Jamaica Kincaid, " <a href="#">On Seeing England for the First Time</a> "
15	Tue, 8 Mar	Alexander Nemerov, " <a href="#">Kissing in August 1945</a> "
16	Thu, 10 Mar	James Baldwin, " <a href="#">Where the Grapes of Wrath are Stored</a> "
17	Tue, 15 Mar	<a href="#">two associated essays</a>
18	Thu, 17 Mar	1 <sup>st</sup> draft workshop

19-27 Mar

SPRING BREAK

19	Tue, 29 Mar	student model essays TBA
20	Thu, 31 Mar	2 <sup>nd</sup> draft
21	Tue, 5 Apr	Essay #2 due
22	Thu, 7 Apr	two additional essays by your writer
23	Tue, 12 Apr	two additional additional essays by your writer
24	Thu, 14 Apr	TBA
25	Tue, 19 Apr	TBA
26	Thu, 21 Apr	1 <sup>st</sup> draft
27	Tue, 26 Apr	student model essays TBA
28	Thu, 28 Apr	2 <sup>nd</sup> draft
	Tue, 3 May	reading day
	Thu, 5 May 2:00	Essay #3 due

## **Course Description**

A 200-level “Introduction to Literary Studies” course, *ENGL 273: The Essay* satisfies the college’s literary studies domain (LS) requirement and the writing level 1 (W1) requirement. Unlike other courses of this kind, however, which generally require you to read fiction, poetry, drama, and film, and then to write essays, this course offers the advantage of studying and writing the same genre. The studied texts serve as your models; your writing process serves as another mode of study.

The course’s reading and writing goals and practices:

### **Reading**

- Reading and analyzing a complex written text’s rhetoric and its persuasive strategies.
- Practicing critical reading that leads to interpretation and reflection.
- Discovering through the analysis and interpretation of texts the way given writers think.
- Identifying the principles and values embedded within a given text that govern its organization and our understanding of the text.
- Consulting and using sources to clarify and amplify discoveries.

### **Writing**

- Using a body of texts to generate ideas and to explore their implications (in writing).
- Selecting, organizing, and incorporating evidence from a number of texts.
- Documenting borrowed source material.
- Developing a conversation among texts that develops and substantiates ideas.
- Shaping that conversational work into organized articles or essays that further develop, deepen, and substantiate the discovered ideas.
- Practicing the art of revision and reflection in the interest of logical persuasion.
- Addressing a general, educated, smart audience.

You will read and write constantly, in and out of class. Be prepared to discuss reading and writing assignments when you come to class. *Keeping up with the work is imperative*—every day’s activities and assignments build progressively toward the graded essays, although a direct relationship might not always be apparent. Every essay is an experiment in its own execution. Accordingly, this course is too.

Most class days will consist of (1) collective grappling with assigned reading; (2) production of new writing, often in immediate response to unseen material (not necessarily written material); and (3) exercises in style. Draft workshop days are different beasts.

You and I will schedule a required conference between the first and second drafts of each essay. We’ll also meet when you think you need to see me, and vice-versa.

The syllabus will change as the course progresses, as the instructor adapts material to the class:

<http://www.alex-vernon.squarespace.com/course-descriptions/273s16>

### **Texts**

- ✎ An array of essays selected and provided by the instructor, including student models, either available through the online syllabus or via handouts/email.
- ✎ A handful of essays provided by each student\*
- ✎ Student writing produced for the class

### **Requirements/Grades**

The course is structured as three “progressions,” each leading to a major essay. Each major essay is worth 25% of the course grade. The remaining 25% covers participation in classroom activities and out-of-class assignments and exercises.

You must receive a “C” average for the three essays to receive W1 credit and a passing grade for this course (regardless of the participation grade). Failure to complete a single progression constitutes failure for the course.

Hold on to all work. Not only will we revisit it as the course progresses, but you will need it as grade documentation. There may be an extra credit opportunity at the end of the semester that will involve some of the written work you’ve done during the semester. So hang on to that work.

\*Your last essay will require you to choose one of the writers we’ve studied and locate four additional essays by this writer for potential use in your essay—which means you will need to read more than four to identify those with potential for your purposes. Many of the writers have published essay collections (see below), although others will require you to find individual essays and perhaps order them through Interlibrary Loan.

James Baldwin, *The Devil Finds Work*; *Notes of a Native Son*; etc.

John Berger, *Why Look at Animals?*; *The Sense of Sight*; *About Looking*; etc.

Annie Dillard, *Teaching a Stone to Talk*; *The Abundance*; etc.

Mary Gordon, *Circling My Mother*; *Seeing Through Place*; *Reading Jesus*; etc.

Philip Lopate, *Portrait of My Body*; *Portrait Inside My Head*; etc.

Alexander Nemerov, *Wartime Kiss*; etc.

Lia Purpura, *On Looking*; *Rough Likeness*; *Increase*

David Searcy, *Shame and Wonder*

Lawrence Weschler, *Vermeer in Bosnia and Other Essays*; *Everything that Rises*

## **Other Policies**

- ✎ Bring hard copies of assigned readings to class, even though they will be provided online or in .pdf form. These hard copies should wear evidence of active readerly engagement with the text.
- ✎ Drinks are permitted in class, but no food. No hats, either, except for religious headgear.
- ✎ *Disabilities*: It is the policy of Hendrix College to accommodate students with disabilities, pursuant to federal and state law. Any student who needs accommodation in relation to a recognized disability should inform the instructor at the beginning of the course. Students should contact Julie Brown in Academic Support Services (505.2954; [brownj@hendrix.edu](mailto:brownj@hendrix.edu)) to begin the accommodation process.
- ✎ *Email*: Email will be used to contact the entire class for communicating changes to the syllabus and other matters. Check your Hendrix account daily.
- ✎ *Academic Dishonesty*: Intellectual dishonesty will not be tolerated. See the academic integrity statement and policy in the student handbook. Frequently, failure to document and attribute secondary sources adequately is not a deliberate attempt to pass another's ideas and words off as one's own, but rather a misunderstanding of how to give that other person sufficient credit properly. Please consult with me on any documentation question so we can avoid problems.
- ✎ *Late essays*: If you have extenuating circumstances, you must consult me at least one week prior to the due date (except in the case of actual emergencies). Otherwise, you will lose five points for every day it is late, starting from when class begins on the due date.
- ✎ *Essay Format*: All submitted essays must follow the MLA style for format, documentation, and bibliography. Specifically:
  - ✎ MLA format: 12 point font with serifs; 1" margins all around (campus MS Word default is 1.5" left margin); double-spaced with no extra gap between paragraphs (as MS Word is wont to do). No cover sheet. No folders. Attach pages with a staple (which I will not provide). Page numbers must appear in the upper right corner of each page except the first. All papers must have a title and a "Works Cited" section.
  - ✎ Exceptions to MLA format: Single-space the name/course/date/professor information on the first page. 1.5-space block/indented quotations. If you have room, add your entire "Works Cited" section at the bottom of your last page.
  - ✎ MLA documentation: MLA calls for parenthetical documentation, not footnotes or endnotes. Consult any recent English handbook, the *MLA Handbook* in the library, or the online guide linked via the English Department's website. *Rule of thumb*: Given the context of the surrounding passage and the bibliography listing, include the absolute minimum amount of information necessary within the parentheses.