Composition 1101

Prof. Scanlan

**Essay 4: Radical Revision**

*Interviewer:* How much rewriting do you do?

*Hemingway:* It depends. I rewrote the ending of Farewell to Arms, the last page of it, 39 times before I was satisfied.

*Interviewer:* Was there some technical problem there? What was it that stumped you?

*Hemingway:* Getting the words right.

(From: Ernest Hemingway, “The Art of Fiction,” *The Paris Review*, 1956)

There’s no reason you shouldn’t, as a writer, not be aware of the necessity to revise yourself constantly. More than half, maybe as much as two-thirds of my life as a writer is rewriting. I wouldn’t say I have a talent that’s special. It strikes me that I have an unusual kind of stamina. I can rewrite sentences over and over again, and I do….And I think what I’ve always recognized about writing is that I don’t put much value in so-called inspiration. The value is in how many times you can redo something.

(From: John Irving, National Book Award Interview, 3 June 2005)

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This essay is about closely reading, re-reading, and revising your own writing.

More specifically, for Essay 4, you are to choose Essay 1 or 2 or 3 and revise it thoroughly. What this means is that you need to alter the entire essay, every sentence, from the introduction to the conclusion.

You will be graded on the number and the quality of changes. Grammar and punctuation will count a lot in this revision, as will the type of sentence changes that you make. But this essay is also about experimenting and moving slowly through your own writing. There is more than one way to write any given sentence, and I want us all to think a little like Hemingway, but more like Irving. Don’t worry about perfection, but do worry about how much time you put into the rewriting. Be patient and practice your stamina. In order to revise your own writing, one of the most important factors is your ability to alter your words, sentences, and paragraphs without thinking that revising means to ruin your “true” writing.

Grading Rubric:

1. Changed title, introduction, thesis, and word choices (40)

2. Changed sentences, paragraph structure, and conclusion (40)

3. Documentation worksheet (20)

NOTE: You must turn in the original essay along with the final draft of this essay

Due Dates:

Draft Due: November 26th

Final Draft: December 3rd