Honors Writing and Critical Inquiry, TUNI 110
Ways of Knowing: In Plain Sight
University at Albany, State University of New York
Class no. 7765, LC 3A, MWF 10:25 – 11:20 AM, Spring 2017

Instructor: Dr. Allison V. Craig, PhD | acraig@albany.edu
Office hours: MWF, 12:30 – 1:30 PM, & by appointment in Business Administration, 315A |

To analyze something is to ask what that something means. It is to ask how something does what it does or why it is as it is. Analysis is, then, a form of detective work that typically pursues something puzzling, something you are seeking to understand rather than something you believe you already have the answers to. Analysis finds questions where there seemed not to be any, and it makes connections that might not have been evident at first. Analysis is, then, more than just a set of skills: it is a frame of mind, an attitude toward experience.

~ David Rosenwasser and Jill Stephen, Writing Analytically

You don’t start out writing good stuff. You start out writing crap and thinking it’s good stuff, and then gradually you get better at it. That’s why I say one of the most valuable traits is persistence.

~ Octavia Butler, groundbreaking science fiction author

Don’t try to figure out what other people want to hear from you; figure out what you have to say. It’s the one and only thing you have to offer.

~ Barbara Kingsolver, contemporary novelist

Writing is not just the act of putting words on the page through pen or keystrokes; writing is a cognitive act in which we must exercise our brains to express ourselves through words. Before we can craft sentences and phrases we must consider not only what words and phrases we intend to use but also why we intend to use some words and not others. In this sense, writing and thinking are inextricably linked. One cannot engage in the process of writing without simultaneously engaging in the process of thinking.

~ Peter Kaufman, “Scribo Ergo Cogito: Reflexivity through Writing”

How do you know you know what you know?

~ Ronald Takaki, “father” of multicultural studies

REQUIRED TEXTS & MATERIALS

• Writing Analytically, 7th edition, by David Rosenwasser & Jill Stephen
• Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People, by Mahzarin R. Banaji & Anthony G. Greenwald
• Paper and writing instrument for “by hand” in-class writing practice
• Laptop for composing and sharing writing in class and on Blackboard

Writing Analytically can be found at the Campus Bookstore, Mary Jane Books (downtown Albany), and online. Be sure to get the 7th edition—no other editions will substitute; a used print copy runs from a few bucks to $65. I recommend getting hard copies, but you may get digital if you have no other option. Additional texts may be posted on Blackboard, distributed in class, or otherwise made available. You may be required to print out and bring to class hard copies of digital texts.

COURSE DESCRIPTION & GOALS

Writing and Critical Inquiry (WCI) is an introduction to college-level writing. The “writing” part of WCI is both the object of study and the tool for the “critical inquiry” part. WCI is, then, learning to use writing as a
way to more deeply understand any subject. Not only does our course use writing as a method of learning, we will also be examining the learning process as our content. “Ways of Knowing: In Plain Sight” poses the question, why is it so hard to see and understand things, and often when they are right in front of us? Our goal is to use writing to view subjects from multiple perspectives, and in doing so examine how we come to know what we know.

WCI, like any other activity where you seek to improve, entails regular, rigorous practice. Practice includes a variety of rhetorical tasks and learning how to select the suitable form for a particular context. You are encouraged to learn more about WCI at our website, http://www.albany.edu/wci/, at which you will find additional information, including explanations of the guiding principles of WCI, course descriptions, frequently asked questions, resources, student testimonials, professor profiles, videos, and more.

WCI is based on the following fundamental beliefs about writing and writing instruction:

- Writing is communication and textual production; it is also a way of thinking, and a form of inquiry and knowledge-making.
- Writing is always a conversation, with yourself or others, and thus inherently a social practice and always a function of context.
- Writing as inquiry is best learned through sustained, guided practice.

By the end of WCI students should be able to:

- understand writing as a process (not only a product), a form of inquiry, and a social practice;
- use writing to critically analyze and therefore better understand both academic and non-academic texts;
- select an appropriate rhetorical mode for various academic purposes, audiences, and contexts;
- demonstrate competence in writing effectively using various media (including traditional, digital, and multi-media formats); and
- understand and utilize various methods and concepts for discussing and analyzing writing and writing situations.

General Education Requirements
WCI is a required course in the University’s General Education program that must be completed with a grade of C or better. Successful completion of WCI fulfills the Basic Communication, Information Literacy, and Oral Discourse requirements for the University at Albany’s General Education Program. For more on general education requirements, go to http://www.albany.edu/generaleducation/.

Commitment to the Course
The success of this class overwhelmingly depends on how well we work together. Please be on time, be prepared, and come ready to work. Be open to learning something valuable at any moment from anyone in the room and try to make a positive contribution to the classroom environment every day. Your continued attendance represents a commitment to this course. Attending class signals you have completed the assigned work and are prepared to make a positive and meaningful contribution to the daily activities. Please do not attend class without completing the day’s assignments. If you attend but have not completed the assignments, or you are either unable or unwilling to make a positive contribution, you may be dismissed from class without earning attendance points. Most importantly, the more able we are able to be optimistic and enthusiastic, the better class will be.

What to Expect
First and foremost, you can expect to do a lot of writing. The work of our class requires a degree of uncertainty about what you know and how you know it. Not knowing is a precondition for learning, so, intellectually, your job is to seek out what you don’t know. WCI may challenge your approach to writing and ask you to alter or even go against what you have been previously taught. This may feel confusing, frustrating, and downright wrong, especially if you have been successful in high school writing forms.
Success in this class comes not from being a “good writer,” but from exceeding your current limitations in writing and thinking. WCI is not about showing how much you already know, it’s about learning more, and learning through writing. Therefore, to make the most of this course, we will spend a good deal of time learning how to be ok with not knowing and managing uncertainty.

A common misconception of 100-level courses is that they are easy. WCI is not easy: it’s foundational. I ask students at the end of the term what advice they would offer incoming students and they always say: don’t procrastinate and manage your time effectively. What you learn in WCI will, ideally, shape how much you learn in future classes, and therefore should demand a lot of time, effort, and diligence. Class will be devoted to individual and collaborative writing exercises. You will have some form of homework to complete every class, including reading, writing, research, and/or group work. You will have latitude through which to shape your inquiries, particularly through topic selection on writing assignments. Please choose subject matter that is personally and socially meaningful as well as suitable to share with classmates.

**RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES**

**Participation**

Actively participation in WCI is a must. But what does participation actually mean? People often wrongly confuse participation as talking, and the louder you are the better. And yet talking can actually get in the way of learning. Sometimes you learn more from listening or encouraging someone else to talk than from you yourself talking. In WCI you will learn that you can learn more from writing or reading other’s writing than from talking or listening to someone talk. So then, how do we know what to do in terms of participation? Because we are a writing class, our go-to participation will be the act of writing, which will involve no talking at all or will entail discussing ideas after you have a chance to think through them in writing. Whatever we do in or out of class, I want you to feel comfortable participating in class in ways that enable your best learning, while acknowledging some of your best learning may come from stepping outside of that comfort zone. I want you to express your ideas knowing they will be heard (in one form or another). I also want you to take intellectual risks but not without a safety net. For some of you who are comfortable talking in groups, this might mean working more on your listening skills, while for those of you are more comfortable being quiet, it might mean challenging yourself to talk a bit more. For all of you it will mean getting comfortable with uncertainty and accepting if not embracing the fact that not knowing is a thing is a necessary precondition for learning.

In sum, participation in WCI means contributing to class in useful ways on a daily basis and throughout the term. Sometimes this means you will need to write or listen thoughtfully. Other times you might need to discuss ideas from your writing with a partner or small group. Some activities will require engagement with the entire class. To direct you through the learning objectives, I will need to know what you do and don’t understand, so I will often ask you to provide feedback of some form, whether in writing or aloud. Part of our course will be to learn how to think through complex ideas in collaborative and non-contentious ways, which necessitates thoughtful writing and listening, as well as adequate preparation prior to class. Hence participation in WCI is not just about talking, but also about active listening, encouraging others to talk, and thoughtfully and enthusiastically engaging the numerous class writing and collaborative activities. The goal of WCI is to use your writing to think beyond what you already know, which requires challenging yourself and your colleagues to consider various perspectives and interpretations in polite but rigorous ways.

**Special note:** If I ask you questions and/or challenge ideas you pose, please know it’s not because you are wrong or “stupid.” As I’ve said and will repeat ad nauseum, not knowing is a precondition for learning. I welcome you asking me to clarify or explain something differently, but I’ve come to realize I get a very quizzical look on my face (hence the forehead wrinkles) when I’m thinking. I also tend to look up or in the distance as I think. I realized this because students often start looking behind them or wherever my gaze is pointed. If might seem like I’m looking at something in the room, but it’s more likely I’m just visualizing my thinking. Please know that if I seem to be looking at you in a stern or disapproving way, it’s not that at all. I’m probably just weirdly picturing my own thoughts.
Attendance
In order to contribute to the classroom community and get the most out of the course, come to every class. The only times you should not be in class are if you are sick, have a family emergency, or have not completed the homework. If you can, please email me to let me know if you must be absent.

Tardiness
Repeated lateness is disruptive and disrespectful and may be factored into your attendance grade. Barring the occasional mishap or crisis, please be on time.

Late Assignment Policy / Making Up In-Class Work
Assignments are due at the beginning of class on date specified. In the event of a crisis, I will consider but not guarantee accepting late assignments. Because of the collaborative nature of our course, in-class work cannot be made up or recreated outside of class for those who have missed.

Responsibility for Course Content
You are responsible for course content, present or absent. Absence is not a legitimate excuse for being unprepared or failing to submit assignments. Unless pre-arrangements are made or you suddenly take ill, I do not email assignment updates. You should talk to peers and check the Daily Lesson Plan on Blackboard.

Office Hours
Please come see me during office hours, MWF 12:30-1:30, in Business Administration 315A (on the podium, nearest Colonial Quad). My office is a safe space and all are welcome to stop by, whether or not it is officially office hours. I may not always be able to accommodate you, but I will if I can. If you cannot make office hours, please schedule another time. Attending office hours is not, however, a substitute for missing or being unprepared for class.

Email Correspondence
I welcome your emails and will respond as soon as I can. Since problem solving is a crucial part of critical inquiry, don’t be surprised if I redirect your question for you to figure out on your own. I check email several times daily, but it is possible I will not get your email for a while, so plan accordingly. I will not reply to emails after 10:00 PM. Use professional decorum in your email, including opening and closing salutations.

Violations of Academic Integrity
We are all charged with creating and maintaining an environment that honors and respects the learning process. Writing and Critical Inquiry teaches how to use writing to learn more about any subject, and as such there is simply no place for violations of academic integrity that pollute that environment. In short, a violation of academic integrity is misrepresenting what you know or how you have come to know it. Violations include plagiarism, cheating on examinations, multiple submissions (submitting substantial portions of the same work for credit in multiple classes without explicit permission from instructors), forgery, sabotage, unauthorized collaboration, falsification, bribery, theft, damage, or misuse of library or IT resources. All violations, no matter how small, must be reported to the dean as per university policy. Ignorance of violation policy is not considered a legitimate defense and will not prevent a report being filed. Incidents may result in failure of the assignment and/or failure of course. See the Undergraduate Academic Regulations website: http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html.

Reasonable Accommodation for Students with Disabilities
UAlbany provides reasonable accommodations for students with physical, sensory, systemic, cognitive, learning, and psychiatric disabilities. If you think you have a disability requiring accommodation, please contact the Disability Resource Center (Campus Center 137, 442-5490). Once registered, please bring me your accommodation letter to discuss how best to implement your accommodations.
Additional Policies

- Bring all texts and tools necessary for that day’s assignments (e.g., textbook, laptop, notebook).
- Power down or silence cell phones. In an emergency, tell me before class and you may quietly dismiss yourself from the room to take a call.
- No text messaging / emailing / instant messaging during class. Course-related web browsing allowed by permission. Penalties, from point deductions to extra work to not using technology may be imposed on the individual and the entire classroom community.
- In case of class cancelation by instructor or university, proceed with assignments as scheduled.
- If you have any concern about our class, grade or otherwise, please come talk to me or send me an email. Please do not wait until the end of the term when it is too late for anything to do be done.
- Except in the case of tabulation errors, term grades are final.
- Additional policies may be instituted as necessary.

ASSIGNMENTS

Reading & Writing Practice

Reading & Writing Practice (R&WP) assignments are the backbone of our class. Students rarely fail my course because they aren’t “good” at it; students who fail almost exclusively do so because they don’t complete R&WP assignments or they complete them without following instructions (which is basically not completing them). Failure to complete assignments stems from time mismanagement and/or the notion that only graded essays really count. Because this is an honors section of WCI, I’m not worried about you falling into the trap of not needing to do the work. In fact, I often give timed assignments so you don’t spend more time than is absolutely necessary on any one assignment. I’m more worried you’ll think there’s a single right way to do the work and that you have to figure out what I, as professor, want. To be sure, there are certain things I’ll expect you to do, but the thing I want most is for you to lead with your intellectual strength and approach activities with a growth mindset. We’ll discuss this growth mindset more during the term, so for now, know that this class is designed to help you use your writing to go beyond “knowing a thing” to “what can I do with this knowing” and “what else do I need to know,” and “what else?”

Improvement in just about anything requires sustained, effective practice. In WCI, our practice is reading-as-writers and lots of writing. We will start with comfortable and familiar types of reading and writing, and gradually work our way more difficult college-level forms. You cannot expect to master new and difficult skills the first time, and there will likely be obstacles, mistakes, and even failures. Failure can be a good thing in the right circumstances. Learning how to manage failure into learning, however, takes grit and perseverance. To make this gritty improvement more achievable, you will have some form of reading, writing, or both, due for every class and in every class. Assignments are all linked in some way, so it is essential that you put your best effort into each one to maximize your learning. You will post most of your writing to Blackboard, and all written work is public unless otherwise noted. Grading is explained in the detailed Reading & Writing Practice Instructions posted on Blackboard.

Peer Review. Any writer, from novelist to academic scholar, will tell you that quality feedback is an essential part of the writing process. Academic work is published only after it goes through a series of formal peer reviews. Peer review is not editing, where someone catches your mistakes so you can “fix” them. Peer review is about asking useful questions and following the implied direction of an idea or argument to its conclusions. Peer review is about looking at both small and big pictures issues to help the author achieve the desired meaning and impact. In other words, peer review is creative and analytical and part of the entire writing process, not something you do at the end. Because the review process can be so powerful in learning how to write more effectively, we will spend as much if not more time on review and revision as we do on preliminary writing. In fact, it is not uncommon to learn more in reviewing someone else’s writing than in having our own writing reviewed. Good writers revise!

Inquiry Assignments

Critical inquiry seeks to find a deeper, richer, more informed understanding of any subject, so we will be using writing to discover all manner of things this semester. Even though they are part of R&WP, there are
three major writing assignments that you will submit as stand alone pieces for a grade. Class members will help develop the criteria for evaluating each of the following three inquiries.

**Unit 1: Cultivating Productive Habits of Mind**
**Culminating Inquiry: Inquiry 1. What is my experience of this issue?** Writing to explore or inquire into one’s experience of a problem, idea, concept, question, phenomenon, or issue.

**Unit 2: Understanding Academic Standards & Honing Analytical Techniques**
**Culminating Inquiry: Inquiry 2. What have others written about this issue?** Writing to analyze a text, idea, experience, event, or phenomenon for an academic audience.

**Unit 3: Knowledge Making & Knowledge Transfer**
**Culminating Inquiry: Inquiry 3. What can I contribute to the academic conversations about this issue?** Writing to participate in a conversation about a relevant question or problem.

We follow this inquiry sequence for metacognitive purposes, which means each unit is helping you develop the intellectual habits that help you learn more and make the culminating inquiries the most effective. As you move through each assignment, you will ideally deepen your inquiry and explore it from various perspectives. Unit 1 R&WP assignments will teach you how to examine your own thinking through writing. In Inquiry 1, what is my experience of this issue, which comes at the end of Unit 1, Cultivating Productive Habits of Mind, you will write about a personal experience and in doing so discover something about how and why you think about that experience as you do. Only once you are able to evaluate the quality of your own thinking on a subject are you ready to effectively and wisely analyze what others have said about that subject, which includes developing strategies to ask good questions on that subject. Inquiry 2, what have others written about this issue, ends Unit 2, Understanding Academic Standards & Honing Analytical Techniques, is an exploration of an idea or issue that arises from Inquiry 1. You will research and analyze the already-in-progress academic conversation about that topic in order to learn what has and has not been discussed, what more you want and need to learn, and what question you still want the answer to going forward. Inquiry 3, which is the last assignment of Unit 3, Knowledge Making & Knowledge Transfer, and of the class as a whole, tests the limits of your tentative answer to that meaningful question you posed at the end of Inquiry 2. This might sound confusing now, but we will work through it in stages and make sense of it a little bit at a time.

**Collaborative Presentation**
Collaborative presentations provide practice in oral discourse skills and are designed to promote understanding of how collaborative writing and collaborative inquiry operate as similar to and distinct from individual writing and inquiry. Groups will present on what they learned from the writing sequence, usually reading several pages or more from their work on Inquiry 1, 2, and 3. Presentations will include an oral component, a collaboratively written document, a learning reflection, and an individual and group evaluation from each member, and written audience feedback. Our class will be one of all WCI Honors sections presenting at the Honors College Symposium, which will take place Saturday, May 6. Stay tuned for more details! We will discuss expectations and requirements as the term unfolds.

**Participation**
My goal as your teacher is to try to inspire you to do your best work while giving you space to find your own way. I want you to take pride of the work you do, and to do the best you can in whatever the circumstances. Whether or not I comment, I notice how engaged you are, how determined you are, and how much effort you put forth. And while I cannot just grade effort, I believe it counts for something. Participation is determined by such things as being on time and prepared daily for class discussion, contributing positively to the classroom dynamic, maintaining an engaged and enthusiastic attitude (which includes helping others out when they need it), and, in short, for giving the class your “all.” Participation grades are dependent upon attendance. To be eligible for a grade of A on participation, you must also get an A on attendance; to get a B on participation, you must get at least a B on attendance, and so on.
Attendance
Both individual and class success depend on creating a community of writers who support each other. You earn 2 points for attending a regularly scheduled class. You lose at least 1 point for tardiness and 2 points for missing class. To exemplify how this works, consider that there are approximately 40 days of class. Missing 3 classes puts you in the B range; 6 missed puts you in the C range; and absences of 7 or more is failing.

Oral Discourse
Oral discourse opportunities factor into participation generally and the collaborative presentation specifically. Assignments include participating in class discussion, reading texts aloud in class; prepared and impromptu homework recitations; workshop participation, including reading drafts aloud and talking to peers; and the collaborative presentation. We will discuss evaluation criteria in class.

Assignment Deadlines
You will have an assignment due each class. All assignment deadlines will be announced in class and/or via Blackboard. Because assignments and assignment deadlines are tentative and may change, please pay attention in class and check the Daily Lesson Plan regularly.

Grading
Simply meeting the requirements of an assignment is considered adequate, or C quality work. Commendable (B-range) or exceptional (A-range) work meets and/or exceeds the minimum requirements and demonstrates above average and superior quality. Please put as much effort into each assignment as possible to benefit from the intellectual process and to put yourself in better position to make higher grades. However, because effort cannot be quantified, grades are determined by the quality of work you submit.

A Note on Grading. I try my best to effectively communicate requirements and expectations of all coursework. Since the work you will be doing this term may be substantially different than what you are accustomed to, you might occasionally be confused. If you have any questions about grading, any questions at all, please ask, and I will do my best to help you understand the goals and expectations of an assignment or a series of assignments. Please do not wait until the end of the term to raise questions, when little if anything can be done. The best way to discuss grades or other course matters with me is in person. Please come see me during office hours or schedule an appointment.

Grade Calculation
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<td>Inquiry 2</td>
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<td>Inquiry 3</td>
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<td>Reading &amp; Writing Practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collaborative Presentations</td>
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<td>Quizzes</td>
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<td>Attendance &amp; Participation</td>
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You must complete and submit all assignments to pass.
WCI must be retaken if you do not achieve a grade of C or better.

Percent Scale

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<td>A-</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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