Honors Writing and Critical Inquiry, TUUNI 110
University at Albany-SUNY
SPRING 2017

Instructor: Dr. Sarah Giragosian
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Class Meeting Time and Location: TuTh 4:15-5:35 pm BBB003
Office Hours: TuTh 3-4 pm in Business Administration 343

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course is designed to help students develop their writing skills across a range of genres, including professional, academic, and literary writing. With an attention to style, rhetoric, and argumentation, students will learn to read arguments in terms of their mediums and messages, to engage debates about issues of a local and global scale, and to choose appropriate research methods to gain information on a topic of interest. Moreover, through careful attention to the multiple stages of the writing process, which include prewriting, writing, revising, and editing, students will gain the skills necessary to articulate, defend, and challenge the ideas that both they and others produce. The course will integrate a range of learning activities to promote critical thinking and writing, and will take a process-based approach that will guide students through the steps of research-based writing, such as gathering and organizing research materials, drafting and revising, and analyzing and evaluating peer writing.

Given that this is an honors course, there will be a strong emphasis on research-based writing and critical methods. As a class, we will examine the ways in which writing can generate multiple interpretations, interrogate the viability of our interpretations, and—in the process—work to sharpen our analytical and rhetorical skills. To facilitate our reading, this course will provide a survey of several important critical schools of thought, such as gender and sexuality studies, cultural studies, critical race studies, and ecocriticism, among others. We will be reading excerpts of theoretical texts and placing them in conversation with literary texts. To this end, we will be discussing strategies for approaching challenging and experimental texts, and we will produce our own original readings supported by textual evidence and informed by critical theory. This course will help students develop analytical skills that will be carried over in other disciplines and will prepare students for the different kinds of writing assignments they will encounter in future courses.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1) Learn to read images, narratives, and arguments in terms of their mediums and messages
2) Learn to approach writing as a process of textual production, a form of inquiry, and a social practice
3) Practice applying rhetorical principles to assess various rhetorical situations and complete varied discipline-based writing tasks
4) Gain experience and develop competence in writing effectively for a variety of purposes, to different audiences, and in different media (including traditional, digital, and multi-media formats)
5) Learn appropriate concepts and develop a lexicon for discussing and analyzing writing
General Education Requirements
Writing and Critical Inquiry (UUNI 110) satisfies various General Education Requirements.
1. UUNI 110 is a required course that meets the University at Albany’s General Education requirement for writing and critical inquiry. **UUNI 110 must be completed with a grade of C or better to fulfill the WCI requirement.** (Students can also fulfill the WCI requirement by taking an approved UUNI 110 equivalent course; at present, the only such approved course is AENG 110Z.)
2. UUNI 110 (as well as its equivalent, AENG110Z) meets the learning objectives for SUNY’s Basic Communication general education category as well as the SUNY “Competencies” in Critical Thinking and Information Management (which is referred to as “Information Literacy” at UAlbany.)

REQUIRED TEXTS


Both texts can be purchased at the campus bookstore or Amazon. Additional course readings will be available on Blackboard. **You are expected to print and read these documents prior to class and bring them in hard copy with you to class.**

WORKSHOP PROCEDURE AND ETIQUETTE: Much of our class time will be devoted to workshopping your writing. You will be writing and submitting assignments to me throughout the semester, but your writing will be formally workshopped by the entire class once in the course. **If you are on the schedule to be workshopped for the week, you will need to post your writing on the Blackboard Discussion Board by 4 pm the day before your workshop. It will be your responsibility to meet this deadline, otherwise your writing will not be workshopped and you will not receive full credit. The reason for this deadline is that your classmates need time to read and critique your work before your workshop session. If there are technical issues with the website, you are expected to email the work to me by the scheduled time mentioned above, and I will send it to the rest of the class. If your writing is not being workshopped, your written work is due at the beginning of the class in hard copy.**

If you are not scheduled to be workshopped, you will need to post on Blackboard a written critique of your peer’s work before our class meets. Provide constructive and non-aggressive feedback to the writer, remembering that each writing exercise is an opportunity to improve your critical and creative faculties as a critic and writer.

It is the responsibility of each writer to remain quiet during the critique. Once the workshop is over, the writer may pose questions or follow-up comments to the class.

CLASS ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION: Attendance is mandatory and everyone is expected to participate in class discussions. Please be punctual and prepared for every class.
Repeated lateness or tardiness over ten minutes will be counted as an unexcused absence.
The success of this course is contingent upon the energy and enthusiasm that you bring to our workshops and discussions. Much of the class time will be spent working in groups, giving and getting feedback from peers. We will be discussing in class helpful ways in which to do this. I can permit only THIRTY absences before your grade begins to suffer (I will deduct a letter grade for every subsequent absence). Please speak with me if there are extenuating circumstances.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Personal Essay: Many of the personal essays that we have read in class are rooted in personal experience, but they reach beyond the boundaries of the individual to explore issues with social, ecological, and political meaning. Others are experimental and break the boundaries of the traditional personal essay, using second person or eschewing narrative. For your own personal essay, you can select your own approach. Consider some of the elements that we discussed in class that might help to animate your essay, such as dialogue, historical facts, and non-traditional formats.

The renowned essayist Philip Lopate writes that “the struggle for honesty” and “the harvesting of self-contradiction” are central elements of the personal essay genre, and we can see that several of the essays we read delve into the writer’s personal contradictions and hypocrisies to reveal a more profound truth about her/himself and the world in which we live. Write your own 5-6 page (double spaced) personal essay. The goal is to arrive at a greater understanding of the subject through the process of reflecting and writing about it.

Draft 1 Due Tues. Feb 14
Final Draft due with the submission of the final portfolio

Analytical Essay: This essay is a thesis-driven paper that performs an analysis of one text or texts that we have read in class. I will supply topics and essay questions during the semester.

Discovery Draft Due on the day of your individual meeting during week seven
Rough Draft Due Tues, March 21
Final Draft due with the submission of the final portfolio

Persuasive Research Essay Proposal and Research Process Worksheet: In this thesis-driven essay and its corresponding exercises, you should present your perspective on an issue or text studied in the course. A primary goal of this assignment is to help you gain confidence as writers and thinkers who can take part in a sophisticated conversation about an issue of importance to you and to others in ways that are appropriate to academic discourse. In that regard, this assignment should build on previous ideas and/or research and might involve engaging with alternative perspectives on the issue at hand. Ultimately, the argument should be conceived as a mode of inquiry. You will be provided with essay prompts during the semester.

The paper is an independent, original essay that seeks to make an intervention in a critical discussion. It is researched and will be developed throughout the latter half of the semester. To help you stay on track of the process, I will provide you with a research process worksheet that you will complete and submit to me, as well as a proposal that you will write that supplies me with your working thesis about your primary text(s). You should provide reasoning for your choice and establish the critical questions that you seek to answer.

Research Process Worksheet and Proposal Due April 4
Collaborative Project: The collaborative project is intended to be a vehicle for your critical reflection on your experiences in this course as writers, readers, thinkers, and researchers. The primary purpose of the assignment is to encourage critical reflection on the nature of writing as inquiry and to solidify your learning about rhetorical principles.

I will assign you to a team during the semester. The topics and expectations for the collaborative project will be passed out mid-way through the semester.

Academic Integrity and My Expectations:
* All written assignments must be completed in order to pass the course.
* For assignments to be submitted via Blackboard, the name of your assignment file should be formatted as: your last name, assignment
* All assignments should be typed or word-processed in an academic 12-point font (such as Times New Roman), with numbered pages.
* Every paper must demonstrate basic writing skills, ranging from grammar to sentence mechanics to the organization and development of a focused critical argument.
* Come speak to me during office hours about any possible problems with writing or the assignment before the due date.
* Also note that all papers must be word-processed, and late papers will not be accepted unless you speak to me beforehand about your circumstances and I grant you an extension.

Please abide by the provisions of the college’s Academic Conduct Code, which can be found below and online at [http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html](http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html):

“Examples of plagiarism include: failure to acknowledge the source(s) of even a few phrases, sentences, or paragraphs; failure to acknowledge a quotation or paraphrase of paragraph-length sections of a paper; failure to acknowledge the source(s) of a major idea or the source(s) for an ordering principle central to the paper’s or project’s structure; failure to acknowledge the source (quoted, paraphrased, or summarized) of major sections or passages in the paper or project; the unacknowledged use of several major ideas or extensive reliance on another person’s data, evidence, or critical method; submitting as one’s own work, work borrowed, stolen, or purchased from someone else.”

Plagiarism is a serious matter and can result in a failing grade for the assignment or for the course. It can also result in expulsion from the University. Please see me with questions.

Academic Conduct:
College classrooms are learning environments, and my classrooms are zero tolerance zones. Disruptive behavior will receive only one verbal warning. After that, dismissal from class will follow, counted as an absence. Disruptive behavior includes, but is not limited to: sleeping; chatting with neighbors; ringing phones; using laptops, smart phones, iPads, etc. inappropriately during class (surfing, texting, IM-ing, chatting via social networks, etc.); refusing to answer direct questions. **No cell phones are allowed in class.**

WRITING PORTFOLIO:
Since this course is concerned with the process that students move through to reach their final versions, you will be asked to attach to your completed work all preliminary writing leading to your final copy when you submit your final portfolio. Please date all such material and keep all writing in a folder that you will submit at the end of the semester.

Your final portfolio should consist of the following items in the given order:
1. 2-page letter to me
   This is your opportunity to evaluate your own evolution and growth as a writer. In this letter, please include a critical analysis of your work. What have you learned about yourself as a reader and writer? What significant revisions have you made? Discuss at least one significant revision that you have made in your writing and explain why you have made it. Finally, please discuss what problems you encountered as a writer at the beginning of the semester and what progress you have made in resolving them.
2. Final drafts of all your works
3. All early drafts of your works, including the pieces that I critiqued and returned to you
4. A stamped mailing envelope with your home address if you would like your final portfolio and my commentary returned to you

There should be no looseleaf pages in the portfolio that you submit to me. Please include all items in a binder or packet.

EVALUATION
This course will be graded as follows: A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, D-, E (“E” being the designation for failure). The University does not use grades of A+ or F.

Personal Essay
   Rough Draft  7%
Literary Analysis
   Discovery Draft  2%
   Rough Draft  7%
Collaborative Project 12%
Participation: In-class Participation 15%
Peer Reviews  7%
Homework  10%
Final Research Paper, Final Paper Proposal and Worksheet
   Breakdown: Proposal and Research Worksheet  5%
   Rough Draft of Final Paper  7%
   Final Paper  13%

Final Portfolio, consisting of rough drafts and final drafts of your personal essay, literary analysis, and final research paper  15%

ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT:
In accordance with University at Albany policy, I am available to discuss appropriate accommodations that you may require as a student with a disability. Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with documented physical, sensory, systemic, cognitive, learning and psychiatric disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring
accommodation in this class, please notify the Director of the Disability Resource Center (Campus Center 137, 442-5490). That office will provide the course instructor with verification of your disability, and will recommend appropriate accommodations.

**Tentative Schedule**

**WEEK ONE:**
Tues Jan 24  
Introduction to the Course  
HW: Read Philip Lopate’s *The Art of the Personal Essay: Introduction* (on Blackboard)

Thurs. Jan 26  
HW: Read Alice Walker’s “Am I Blue?” and Ch.2 in *The Essentials of Writing*

**WEEK TWO:**
Tues Jan 30  
HW: Read Ch. 3 in *The Essentials of Writing* and James Baldwin’s “Notes of a Native Son” on Blackboard

Thurs Feb 2  
HW: Read Oz Spies’ “Hot Dish” and Lorrie Moore’s “How to Become a Writer” (on Blackboard) and

**WEEK THREE:**
Tues Feb. 7  
HW: Read Casey Llewellyn’s "What We Could Do With Writing" (on Blackboard)

Thurs Feb. 9  
Rough draft of personal essay and critiques of your peers’ essays on Blackboard due Tues. Feb. 14

**WEEK FOUR:**
Tues Feb. 14  
Personal Essay rough draft due  
WORKSHOP 1-Personal Essay  
1. Jessica Au  
2. Valerie Bresier  
3. Ryan Carr  
HW: Critiques of your peers’ essays on Blackboard  
Read Beverly Daniel Tatum’s “Defining Racism” and Robin DiAngelo’s “Why It’s So Hard to Talk to White People About Racism” (on Blackboard)

Thurs Feb. 16  
WORKSHOP 1-Personal Essay Workshop Continued  
1. Jeremy Carter  
2. Emily Cheung  
3. Nora Derian  
HW: Read pp. Claudia Rankine’s *Citizen* p.5-36, “Poet Claudia Rankine: ‘The invisibility of black women is astounding,’” and Nick Laird’s “A New Way of Writing About Race” (book review) on Blackboard
WEEK FIVE:
Tues Feb. 21  HW: Read p. 41-79 of Citizen and Zora Neale Hurston’s “How It Feels to Be Colored Me” (on Blackboard)
Thurs. Feb. 23  HW: Read pp. 82-119 of Citizen and Ch. 5 of The Essentials of Writing

WEEK SIX:
Tues Feb. 28  HW: Finish Citizen and prepare a thesis statement for your analytical essay
Thurs March 2  HW: Write a discovery draft in preparation for the submission of your first draft of literary analysis paper due on the day of your individual meeting during week seven

WEEK SEVEN:
Tues March 7  Individual Meetings (no class)
Thurs March 9  Individual Meetings (no class)
HW: Analytical Essay rough draft due Tues. March 21

WEEK EIGHT:  Spring Break, Classes Suspended

WEEK NINE:
Tues March 21  Workshop 2. Analytical Essay rough draft due
1. Erin Leghart
2. Danielle Lucas
3. Jack McCaffery
HW: Read and critique your classmates’ essays
Read Rebecca Solnit’s “The Longest War” (on Blackboard)
Thurs March 23  WORKSHOP 2 Analytical Essay Continued
1. Jayda Melnitsky
2. Michael Nicholas
3. Sean O’Connor
HW: Read Ch. 7 and 8 of The Essentials of Writing

WEEK TEN:
Tues March 28  HW: Read excerpts of Rachel Carson’s Silent Spring and reviews on Blackboard
Research Process Worksheet and proposal due April 4
Thurs. March 30  HW: Read an excerpt of Carol Adams’ The Sexual Politics of Meat (on Blackboard)
Finish Research Process Worksheet and Proposal due April 4
WEEK ELEVEN:
Tues April 4  HW: Read Ch. 9-10 of The Essentials of Writing
Thurs April 6  HW: Persuasive Research Paper due Thurs. April 13

WEEK TWELVE:
Tues April 11  Passover: Classes Suspended
Thurs April 13  WORKSHOP 3-Persuasive Research paper rough draft
               1. Emily O’Halloran
               2. Malachy O’Sullivan
               3. Nicholas Prescott
               HW: Read and critique your peers’ essays on Blackboard

WEEK THIRTEEN:
Tues April 18  WORKSHOP 3 Cont.-Persuasive Research paper rough draft
               1. Danielle Rambuss
               2. Gabrielle Shames
               3. Kyle Thaine
               HW: Read Corey Lee Lewis’ “Greening Literature” (on Blackboard)
Thurs April 20  HW:TBD

WEEK FOURTEEN:
Tues April 25  HW: Work on Collaborative Group Presentations and Final Portfolio
Thurs April 27  In-class Workshop: Collaborative Group Presentation Prep Work
               HW: Work on Collaborative Group Presentations and Final Portfolio

WEEK FIFTEEN:
Tues May 2  Collaborative Group Presentations
Thurs. May 4  Collaborative Group Presentations

WEEK SIXTEEN:
Tues May 9  Collaborative Group Presentations. Final Portfolio due in class
Addendum to the WCI Honors Syllabus:
Writing and Critical Inquiry
Dr. Giragosian

WCI Honors Symposium

2017 will be the inaugural year of the WCI Honors Symposium, which will take place on Saturday May 6, 2017. Each honors student will be required to collaborate with a peer group and participate in presenting their collective research. The project is intended to be a vehicle for your critical reflection on your experiences in this course as writers, readers, thinkers, and researchers. The primary purpose of the assignment is to encourage critical reflection on the nature of writing as inquiry and to solidify your learning about rhetorical principles we have studied as a class.

With your group members, you will need to select a topic and prepare a 15 minute presentation. Possible topic options will be disseminated mid-way through the semester. At this point in the semester, please be sure to block off May 6 on your calendar for this event. Before your presentation at the Honors Symposium, you will have an opportunity to practice your presentation with your group members and receive feedback both from your instructor and your classmates.

Each member of the group is required to participate in the organization and preparation of the presentation, as well as its delivery. You will also be required to evaluate each team member’s contributions to the group. Finally, you will need to attend at least one session in addition to your own on the day of the symposium. More details will follow as we approach May.

You will need to research at least three other sources to address your topic. Moreover, you will need to hand me your group’s Works Cited page on the day of your presentation. You are also required to discuss the relevance of your topic in relationship to critical inquiry. How can the humanities and training in critical reading and writing practices help support issues of social or ecological justice? In other words, how can literature be a social and political resource, both conditioned by its social context and capable of upsetting social conventions? How can literature affect cultural conditions and even policies on the legislative level? In a classroom setting and the larger public sphere, how can it be used to build, undermine, and/or reinforce communities?

I will assess this project based on your peer review of your classmates and my own evaluation. Each team member will be graded on a scale of 1 to 10, in which 10 is a perfect score. The criteria are as follows:

**Organization:** The presentation has an identifiable introduction, body, and conclusion and the speakers move smoothly through them. The material is presented in a logical fashion.

**Topic Knowledge:** It is clear that the speakers have spent some time delving into the topic and are able to field questions from the audience.

**Overall Impression of Verbal Skills and Delivery:** Speakers do not simply read off slides/notes and seeks to engage the audience by making connections between the new material being presented and the work we have studied over the course of the semester.

**Participation:** Each member of the group is involved in the presentation and attends at least a second session on the day of the symposium.

**Peer Review:** The peer review is complete.