**JUNIOR WRITING:**
**WRITING FOR CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS**
**STPEC 393A**

Wednesdays, 4 pm – 6:30 pm
Dickinson 114

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Office hours by appointment

Writing for Critical Consciousness fulfills the Junior Writing requirement for the Social Thought and Political Economy program. While the aim of first-year composition courses is to introduce students to the conventions of college writing in general, the aim of Junior Writing courses, in general, is to introduce students to the conventions of composition specific to their major. But unlike many other majors, the STPEC major is bounded by no clearly established set of disciplinary writing conventions. And because one thing that STPEC does clearly emphasize is the relationship between theory and action, we will use this Junior Writing course to examine, in part, the process and practice of writing itself in terms of praxis. The bedrock that lies beneath the layers of texts, cases, and examples that we'll study this semester is the political action associated with textual production. As we explore and map this terrain, we'll consider some or all of the following: the politics that underlie guidelines of style; the politics of ‘voice’; the relationship between identity and language; the rhetoric of empire and the language of imperialism; the politics of representation and self-representation; the function of narrative; the rhetorical constructions of space and place; and the relationship between form and content. The big question that we'll be grappling with is this: what role does composition play in social action?

My intention or hope, as I build this course to deal primarily with rhetoric, is that by examining the political forces of language you'll be better equipped to see the political force of your own language. My major objective is that you gain comfort and skill examining your own writing with the goal of exercising more control over it. The path from textual analysis to textual creation is not necessarily a direct line, and is not always as intuitive as it may seem, but I believe that those who carefully analyze and examine their own written work have the power to grow and develop as writers long after they leave this classroom and go on to explore all kinds of paths. Indeed, the practice of textual analysis extends to a wide range of texts, media, and disciplines. Most importantly, I believe, the ability to critically examine and analyze texts holds the potential to disrupt and appropriate the power that many texts hold, and can enable you to exercise more power over the texts you produce.

Because college tends to be a busy time, many students learn to quickly produce essays that demonstrate the student's grasp on the material. But writing is more than reporting knowledge. Part of the discourse of Writing Across the Curriculum (which is what Junior Writing is) is that we learn to write and write to learn. So we'll linger in the writing process, reflecting, re-considering, re-
vising (indeed, at least one of our readings this semester views revision as a political process). To dwell in the process of creation is to orient oneself to the political action and power of rhetoric: how a writer says what she says pulls as much gendered, racial, cultural, historical and political weight as what she says. A good writer, to my mind, understands the power of language, and can control it. To write and to think nothing of how language functions is to forfeit your voice, and so also your power.

What you write about in the big essays will be largely up to you; I’ll provide prompts for the smaller essays. Because the landscape of “writing” is particularly dynamic, as we move through the semester we’ll broaden the scope of “writing” to “composing.” You can think of the beginning of the semester having relatively fixed boundaries around the conventions of college and essayistic writing. Once we’ve explored those boundaries and the territory they draw, we’ll work to transgress them and to map new territories, or, at any rate, to map familiar territories in new ways.

*I very much want to meet with all of you during the semester to discuss your work. Please feel welcomed and encouraged to contact me to schedule meetings. I do not hold ‘open’ office hours as I have found that very few students show up to them. But I will always be available for appointments on Wednesday afternoons, and am amenable to scheduling meetings during other weekdays. I’m also open to scheduling phone conversations, and will provide my phone number on a case-by-case basis.

TEXTS
Some texts for this class have been selected for what they say, others for how they say it. Most of them will be made available to you via Google Drive.

Three actual physical texts are available at Amherst Books in downtown Amherst. It’s a local business, a small bookstore, and I encourage you to support them.

Strunk, William and White, E.B. The Elements of Style

WORK
The course is designed with the intention that readings, discussions and assignments build on or are related to each other. Missing one or more assignments throws the course, and your education, off kilter. Besides which, as fundamentals of college, I assume that you will do your work, that you’ll be prepared for class discussions, and that you’ll hand your assignments in on time. Those are the basics.

I know that life happens, and sometimes deadlines pass regardless of whether you’ve finished your work. So, you may hand your work in up to one week late and still get the benefit of my feedback, but with a grade deduction of a letter grade. Unless otherwise noted, I will grade hard copies only – no emailed or digital assignments will be accepted. I will generally collect essays
in class. If you don’t have your essay with you, it’s your responsibility to get me a hard copy as soon as possible (I won’t come to campus just to pick up your paper).

Extensions are rare, but if you would like one and feel that you have a compelling reason, speak with me at least 24 hours before the due date. Be prepared to show me your work and have a sound case for an extension. Extensions will not be granted if it is clear that you have done no or only minimal work toward the finished project.

Assignments in this class are spaced intentionally to correspond with readings and discussions, and to allow time to work on them. One late assignment causes a train wreck of overdue papers further down the line. It’s best to stay on top of your work. The assigned reading load is relatively light for a 300-level course so that you can focus on your own research and writing; you will have a writing assignment due nearly every week. Incompletes are possible in extreme cases only, for example in the case of serious illness (which requires a doctor’s note).

Moodle
We have a Moodle page. It’s basically an on-line version of the syllabus, but on occasion we will use Moodle for peer-review activities.

Some assignments may be handed in on Moodle (like drafts of major essays). If you all are interested in transferring more of our work to Moodle, I’m okay with that. Let me know and we’ll work it out.

A note on technology: Please do not ever use your cell phone during class. If you are in the midst of an emergency and must use your phone, quietly excuse yourself and use your phone outside. If you must use a computer during class, use it for class-related purposes only (which does not include Googling stuff); if I learn that you are using it for other purposes, I will deduct half a letter grade from your final course grade for every infraction. Same goes for texting during class: half a letter grade deduction.

Please do not record, in any way other than written notes, our class (audio or visual) without obtaining permission from the instructor and your classmates.

I check work email at least once a day, Monday through Friday, and will respond within 24 hours. I do not check work-related emails on Saturdays and Sundays.

Writing
You will write a variety of essays this semester: short essays intended to further your thinking on a topic or personalize a theoretical problem; longer essays are intended to offer you’re the opportunity for an extended exploration and/or critique of a major problem raised by course texts and discussions.

I expect final versions of all assignments to be thoughtfully designed and polished. Proper grammar and appropriate citations are a given. Essays should be titled, solidly bound in some way (like with staples, but preferably not with paperclips), with pages numbered, and, if it’s a conventional essay, sporting MLA style and layout. I may deduct points from essays that fail to meet these most basic criteria.
Again, to receive a grade and the benefit of my feedback your paper must be handed in hard copy within a week of the due date. I may not grade emailed papers or papers submitted beyond a week of the due date.

Plagiarism is passing off another author’s work as your own, paraphrased or copied verbatim. Plagiarism is considered a strict offense by me and by the University and carries strict penalties. If I found that you’ve plagiarized an essay or a significant part of an essay, you’ll receive an F. Be sure to attribute all ideas, work, and language to their source. Please use MLA style for assignments for this course (unless you get the okay from me to use a different style).

READING
You can expect anywhere from no reading to about 100 pages of reading every week. I try to balance the readings: the heavier weeks tend to feature comic books, the lighter weeks tend to feature denser texts. Some of the readings are tough – they’re very meaty and intellectual, you’ll very likely need to consult a dictionary, and you should definitely read them more than once. Other readings will be more immediately accessible, but still deserve significant time and examination. Time spent deciphering and analyzing the readings is exercise for your brain; I’m confident that you’ll find that with practice your ability to understand and analyze all texts will improve.

Note: Reading actually means studying. You should be familiar with the readings enough to distinguish one author’s arguments and ideas from another’s, to know which author wrote which piece, and to know approximate dates that each piece was originally published.

NOTEBOOK
Buy yourself a notebook and take notes in it – take notes on readings, on observations relevant to class, and on class discussions. Periodically I will devote class time to writing in our notebooks. I’ll collect and grade them occasionally. They will be assessed for quantity.

ATTENDANCE
Please come to class, arrive on time, contribute to class discussions and to workshops, come to scheduled meetings with me, turn in your work. Frequent tardiness and/or more than two absences will result in a grade reduction of one letter grade per absence.

Graded Assignments:
Profile Essay (due Sept 22) 15%
Short Essay on Jordan and Rich (due Sept 24) 10%
Short Essay: Re-visions/Reflection (due Oct 1) 10%
Midterm Essay (due Oct 15) 20%
Archives Project (due Oct 27) 10%
And Presentation (Oct 29) 5%
Final Project (due Dec 12) 20%
Notebook 10%
Unit One: Narrative – Text and Subtext
Wednesday, September 3
Introduction, syllabus, FSA photos or Photovoice, personal narratives Autobiographies on writing: develop framework and questions for classmate interviews.

Additional Homework:
Interview assigned classmate regarding language and writing, and prepare brief presentation for next week.

Wednesday, September 10
Topics: Narrative and counter-narrative; writing and listening; discourse communities
Discuss Raymond Carver’s “Cathedral” (on-line)
Discuss Stanley Fish’s “Is there a Text in this Class?”
Small group presentations on classmate interviews and large group debrief

Additional Homework:
Prepare profile essay (3-6 pages) based on classmate interview and course material. Bring a good draft to class on September 17 (final draft is due Monday, September 22 on Moodle).

Recommended:
While the content is entirely irrelevant to our course, I think the approach and organization of David Remnick’s profile of Bruce Springsteen in The New Yorker exemplify an excellent profile piece. I’ll provide the url here and the link on Moodle: http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/07/30/we-are-alive

Wednesday, September 17
Topics: Narrative, continued; the politics of voice(s); English(es)
Discuss Slave Narratives (Moodle link)
Class Activity: Reimagining the Slave Narratives
Workshop Profile Essays

Additional Homework:
Revise profile essays; final version due on Moodle on Mon, Sept 22

Recommended and relevant texts:
A. Suresh Canagarajah, “The Case of World Englishes in Composition: Pluralization Continued” (Canagarajah’s article will be formally assigned later in the semester, but it’s relevant this week, too.)
Peter Elbow, “Why Deny Speakers of African American Language a Choice Most of Us Offer Other Students?”
Bruce Horner and John Trimbur, “English Only and U.S. Composition”

Monday, September 22
DUE on Moodle by 6 p.m.: Final version, profile essay (approx. 5 pages plus citations)
Wednesday, September 24
Topics: Voice, identity and liberation
Discuss June Jordan’s “Nobody Mean More to Me than You and the Future Life of Willie Jordan”
Discuss Adrienne Rich’s “When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-vision”

Due in class: Short Essay (2-3 pages) discussing the oppressive and liberatory possibilities of language in the articles by Jordan and Rich (feel free to bring in other texts and course readings, too).

Additional Homework:
Re-view an essay or other rhetorical work of your own creation (3-6 pages) and prepare a 2-3 page reflection for class on Wednesday.

Wednesday, October 1
Topics: Autobiography, language and identity
Discuss Allison Bechdel’s Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic
Discuss Amy Tan’s “Mother Tongue”
http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/guorui/2008/02/06/mother-tongue-by-amy-tan/

Due in class: Re-vision of / reflection on your own work.

Additional Homework:
In addition to your own observations, questions, and critical reactions, I’d like our discussion next week to address (a) Redniss’s opening apology to Curie and her presentation of Curie’s love affairs vis-à-vis Shiva’s discussion of gender and science, (b) Redniss’s digressions, tangents and juxtapositions, (c) Williams’ rhetorical connections between the personal and the political.

Unit Two: Writing and Action
Wednesday, October 8 (Big reading week)
Due on Moodle: Draft of midterm essay (intro, conclusion, and topic sentences)
Discuss Lauren Redniss’s, Radioactive: Marie and Pierre Curie – A Tale of Love and Fallout
Discuss Vandana Shiva’s “Science, Nature and Gender” in Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development
Discuss Terry Tempest Williams’s “The Clan of One-Breasted Women” in Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place

Wednesday, October 15
Due in class: Final version, midterm essay

Visit Special Collections, Du Bois Library
Intro and tour by Aaron Rubenstein plus 20-30 minutes for individual research (60-90 minutes total).
Resources may include documents about campus protests and movements, the Radical Student Union, local and regional social change (e.g. anti-nuclear proliferation) and intentional communities (let me know if you have preferences).

Additional Homework:
Continue research in the archives, draft essay/report/investigation/reflection based on archival research. Brings drafts and other relevant work to class next week.

Wednesday, October 22
Writing and Action, continued
Discuss George Orwell’s “Politics and the English Language” (on-line)
Discuss and review archival work and projects; discuss presentation guidelines.

Monday, October 27
Due by 6pm on Moodle: Archives Project (prepare presentation for Wednesday’s class)

Wednesday, October 29
Small group presentations on archival work
Topics: Discourse, globalization and de-colonialism
Discuss Linda Tuhiwai Smith, selections from Decolonizing Methodologies
TBD: Vandana Shiva, selections (Google Drive)
TBD: Noam Chomsky on rhetoric of Cold War and War on Terror

Wednesday, November 5
Modernism, post-modernism and mythologies
Discuss James Baldwin, “The White Problem”;
Suresh Canagarajah, “The Case of World Englishes in Composition: Pluralization Continued”;
William Strunk and E.B. White, The Elements of Style.
TBD: Marguerite Feitlowitz, selections from A Lexicon of Terror: Argentina and the Legacies of Torture

Wednesday, November 12
NO CLASS: Tuesday class schedule
Due on Moodle: Proposals for Final Project
Final Project should explore this question: What role does composition play in activism?

Wednesday, November 19
Due via email or Moodle: Comments on your partner’s Final Project proposal.
Topics: Space and place, postmodernism, form and content, rhetorical strategies
Discuss Rebecca Solnit, selections from Storming the Gates of Paradise: Landscapes of Politics and Infinite City: A San Francisco Atlas TBD

Wednesday, November 26
Slam
Keep working on Portfolio/Final Project!
Thanksgiving break begins after class.

Wednesday, December 3
Last Class: Workshop Final Projects; Course wrap-up

ALL WORK DUE BY FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12