

WOST 391W: Writing for Women's Studies Majors

Claire Schomp: Fall 2005

TR 9:30-10:45 (Bartlett 202)

Office Hours:

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed as a writing workshop to acquaint you with various genres of writing within Women's Studies. As a workshop, the course is organized around a series of **written assignments**. While each assignment will allow you to evaluate and practice different styles of writing, a central goal of this course is to help you identify and utilize effective writing techniques that cross boundaries of genre. To this end, I want you to work to identify your individual strengths as writers.

We will practice all aspects of the writing process, from generating ideas and drafting to revising, editing and proofreading. The class will work collaboratively in discussion and peer-review groups to maximize opportunities for feedback and shared learning. We will routinely return to **key questions** about each writing assignment: Who is my audience? What are the stated requirements? Are there any unstated expectations or conventions of the genre or discipline? What are my own goals and standards in approaching the assignment? What techniques and resources are available to me to help me meet those standards? By working to answer these questions in specific contexts, you can use this course to develop and enhance skills that will translate to other writing situations outside of this course.

Each written assignment will be accompanied by **readings** that will serve as models *and* as opportunities to engage in critical discussion about the reading/writing processes. You will be asked to respond to readings on two levels: first and foremost, as a model of writing—offering you samples of stylistic choices to identify, emulate, and critique—and second, as a canvas of ideas to which you can relate and respond. We will examine how these two tasks are related, how they can and must be separated in the writing classroom, and how they intersect with feminist issues.

Finally, this course is designed to respond to **your needs** as students and women's studies majors. You are expected to direct its evolution not only as workshop participants, but as contributors to its design. You as students will be asked to select readings and choose genres you feel are important to study as women's studies majors.

COURSE GOALS

This course seeks to improve your writing. Specifically, it seeks to improve your ability:

- to write for various audiences and purposes
- to guide your reader by framing your expository writing with a clear thesis that is supported by well-organized textual evidence and discussion
- to find and evaluate useful resources
- to revise and edit your writing in significant ways
- to be a constructive and careful reader of your own and others' writing
- to manage and reflect on all aspects of your writing process
- to acquaint yourself with, use, and critique various conventions and forms of discourse
- to extend your thinking by questioning your assumptions and considering the views of others
- to consider and apply theoretical issues such as the intersection of identity, gender, and language

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Readings:

In addition to handouts provided throughout the semester, selected readings will be placed on e-reserve at the library. To access these reserves, go to <http://ereserves.library.umass.edu/> and search by my name and department. Our course password is **women**.

Written Assignments:

Detailed information on assignments will be provided later in the course. The following is to give you a general idea of the requirements and goals of each assignment.

➤ ***Autobiographical Statement***

A 2-3 (double-spaced) page statement of your personal, academic, and/or professional vision. The goal of this assignment is to produce a concise, informative, and interesting statement that meets expectations for a particular category or genre relevant to your field.

➤ ***Cultural Review***

A 4-5 page analysis of a cultural "text" in relation to issues of gender, class, and/or race. The goal of this essay is to apply a critical framework to a cultural "text" in order to persuasively interpret that "text."

➤ ***Myth Adaptation and Analysis***

An adaptation and explication of a traditional myth or fairy tale for a contemporary audience. The goal of the adaptation (length and style open) is to write creatively for a clearly defined audience; the goal of the explication (3-4 pages) is to write a clear, persuasive analysis that evaluates changing cultural contexts for myths.

➤ ***Research Project***

A researched essay/project proposal of 6-7 pages on an original topic relevant to your field. The goal of this assignment is to construct a persuasive argument and/or project proposal that is grounded in documented sources and contexts. In addition, this project requires a 1 page abstract and a presentation.

➤ *Journal*

In addition to the writing assignments outlined above, you will produce writing that will form your writing journal. All of your required in-class writing exercises, discussion and reading notes, and assigned homework form your writing journal. Some will be turned in at the time of completion; others will be saved and submitted at the end of the semester. As you proceed through the term, SAVE all your writing. Class discussion will draw from your journal responses, so you are always expected to have them with you in class.

Presentations:

You will be required to present one excerpt from one of the written assignments for selected “reading days” held throughout the semester. In addition, you will be required to present a scaled-down conference style version of your research project.

WRITING PROCESS

Each of the four required essays will be taken through a series of three drafts. Please include a written **process note** with each draft you turn in to me, or provide a verbal version to your reader(s) in peer review or conference. The process note briefly identifies what you are working on, specific revisions you have made, and what concerns you have about the essay.

1. Draft 1 is where you get down all your ideas and organize them according to a particular argument. Focus on organizing your thinking and ideas rather than worrying about details or style.
2. After revising your essay to create Draft 2, multiple readers will provide a variety of responses and editing suggestions in **peer review**. This will help you consider the varying demands of your audience and clarify inconsistencies in your writing. You will receive feedback from me in the form of written comments or an individual conference. You will have **two or more required conferences** during the semester.
3. Finally, you will then revise your essay again, taking care to proofread it for grammatical errors and format it according to the checklist I will provide. Turn in Draft 3 with this checklist, prior drafts, and your peer review sheets attached.

POLICIES

Academic Dishonesty:

Plagiarism is the intentional theft of another’s work. It can range from copying passages without using quotation marks or citations, to paraphrasing someone’s ideas without giving credit, or handing in work for one course that you used for another without both instructors’ permission. We all depend on others’ ideas for our own work; what is wrong about plagiarism is not acknowledging our debt. The following is summarized from the University’s Academic Honesty Policy: “plagiarism is the failure to acknowledge the source of all information gathered in the preparation of class and written work. It includes direct quotation, paraphrase, and the borrowing of information or facts which are not common knowledge, without acknowledging the source through footnote, adequate means of citation, or proper quotation structure. Students are encouraged to learn the style most accepted in their disciplines.”

I take plagiarism VERY seriously and will fail a student for this course if an act of plagiarism is confirmed. Keep in mind that now that you have received this syllabus, you cannot plead ignorance. If you have *any* doubts about what plagiarism is or about citation, see me *before* the papers are due. Once a paper is turned in, it is too late to clear up any honest mistakes.

Email:

You may email me with questions or concerns, but first try to speak with me. I cannot promise that I will always have access to email or can get back to you immediately. I will not accept papers by email unless we have discussed special situations.

Late Work:

I do not accept late papers unless there is an emergency, and I expect to be notified as soon as possible of an emergency situation. If you know you will be absent from a class, it is your responsibility to make sure your work is turned in on time. (Give it to someone to hand in or ask the WOST department secretary to put it in my mailbox.)

Participation and Attendance:

Participation is required in all facets of the course, from discussion to writing assignments to reading and presentations. Participation depends on attendance: if you miss more than 2 classes, your grade will be reduced, as so much of class-work cannot be made up. You do **not** need to provide me with doctor's notes or excuses; just keep in mind that once you go beyond 2, your grade will be reduced by *one half grade for each absence* (for example, a grade of B with 3 absences becomes a B-). It is your responsibility to notify me about emergencies as soon as you can and to make up what work you can. I will send around an attendance sheet at the beginning of class; *make sure you always sign in* and check the handouts and assignments for the day. If you are tardy, I will note it on the sheet. Three tardies counts as a full absence. When you return to class after an absence, *it is your responsibility to check the attendance sheet from the day you were absent to see what handouts and assignments you missed.*

Grading:

Your course grade will be calculated as follows:

- Autobiographical Statement = 15%
- Cultural Review = 15%
- Myth Adaptation and Analysis = 15%
- Research Project = 15%
- Research Presentation = 5%
- Writing Journal = 25%
- Class Participation = 10% (includes discussion, peer review, and other in-class work)

Note: Poor attendance can affect your grade negatively, as described above.

A FINAL NOTE

It is vital for us to establish a safe and open atmosphere as a reading and writing community. Fostering respect and sensitivity in discussion is central to achieving this goal. Differences of opinion are welcome; disrespect is not. I will do my best to make sure everyone has the opportunity to participate regularly in class discussion. If you have concerns about participating, please discuss these with me early on.