

JUNIOR WRITING:
WRITING FOR CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS
STPEC 393A

Wednesdays, 4 pm – 6:30 pm
Dickinson 209

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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 develop fluency communicating within a particular discipline. As such, Junior Writing presents the opportunity to begin—if you haven't already—thinking about engaging with texts as a professional. To be sure, this isn't about job training, nor is it about applying for jobs. Instead, as STPEC emphasizes the relationship between theory and action, our writing class will use rhetoric and composition to negotiate the *theory* presented by texts and the *action* of reading and writing texts.

Underneath the layers of texts, cases, and examples that we'll study this semester lies 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. One of the big questions that we'll likely grapple with is this: what role does composition play in social and political 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-revising (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.

*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 attend them. But I will *always* be available for appointments on Wednesday afternoons, and am amenable to scheduling meetings during other weekdays if necessary. I'm also open to scheduling phone conversations, and will provide my phone number on a case-by-case basis.

TEXTS

Texts this semester will be made available to you via Google Drive, Moodle, or the UMass library.

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 work, 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).

TECHNOLOGY

We have a **Moodle** page. It's basically an on-line version of the syllabus, but on occasion we will use Moodle for 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 in the classroom**: 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; and longer essays intended to offer you 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 choose 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 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 100 pages of reading every week. I try to balance the readings. 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 – jot reactions or responses to readings and activities, write observations relevant to class and 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*: the more you write, the higher your grade. (Although you may include them in your notebook, class notes will not count as journal entries.)

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. Excessive tardiness and/or more than two absences will result in a grade reduction of one letter grade per absence.

GRADES

A 93-100	B+ 87-89	C+ 77-79	D+ 67-69
A- 90-92	B 83-86	C 73-76	D 60-66
	B- 80-82	C- 70-72	F <60

ASSIGNMENTS

Presentations	5% each (3)
Drafts	5% total (3)
Unit 1 Essay	15%
Unit 2 Essay	20%
Unit 3 Essay	25%
Notebook/Informal Writing	10%
Re-vision/Reflection	10%

SCHEDULE

Unit 1: Representation and Surveillance

January 21 Course Introduction / Syllabus / Politics of Representation
 Re-presentation and Interpretation
 Reading as Composition
 Photovoice: Voices from South of the Clouds

January 28 Writing and Action
 Reading:

(1) June Jordan, “Nobody Mean More to Me than You and the Future Life of Willie Jordan”

(2) Adrienne Rich, “When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Revision”

DUE: Response essay to Jordan or Rich (informal)

February 4 Surveillance Theory and the Rhetorics of Photography
 Reading:
 (1) Susan Sontag: Images of Atrocities; Surrealism; TBD (Google Drive)
 (2) Gradient Lair: <http://www.gradientlair.com/post/100445317273/read-this-week-91>
 (3) David Spurr, selections, *The Rhetoric of Empire*
 Timm Rautert, *No Photographing*
 Pulitzer Prize Photos
 DUE on Moodle: Draft for Unit 1 Essay (4-6 pages)

February 11 Resistance
 Presentations (small groups): Resistance Photography
 (Prior to class, please post and share images on Moodle Database)
 DUE: Unit 1 Essay: Critical Analysis of the Politics of Composition (formal writing)

Unit 2: Critical Readings of Oral Histories

February 18 Oral Histories
 Readings:
 (1) The Federal Writer’s Project Slave Narratives (on-line)
 (2) James Baldwin (TBD)
 DUE: Response to FWP Slave Narratives (informal writing)

February 25 Oral Histories continued
 Library Visit (TBD)

March 4 Presentations of Oral Histories / Discussion
 Reading: (1) Linda Tuhiwai Smith on “Insider/Outsider Research”
 DUE: Critical Summary of 3 Library Sources (informal writing)

March 11 Meetings with Ethan: Discuss Critical Analysis Essay
 DUE at meeting: Draft of Unit 2 Essay

March 18 **No Class:** Spring Break

Unit 3: The Archives: Radical Histories

March 25 Archives Visit (TBD)
 DUE: Unit 2 Essay: Critical Analysis of Oral History (formal writing)

April 1 Presentations: Archives Show and Tell
 DUE: Report on Archived Information (informal writing)

April 8 Career Fair: 4-6:30, Bernie Dallas Room, Goodell

- April 15 **Critical Reflection: Archives and Archival Research**
DUE: Draft of Unit 3 Essay
- April 22 **Monday Schedule: No Class**
- April 29 **Final Class: Course wrap-up, reflection, and evaluations**
DUE: Unit 3 Essay: Radical Archives
- May 5 **DUE: Re-vision/Reflection Essay**
All outstanding work and revisions due by May 5.