Rhetoric and Writing Studies RWS 1301

In Spring 2021, all sections of RWS 1301 are 100% online

Instructor and Course Information

Instructor Name: Natalie Taylor

Contacting Me:
My email is netaylor2@miners.utep.edu. You can also feel free to message me directly in Microsoft Teams via private chat. When it is not my designated office hour times (see below), you may expect a reply to your email or chat message within 24-hours. If you message me on Teams during my office hours, you can expect an immediate response (unless I’m meeting/talking with another student already). Please note, however, that I typically do not check my email or Teams chats on weekends (Fridays at 4pm through Mondays at 8am).

Online Office Hours
You can expect me to be online and active on Microsoft Teams on Mondays/Wednesdays 4:20-4:50pm, Thursdays from 1:00-1:30pm, and by appointment. These designated “office hour” times are set aside for you to ask me questions and talk about your writing, and I strongly encourage you to use them. You are not interrupting me—these times are dedicated to you! To meet with me, all you have to do is send me a private chat on Teams. When you send me a private message during these times, you can expect an immediate response (unless I’m already meeting/talking with another student). We can then either talk “live” about your assignments/questions via the chat function on Teams, or we can start an immediate audio/video call in Teams. It is up to you which mode of discussion you prefer.

Synchronous Class Meeting Times
Mondays and Wednesdays, 3:00-4:20pm (El Paso Time)

Mandatory Synchronous Class Sessions: Zoom Days and Teams Days
You are expected to virtually attend class on Mondays and Wednesdays from 3:00-4:20 (El Paso time). While you are expected to be present and engaged during both weekly time slots throughout the semester, what that attendance looks like will vary. Starting in Week 3, I will split the class in half. Half of you will be assigned to meet with me on Mondays on Zoom for a video call class session, called a “Zoom Day.” The other half of the class will meet with me on Wednesdays for their Zoom Day. On your non-Zoom Day, you will still attend and participate in what I’m calling “Teams Day.” Each week, on your assigned Teams Day, you will meet with an assigned Writing Group on Microsoft Teams to complete a discussion-based activity via text-based chat and/or work independently to complete a journal entry that must be submitted by the end of the class period.
The reason for splitting the class is to make your class time more productive and engaging. I have found that it is very difficult to hold a coherent and productive virtual conversation with 25 people on Zoom. With 12-13 students in each session, I hope that our discussions and virtual activities will be more inclusive and useful for you. On Teams Days, you will have the time to do the in-class small group activities and in-class writing we would normally do in a face-to-face class. Half-way through the semester, we will evaluate together the effectiveness of this system and perhaps switch up the groups and/or change the system, depending on your feedback.

Program Overview
At UTEP, the First-Year Composition (FYC) program in the English department offers two first-year courses that are typically taken as a sequence, RWS 1301—Rhetoric and Composition I and RWS 1302—Rhetoric and Composition II. These courses are intended to help students develop their rhetorical and writing knowledge and skills within these five knowledge domains: writing process knowledge, subject matter knowledge, rhetorical knowledge, genre knowledge, and discourse community knowledge. Therefore, we teach writing as a complex activity through which students are given guidance and often collaborate. Drawing on the rich scholarship of Rhetoric and Writing Studies, we have designed our courses to help students address the challenges of 21st century composing. In these courses, students are empowered to determine the most effective strategies, arrangements, and media to use in different rhetorical contexts.

In fall 2020, all sections of RWS 1301 and 1302 will be taught online. Regardless of the delivery system, the FYC program reminds students that the primary purpose of these classes are the learning and practice of writing. The Conference on College Composition and Communication together with the Council of Writing Program Administrators state:

Writing classes teach writing: Principally, writing classes foreground writing itself as a complex, distributed activity premised upon sociality and community formation, processes and materials, flexibility, and ethical communication. Writing classes may involve participants in purposeful interpersonal interactions (discussions and conversations), writing-related activities (peer review, studying features in model texts), and interpreting texts (making meaning individually or together with others); however, the activity of writing itself continues to be central to what a writing class sponsors.

CCCC and CWPA Joint Statement in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

RWS 1301 & 1302 Learning Outcomes
At the end of these FYC courses, students will be able to:

Critical thinking and reading
- Think, read, and write analytically and reflectively
- Address specific, immediate rhetorical situations and their effects on individuals and communities
- Read a diverse range of texts and apply these texts to different audiences, contexts, and situations.

Composing practices
- Read and compose in several genres to understand how genre conversations shape and are shaped by readers’ and writers’ practices and purposes
• Develop composing processes appropriate to writing style, audience, and assignment
• Use composing processes and tools as a means to discover and reconsider ideas, generate writing, and make meaning
• Engage with a community of writers who dialogue across texts, argue, and build on each other’s work
• Develop writing projects through multiple drafts by learning flexible strategies for reading, drafting, reviewing, collaborating, revising, rewriting, rereading, and editing
• Give, receive, and act on productive feedback from peers and instructors to work in progress

Research
• Learn to formulate research questions, methods for research, and analyze and synthesize material
• Develop 21st century technological literacies and modalities needed for researching and composing
• Locate and evaluate primary and secondary materials, such as: journal articles and essays, books, scholarly and professionally established and maintained databases and archives, and informal electronic networks and internet sources.
• Learn writing strategies for integrating source material into your own prose (quoted, paraphrased, and summarized material)
• Apply research to various genres and cite sources in American Psychological Association Style (APA) or Modern Language Association Style (MLA)

Assessment
• Use reflective learning strategies to self-assess and understand one’s processes and products
• Collaborate
• Integrate and act on critical feedback from peers and instructors
• Understand and examine critically the reasons behind writing conventions in fields and disciplines

Rhetoric & Composition 1 (RWS 1301) Course Description
Rhetoric & Composition 1 (RWS 1301) is designed to help you reach your academic and professional goals. Course assignments invite you to explore civic, cultural, political, or social concerns through topics that appeal to your sense of civic responsibility as a member of various communities. By engaging with your course topic through various genres, RWS 1301 encourages you to cultivate rhetorical skills while gaining domain knowledge in an area of special interest to you. The goals of RWS 1301 at UTEP are largely based on the Writing Program Administrators’ Outcomes.

You will use writing to inquire into different rhetorical situations, and you will create different types and genres of composition (not limited to academic essays). The curriculum consists of these 5 modules.
Module 1 – Taking Inventory
• Exploring texts
• Experimenting with multimedia
• Collaborative project on studying texts, authorship, and the idea of composition

Module 2 – Autoethnographic Study of Self and Language Experiences
• Language and literacy – relationship to home and language
• Looking back on your linguistic identities
• How do linguistic and cultural experiences affect your ideas about what it means to write in college?

Module 3 – Remixed Self Study
• Adapting to another audience – audience analysis
• Examining an alternative genre – genre analysis
• Composing in a new medium
• Rhetorical analysis

Module 4 – Social Issue Investigation
• Identifying an issue of personal and social concern
• Interrogating assumptions, biases, and representations through topic research
• Report with annotated bibliography for future study

Module 5 – Visual Argument
• Creating infographic, PSA, or alternative visual project
• Presentation of infographics and PSAs

Required Texts & Materials
In addition to the required textbook (info below), you must have the following to succeed in this course:
• Consistent and frequent access to an internet connection/wi-fi hotspot and computer.
• A working webcam and microphone

Required Textbook
Note: Additional readings will be posted on Blackboard.


Available at the UTEP Bookstore.
Course Assignments and Grading

Grading Contract

Like any other course, you will earn a letter grade of A, B, C, D, or F in this class. Your grade will be based largely on your labor, or the time, effort, energy, and focus you put into the work of this course. During the first 2 weeks of class, we will discuss and negotiate the terms of what constitutes an A, B, C, D, or F and codify that agreement in a grading contract. See the separate link in Blackboard for the Grading Contract. We will be completing the contract together in class. Once completed, that contract will become part of this syllabus. Essentially, what that contract says is that you will earn a B in this course if you complete all assigned work on time and by meeting the specific conditions laid out for you in each assignment. All submitted work will be assessed as either complete or incomplete based on concrete criteria included with each set of assignment guidelines. Not doing these assignments or submitting them late or incomplete (and/or missing a lot of class meetings) will lower your overall course grade. To earn an A, you will need to complete the Optional Final Portfolio, described briefly below and in detail in the attached grading contract draft.

The Work of the Course

Below are summaries of the the types of assignments you can expect to complete during the course of the semester. More detailed instructions for each assignment will be made available to you on Blackboard.

Module Projects

There are a total of 5 module projects for this course that fulfill the goals of each module explained in the course description above. Not submitting a module project or submitting an incomplete module project will result in a lower course grade.

In conjunction with each module project, you will complete the following types of assignments:

Vision Statements

At the beginning of each module, you will write a vision statement for your project. In your vision statements, you will describe what you want your version of the project to accomplish, what you want your project to look like, what audience you hope to reach, and a detailed plan for how you hope to reach this vision.

Creator Statements

When submitting your final draft of each project, you will write a creator statement in which you discuss the particular ways in which your project aligns with your original vision, how and why your vision for the project changed throughout the writing and revision process, and what you could do to better align with your original vision (or further adapt/change that vision) in future revisions. While doing this, you will also account for how you addressed or considered peer feedback and cite and discuss major changes you made during the process of revision.

Revisions

For every project, you will be required to complete a certain number of revisions. To complete a revision, you must make substantial changes to your draft and incorporate the feedback of your peers and instructor.
Peer Workshops and Assessments:
For each project, you will participate in peer workshops, usually with your assigned Writing Group. During these workshops, you will share a draft of your project with your peers and then read and offer feedback on your group members’ drafts. At the end of the semester, you will also write a letter to a member of your Writing Group explaining what you learned from them as a peer and describing how you saw them grow as writer throughout the semester.

Ongoing Smaller Assignments
To support your work on each module project and your ongoing growth as a writer, you will also complete these other, smaller assignments. Some of these will be completed during class, others will be assigned as homework.

Reading Questions
On your assigned Zoom Day, you are expected to bring at least 2 questions about the assigned reading to our class session.

Journals
You will write in your journal at least twice per week, sometimes three times. Journal entries are informal, and while you will be expected to meet certain requirements (i.e. word or time-spent requirements), you are not expected to extensively revise or polish these entries. Occasionally, you will be asked to share parts of a particular journal entry with your writing group.

Asynchronous Class Chats
Occasionally, you will be asked to respond to a discussion prompt on Microsoft Teams. These discussions will have designated due dates and will require you to interact with at least 2 other peers.

Writing Group Synchronous Chats
Starting the third week of class, I will assign you to a Writing Group of 3-4 students. This Writing Group will be your group for the entirety of the semester unless we agree as a class to mix up these groups at some point. On your assigned Teams Day, you will meet with your writing group in your assigned Teams channel to chat live via text message. (You’re also free to use gifs and emojis. These are informal conversations!) You will be assigned discussion questions and/or an activity to complete within the class period. These chats will be counted as your attendance for that day AND as complete/incomplete assignments based on the criteria forwarded in each chat guide.

Other Assignments

Reflection Letters
Twice this semester, you will write a 500-word reflection letter that considers your learning and labor process over the course of the semester up to that point.

Conferences
Twice this semester, at midterm and during finals week, you will meet with me one-on-one to discuss your progress in this course. In preparation for these conferences, you will bring your Reflection Letter. You will read this reflection to me as a basis for our discussion.
Optional Final Portfolio and Additional Conferences
If your goal is to earn an A in this course, you will have to complete a final portfolio. The final portfolio will consist of 2 significantly revised or translated module projects, 2 significantly revised or translated journal entries, 4 author’s notes about each revision, and 2 additional meetings with me to seek assistance on your revisions. The details of this portfolio are described in the grading contract.

Online Course Delivery

Course Delivery
In Spring 2021, RWS 1301 will be held fully online. The course is designed to engage students through discussions with your classmates and instructor through Blackboard (Bb), UTEP’s Learning Management System (LMS). The course will rely extensively on Blackboard, though your individual instructor may supplement it by incorporating other platforms and various media. In order to succeed in the course, you will need to have regular use of the internet and a stable connection. Although you can use the Blackboard App on your phone, it is highly recommended that you compose your work for class, and perform class activities, via a computer. If you don’t have a computer or reliable internet at home, the university can help you with resources: Technology Support - UTEP. Please speak with your instructor immediately if you will need assistance. We want you to have the opportunity to succeed in class without concern about access. There are also computers available for you to use in the library on campus.

Ensure your UTEP e-mail account is working and that you have access to the Web and a stable web browser. Mozilla Firefox and Google Chrome are the most supported browsers for Blackboard; other browsers may cause complications with the LMS. When having technical difficulties, update your browser, clear your cache, or try switching to another browser. If you encounter technical difficulties beyond your scope of troubleshooting, please contact the Help Desk as they are trained specifically in assisting with technological needs of students.

Students can prepare for the course by familiarizing themselves with the “Ready for Online Learning” guides to acclimate to online learning:
- Dispelling the Myths of Taking an Online Class
- Check Your Technology
- Communicating Effectively Online
- Managing Your Time Before It Manages You
- Online Teamwork
- Netiquette Guide for Online Courses
These guides are available on the navigation bar on the Blackboard shell for RWS 1301.

Students can also prepare by taking the Blackboard Student Orientation https://www.utep.edu/extendeduniversity/cid/student-resources/blackboard-orientation.html

Time Commitment Expectations
Each week, you are expected to spend 3 hours in class, whether it be a Zoom Day or Teams Day, and around 6 hours doing homework activities (usually reading and writing) outside of class time.
Online Platforms
For our specific course, we will use three (3) platforms in this course to communicate and do the work of this course: Blackboard, Zoom, and Microsoft Teams. Each platform will be used for a specific purpose.

- You will use **Blackboard** to keep track of what is due, access readings and assignment instructions, submit assignments, and to maintain an awareness of how you are doing in the course through “My Grades.” I will also post announcements for the whole class on Blackboard.
- We will use **Zoom** for our virtual audio/video class sessions. The first two weeks of class, we will all meet on Zoom. Starting in Week 3, you will only log into Zoom on your assigned Zoom Day.
- You will use **Microsoft Teams** to communicate with your Writing Group on “Teams Days,” to add to your Journal, and to communicate with me directly outside of class.

Netiquette Statement
- Debate, critical inquiry, and intellectual diversity are essential elements to higher education and a process of learning. There is the potential during this course for controversial and sensitive topics to be discussed during small group or whole class interaction, and to surface through *group chats*. You are expected to demonstrate respect and courtesy for your peers and instructor when they express differing arguments, viewpoints, and/or experiences. Sexist, racist, homophobic, or other hateful speech will not be permitted. Angry displays, whether in writing, online postings, or in class discussions will be handled as disruptions to the wellbeing of the class and responded to as marks against you as part of the “Collaboration and Sharing” condition of our grading contract (see Grading Contract).
- Blackboard, Zoom, and our Microsoft Teams channels are not public internet venues; all things people say or write in these venues should be considered private and confidential. Whatever is posted or said in these online spaces is intended for your RWS classmates and instructor only. Please do not copy documents and paste them to a publicly accessible website, blog, or other space. If you want to cite your classmate’s writing in your own work, please ask permission first and do so with correct MLA or APA citation.

University and Program Policies and Student Services

**FYC Class Attendance Policy**
According to UTEP’s [Curriculum and Classroom Policies](https://www.utep.edu/curriculum/policies.html): The student is expected to attend all classes and laboratory sessions. It is the responsibility of the student to inform each instructor of extended absences. When, in the judgment of the instructor, a student has been absent to such a degree as to impair his or her status relative to credit for the course, the instructor can drop the student from the class with a grade of W before the course-drop deadline or with a grade of F after the course-drop deadline.

Please consult UTEP’s [Curriculum and Classroom Policies](https://www.utep.edu/curriculum/policies.html) for more information regarding Excused Absences for University-Recognized Activities, Absence for Religious Holy Days, and Military Leave.
Attendance is mandatory for all freshman-level courses. Students are expected to attend all class meetings and to participate in discussions and workshops. The class discussions will help students learn to improve their writing, often through the discussion of a sample student project (sometimes the student’s, sometimes one written by a classmate).

In addition, the First-Year Composition Program has developed the following policies that should be adhered to strictly by all instructors:

**For Face-to-Face Classes (or in our class’s case, a Synchronous Online Class):**
Students are entitled to a single week of unexplained absences without penalty (for example, 3 classes missed in a three-times-a-week class, 2 classes missed in twice-a-week class, 1 class missed in a once-a-week class).

After 2 total weeks of absence (not necessarily consecutive classes) the student’s grade is lowered by a full letter (A becomes B, etc.).

After 3 total weeks of absence (not necessarily consecutive), the student is automatically dropped from class.

**Missing a scheduled conference with the instructor constitutes an absence.**

**For Hybrid Courses**
The attendance policy for hybrid courses aligns with the structure for face-to-face courses with each missed weekly class meeting constituting absence from a week of class.

The program recommends that the student contact the instructor to discuss the attendance policy and how it applies in cases in which it is not possible to attend a weekly class meeting, while continuing to maintain robust participation in class activities. [see also online courses]

**For Online courses**
In an online class, attendance is measured by participation in class activities. The attendance policy for online courses aligns with the structure for face-to-face courses, with each missed week of class activities constituting absence from a week of class.

The instructor can measure participation through various pathways, such as completion of scaffolded activities and discussion posts, and responding to other students’ posts and feedback. We also recommend measuring course activity by using the Course Reports feature on Blackboard, particularly the Course Activity Overview.

When it becomes evident that it is not possible to participate in class, the program recommends that the student contact the instructor to discuss the attendance policy and how it applies, before resuming robust participation in class activities.
Drop Policy
If you cannot complete this course for whatever reason, please contact your instructor. Your instructor can help you with the drop process and you can contact the Registrar’s Office. If you do not drop, you are at risk of being dropped by the instructor and possibly receiving an “F” for the course.

Academic Integrity
The University of Texas at El Paso prides itself on its standards of academic excellence. In the classroom and in all other academic activities, students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, and any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts. Instructors are required to report the suspected academic dishonesty to the Office of Student Affairs. Visit the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution page for more information on Academic integrity.

Accommodations
UTEP is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and auxiliary services to students, staff, faculty, job applicants, applicants for admissions, and other beneficiaries of University programs, services and activities with documented disabilities in order to provide them with equal opportunities to participate in programs, services, and activities in compliance with sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. Reasonable accommodations will be made unless it is determined that doing so would cause undue hardship on the University. Students requesting an accommodation based on a disability must register with the UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS). Students are encouraged to visit CASS in room 106, Union East Building or contact them at 747-5148 or cass@utep.edu.

Military Students
If you are a military student (veteran, dependent, active) please visit the Military Student Success Center. I also recognize the complexities of being a student veteran. If you are a student veteran, please inform me if you need special accommodations. Drill schedules, calls to active duty, complications with GI Bill disbursement, and other unforeseen military and veteran-related developments can complicate your academic life. If you make me aware of a complication, I will do everything I can to assist you or put you in contact with university staff who are trained to assist you.

University Writing Center
UTEP’s University Writing Center (UWC) offers free writing tutoring assistance for all UTEP students. The tutors are undergraduate and graduate students who can help with all parts of a writing assignment, including prewriting, organizing, revising, and editing. They can also help to understand any writing assignment and help work on comprehending difficult textbook material.
Please note that in fall 2020 the UWC will be operating fully online. Go to University Writing Center - UTEP to make an appointment with a writing center consultant.

There are now two options students can take advantage of:

- **Synchronous online assistance** – students can go to our website (utep.edu/uwc) and use the link to log into Blackboard Collaborate. No Appointment Needed! We will review your paper with you live online! Visit our website for current hours and availability of Synchronous Sessions.
- **Email us your paper** – go to our website (utep.edu/uwc) and choose the Email option. You can email your paper to us any time. We will review it during our next open hours of operation and return it to you with suggested revisions. There may be up to a 72-hour turnaround for emailed papers, so plan ahead!

**Important University Dates for Spring 2021 Semester**

Jan 19th – Spring Classes Begin
Jan 19th-22nd – Late Registration (fees incurred)
Feb. 3rd – Spring Census Day
  
  Note: This is the last day to register for classes. If payment is not received by this day, students will be dropped.
Feb. 15th – 20th Class Day
  
  Note: Students who were given a payment deadline extension will be dropped at 5:00pm if payment arrangements have not been made.
Mar. 15-19th – Spring Break
Mar. 21st – Midterm Grades Due
Mar. 26th – Cesar Chavez Holiday – no classes
Apr. 1st – Spring Drop/Withdrawal Deadline
  
  Note: Student-initiated drops are permitted after this date, but the student is not guaranteed a grade of W. The faculty member of record will issue a grade of either W or F.
Apr. 2nd – Spring Study Day
May 7th – Dead Day
May 10-14th – Final Exams Week
May 19th – Grades are Due
May 20th – Grades are posted to student records

**Course Schedule**

Below is the course schedule for the first 4 weeks of class. Following weeks will be available on Blackboard.

This schedule is subject to change depending on the needs of the class. I may also assign you something to do that is not on the calendar when we are in class. You will be notified of any changes to the schedule via Blackboard Announcements.
Zoom Days/Teams Days
Starting in Week 3, our schedule is divided into “Zoom Days” and “Teams Days.” If your assigned Zoom Day is Monday, your Teams Day will be Wednesday. If your assigned Zoom Day is Wednesday, your Teams Day will be Monday. On Zoom Days, you will meet with me on Zoom for a class session. On Teams Days, you will work independently and/or in your writing group on Microsoft Teams. You will do the same amount of work; it’s just that the order of that work will be different depending on your assigned Zoom Day.

Readings
Unless stated otherwise, all readings that are assigned for that week must be completed before 3pm each Monday. You will be engaging with these readings throughout the week in various ways. It is imperative that you are prepared to engage with those readings before our class-time begins on Monday, even if Monday is not a Zoom Day for you. For readings assigned in Habits of the Creative Mind, you do not have to read the “Practice Sessions” at the end of each essay/chapter.

Fridays:
Regardless of your assigned Zoom Day, you will have journal entries and other writing assignments due each Friday by the end of the day. Pay attention to these Friday due dates. While we do not meet on Fridays, you will be expected to complete those assignments on time.

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<tr>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Zoom Day</th>
<th>Teams Day</th>
<th>Due Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1 (Jan. 20-23) – Introductions, Syllabus, and Grading Contract</td>
<td>We will meet on Zoom on Wednesday for our first day of class. I will be taking attendance.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Read: Syllabus and Grading Contract</td>
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<td>Read: “On Learning from Failure” (pp. 186-188 in Habits)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Write your first Journal Entry (see prompt document link on Blackboard)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Respond to “Introductions” discussion board on Teams and reply to 2 peers. Instructions are available on Teams.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Readings | Zoom Day | Teams Day | Due Friday
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**Week 2 (Jan 25-29)**

**For Monday:**
“Orienting” (*Habits* pp. 1-20)

**For Wednesday:**
“On Unlearning” (*Habits* pp. 23-25)

Module 1 Project Instructions

We will meet as a full class on Zoom for both Monday and Wednesday sessions this week.

**Before class on Monday:**
Respond to “Grading Contract” Discussion board on Teams. Instructions for this post are available on Teams.

Bring 2 discussion questions about the assigned reading.

**Before class on Wednesday:**

Bring 2 discussion questions about the assigned reading.

**Due Wednesday at midnight:**
Journal Entry (see prompt link on Blackboard)

Note: Reserve at least 60 uninterrupted minutes to complete this journal entry.

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**Week 3 (Feb. 1-5)**

**Note:** We begin splitting the class in half this week. Check Blackboard to see what day is your Zoom Day and what day is your Teams Day!

“On Learning to See” (*Habit* pp. 45-56)

“On Seeing as a Writer” (*Habits* pp. 129-131)

“On Getting Your Act Together” (*Habits* pp. 213-218)

**Before Class:**
2 questions about the readings

Bring to class 1 multimedia text that you’ve encountered in the last week that is somehow about writing or composing

Examples could include: Instagram stories, TikTok videos, blog posts, memes or gifs, etc.

**During Class:**
WG Chat – Wk 3

Journal Entry

Journal Entry
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Readings</th>
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<th>Teams Day</th>
<th>Due Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| TBA      | **Before class:** 2 questions about the readings  
Module 1 Project Draft  
**During Class:** Peer Workshop – Module 1 | **During Class:** WG Chat – Wk 4  
Journal Entry | Mod. 1 Project Revision  
Creator Statement  
Journal Entry |

**Week 4 (Feb. 8-12)**
Dear Writers,

First, let me ask you: What motivates you to do well in the activities you do outside of school? Why do you put effort into those activities? For example, why do you keep going back to the gym? What makes you pick up your guitar at the end of the day to learn a new song? What do you do when you’re cooking something you’ve never cooked before and it turns out wrong?

Next, let me ask you: What motivates you to do well in college? What motivates you to improve? Why are you here? What do you want to learn? What do you hope to take away from the classes that you’re enrolled in?

Finally, let me ask you: What do grades really mean? What purpose do grades serve? Why do we value them so much?

I assume that you’ve never received a grade on your workouts at the gym. You measure your success differently there, by the amount of weight you can lift, by how long or how fast you can run, and, perhaps, by the transformation you see in the mirror. I assume that if a family member taught you to bake, that they didn’t give you an F when your first cake turned out disgusting. Instead, they probably helped you figure out what went wrong. I assume that when you took guitar lessons, you didn’t immediately pick it up and start playing songs. You fumbled around and practiced the chords until you could play a song.

Of course, the university, as a system, often measures success differently. This course, RWS 1301, is required, and I am mandated to assign you a grade at the end of it. But how much does the motivation to attain an A or a B help you learn? Think hard about this.

It is my belief (and that of other scholars in the field of Rhetoric and Composition, such as Dr. Asao Inoue) that striving for good grades, particularly on something like writing where there is no single pathway to “good” writing, leads students to think more about their grade than about improving their work. Because I, as your teacher, am the person who is grading you, it is likely that you will become more focused on pleasing me and my expectations than on thinking about how exactly you want to express or portray your ideas in words. Of course, you need good grades to graduate, to keep your scholarships or financial aid, to play in your next game if you’re an athlete, and to pad your GPA so you can get into graduate school. Grades have been made important by these other systems, but I do not believe that they signify whether you have improved your writing or not or whether you are a “good writer” or not. Like learning to cook or to play an instrument or to run a marathon, learning to write well takes practice. And like all of these other activities, practicing writing does not instantaneously yield good products. No, writers who want to improve their writing take risks and try new things that might end in failure (a bad cake, if you will). Writers who want to improve their writing are motivated by curiosity and the desire to practice putting ideas on paper, to puzzle out through revision how to make those words do what we want them to do. I want you to be able to do these things, to take risks and try new things, even if it means you produce something that might be considered a failure.

The authors of our required textbook, Habits of the Creative Mind, argue that writing is a "technology for thinking new thoughts" (Miller and Jurecic 10). Miller and Jurecic also argue
that the “fear of failure stifles creativity and innovation” (186). If you are focused only on earning an A, then you are unlikely to find those "new thoughts" in your writing. When you are writing for this class, I want you to be able to try new things without worrying about failing the class. I want you to learn from your mistakes. I want you to practice the habits of mind that Miller and Jurecic discuss. Finally—and perhaps this is an unattainable ideal I am striving for, given the systems that raised you—I want you to be motivated by the desire to learn and improve and the inherent reward of working through a problem, rather than by your final GPA.

Therefore, in this course, I am detaching your grade from the quality of your writing. Instead, your grade will be based upon the labor you put into the required work of this course. The default grade for this course is a B. As long as you meet the specified conditions described in this contract, starting on page 4, you will earn a B in the course. (Don't worry—you will also be able to earn an A, if that is the grade you want/need.) Before I get to those conditions, let me describe a few assumptions that this contract is based upon. These assumptions or principles are adapted from Asao Inoue's grading contract example in Labor-Based Grading Contracts: Building Equity and Inclusion in the Compassionate Writing Classroom.

First, I assume that in order for you to learn, you must do labor and that how much labor (or time/effort/energy/focus/etc.) you put into the work for this course is more representative of your learning and growth as a writer, reader, and critical thinker than the quality of the writing you produce. In other words, your grade will be based on how much work you do. The more work and the more intense and focused that work is, the better your grade will be.

Secondly, I will assume that every one of you will try your hardest, that you will at least attempt to be motivated by the desire to learn and to improve. This assumption is based in trust. If I ask you to spend an hour on a particular writing assignment and you say you spent an hour doing that work and produced X, I (and your classmates) will believe you. The success of this contract is predicated on us trusting each other. If you choose to try and deceive me and your classmates, know that you lie is primarily hurting your own learning and growth as a writer.

As part of this second assumption, it is worth noting that if you read that the default grade for this class was a B and thought, "Hey, this is going to be an easy boost for my GPA,” then you will be sorely mistaken. If you are looking to do the minimum work possible to earn the highest possible grade, you are not likely to do well in this class. There is no “extra credit” in this course, no way to make up for missing assignments or incomplete work without fully committing to your own learning and your own growth as a writer. If you are invested in your own learning and want to improve your writing, then this class will be incredibly rewarding for you.

**One more thing:** Just because I am using labor to determine your final course grade does not mean that the quality of your writing doesn’t matter. It does! Your classmates and I will be offering you extensive feedback on the quality of your work throughout the semester in order to help you improve it. Your ability to ingest that peer and instructor feedback and do something with it during your revision process is part of the labor of this course and will be rewarded, both in you maintaining a B or A in the course but also in the ability to recognize in yourself a “job well done.” My hope in detaching grades from the quality of your writing is that it allows you the freedom to make writing do what you want it to do. You are free to use writing to think new
thoughts and reach different audiences rather than just me, your instructor. My role as your teacher becomes that of a reader, a guide, or a mentor rather than a judge. I believe your writing will improve if you are putting the time, effort, energy, and focus into doing just that.

On the following pages are the conditions of our grading contract. I encourage you to keep this contract handy throughout the semester so that you can keep track of how you are doing. By remaining in this course, you are agreeing to abide by the conditions of the contract and to accept the consequences (a lower course grade) if you do not uphold your end of the contract. For ease of use when referring to this document, I have included a table of contents below that uses click-navigation.

Note: There are sections of the contract that are negotiable and therefore incomplete as of now. These areas are marked in red. We will complete those portions together during the first 2-3 class periods of the semester.

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B Grade Conditions
The default grade for this course is a B. If you do all of the work that is asked of you in the manner that it is asked of you, you will earn a B in the course. To earn that B, you must meet the conditions described in detail below.

Attendance
As mandated and described by the FYC program policy for face-to-face classes in our syllabus, you are required to attend all class sessions on Mondays and Wednesdays, whether we are meeting on Zoom or in small groups on Teams.

During Zoom sessions, you must have your video camera on to be counted as present (unless individually negotiated otherwise with me). I also reserve the right to remove you from class and to count you absent if you are in an automobile, regardless of whether you say you are driving or not.

On Teams Days, your attendance will be measured by either your submission of the assigned writing assignment OR your time-stamped contributions to your small group's chat, depending on what is assigned to you for that day. You will be counted absent or late if you are not contributing throughout the chat. For instance, if you are only communicating with your group sporadically or only for the first 20 minutes, you will be counted as “late” for that day.

As stated in the department policy, you are allowed to miss 3 class periods without penalty. If you miss 4-5 class periods, your grade will be dropped a letter grade. If you miss 6 or more absences, you will be dropped from the course.

Lateness and/or Leaving Early
You are expected to be in class on time and engaged for the entire Zoom call or small group chat on Teams. During Zoom calls, I take attendance at some point in the first 5 minutes of class and again sometime during the last half of class. If you are not in the call with your camera on for both instances when I take role, you will be counted as late. Being late and/or leaving early more than 4 times will count as an absence.

Note: If you are leaving/entering class intermittently because of connection/technology issues or some other reason, it is up to you to communicate with me about these problems and to ensure you were counted as present for that class period.

Collaboration and Sharing
You will work collaboratively with your assigned writing group(s) this semester. In this group, you will discuss course readings and other materials and read and respond to each other’s writing. Here are some of the guidelines you have agreed to follow during group discussions/work:

- You will make significant contributions to the small group conversation.
- You will respect each other’s opinions and alternative points of view.
- You will use your group and/or other classmates to communicate about coursework, even beyond the assigned group assignment. This means that you will try to answer each
other’s questions or concerns when they come up. You can use the Teams channels and/or chat to do this.

- When reviewing each other’s writing, you will try to offer constructive criticism.
- Within reason, you will try to help and/or support group members who fall behind on their work or who are confused about assignments. You can use the Teams channels and/or chat to do this.
- You will treat each other with mutual respect.
- While Teams is an informal communicative space, you will still act with maturity.
- This is in the syllabus as well, but you also will agree to keep confidential the ideas and words that are shared within the spaces of this class. Teams, Blackboard, and Zoom are not public platforms. Do not post or otherwise share your peers’ comments in any other public forum.

These guidelines can be added to and revised throughout the semester.

Not following the above guidelines may result in you being removed from the group (and placed in a new one) and having one of your group assignments being counted as either “missed” or “ignored,” which could result in a lower course grade. This will likely only happen in extreme circumstances/violations, such as bullying or other violent behavior.

**Academic Integrity**

All of your writing must be of your own creation and must be written specifically for this course (not reused from other courses). I take academic dishonesty very seriously, but I also understand that as writers new to the university, you may still be learning the ways in which academic writing cites and builds upon others’ work. I expect you to commit to avoiding intentional plagiarism and to learning the practices of citation we will go over in class. All sources, including multimedia such as images and videos, must be cited correctly in either MLA or APA format, depending on the assignment. These citations must be included *both* in a Works Cited page and in the body of your writing in the form of in-text citations. When you paraphrase or summarize an author’s points, you must ensure that your paraphrase or summary is not using any of the original language and is correctly cited.

**If you plagiarize on an assignment, your grade will automatically drop to a D or an F, depending on the severity of the offense.** For example, if you choose to copy and paste work that is not your own into your own writing without citation, acknowledgement, or quotation marks, that is most likely an F-level offense, even if you have included the source in your Works Cited. If you forget to include a few in-text citations on summaries or paraphrases, that is most likely a D-level offense. If dropped to a D, you may work to bring your grade back to a C by completing a full revision of the plagiarized assignment and completing the A-Grade work listed below. If dropped to an F, you will not be able to work your way back up to a passing grade in the course. I will discuss these offenses with you directly and negotiate these terms individually. Note that I am also required by the university to report academic dishonesty to the Office of Student Affairs. See the syllabus policy on Academic Integrity for more information about the university’s stance on academic dishonesty.
Late Assignments
You should submit all assignments complete and on time. If work is submitted after the due date and time, including in-class assignments on days you were absent, it will count as late. You must submit your late assignment **within 5 days** after the original due date/time before it counts as a "missed" assignment (see next section).

To continue to earn a B in this course, you are allowed to submit up to 3 assignments late without penalty. More than 3 late assignments will result in a drop in letter grade.

Assignments that are to be completed during a specific class time (i.e., Journal Entries or Writing Group chats on Teams Days) follow the same guidelines—they must be submitted within 5 days to be counted as late. If you are absent on a Teams Day and therefore are not present for the Writing Group Chat, you will still be counted as absent (see attendance policy), but you can make up the Writing Group Chat assignment by writing a summary of your group’s chat and making your own contributions (with 5 days of original class period). This make-up chat will count as a late assignment.

**Note:** There are particular assignments that cannot be accepted after the original due date. These assignments will be clearly marked. If you submit these assignments after the due date, they will skip the “late” designation and will instead be counted as “missed” (see next section).

Missed Assignments
A missed assignment is work that you submit after 5 days have passed since the original due date. This means that you can submit a missing assignment at any time in the semester, but it will hurt you more than a late assignment. Extremely late work, defined as “missed” here, loses its relevancy the more days that go by, harming your own learning and often the learning of your peers as well. **Therefore, you are only allowed to miss 2 assignments without penalty.** After your second missed assignment, your grade will drop to a C.

Ignored Assignments
An ignored assignment is any work that I have no record of you completing. I do not assign insignificant work in this course. To completely disregard work for this course is detrimental to your own learning and growth as a writer. Therefore, in order to meet the conditions of a B grade, you are not allowed to have any ignored assignments. **Note:** Ignoring a module project will result in an automatic F in the course.

Extensions
A maximum of **2 extensions** will be granted during the semester without penalty to your grade. To acquire an extension, you must notify Natalie before the original due date and show proof that you have been working on the assignment. If you meet these stated conditions, you and Natalie can agree upon a new due date for the incomplete assignment.

All Submitted Work Must Be:
- **Complete and on time.** Every assignment you submit will be marked as complete or incomplete. Each assignment will contain a checklist of minimum criteria your work must meet in order to be counted as complete. Failure to meet all of those checklist items
constitutes an *incomplete* assignment and will affect your standing in the course. As a basic example, if a journal prompt asks you to write 500 words, and you submit 300 words, you will not have fulfilled the requirements of the assignment and will have not met the conditions of this contract. Similarly, if I ask you to write something for 30 minutes, I expect that you will be honest about spending that amount of time completing that work. Again, every assignment will come with a list of criteria which must be met in order for your assignment to count as complete.

- **Revisions.** When asked/assigned, you will need to revise and rethink particular assignments. When this is asked of you, you will revise by reshaping, extending, complicating, or substantially clarifying your ideas—or even relating your ideas to new things. Surface-level corrections/changes (such as fixing commas or moving a sentence or two around) do not count as complete revisions. Revisions might be messy—this is encouraged. Revisions must also somehow respond to and/or seriously consider your classmates’ (and your instructor's) assessments of your previous drafts. Submitting a revision that does not meet all of this criteria will constitute an incomplete assignment.

**On-time but Incomplete Assignments**

If/when you submit incomplete work (as defined above), you will be granted a single chance to revise and resubmit that assignment. You must complete the assignment within an individually negotiated time frame in order to maintain your B in the course. You are only allowed to do this *once* during the semester to maintain a B. If you do not revise and resubmit during the negotiated time frame, then the incomplete assignment will be counted as “Ignored.”

If you submit an assignment that is incomplete *and* late, I will automatically mark it as “Ignored.”

**A Grade Conditions**

To earn an A in this course, you must, *in addition to* the above B grade conditions, meet ALL of the following conditions. If an A is your goal for the semester, I encourage you to be working on these conditions throughout the semester. While the portfolio (described below) is not due until May 6, you will need to plan ahead in order to ensure you complete everything on time and in the manner described.

**Submit a final portfolio that includes:**

- 2 significantly revised and/or translated module projects of your choosing
  - These revisions should go beyond surface-level changes *and* should go beyond whatever your “final” draft you submitted on the original due date. In order to meet this requirement, you might have to move your project into a new genre, add more sources, or write for a new audience. We can discuss individually what these revisions will look like for you.
- 2 significantly revised and/or translated journal entries of your choosing
  - You can choose which journal entries you want to revise, but these revisions must go beyond surface-level corrections. When revising, you are allowed to go beyond the original journal prompt to create something new, something that suits your own interests and goals. This might just mean going beyond the original word-count expectation. But it could also mean that you turn the journal entry into
a different genre of your own choosing to reach a broader, more relevant, audience. We will discuss what these revisions will look like for your individual selections.

- An author's note for each revised assignment (4 total)
  - Each author's note will be at least 500 words. These author’s notes will describe your revision process and the labor you put into the revision for each respective assignment. You will also cite and discuss at least 3 significant changes/revisions you made to the assignment, explaining those choices and what the effects of those choices were.

Two additional one-on-one meetings with the instructor
It is not enough to merely complete and submit the portfolio. That portfolio must represent significantly revised work in order to attain an A. These additional required conferences are to ensure that the labor you put into your portfolio is A-quality labor. During the additional conferences, we will discuss your portfolio-in-progress and negotiate what constitutes significant revision for each of your selected assignments. You are expected to bring at least 2 revisions-in-progress to each conference for us to discuss.

It is up to you to schedule these additional meetings with me and all conferences must be completed before April 23. Each conference will be about 20 minutes long. You are allowed—and encouraged—to schedule more meetings to help you revise and curate this portfolio!

Grades Lower than a B
I would hope that you are not aiming for anything lower than a B, but the easiest way to slide into a C, D, or F, is not to complete work on time, to submit incomplete work, and/or to miss class. Please see the chart below for a summary of how your grade is affected when you have not met some or all of the major conditions of the B-Grade contract.

**Bringing Your Grade Back Up**
You may also follow the additional “A-Grade” guidelines in order to raise your grade ONE letter grade. For instance, say you “miss” three assignments early in the semester and your course grade falls to a C. You may complete the "A Grade" work as described above in order to pull yourself back up to a B. However, you will no longer be able to earn an A in the course.

**Summary of Grades and Conditions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th># of absences</th>
<th># of late assignments</th>
<th># of missed assignments</th>
<th># of ignored assignments</th>
<th># of incomplete assignments (submitted on time)*</th>
<th># of extensions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1#</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How Do You Know How You’re Doing?

In many ways, it will be easier for you to know how you are doing in this class. As long as you are meeting the conditions listed above, you can be confident that you are earning a B. However, if you are at all concerned, I encourage you to meet with me during my Office Hours or set up an appointment to discuss your progress.

Because I am not grading the quality of your work, the Blackboard gradebook will look a little different from your other classes. You’ll be able to track your own attendance record through the attendance grade, which I will be sure to update at the end of each week. However, for your assignments, rather than seeing a total points or an overall letter grade, you will see a series of 0s, 1s, 2s, 3s, and 4s. These points do not represent a grade but rather the degree to which you have met the conditions of the agreement stated above. Blackboard’s gradebook has limitations in this regard, so it is up to you to keep track of the NUMBER of each 0, 1, 2, 3, and 4 to ensure you are meeting the terms of the grade you are pursuing. If you are ever confused about your standing, please talk to me.

**Blackboard Grade Center Key**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>This assignment was either “Ignored” OR you submitted this assignment “On-Time but Incomplete.” To remove the 0, you will need to either submit your assignment late or revise/resubmit your assignment, depending on the scenario.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>This assignment was “Missed,” meaning you submitted the assignment more than X days after the original due date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>This assignment was submitted “Late” but within X days of the original due date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>This means you submitted the assignment on time but <em>incomplete.</em> You then revised and resubmitted a complete assignment within the negotiated time frame, attaining a 3 status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>This means you submitted the assignment on time <em>and</em> complete. Ideally, you will have all 4s in the gradebook.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extraordinary Negotiations

This contract is a social contract as well, meaning that we have discussed it publicly and made changes to it together as a class. It is part of my job as the instructor to make sure that the contract is enforced fairly for all students. That being said, because this semester is taking place during an ongoing pandemic, I know that things may not go as smoothly as this contract.
presumes. Life happens, and I don’t want you to fail because life interrupted your ability to succeed in this course. If you have extraordinary circumstances that arise at any point in the semester that make it impossible for you to meet one or more of the conditions of the contract, please get in touch with me when you are able. I will do my best to work with you, within reason, while still ensuring that the integrity of this contract is upheld.

My End of the Deal
At this point, you might be asking, “What can I expect from you, my teacher, if you’re not going to grade my work?” You can expect the following from me:

- That I will enforce this contract as fairly as possible.
- That I will mentor you and guide you through the semester with both sincerity and compassion.
- That I will read every word you write this semester, even if I don’t respond to all of it individually.
- That I will be dedicated to your learning and progress as a writer, reader, and thinker.
- That I will help you set high expectations and attainable goals for your writing.
- That I, as a deeply interested reader and a highly invested teacher, will find ways to help you achieve your own writing goals.