

UNIVERSITY WRITING PROGRAM

FYW: Writing Seminar

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Course Syllabus (Fall 2019)

UWRT 150.38	12:30 P.M. – 1:45 P.M. (TTH)	<i>Golisano Hall</i>	(GOL)-3560
UWRT 150.55	3:30 P.M. – 4:45 P.M. (TTH)	<i>George Eastman Hall</i>	(EAS)-3335

Office Hours:

Mondays: 4:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M.

Wednesdays: 9:00 A.M. to 11:00 A.M. and by appointment *Liberal Arts Hall (LBR)-A112*

All University Writing Program courses share a common mission and approach:

This approach teaches students that effective writing is a recursive process, influenced by individual learning styles, social context, purpose, feedback, technology, and audience. Students use digital and print resources to find, evaluate, and integrate relevant source information into their writing. Students cultivate the ability to read, understand, interpret, and discuss intellectually challenging texts that represent different cultural perspectives and academic disciplines.

Course Description:

Writing Seminar is a three-credit course limited to 19 students per section. The course is designed to develop first-year students' proficiency in analytical and rhetorical reading and writing, and critical thinking. Students will read, understand, and interpret a variety of non-fiction texts representing different cultural perspectives and/or academic disciplines. These texts are designed to challenge students intellectually and to stimulate their writing for a variety of contexts and purposes. Through inquiry-based assignment sequences, students will develop academic research and literacy practices that will be further strengthened throughout their academic careers. Particular attention will be given to the writing process, including an emphasis on teacher-student conferencing, critical self-assessment, class discussion, peer review, formal and informal writing, research, and revision. Small class size promotes frequent student-instructor and student-student interaction. The course also emphasizes the principles of intellectual property and academic integrity for both current academic and future professional writing.

Objectives and Outcomes:

Students completing First-Year Writing will learn to:

- Develop rhetorical knowledge and study writing as situated, motivated discourse.
- Identify and analyze a range of influences—social, linguistic, cultural, technological, and national—that have shaped them as writers, students, and individuals.
- Practice producing interesting texts that reflect academic conventions.
- Revise and improve their writing.
- Express themselves effectively in common college-level written forms using standard American English.
- Use relevant evidence gathered through accepted scholarly methods and properly acknowledge sources of information (General Education Framework).

Required Texts:

- Harris, Joseph. *Rewriting: How to Do Things with Texts* (PDF is available in myCourses)
- Supplemental readings will be available in the “Content” section of **myCourses**

Other Required Materials:

- Access to the MyCourses website: <http://mycourses.rit.edu>
- A portable digital device (i.e., a laptop or tablet) for in-class reading and writing purposes.
- Access to a word processing program that is compatible with Microsoft Word.
- A means for storing course files (e.g., a flash drive, a cloud service, etc.).
- A notebook for notes on in-class discussions of articles and rhetorical/discursive concepts.
- A paper folder to store any hard-copy handouts, class notes or readings.

Class Participation & Student Centered Learning:

I will strive to create a student-centered learning environment in which **you** are largely responsible for making the course meaningful. And because class participation is essential to a course like this one, which uses a discussion format, you will receive a grade for your contributions to daily class discussions. I expect you to come to class on time with the assigned reading and/or writing **completed**. This grade will reflect not just the amount of participation, but also the quality. So come to class and bring consistent and dedicated involvement to class discussions and assignments. I also expect you to treat each other with respect, and to make sincere attempts to listen to and understand what your classmates are saying. You can expect me to do the same.

Some Ground Rules for Class Discussion (Office of Academic Affairs):

- Reasonable people can and do disagree.
- Each person deserves respect and deserves to be heard.
- Tolerance and patience are required of all.
- Expect to offend and be offended; it helps to forgive yourself and your classmates in advance.
- Respect the courage of some who share things we may find highly objectionable. We may learn the most from their comments.
- Understand the rules for civic discourse may need to be negotiated on individual, group, and class levels (e.g., gender-linked and race-linked styles of communication may need to be considered explicitly).
- Acknowledge that all racial/ethnic groups have accomplishments their members can be proud of and misdeeds they should not be proud of (i.e., no racial/ethnic group walks in absolute historical perfection or wickedness).
- Each person can only be held accountable for what they have done; they cannot be held accountable for what ancestors or relatives have done.
- Each person should understand the privileges that he or she has in the United States based on skin color, gender, and other social assets such as economic class, level of education, and so on.
- “Equality” between and among discussants should be the relational norm.

Attendance Policy:

Because UWRT courses are participation and discussion-based courses, attendance is a crucial component of your success in this course. You are allowed six (6) absences for the term. Every absence after the sixth will result in a 3% deduction from the final grade. Extenuating circumstances (a death in the family, serious illness, etc.) will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The writing program does not differentiate between excused and unexcused absences, so you do not need to tell your instructor why

you missed class. However, if you anticipate exceeding the 2-week absence limit, you should talk with your instructor immediately. Any student who misses more than 1/3 of the classes may be given an "F" in the course.

Late Work Policy:

Listen, I've been there. Many of you juggle insanely heavy course loads, participate in any number of university clubs and/or sports teams, and, who knows, maybe even maintain real human relationships as part of a robust social life. While I am aware of and sympathetic to the way these variables interact, you still need to complete and submit the work in a timely manner so I can provide you with comprehensive and useful feedback. Ultimately, failure to complete work (both "low-stakes" exercises and formal writing assignments) on time will negatively affect your grades and can severely limit the amount of commentary you will receive from me.

Document Submission Protocol:

- ALL drafts of your formal writing assignments must be submitted to me via the corresponding **Assignment Folders** on our myCourses page.
- Because I provide detailed feedback on your rough drafts by using the "Track Changes" function on Microsoft Word, **ALL SUBMISSIONS MUST BE IN "DOC" OR "DOCX" FORMAT. (DO NOT SUBMIT PDFS PLEASE.)**

Academic Integrity:

As an institution of higher learning, RIT expects students to behave honestly and ethically at all times, especially when submitting work for evaluation in conjunction with any course or degree requirement. All students are encouraged to become familiar with the RIT Honor Code and with [RIT's Academic Honesty Policy](#).

"As members of an academic community, both students and faculty share responsibility for maintaining high standards of personal and professional integrity. If a student violates these standards, the Academic Integrity Process affords a fair resolution. The committee outlined herein may be called upon to hear cases where a breach of student academic integrity is alleged by instructor. In all cases, it is the responsibility of any university representatives to render fair and appropriate decisions reaffirming standards of integrity expected in the academic community." (RIT policy introduction)

RIT Counseling and Psychological Services (CaPS):

Here is a link to the [CaPS homepage](#) and the following is a message from CaPS Director, David Reetz:

"Success in this [class] depends heavily on your personal health and wellbeing. Recognize that stress is an expected part of the college experience, and it often can be compounded by unexpected setbacks or life changes outside the classroom. Your instructors and I strongly encourage you to reframe challenges as an unavoidable pathway to success. Reflect on your role in taking care of yourself throughout the term, before the demands of exams and projects reach their peak. Please feel free to reach out to me about any difficulty you may be having that may impact your performance in your courses or campus life as soon as it occurs and before it becomes too overwhelming. In addition to your counselor/academic advisor, I strongly encourage you to contact the many other support services on campus that stand ready to assist you."

Academic Accommodation:

RIT is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. If you need accommodations such as special seating, testing modifications, or note taking services due to a disability, please go to the Disability Services Office. It is located in the Student Alumni Union, room 1150. If you receive accommodation approval, it is imperative that you see me during office hours so that we can work out whatever arrangement is necessary. (Also, here is a link to the Disability Services Office's [Campus Partners & Resources](#).)

The UWP Writing Commons:

The Writing Commons provides free writing instruction for all RIT students at any stage of the writing process. Located on the first floor of the Wallace Center, the Writing Commons is staffed by peer and professional writing consultants with diverse backgrounds and from a variety of academic disciplines. Whether you need help getting started, organizing your thoughts, developing ideas, struggle with grammar and mechanical issues, using sources effectively or properly formatting your citations, we help students develop productive writing habits and revision strategies. For more information, or to schedule an appointment, go to: <http://www.rit.edu/academicaffairs/writing/about-us>

Diversity & Inclusion:

We live in and engage with a world that seems to get smaller and smaller every day; a world where cultural, racial, ethnic, ideological, and linguistic diversity are *not* exceptions: they are rules. And, I believe that it is *our responsibility* to cultivate and maintain a classroom community that is safe and stimulating—a place where no one feels the need to hide what they really want to say. I also choose to see language (or any other) difference as an opportunity to create and share meaning, not as an obstacle to understanding. There is a certain kind of greatness achieved, not in spite, but *because* of difference.

Preferred Names/Pronouns:

If you have a preferred first name and/or pronoun preference, please let me know either in class or by email so I can honor your preference. If you would like myCourses and your RIT teachers to have your first name preference automatically known, you can change your first name preference through the Registrar's office by completing this [form](#) and returning it to that office.

Closures:

In the event that RIT is closed, all radio and television stations will be notified. I will not email the class in the event of a school closure. I will email everyone if I need to cancel class for some other reason.

UWRT 150: Course Requirements & Grade Allocation

Low-Stakes Assignments:

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| • Community Practice | 15% |
| • Discussion Posts | 15% |
| • FYW Reflection Journal: Writer's Log | 5% |

High-Stakes Assignments

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| • Assignment #1 (Critical Synthesis)* | 20% |
| • Assignment #2 (Inquiry-Based Research Portfolio)* | 35% |
| • Assignment #3 (Writer's Statement)* | 10% |

**Detailed descriptions of the requirements for these assignments will be available on myCourses.*

Grading Scale:

A (93-100), A- (90-92.9), B+ (87-89.9), B (83-86.9), B- (80-82.9), C+ (77-79.9), C (73-76.9), C- (70-72.9), D (60-69.9), F (< 60)

Community Practice

As we move toward the core course objectives of FYW, what we are really doing is evolving as a **community of practice**. *Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly* (Wenger-Trayner, 2015). In other words, we will grow and improve as readers, writers, and thinkers as we read, write, and think about reading, writing, and thinking *together*.

Together, we will **make knowledge** by engaging in and refining **literacy practices** that are driven by a particular set of **values** that our work will explore, represent, and continually redefine.

15% of your total course grade is determined by your engagement in the following activities:

Community Building

- ✓ Adding to the Conversation
 - engagement in class discussions
 - presentation and “translation” of **Discussion Posts**
- ✓ FYW Teamwork
 - collaborative writing exercises (both in and outside of class)
 - discussions/workshops on class readings

Peer Review Workshops

- ✓ Attendance at and preparedness for all workshops
- ✓ Completion of “Reader Worksheets”

Commitment to the Writing Process

- ✓ Completion of all invention exercises and prewriting worksheets

Discussion Posts

15% of your final course grade will be determined by your engagement in this forum.

In *Rewriting: How to Do Things with Texts* Joseph Harris states that “a writing course is defined less through the texts you assign students to read than through the work you do with the texts that students write. [...] The point is for student texts to be as visible in a writing course as the texts of established authors, and thus for students to begin to see themselves as intellectuals and writers much like those authors” (127-8).

As we work through complex and stimulating texts by more accomplished authors, looking at, commenting on, and responding to student writing (*your* writing) will be an integral component of this course. In the Discussions tab of myCourses, there will be topics created, each named after a text/chapter we will be reading in the course (or some concept that we have discussed in class). Before the class during which the reading will be discussed, you will need to post a thread to the corresponding topic.

Our ultimate goal will be to utilize these posts as centerpieces of in-class discussions (and/or writing exercises) so don't be surprised when your comments become a large part of our conversation. The hope, too, is that the work we do in this space will help to develop your awareness of, and relationship with, the recursive nature of writing. Remember, “Good writing is a developmental process, one that immerses students in the practice of working as a writer” (Clark), and these discussion posts are just that: practice spaces for your longer, high-stakes writing assignments. So use them as opportunities to explore creative interpretations of texts or unconventional rhetorical strategies.

You will be required to write around 15 of these posts over the course of the semester. And while I will be reading all of them, I will not be grading and responding to every single post. You will receive two (2) grades over the course of the semester for the work you do in this forum, and each grade will be for the writing completed during a particular time period (or “unit”).

I have appropriated Joseph Harris' grading philosophy to help you forecast how your grade will be determined. “To earn a C students must clearly restate the project[s] of a text[s]; for a B they must note moments in [them] of particular interest or difficulty; and for an A they must articulate [...] position[s] of their own that respond to and make strong use of [their] ideas and phrasings” (130).

You will need to post at least one thread under each topic in the Discussions tab on myCourses. In order to help you do that, below is a “menu” of writing moves that you can make in that post. You should choose **at least 2 of these moves** and be prepared to share your ideas with the class on the day that the reading will be discussed.

- **Quote** from the article and explain what's “interesting” about what the author has to say
- **Compare** or **Contrast** an idea from the article to something you've read before
- Evaluate a **Use** or **Limit** of the author's **Approach** to their method or writing of the article
- **Forward** or **Counter** a specific idea from the article
- **Create a Visual** which adds to the conversation about the article (diagram, meme, etc.)
- Write a **Discussion Question** to ask the class
- **Confirm** or **Challenge** one or more of the author's claims based on your observation or experience

FYW Reflection Journal: Writer's Log

5% of your final course grade will be determined by your completion of these exercises.

While the Discussion Posts are spaces for you to explore and negotiate the complex texts we read and the rhetorical strategies we analyze and employ, your FYW Reflection Journal (or "Writer's Log") will be a place for you to reflect on your *own* composition processes and the choices *you* make as a writer. Try to think of these entries as exercises in self-regulation—opportunities to plan, adjust, or maybe even abandon different rhetorical strategies as you identify your voice and develop authority as the creator of relevant, impactful discourse.

While I highly suggest (plead) that you simply keep a running Word document on your laptop or tablet (or maybe even your phone), some of you may still choose to respond to in-class journal prompts in a spiral/composition notebook. Just know that if you decide to go this route you will still be responsible for translating (i.e. transcribing or scanning) your work into some digital format (docx/pdf/jpeg) that can then be uploaded to the corresponding Dropbox on myCourses.

Also, even though you will be responsible for completing approximately 10 journal entries (give or take a few), you will only "hand in" your journal twice this semester. Specific due dates for these submissions (and what each one should include) will be posted to our myCourses calendar. While these entries are "graded" on a pass/fail basis (i.e. if you do them, you get the credit; if you don't, well, you don't), the work you do in these journals will play a large role in what will eventually become your final formal writing assignment of the semester, the **Writer's Statement** (much more to come on that later).

Finally, if you miss a class, it is up to you to make sure you keep up with these entries. I will continually update the list of prompts in a document in the "Content" section of our myCourses page.