

Matthew Stumpf  
Digital Composition Syllabus Rationale

The rise in digital technologies is possibly the most promising aspect of the twenty-first century for some, while simultaneously the most heart-wrenching for others. What is promising are the possibilities; what is heart-wrenching is the death of once popular forms of media. Regardless of which side of this paradigm on which you stand, one thing cannot be argued. Digital technologies are certainly on the rise and are becoming, undoubtedly, the primary form of work, play, and general communication used by the world as a whole. For this reason it is the responsibility of educators in the contemporary classroom to address this historical moment head on. As an instructor of English composition it is my role to enable my students with the tools to critically analyze, engage with, and communicate with the world in which they inhabit. As these students enter my classroom they have already been inundated with Tweeting, Snapping, Instagramming, Facebooking, Blogging, and every other sort of online communication medium in existence. It would be negligent of me as an instructor to ignore this already acquired aspect of their education. Thus, a composition classroom that is centered on the use of digital technologies to compose, communicate, and critically converse with the world is not only timely and trendy, but essential to effectively educating the twenty-first century college student.

The accompanying syllabus takes this pedagogical approach and runs with it, not only employing digital tools to effectively conduct a composition classroom that meets the LSE (Liberal Studies Elective) requirements suggested by IUP (Indiana University of Pennsylvania), but also incorporating digital technologies directly into the curriculum so as to not make their use seem supplemental to the classroom objectives. The digital tools utilized in this class range from basic online media websites that students will already be familiar with if not already experts with, to web-based tools such as Twine and Google Drive. All of the technologies used help contribute to the fostering of a learning environment that first-year composition I students will find both accessible and inviting.

Ultimately the goals of this course have not changed. The same knowledge and skills that are focused on and achieved in non-digital versions of this course are still achieved in this more digitally focused version. However, by incorporating digital technologies into this course the students learn how they already implement some of these skills daily, and it also prepares the students more for the world they are a part of. Further, these tools offer the students an almost infinite amount of possibilities with their composition. Composition can range from a Tweet to an analytical research paper and everything in between, but students all too often only see it as only the latter. This course will allow students to connect with their work on a personal level, exposing to them that they have an audience beyond the professor and many of them have already retained this audience for an extended period of time. The students entering a

composition I classroom need to be able to enter any other classroom after that semester and feel prepared. By instilling confidence in these students, while also training them how to better navigate the written word, this digital composition class will be of immense benefit to every student at the university.

Composition I: Reading & Writing in the Digital 21st Century  
Fall 2017 Tuesday & Thursday 3:30 – 4:45  
HSS 214

Instructor: Mr. Matthew J. Stumpf  
Office: HSS Rm. 506MM  
Phone: (814) 952-2630  
Office Hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday 12 – 3pm  
E-mail: [m.j.stumpf@iup.edu](mailto:m.j.stumpf@iup.edu)

*“We live in a society exquisitely dependent on science and technology,  
in which hardly anyone knows anything about science and technology.”*  
- Carl Sagan

*“Men have become the tools of their tools.”*  
- Henry David Thoreau

---

**Course Description:**

What both Sagan and Thoreau are referring to in the above quotes is a lack of understanding. Both men are discussing a lack in knowledge concerning the technological advancements of their time, and a lack of knowledge about how those advancements can be utilized to better the human experience. Now, you are probably asking yourself what this has to do with your composition I writing course. Well, composition I is a required course for every student that comes through this university, which you will learn is a good thing. It is the first of two required writing courses you will take. Even though you all come from different backgrounds and all have different aspirations for your futures, writing will be an essential tool for you moving forward, and in most cases is already a tool you use everyday. In the 21st century, writing can be composed, read, and analyzed in many forms, but the most pervasive of these forms is the digital. From reading news articles on your cell phone to composing love letters through Facebook chat, the digital realm is where people in the 21st century engage with text the most. Composition I is required because it will place you into a mindset that will be an asset to you for the rest of your time in college. This is not only because of the writing, which will help you with any future career, but it will also allow you time to think critically, and thus obtain the type of knowledge regarding the tool of writing that Sagan and Thoreau are discussing. In this course we will use digital tools to create different kinds of writing with different goals in mind. All the while, you will develop your own writing process, as well as an understanding of how writing functions in the digital 21st century. This course will require some reading. The texts are in place to enable you to think critically, and to provide you with ways to understand the tool of writing within its many different technologically influenced forms. I do not expect everyone to agree with everything we read—in fact that is the fun part—but instead, I expect everyone to read and

then tell me, as well as your classmates, what you think about the readings. Much of the writing that you will do in this course will be a reflection of your own beliefs, enabling you to communicate your thoughts and feelings effectively while also displaying to you the importance of writing in a time in history where your words can reach a broad audience with ease. Nobody is ever a perfect writer, so don't think that is what I require of you, instead all I want to see is that everyone is thinking and writing about it, and in return coming to realize that you are already a writer.

### **University Catalog Description:**

A first-year writing course. Students use a variety of resources to create projects in a variety of writing genres. Resources for writing include but are not limited to memory, observation, critical reading and viewing, analysis, and reflection. Students will use writing processes to draft, peer review, revise and edit their projects.

### **Student Learning Objectives:**

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- Use writing processes in order to generate, develop, revise, share, and proofread/edit any writing they compose in any writing environment
- Produce texts in a variety of genres and mediums, including those in the digital realm
- Understand how to integrate others' texts into their writing and critically evaluate those texts
- Reflect on their own writing processes and understand the rhetorical effectiveness
- Read and think critically about the readings, and the physical, as well as digital world around them
- Describe and evaluate the effectiveness of specific conventions of writing in a digital environment
- Find their own voice within a piece of their writing

### **Required Texts:**

*Available Free Online:*

Pham, Hung, and Stone, Matt. *Digital Freedom: How Millions are Carving out a Living Online*. Archangel Ink: Amazon Digital Publishers. 2016. **ISBN: 1942761791**

Other free readings will be available at: [www.matthewstumpf.net/eng101readings](http://www.matthewstumpf.net/eng101readings)

*Books (Digital versions are acceptable):*

Graff, Gerald, and Birkenstein, Cathy. *They Say, I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed., New York: W.W. Norton & Co. 2014. **ISBN: 0393935841**

Pernisco, Nick. *Practical Media Literacy: An Essential Guide to the Critical Thinking Skills for our Digital World*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Amazon Publishers. 2015. **ISBN: 151189136X**

### **Suggested Text:**

Kernighan, Brian W. *Understanding the Digital World: What You Need to Know about Computers, the Internet, Privacy, and Security*. Princeton UP. 2017. **ISBN: 069117654X**

### **Course Policies:**

- 1) Attendance: As you will learn, the benefits of any college course increase with how much you attend that course. With that being said, each student is allowed two unexcused absences during the course

of the semester before their grade will begin to be negatively affected. These unexcused absences can be for any reason of your choosing, but do keep in mind that after the two allotted absences your grade will begin to decrease by half a letter for each day missed. This policy is in place because I do understand that students get sick or may have personal issues that prevent them from attending every class. If you happen to come down with an illness or have an emergency after your second absence please email me, and we can discuss the situation. I urge commuters to not endanger themselves if the Pennsylvania weather does not cooperate. I will email everyone in advance if weather prevents us from having class. **Students are responsible for keeping track of their absences as well as obtaining notes from their classmates for the days missed. If discussed prior, Skyping or FaceTiming into class may be an acceptable form of attendance.**

- a) Tardiness: This class begins at 3:30pm not at 3:35 or 3:40. I expect students to be on time for class. For the first week or two I will be lenient on this policy, but after that tardiness will not be tolerated. Students arriving late to class will be marked tardy. After two tardy marks a student will be deducted one of their absent days (refer above to attendance policy). Commuters should leave home early enough to get a parking space and make it to class on time. This policy also applies to leaving early unless arrangements have been made with me prior to class.
- 2) E-mail Correspondence: If and when you e-mail me, be sure to include the course number in the subject bar. The body of the email should include your name and be legible. These are professional correspondences, and should be treated as such. Failure to follow these guidelines will result in a dismissal of your e-mail regardless of its content. This will be a lesson during class time, which you will then enact throughout the semester.
- 3) Electronic Devices: For the most part, the use of cell phones, mp3 players, or any other hand-held electronic device will not be tolerated. If you are expecting an important phone call from work or family let me know prior to class. With that being said, I do understand that many of you may use laptops or tablets for note-taking, which is acceptable and often encouraged. Further, many of the assignments we will do in this course will have a digital component, and having your computer with you in class may be beneficial. If caught using your device for non-school purposes (i.e. chatting with friends, browsing imgur, etc...) you will be marked tardy for that day as you missed part of class while being distracted online. It will be pretty obvious to me if you are using these devices for non-sanctioned purposes, so please don't even try it.
- 4) Plagiarism: This is the use of another person(s) thoughts or words without giving them credit. It is cheating and is not only unethical but illegal as well. Plagiarism is a serious offense and, if caught, will result in failure of the course no question. This is an offense that has become increasingly more common with all of the information available online. **If you are unsure about what to do with specific material please contact me and I will help you with any problems you are having.** You should familiarize yourselves with the university's academic integrity policy located on the website.
- 5) About Your Assignments: Late assignments will be deducted half a letter grade for each day that the assignment is late. If you require an extension for an assignment please speak with me. Please do not turn in an incomplete assignment because it will not be graded. **All assignments must be completed in order to pass the course.**
  - a) Google Drive: Assignments will be turned in through Google Drive. All students will have a Google Drive folder entitled: "LastName.ENGL101" which I will create and then share with

them through their campus email. Students can then use this space for turning in their assignments, as well as sharing notes and drafts with their peers. This space will serve us throughout the entire semester.

- 6) **Support for Students with Disabilities:** Disability Support Services, a unit of the Advising and Testing Center, is the primary agent for the provision of access for IUP students with physical, learning, and other disabilities. Faculty and staff within the office serve to ensure IUP's program access compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students with disabilities are urged to register with the office. (Taken from the Undergraduate Handbook pg.20) I will honor and work with Advising and Testing recommendations for the support of students with disabilities in any of my classes. Their advisers will help me to work with you to meet your needs.

#### **Course Requirements:**

Bring your readings each day in either physical or digital form. You will need to bring a laptop, tablet, or writing utensil everyday to take notes and do in class writing assignments. Also, keep an open mind and respect your classmates' opinions.

#### **The Writing Center:**

The University Writing Center is located at 218 Eicher Hall and is open to students Monday through Thursday 9am – 8pm, as well as Friday 9am – 3pm. They are also available online for tutoring sessions. We will be making a trip over to the center this semester to see what is offered. I really do encourage that you take advantage of this great resource available to you for free; even I use the writing center.

#### **Assignments and Grading:**

Genre Essay	175
Persuasive Essay	175
Online Blog Posts	100
Podcast	150
Class Participation/Assignments	150
Final Group Twine Project	250
Total Points	1000

<b>A=1000-900</b>	<b>B=899-800</b>	<b>C=799-700</b>	<b>D=699-600</b>	<b>F=599 &amp; below</b>
-------------------	------------------	------------------	------------------	--------------------------

If at any point throughout the semester you are concerned about your grade, **see me**. If you demonstrate an active interest in your grade for this course it will reflect your engagement with your own education and may benefit those in-between letter grades.

Note: We will discuss specific grading procedures for each assignment in class. You will have the opportunity to tell me, and your classmates, what you believe should be the grading criteria for each assignment, and also what you believe would make each assignment effectively meet the goals that are outlined below. Assignment rubrics will be generated democratically by the class.

### 1. The Essays:

#### - Genre Essay:

By the time you begin to work towards this essay we will have critically discussed genre in class, you will have read a number of different genres, and you will have completed your Genre Remix assignment. The authors of the pieces we have encountered chose the genre they are writing in for specific reasons—although these reasons may not be clear to us, the reader. For this essay you will choose two of the pieces of writing you have read so far this semester that belong to different genres of writing (i.e. poetry and an expository essay, a Tweet or a comic strip, and even a short video clip or a whole novel). You will then write an essay discussing the major traits that make the genres different from one another, what similarities may exist between them, and most importantly what the author's purpose of choosing to present their information in this specific genre does to the message the text is relaying to its readers. This essay should display a clear understand of genre and the ways in which it can be manipulated in order to achieve different purposes with one's writing and be **750-850 words** in length. This essay will be turned in via your shared Google Drive folder

#### - Persuasive Essay:

This essay will be the most academically rigorous of the writing you will do this semester. It will require that you choose a topic we have discussed through our class readings and then compose a paper persuading your reader to the belief you hold about that topic. This paper will require you to use outside sources (at least one of which must be relatively recent depending on your topic), as well as your own personal opinions about the topic, in order to create an argument for why someone should believe what you believe. I ask that you use at least **two outside sources** to back up your claim, and that the paper is **1000-1500 words** in length. We will discuss the specific mechanics of this paper in-depth during our class time, and our Anonymous Docs assignment will be used to help focus and revise this paper.

2. Online Blog Posts: These posts give you an opportunity to write without the pressures of having to create a formal document that only I will see. This will be an open forum that will allow you to write whatever you feel and respond to what your classmates are feeling about the same topic. You will be responsible to make **at least one original post per week** on this forum in regards to a short text that I will make accessible to you online, and also **respond at least once a week** to a post written by one of your classmates. These forum posts can range from 200-300 words—although you will not get penalized for writing more, you will get penalized for writing less—and must either reference the work I post for you to read, or the work of another student in the course. These are meant to be easy, fun, and a good way for you to practice writing without the pressures of a formal grade. I want you to feel as if this forum is a place for you to get some words down on the screen; a place where your writing may not be perfect, but your message is impassioned with your own opinions. Find your voice and let it be heard! **Posts are to be submitted before noon on Thursdays.**

3. Podcast: You may be asking yourselves, “Why do I have to do a podcast in a writing course?” Well, on many occasions the writing that you do in the professional world will need to be presented to someone. Writing may seem like a solitary act, but if you wish for your writing to do something and be meaningful to someone else you will have to get it out into the world, and what better way to practice this than to compose your own podcast. For this assignment you will have to write a **250 word rationale** for your podcast, which will be shared with the class through your blog. The topic of your podcast can be anything we have discussed in class up to this point, or if

there is another issue about which you feel passionate, you may propose a different topic to me. These other topics are subject to my approval. This rationale will be handed in to me on the day you present your podcast to the class. For the podcast aspect of this assignment you will compose an effective **five minute** podcast. Podcasts may vary in form, but the exact requirements for this will be discussed as a class when we discuss the digital tools necessary for composing this podcast.

4. **Class Participation/Assignments:** Your participation in class discussion is vital to the success of this course. Every student should make an effort to discuss, dissect, analyze, and argue about any of the topics and issues we cover in class. I encourage that students think critically about what we talk about and make appropriate comments to the class as a whole in regards to these topics. I expect students to be courteous of each other's opinions, but also ask that you all think critically about what you are saying. This class is not a debate session, but rather a place where ideas can flow freely, and I hope that everyone in the class will help add to this flow of ideas. Along with this, your homework assignments all build towards your major projects, and thus must be taken seriously. These assignments are all digital in nature. You can expect one homework assignment to accompany each of the major projects.
  
5. **Final Group Twine Project:** This project should be fun! For your final project we are going to use the skills you have developed throughout the semester. You will work with one partner in order to create a narrative about each other's lives (i.e. partner 1 will write a story about the life of partner 2 and vice versa). You will be asked to interview each other, do research on the other person in whatever way you see fit (we will discuss methods of doing this in class), and then compose an interactive Twine story about your partner. These writings can be completely factual if you wish, or you can get creative with it and write some fiction; you to choose the genre in which you are going to write. Since this assignment will be completed using Twine we will spend time workshopping this tool and developing a class rubric for grading the assignment I expect that this assignment will persuade me into believing you know the person as if you were their biographer, and I expect that it will be clear, and possess a narrative that outlines the life of the other person. You will not be graded on the writing done by your partner about you, only the writing you do about them. Please be considerate of each other, therefore, do not write anything libelous towards your partner and do not create a narrative that will place your partner in a negative light. This is meant to be a fun and good way for you to practice all the writing skills we have developed in class.

### **Reading and Assignment Schedule:**

All readings are to be completed by the day we will discuss them in class. All assignments due are in **bold** on the days they are to be turned in to me.

Note: The below schedule is tentative. I reserve the right to adjust and amend the schedule as needed throughout the semester.

*Practical Media Literacy* = PML

WWW = Website

*They Say, I Say* = TSIS

Date	Reading assignments and assignments due
Tuesday-08/29	Give out and go over syllabus, discuss qualities of good writing.
Thursday-08/31	Readings: Preface and Introduction to TSIS

	<b>DUE: Bring in favorite piece of writing (no matter what medium) and discuss how it fits into the qualities of good writing we talked about.</b>
Tuesday-09/05	Readings: PML: Introductions & Intro to Part 1 - "Beginning to Understand Media Literacy"
Thursday-09/07	Readings: PML: Ch. 1 pp.29-37, 47-53 <b>DUE: 1<sup>st</sup> Online Blog Post</b>
Tuesday-09/12	Readings: PML: Ch. 2 pp.53-67
Thursday-09/14	Readings: WWW: Alan Liu "Imagining the New Media Encounter" <b>DUE: Online Blog Post and Genre Remix Assignment</b>
Tuesday-09/19	Readings: "So What? Who Cares?: Saying Why it Matters," TSIS – 92
Thursday-09/21	Readings: PML: Ch. 3 pp.67-80 <b>DUE: Online Blog Post and Genre Essay</b>
Tuesday- 09/26	Readings: PML: Ch. 4 pp.80-85
Thursday-09/28	Readings: WWW: Brian Kernighan "Introduction" <b>DUE: Online Blog Post</b>
Tuesday-10/03	Readings: "Yes/No/Okay, But: Three Ways to Respond," TSIS – 55
Thursday-10/05	Readings: None  On this day we will be going to the writing center. Meet at the classroom and we will walk to Eicher Hall. <b>DUE: Online Blog Post and Anonymous Docs Assignment</b>
Tuesday-10/10	Readings: "They Say: Starting with What Others Are Saying," TSIS – 19
Thursday-10/12	Readings: PML: Ch. 5 pp.99-107 <b>DUE: Online Blog Post and Persuasive Essay</b>
Tuesday-10/17	Readings: WWW: Nick Montfort "Riddle Machines: The History and Nature of Interactive Fiction"
Thursday-10/19	Readings: PML Ch. 6 pp.120-125 <b>DUE: Online Blog Post</b>
Tuesday-10/24	Readings: WWW: Christian Vandendorpe "Reading on Screen: The New Media Sphere"



Thursday-10/26	<p>Readings: None</p> <p>On this day we will be going to the library to meet with a librarian who will discuss the resources available to you.</p> <p><b>DUE: Online Blog Post</b></p>
Tuesday-10/31	<p>Readings: “As A Result: Connecting the Parts,” TSIS – 105</p>
Thursday-11/02	<p>Readings: PML: Ch. 7 pp.132-143</p> <p><b>DUE: Online Blog Post</b></p>
Tuesday-11/7	<p>Readings: PML: Ch. 8 pp.162-167</p>
Thursday-11/9	<p>Readings: “What's Motivating This Writer?: Reading for the Conversation,” TSIS – 145</p> <p><b>DUE: Online Blog Post</b></p>
Tuesday-11/14	<p>Readings: WWW: Brian Kernighan “Programming and Programming Languages”</p> <p><b>DUE: Podcasts day 1</b></p>
Thursday-11/16	<p>Readings: WWW: Brian Kernighan “The Internet”</p> <p><b>DUE: Podcasts day 2</b></p>
Tuesday-11/21	<p>Thanksgiving Break!</p>
Thursday-11/23	<p>Thanksgiving Break!</p>
Tuesday-11/28	<p>Readings: PML: Ch. 11 pp.197-209</p>
Thursday-11/30	<p>Readings: WWW: Marie-Laure Ryan “Multivariant Narratives”</p> <p><b>DUE: Online Blog Post</b></p>
Tuesday-12/5	<p>Readings: “Ain't So/Is Not: Academic Writing Doesn't Always Mean Setting Aside Your Own Voice,” TSIS – 121</p>
Thursday-12/7	<p>Readings: None</p> <p>On this day we will workshop your final Twine projects</p>
Finals Week- 12/12	<p><b>DUE: Final Group Twine Project</b></p>