ENG/WGS 4150: Rhetoric, Identity, and Culture

Catalog Description: Advanced study of the theoretical and practical considerations necessary for public writing with respect to the ways that cultures and communities are constructed through language and text. Students will consider the relationship between identity and professional writing as they develop skills such as writing for diverse audiences; assessing sources for credibility, bias, and suitability; and evaluating rhetorical styles for effectiveness. *Pre-requisites: ENG 2125 or permission of the instructor.*

Course Description: Cross-listed between ENG and WGS, this course considers the intersection of gender identity with public and professional writing. The first half of the semester will be devoted to considering emergent theories on gender, identity, and rhetorical communities, and the second half will focus on student-led research projects. Specifically, the class will be working with the National Women's Studies Association's partnership with the Wikipedia Education Program to increase the accuracy and diversity of topics related to women and gender on Wikipedia. In addition to evaluating current Wikipedia content, students will receive training through Wiki Ed on skills such as fact-based, neutral writing; research; media literacy and source evaluation; critical thinking; and collaboration.

This course meets the following Professional and Public Writing Minor Outcomes:
- WRITING COMMUNICATION: Analyze a discourse community by identifying its ethical norms, goals, power relations, and the socially and historically constructed features of its practices and artifacts.
- INFORMATION LITERACY: Evaluate the authority, credibility, and relevance of information and develop a repertoire of research strategies.
- WRITING COMMUNICATION: Demonstrate both rhetorical flexibility and a sophisticated command of generic, formal, and stylistic conventions.
- INTEGRATIVE LEARNING: Envision a public and professional self that builds on past experience and across multiple contexts.
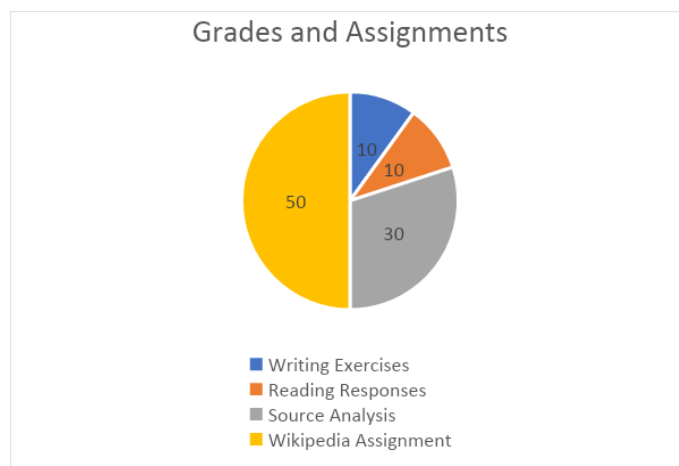
This course meets the following Women's and Gender Studies Program Outcomes:
- Analyze historical and contemporary systems of privilege and oppression, with special attention to the ways gender intersects with race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, ability, religion, and nationality.
- Analyze the ways in which the media has a role in the shaping of identity, particularly along intersections of gender, race, and class.

Course Objectives

Objective	Method(s) of Assessment
Identify how rhetorical strategies create and challenge notions of identity, culture, and community through communication practices.	Reading responses; #PressforProgress project
Recognize the relationship between privilege and power in the context of professional situations and public writing.	Source analysis paper; reading responses
Reflect on how identity markers – such as gender, race, class, sexuality, religion, and (dis)ability – are constructed in culture through written language.	Reading responses
Consider the ethical implications of professional writing in the creation of public documents.	Wikipedia project; #PressforProgress project

Letter Grade	Percentage
A	94 – 100
A-	90 – 93
B+	87 – 89
B	84 – 86
B-	80 – 83
C+	77 – 79
C	74 – 76
C-	70 – 73
D	60 – 69
F	0 – 59

Grades and Assignments

■ Writing Exercises
■ Reading Responses
■ Source Analysis
■ Wikipedia Assignment

Required Reading
- LePan, Don, Buzzard, Laura Buzzard, and Okun, Maureen. *How to Be Good with Words*
- Other required readings will be posted on Blackboard, with their due dates noted on the syllabus.

Reading Responses (30%): Students are to complete three reading response papers over the course of the semester. Students may choose any of the readings from class to respond to, and papers are due on the day in which the assigned reading is to be discussed in class. There are three different prompts for the reading responses; each prompt may only be used once.

Prompt One: Your essay should demonstrate your understanding of the reading and address the following points:
- Author's purpose(s) for writing the article.
- Intended audience, as evidenced by the language and tone of the piece.
- Key conclusion(s) of the article.
- The context (historical, ethical, political, cultural, environmental, and/or circumstantial conditions) that underlies the article.
- The most important evidence (data, facts, and/or experiences) the author uses to support his/her conclusions.
- The ideas or concepts one would have to understand to follow the author's reasoning.
- Things the author takes for granted that might be questioned.
- Implications of taking the author's reasoning seriously.
- Consequences/implications of not taking the author's reasoning seriously.

Prompt Two: Your essays should demonstrate your understanding of the reading and address the following questions/points:
- Do you agree or disagree with the author's viewpoint(s) or with what your examination of the topic has led you to discover? (Agree with some points, not with others?)
- Decide why you agree or disagree: Did you borrow your reaction from someone else—a parent or friend, a celebrity, a fictional character, the news? If possible, determine what specific experiences conditioned you to agree and/or disagree in the way(s) you do.

- Think of other possible reactions you or someone else might have to the person, issue, or situation.
- Resist your conditioning: Ask yourself whether one of the other reactions also has its merits and why.
- Consider how treating your first reaction or first reading of an article or story as tentative rather than fixed and "right" might add complexity and depth to your understanding of an issue.

Prompt Three: Your essay should respond to one of the readings from an alternate subject position. That is, if the article is a first-person essay, approach the topic impersonally from the third-person. Or, if the article analyzes a topic through the lens of race, imagine discuss how the reading would be different through another identity marker. Ultimately, your response should not only demonstrate your understanding of the article's topic, but demonstrate why/how the topic is enhanced, challenged, and/or complicated using other subjectivities.

Writing Exercises (10%): Throughout the semester we will be doing in-class and take-home writing exercises. The exercises will focus on different writing skills and are designed to help build your writing muscles. Students will be allowed to miss one writing exercise over the course of the semester.

#PressforProgress Project (30%): Students will identify a topic of their choosing related to International Women's Day 2018 campaign theme #PressforProgress (https://www.internationalwomensday.com/Theme) and locate three different sources discussing their topic: mainstream media, professional trade publication, and Internet platform. Students will analyze each source, paying particular attention to tone, syntax, rhetorical style, credibility, and organization. From this, students will complete the following assignments:
- Source analysis paper: 4 - 6 pages and conform to MLA style guides (15%)
- Research poster/handout/deliverable for IWD (15%)

Wikipedia Project (50%): As part of the Wiki Education Foundation's "Closing Wikipedia's Gender Gap" project, students will research a topic related to women and/or gender and contribute their knowledge to new or existing Wikipedia articles. Detailed assignment guides and a weekly timeline is on our course Wikipedia page (link provided on Blackboard).

Course Schedule

Week One
Jan 10: Understanding Yourself as a Writer
- Writing Exercise #1: Presenting Yourself as Writer (to be completed in-class)

Week Two
Jan 17: Gender and the Written Language
- *How to Be Good With Words*: "Introduction," "Gender," and "Relationship Status"
- Ahlber, Peter J. "All-Purpose Pronoun" http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/26/magazine/26FOB-onlanguage-t.html
- Bartlett, Thomas. "Huh? A Pronoun that Goes Both Ways" (Bb)
- Landau, Elizabeth. "On Twitter, is it 'he or she' or 'they' or 'ip'? http://www.cnn.com/2009/LIVING/03/06/words.language.pc/index.html
- The Bryant Park Project. "'Yo'! Baltimore Kids Create a Pronoun" http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=18567465

Week Three
Jan 22: Guest Speaker – Justin Catanoso (class will meet in Webb 202 from 4:30 – 6:00)
- *How to Be Good With Words*: "Humans & Other Animals" and "Political Controversies"
- "CDC gets list of forbidden words: fetus, transgender, diversity" (Bb)
- **DUE: Writing Exercise #2**
Jan 24: Language and Politics, cont.
- *How to Be Good With Words*: "Class," "Religion," and "Politically Correct: A History & Commentary"

Week Four
Jan 29: Race and the Written Language
- *How to Be Good With Words*: "Race"
- Anzaldua, Gloria. "Speaking in Tongues: A Letter to Third World Women Writers" (Bb)
- Demby, Gene. "How Code-Switching Explains the World" http://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2013/04/08/176064688/how-code-switching-explains-the-world
Jan 31: Sexuality, Disability, and the Written Language
- *How to Be Goo with Words*: "Disability" and "Sexual Orientation"
- Benham, Jessica L. and James S. Kizer. "Aut-ors of our Experience: Interrogating Intersections of Autistic Identity" (Bb)
- #PressforProgress Assignment will be reviewed in class.

Week Five
Feb 5: Introduction to the Wikipedia Project
- Assignment and steps for setting up Wikipedia account will be introduced in class.
- **Due: Writing Exercise #3**
Feb 7: Online Rhetorical Communities
- Stein, Joel. "How Trolls Are Ruining the Internet" http://time.com/4457110/internet-trolls/
- Nussbaum, Martha C. "Objectification and Internet Misogyny" (Bb)

Week Six
Feb 12: Evaluate Wikipedia
- Students should complete the Week Six Training Module "Evaluating Articles and Sources" before class.
- **DUE: Writing Exercise #4**
Feb 14: Evaluating Wikipedia, cont.
- Students should choose an article on Wikipedia related to our course and evaluate it following the guidelines on our Wiki Course Dashboard. Bring your answers to the questions to class and be prepared to share your findings.
- **DUE: Wiki Article Evaluation**

Week Seven
Feb 19: Content Gap
- Students should complete the Week Seven Training Module "Sources and Citations" before class.
Feb 21: Citations
- Students should either add 1-2 sentences to a course-related article, and cite that statement to a reliable source, as you learned in the online training, OR use the Citation Hunt tool to evaluate

unreferenced statements from an article. In addition to your citations, go through and copyedit the article, following the prompt on our Wiki Course Dashboard. Be prepared to discuss your contributions in class.

Week Eight
Feb 26: Sources and Plagiarism
- Students should be prepared to discuss their #PushforProgress source analysis papers. Class time will be devoted to working on research posters/handouts.
- **DUE: #PushforProgress Source Analysis Paper**
Feb 28: Wikipedia Topics
- Students should complete the Week Eight Training Module "Finding Your Article" on our Wiki Course Dashboard and complete the assignment under "Choose Possible Topics."
- **DUE: Identify 2-3 potential articles you might work on for your Wikipedia Project and post links to the articles and your notes about what you might improve in your sandbox. Be prepared to discuss your choices in class.**

Week Nine: Spring Break

Week Ten
Mar 12: Finalize your Wiki Topic
- Complete the Week Ten Training Modules "Sandboxes and Mainspace" and "Plagiarism." In class, we will work on the corresponding assignment depending on whether you have decided to create a new article or improve an existing article.
Mar 14: **International Women's Day** Students should report to the YWCA High Point by 5:30 PM.
- **DUE: #PushforProgress deliverables**

Week Eleven
Mar 19: Neutrality
- Noble, Safiya. "The Power of Algorithms" (Bb)
- Before class, watch Dr. Safiya Noble's lecture "Challenging the Algorithms of Oppression" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iRVZozEEWlE. We'll complete an in-class activity and Writing Exercise #5 related to Dr. Noble's research.
Mar 21: Peer Review
- Complete the Week Eleven Training Module "Peer Review." In class, you will review two of your classmates' articles, leaving suggestions on the Talk page or classmate's sandbox.

Week Twelve
Mar 26: Peer Review Response
- Individual meetings. Students will schedule an appointment with their professor to go over their articles and prepare to move their work to the Wikipedia main space.
- You should complete the "Respond to your peer review" assignment on our Wiki Course Dashboard.
Mar 28: Moving work to Wikipedia
- We will not meet as a class today. Students should complete revisions to their article and prepare to move their work to the Wikipedia main space. Review and complete all "Week Thirteen" assignments on our Course Wiki Dashboard.

Week Thirteen
Apr 2: Easter Monday (University Closed)

Apr 4: Identity, Bodies, and Online Spaces
- Stanley, Jessamyn. *Every Body Yoga* (selections on Bb)
- Tumblr: "My Name is Jessamyn" http://mynameisjessamyn.tumblr.com
- Isaksen, Judy. "Disrupting the Long, Thin, Sexy Stretch of Whiteness: Representations of Yoga Practices" (Bb)

Apr 5: Jessamyn Stanley Lecture; 6 PM, Congdon

Week Fourteen
Apr 9: Improving Your Article
- Complete the Week Fourteen Training Module "Contributing Images and Media Files"
- In class students will respond to critiques and add appropriate links and images.

Apr 11: Public and Professional Writing: Ethical Implications
- Surma, Anne. "Marking the Space: Writing as Ethical, Imaginative, and Rhetorical Praxis" (Bb)

Week Fifteen
Apr 16: Presenting about your Wikipedia Experience
- Use the "Week Fifteen" questions to help guide your presentation

Apr 18: Religion and Public Writing
- Reflections by Rev. Dr. Carter Heyward (Bb)

Apr 19: WGS Research Symposium, 5:00 PM, Wilson Ballroom

Week Sixteen: Wiki Editorial Process
Apr 23: Final Thoughts
- **DUE: Reflective Essay (see prompt on Wiki Course Dashboard)**