

English 120A: Advanced Composition

Writing in Electronic Environments



"The medium is the message"
-Marshall McLuhan

"The task of the critic is to perform analysis on an agenda of someone else's construction [, whereas d]esign takes the results of past production as the resource

for new shaping, and for remaking”

- Gunther Kress

Course Description

Advanced Composition is workshop course in academic writing for students who have completed the lower division writing requirement. It is also one of the two required courses for all English majors. Advanced Composition is required because English majors need intensive instruction in sophisticated, analytical writing as well as the intense instruction in critical reading that you get in literature classes. Advanced Composition is a course in English, but not in the sub-field of literature; it is a course in the sub-field of rhetoric and composition – a field you will learn much more about this semester.

This section focuses on the use and critique of writing tools and writing spaces, from the pencil to the pixel, from the page to the screen. Students will learn to write in electronic environments such as power point, blogs, websites, and hypertext essays (no prior electronic writing experience expected). The course emphasizes revision, collaboration, and analysis. Daily and weekly writing assignments lead to an electronic portfolio of completed academic compositions, at least one of which students will publish on the web.

Course Philosophy

Because this is a *writing* course and you, the students, are the *writers*, the main focus of our study will be on the text that you produce. Yes, we will consume some texts as well, but our focus is going to be on why, how, and where we compose—or produce—texts. Therefore, you need to be present every day in order to write and discuss your own texts, the texts of your peers, the texts that you co-author with your peers, as well as texts that have been published in book form or on the web. I will lecture 10% of the semester – the rest of the time, you will write, talk, analyze, present, compose, and design meaningful messages.

Learning Goals

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

- Analyze writing tools, genres, and delivery methods
- Compose a range of texts in and for electronic environments

- Define the following concepts: composition, design, writing space
- Demonstrate the ability to reflect upon their own visual and verbal rhetorical strategies and choices
- Engage in critical discussions of the nature of writing in the 21st century
- Intelligently distinguish among the production and reception of text
- Produce sophisticated, academic analysis on topics relating to composing in electronic environments

Major Assignment Due Dates:

PowerPoint Presentation:	9/21
Short Paper:	10/5
Group Project:	11/2
Longer Traditional Paper:	11/14
Hypertext Essay:	11/30
E-Portfolio:	12/9
No Final Exam	

Grading

I use a portfolio system of grading. In other words, you will submit the major assignments to me throughout the semester and get feedback. You will then need to revise your texts. At the end of the semester, you will submit a portfolio of all of your revised compositions. This final portfolio will be worth 80% of your grade. The other 20% will be based on your short daily writing (blogging, posting to WebCT).

Here is how I perceive of letter grades:

F: Compositions rarely earn an F, unless the text is completely off-topic or plagiarized (see “Class Policies” for more on plagiarism).

D: Texts that barely scratch the surface of the assignment or address it erratically tend to earn grades in the D-range.

C: Texts that complete the assignment earn grades in the C-range. C represents “satisfactory” or “adequate.” Texts that simply fulfill the assignment requirement but do not exhibit anything more than an adequate response to the prompt earn C grades. C is an average grade – it means that the text got the job done—not necessarily done well (and certainly not done extraordinarily). When I look at texts, I start with “C” and move up or down from there.

B: Texts that get the job of assignment done with particular insight, eloquence, and or analysis tend to earn grades in the B-range. A text must do the job of the assignment very well to fall into B-range. B texts exhibit that the author has pushed her or his own thinking

A: The grade of A is earned by a small number of texts that not only push the author's thinking, but that also push my thinking about a particular matter.

Class Policies

Attendance

I will take attendance at the beginning of every class. You will be allowed three absences. I will not distinguish between excused or unexcused absences (except in extreme circumstances). Therefore, I recommend that you use your absences wisely. If you miss four classes you can be subject to fail this course. Additionally, habitual tardies are a disruption to the class, and I will discourage them. Tardies on workshop days will be counted as absences.

Participation

We will spend much of our class time working on readings and strategies designed to support you in your composing. Participation will be crucial to your success in this class. It is particularly important in a writing course that is based on discussion, group work, and a variety of in-class activities. You must come prepared to participate in each class. If you decide to come to class unprepared on a workshop day, you will receive an absence.

Late Paper Policy •

Although the final drafts of your texts are due at the end of the semester, it is imperative that you bring complete drafts on their due dates. If you know you are going to be absent, contact me and turn it in early. If you cannot bring your text into the workshop, you will not be allowed to submit it as part of your final portfolio, which will result in a significantly lower final grade

Plagiarism M

The word plagiarism comes from the Latin word *plagiarius*, which translates as “kidnapper” (MLA Handbook 30). If you are unsure of how or when to give credit to another source, please see me or a Writing Center tutor. Don't kidnap someone else's ideas! **If you are caught plagiarizing you could not only fail this course, but may get suspended or expelled from the university.**

Classroom Etiquette

Because this is a rhetoric class, we will focus on using language to communicate effectively with a diverse audience. Therefore, hostile speech directed against someone's race, sex, religion, ethnicity, or sexual orientation will not be tolerated. Additionally, I must ask that all pagers and cell phones be turned off during class unless approved ahead of time by me.

Class Schedule

Please note that a class schedule is always a work of fiction

CR= CyberReader

IC= Interface Culture

DW= Designing Writing

URL=website to read/click around

WebCT=PDF file in the "Readings" section of the WebCT site

Date	Class Topic	Homework Due on This Date
M 8/29	Introduction to: each other the class WebCT	None
W 8/31	Writing Technologies Posting to the WebCT discussion board Intro to Blogging and the Blogosphere: Read Billy Clark at <u>_Lore_</u> as a class <u>http://www.bedford-stmartins.com/lore/digressions/content.htm?dis03</u>	Reading: CR: Woolley "Cyberspace" pp. 3-17 DW: Chapter 1 "Understanding Design Principles"; Chapter 2 "Designing for a Purpose"; Chapter 3 "Designing for Your Readers" Writing: Complete one of the following "Design Activities": p. 12 or p. 19 or p. 23. Print out and plan to turn in
M 9/5	LABOR DAY – NO SCHOOL	None

<p>W 9/7</p>	<p>Notions of “Cyberspace” Blogging and the Blogosphere, cont. In-class writing: Post to the class discussion board: what blogs did you choose? Why did you choose them? What was the most surprising thing you read? Did you read anything that you agreed or disagreed with?</p>	<p>Reading: WebCT: Baron “From Pencils to Pixels” URL: Read the entry by Dennis Jerz and at least 4 others at http://www.bedford-stmartins.com/lore/digressions/index.htm Read 8 blog entries of your choice (you may read 8 different blogs or read several entries on the same 3 or 4 blogs). At least one blog must be about technology and writing. Keep a list of the URLs to bring to class. Writing: Post to the class discussion board: which essay(s) on the _Lore_ website made most sense to you? Pick out the passage that gave you the most food for thought and write up your response – why was this passage important for your thinking? (Posts should be 2-3 meaty paragraphs)</p>
<p>M 9/12</p>	<p>In-class Writing and Discussion of “Virtual Identities” Learn to create blogs</p>	<p>Reading: CR: Chapter 2 “Virtual Identities” pp. 55-120; after you read the Rheingold essay in Chapter 2 (pp. 89-120), look at http://www.dodgeball.com Continue to read and post to blogs of your choice – read at least one blog that relates to an issue in the reading that interests you Writing: Post to the WebCT discussion board: How did you find a blog that related to the class reading? How did the blog compare/contrast to the class reading? If one of the essays in chapter 2 in CR was a blog, write</p>

		up a comment that you would post.
W 9/ 14	<p>Discuss digital piracy: model believing/doubting game</p> <p>Go over PowerPoint Assignment Sheet</p>	<p>Reading: CR: Chapter 4 “Digital Piracy” pp. 178-226 URL: Anderson “The Long Tail” (also click around on the sidebar”: http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/12.10/tail.html?pg=1&topic=tail&topic_set= Continue to read and post to blogs of your choice – read at least one blog that relates to an issue in the reading that interests you Writing: Post to the WebCT discussion board: How did the blog you found compare/contrast to the class reading? If an essay in chapter 4 in CR was a blog, write up a comment that you would post.</p>
M 9/19	<p>Talk and write about creating blogs</p> <p>Create blog rolls</p> <p>Discuss gender and race in cyberspace</p> <p>Answer questions about assignment/workshop</p>	<p>Reading: CR: Chapter 3 “Sexual-Racial Politics” pp. 121-177 WebCT: Selfe “Lest We Think the Revolution is a Revolution” Writing: Create a blog and post an introductory entry Post to WebCT: play the believing/doubting game with one of the essays in chapter 3 or with Selfe’s essay</p>
W 9/21	Workshop PowerPoint presentations	<p>Writing: PowerPoint Presentation Draft Due</p>

<p>M 9/26</p>	<p>Discuss textual representation of ideas</p> <p>Discuss Absolute PowerPoint</p> <p>Discuss Interface Culture</p> <p>Go over Short Paper Assignment Sheet</p>	<p>Reading: URL: "Absolute PowerPoint" at http://www.physics.ohio-state.edu/~wilkins/group/powerpt.html IC: Preface "Electric Speed"; Chapter 1 "Bitmapping"; Chapter 2 "The Desktop"; Chapter 3 "Windows"</p> <p>Writing: On your blog, make a link to the "Absolute PowerPoint" article and write your own commentary on it (you may believe it, doubt, or some combo thereof). Read your classmates' blogs; comment on two of them: one of your choosing and one on your blog partner's blog (see list on WebCT)</p>
<p>W 9/28</p>	<p>Discuss Interface Culture and Johnson's blog</p> <p>Read our own blogs</p> <p>In-class Writing: Post to Discussion Board</p>	<p>Reading: IC: Chapter 4 "Links" URL: Steven Johnson's blog at http://www.stevenberlinjohnson.com</p> <p>Writing: On your blog, write an entry on the "links" chapter of Interface Culture with a link to Johnson's site. And, post a comment on Johnson's site or on a classmate's blog</p>
<p>M 10/3</p>	<p>Talk about the constraints of writing tools</p> <p>Talk about Short Paper Assignment</p>	<p>Reading: IC: Chapter 5 "Texts"; Chapter 6 "Agents"; Conclusion "Infinity Imagined"</p> <p>Writing: Post to your blog about something in Johnson's text that struck you – in your post include at least one link to something he mentions and at least one direct quote from the book. Write a comment on two classmate's blogs: one of your choosing and one assigned</p>

W 10/5	Short Paper Draft Due Workshop Short Papers	Writing: Short Paper Draft Due
M 10/10	Discuss the Role of New Technologies on Thinking, Writing, and Language Use Assign Group Project	Reading: WebCT: Johnson "Everything Bad is Good for You" DW: Chapter 8 "Navigation Aids"
W 10/12	Get into Groups First in-class Group Work Day Report due at the end of class: what technology will you try and what role(s) will each group member play? (Post to WebCT)	Reading: WebCT: Trimbur "Reviews" Writing: Blog about your previous experiences with group authorship
M 10/17	DreamWeaver Training Day	Reading: DW: Chapter 17 "Web Sites" Writing: Blog about your individual experience with the new technology you are reviewing Post by 5 pm 10/14 Comment on at least one group member's blog
W 10/19	DreamWeaver Training Day	Reading: DW: Chapter 9 "Color" Writing: TBA
M 10/24	Group Project Work Day	Reading: DW: Chapter 10 "Shading, Borders, and Rules" Writing: TBA

W 10/26	Group Project Work Day	Reading: DW: Chapter 11 “Illustrations” Writing: At or before the end of class time (1:15), post an entry to your blog about what your group accomplished today Keep working on website
M 10/31	Introduce Assignment for “Longer Traditional Paper” Group work day – prepare/practice presentation	Reading: DW: Chapter 16 “Creating Multimedia Presentations” Writing: Finish group project and begin to prepare presentation
W 11/2	Group Project Due Project Presentations (15 minutes per group)	Writing: Group Project Due
M 11/7	Reflect on co-authorship and group design of texts Brainstorm Ideas for Traditional Paper	Reading: DW: Chapter 12 “Academic Essays” Writing: TBA
W 11/9	TBA	TBA
M 11/14	Traditional Essay due Workshop Traditional Essay	Writing: Traditional Essay due
W 11/16	Assign Hypertext Essay Revision Project	Reading: DW: Chapter 5 “Designing with Your Sources in Mind” and TBA Writing: TBA

M 11/21	Discuss the notion(s) of design and composing Read and discuss your WebCT and blog entries Discuss the Kress readings Plan for post-Thanksgiving	Reading: WebCT: Kress "Design 1" and Kress "Design 2" Writing: Pick two passages from Kress: one that raises questions for you and one that brings clarity to your thinking. Explain one passage on your blog and discuss the other one on the WebCT discussion board.
W 11/23	No class meeting – work on your own	
M 11/28	TBA	TBA
W 11/30	Hypertext Essay Due Workshop Hypertext Essays	Writing: Hypertext Essay Due
M 12/5	Work on revising texts for final portfolio	TBA
W 12/7	Work on revising texts for final portfolio	TBA
F 12/9	E-PORTFOLIOS DUE BY 5 PM	