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English 354: Advanced Composition: Writing Ourselves/ Communities Into Public Conversations

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COURSE DESIGNS

ENGLISH 354: Advanced Composition Writing Ourselves/Communities Into Public Conversations

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

English 354: Advanced Composition is a required course for undergraduate majors in English, broadcast journalism, criminal justice, and pre-service English education, among others, at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, a research-one, land-grant institution with a student population of about 24,000. English 354 focuses on “intensive study and practice in writing non-fiction prose” and has a prerequisite of at least one 200-level writing course.

Amy Goodburn is Associate Professor of English and Women’s Studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where she has taught since 1994. She teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in composition, rhetoric, literacy studies, and English education, and she coordinates the Composition Program and UNL’s Peer Review of Teaching Project.

Heather Camp is a Ph.D. student in composition and rhetoric who, through a teaching internship, attended this course regularly and assisted with its course design. At UNL she has taught first-year composition, tutored in the Writing Assistance Center, and served on the English Department’s Assessment Committee.

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

English 354 is one of four composition courses that students can take above the 100-level in UNL's English Department. It generally enrolls juniors and seniors. As a requirement for majors in English, English education, criminal justice, and broadcast journalism, to name a few, English 354 usually enrolls a diverse student population (not all of whom are enthusiastic about taking the course). Although 354 has a prerequisite of a 200-level writing course, UNL's computer system cannot enforce this rule, so many students sign up for 354 without prior writing experiences beyond the first-year composition courses. Even those who do have experience in 200-level writing courses may not have experience with expository writing since 200-level courses in poetry and fiction writing also count toward the prerequisite. Most students come into the class familiar with small group work and portfolio systems of evaluation, but teachers cannot assume students will have knowledge of particular writing strategies or course "content." Taught mainly by lecturers and a few composition and rhetoric faculty, there are a wide variety of approaches to the course. Some teachers focus on traditional literary research, others on "the personal essay," and still others teach it as a general writing workshop. Students do not know which focus their 354 course will take until they enter the classroom.

Beyond being a requirement for particular majors, English 354 also fulfills UNL's "Integrative Studies" (I.S.) course requirement within the comprehensive education program. I.S. courses are designed to engage students in critical thinking, writing, oral expression, analysis of controversies, exploration of assumptions, inquiry into the origins and consequences of intellectual bias, and consideration of human diversity. Students take ten I.S. courses throughout their undergraduate experience, with at least one at the 300 and 400 levels respectively. Students often take 354 to fulfill their 300-level I.S. requirement, and our goals for focusing on argument in the public and private sphere directly connect to these I.S. goals.

THEORETICAL RATIONALE

In *Writing Ourselves/Communities into Public Conversations*, our students explore public and private arguments and analyze how arguments are made within each (overlapping) sphere. We want them to consider the varying and sometimes competing strategies used to construct an argument, the cultural narratives that underpin them, and the ways that public and private arguments often connect and conflict. We hope that in studying public and private argument, our students will become more conscious of how issues of representation and genre are context-dependent and motive-driven. We also hope that they will come to see the writing of argument as both a personal and critical matter as they study the intersections between public writing and their own lives.

Our interest in public argument mirrors emerging scholarship that conceptualizes a more politically and socially active role for the writer. As Christian Weisser suggests, "Since its birth as an academic discipline, composition studies has gradually expanded its focus from the individual writer, to social notions of how knowledge is generated, to more political -and public - investigations of discourse" (1). For compositionists such as Weisser, Susan Wells, and Elizabeth Ervin, this social turn in writing is understood in terms of calls to analyze, theorize, and sometimes produce "public writing." For instance, Weisser argues in *Moving Beyond Academic Discourse* that compositionists need to theorize public writing "by seeing how it is shaped and transformed by forces including the social, economic, political, cultural, and ideological" (97). He states, "By exposing these forces, both in theory and in the classroom, we arrive at a fuller understanding of what public writing is and how it works or fails to work in specific circumstances" (97). In a similar vein, David Bloome calls for writing teachers to engage students in *Critical Discourse Analysis* of arguments in the public sphere. As Bloome summarizes,

Critical Discourse Analysis asks us to look very carefully and in detail at the language used in a conversation, a newspaper article, a Web site, and even a "President's Update" for how that language frames issues and people and defines the terms of debate and discussion, the assumptions it takes for granted as "common sense," how agency is assigned or hidden, and for how any use of language privileges some at the expense of others. (12)

We are persuaded by these scholars' calls for analyzing public writing in the classroom because we believe in the value of helping students to recognize the politicized function of language, particularly how it works to maintain and perpetuate oppressive power structures. Within English 354, we invite our students to consider questions of public writing, such as Who is speaking? Who is silent? Whose perspectives are absent? We hope that this questioning will lead students to a greater awareness of the power of language in shaping society and to realize, in turn, that they can write themselves into these conversations—to participate in, complicate, and perhaps re-make them.

Of course, it's not always clear what constitutes "public writing." Feminists and postmodernists alike have contended that separating knowledge into public and private spheres presents a destructive and flawed version of reality (Fraser, Gring-Pemble, Young). Like these scholars, we feel that conceptualizing argument in terms of public and private spheres ignores the complex ways that the two impact and are part of each other. This binary veils the ways that knowledge is integrally and intimately connected with the knower. Thus, while we are drawn to having students analyze public writing, we also

want to complicate their notions of “public writing.” Rather than having students write texts for the public sphere (for example, Elizabeth Ervin’s course design on writing for public audiences or Nora Bacon’s service-learning initiatives where students write for public audiences), we view the composition classroom as a productive site for examining what we mean by “private” and “public,” often re-framing our understandings of what these descriptors mean for argument and discourse. We want students to see that their family and/or community experiences are always already embedded within larger cultural narratives that they participate in and that they can speak to, add to, and complicate. In this article, we describe one vision of how we have tried to engage students in exploring the boundaries between personal and public arguments. In a previous article describing an assignment that we use, Amy explains the philosophy underpinning our version of English 354 in this way:

By emphasizing writing practices that value experience as an historical, social, and ongoing process of knowledge-making, we believe students can develop rhetorical awareness of and strategies for participating in discourses that exist in private and public spheres-and perhaps disrupting and remaking the boundaries between them. (Goodburn 23)

To carry out these goals, we foregrounded three critical terms—“narrative,” “representation,” and “genre.” Using these concepts, we asked students to look at the way writers situate themselves in their research in order to enter and intervene in ongoing public conversations. The term “narrative” served as a touchstone for thinking about social and cultural narratives and the ways that our writing and language are already always situated within larger discourses that shape (and sometimes limit) how we come to understand and know. We used course readings focused on Nebraska communities and histories because our student population is primarily from Nebraska (over 93%), and we wanted to provide models for how other Nebraska authors have used narrative to investigate and represent their homes and communities for public audiences.

Similarly, the term “representation” was a means for helping students to understand “research” as a process of knowing and interpreting connected to one’s own social location rather than a neutral or objective presentation of facts. Composition scholars have examined the ethics of representation in a variety of venues: in research methodologies (Fontaine and Hunter, Mortensen and Kirsch), in how we use and talk about student writing (Anderson, Brooke and Goodburn), and in understanding writers’ representations of self (Newkirk). In English 354, we used the concept of representation to help writers consider the ethical responsibilities entailed in their critical and rhetorical choices.

Finally, we focused on the term “genre” as conceptualized by theorists such as Amy Devitt, Anis Bawarshi, and Mary Jo Reiff as well as teacher scholars like Tom Romano who have explored the power of multi-genre writing with students. We view genre as a central term for helping students understand how forms for writing are integrally connected to one’s individual rhetorical purposes within broader social and political contexts. As Bawarshi suggests, “Genres function as sites of action in which writers acquire, articulate, and potentially resist motives to act . . . genre is a social motive and a rhetorical instantiation of that motive” (45). Thus in English 354 we invite students to write in different genres and to conceptualize genre in conjunction with one’s critical and rhetorical purposes for writing.

Students engaged with the terms “narrative,” “representation,” and “genre” through two four-week units and one six-week unit, each focused around a writing project, ranging from 8-15 pages. In Unit One: Writing Home and Community, students examined private and public representations of their homes and communities and, through research, explored the genres that are used to represent these places. Students located texts or artifacts that comprised the history of their community (i.e. scrapbooks, newspapers, church books, recipe/cook books, letters, journals, postcards, brochures) and wrote about their relationships to the values, attitudes, and identities represented in these textual histories of their homes and communities. In this way, students began to experiment with the interplay between personal narrative and public record.

In Unit Two: Analyzing Arguments in Our Communities, students conducted a rigorous rhetorical analysis of an argument of their choosing. Working from Andrea Lunsford and John Ruszkiewicz’s definition of argument as “any text - whether written, spoken, or visual - that expresses a point of view” (4), students were given two options: 1) rhetorical analysis of at least two texts on an explicit public argument or 2) rhetorical analysis of an implicit argument being made in a visual medium (movies, music videos, “reality” tv shows, etc.). With this project, we hoped that students would gain a more critical understanding of the complex ways that power operates within the public sphere through analyzing what counts as knowledge, explaining how evidence is produced, and identifying which forms of persuasion are most valued in their field.

In Unit Three: Writing Ourselves into History, students continued to examine issues of representation and genre as they undertook a multi-genre research project on a historical event of the 20th or 21st century. Students identified a topic that connected to their own family and/or community history and conducted archival, primary (including at least one interview), and secondary research on the topic. They explored various genres that have been used to document the event and were given the option to write in multiple genres to represent their research findings. Reinforcing the idea that their projects par-

ticipate in the public sphere, students presented their projects in the English department library where faculty and friends were invited to attend.

Although each project requires different types of writing, all three ask writers to take up questions of representation, genre, and narrative in similar ways. Underlying all three projects is the assertion that public representations are subjective, shaped by power relationships, and guided by social, political, and historical contexts. Projects one and three in particular raise ethical issues as students represent others' experiences, asking, "What are the ethical implications of representing someone without acknowledging or representing one's own subject position within the text?" and "How does one's representation affect the reader's understanding of the project?" These questions help students to gain insight into their own motivations and biases, to be more conscious of their rhetorical choices, and to be careful and creative in constructing their representations of others.

Beyond the writing projects, class readings were used in English 354 to invite students to consider how events and arguments are represented in public and private spheres. For instance, students read two different forms of writing about the history of the Genoa Industrial Indian School, an off-reservation, government boarding school that operated in Nebraska. The first text was an article from *Nebraska History* magazine that gave a broad overview of the school's history. The second text was a collection of letters between a former GIS student and his boyhood friend that were published in a commemorative newspaper. In their informal writing, students addressed questions such as How do you see the history of the Genoa Industrial Indian School being represented by the different authors? Is there a common narrative for the school's history? How do the writers' uses of different genres impact your understanding of the school's history?

Overall, our version of English 354 seeks to sponsor students' critical understanding about research writing, providing them opportunities to interrogate assumptions underlying arguments and to consider the multiple factors that shape knowledge construction and textual production. From their analysis of public and private representations, we want students to recognize that all representations are open to analysis, debate, modification, and/or rejection. As Sandra Young suggests, "When representations become contested, . . . learning is also a process of unlearning, of replacing worn, outgrown, no-longer-useful representations with more authentic, authorial, and unpredictable ones" (79). As English 354 students construct accounts of home, community, and history that include alternative perspectives, unheard or silenced voices, and/or personal knowledges, we hope that they that they will acquire some critical and rhetorical tools for listening to and writing themselves into public conversations.

CRITICAL REFLECTION

It's always difficult to assess students' learning with respect to goals such as exploring how argument operates in the public and private spheres or examining how issues of representation and genre shape our composing processes. We don't want to lapse into a teacher success narrative or claim that this course was always successful in its conception or execution. Even our individual readings of the course differ, and students' perceptions are further distanced from our own. We struggled with issues of representation as we wrote this article, for instance, when we considered how to represent Heather, a teaching intern who was involved in pre-course brainstorming but who didn't ultimately play a central role in the course's design. While we chose to use first-person plural to signify our mutual investment in the course and our commitment to its goals, we acknowledge that this "we" prevented us from describing our varying locations and perspectives within the classroom and from exploring how these differences affected our experience of the course.

Representing student learning as a means of critically reflecting on our goals is also problematic; as we considered the task of documenting learning, we were aware that our perceptions of student achievement would be shaped by the questions and expectations that guided our inquiry. This understanding led us to reconsider how we wanted to write our critical reflection. We ultimately decided that our primary goal would be to showcase student work in order to give our students an opportunity to represent themselves.

Overall, we were pleased with how the course structure and focus sponsored students' intellectual inquiry into writing and created an engaged classroom community. The twenty students in this particular 354 section represented a range of undergraduate majors: eight English, two English education, two communications, five criminal justice, one computer, one biological sciences, and one newspaper journalism. For the most part, students were highly motivated (especially surprising since three were graduating seniors). While we can't take credit for fostering such class dynamics, we do believe that the central terms of the course gave students a language for reading and responding to others' work in complex and critical ways. Their peer responses to one another were frequently over a typewritten page long and gave critical and thoughtful feedback. In their midterm narratives, students wrote glowingly about their "intellectual peers" and the ways they contributed to their learning. The public presentations of students' projects were another highlight—it was clear that the students felt ownership and pride in their projects, and it was truly a public celebration of their work.

For many students, the focus on public/private argument offered a space to explore central issues in their lives from different perspectives via the three projects. For instance, in projects one and three, April wrote about growing up

on a family farm and the effects of her rural experience on her identity. April's first project consisted of three loosely joined narratives while her third project was a 17-page, full-color magazine that utilized news articles, interviews, and family profiles to analyze her family's experiences against the backdrop of the national farming crisis in the 1970's and 1980's. In many ways, her first project sponsored the development of her third project:

My initial research question revolved around the economic situation of my family. I wanted to know why I was a first-generation college student or why I lived in a mobile home until I was seventeen. My family didn't seem to be poor, but I know that we were lower-middle class and I wanted to know why. I wanted to examine how my parents climbed the ladder of success to send their kids to a private high school and eventually buy a \$145,000 home.

As April investigated the history of the farm crisis, she began to uncover attitudes that led her to understand her family's history differently: "It helped me to understand why one of my grandfathers committed suicide and why the other refused to accept government aid. It simply opened up the historical nature of this issue to include an incredibly human side that is difficult to express." In a similar vein, Lisa described her goals for representing her experience of being in Manhattan for a journalism internship on September 11, 2001:

I wanted to create a piece that I could use to encompass all the feelings around 9/11 that were not broadcast or published. I wanted to create something as an alternative history to the information that will most likely reach the history books. By writing myself and my family and friends into this historical moment, I feel that I am creating a more permanent memory that has some chance of being preserved . . . I feel like by placing myself in such a place that I am writing myself into the history of the world. This may be an odd statement to make . . . but this is the only instance in my life where I have been in a place where the entire world is watching.

The course was also effective in leading students to engage with ethical issues involved in representing others' experiences and the relationship of these experiences to their own subject positions. For some students, these issues of representation centered around privacy debates and the impact of their research on family members. For instance, Ann initially intended to include in her project a family member's experience of aborting a fetus that tested positively for cystic fibrosis, but she ultimately replaced this section with a published account of a similar event because she didn't want to stir up controversy in her family. In writing about her uncle's experiences in Vietnam, Kelsey

struggled with depicting how her uncle died (in a house fire that he accidentally set while he was drunk) because she didn't want to be stereotypical about Vietnam veterans. She wrote:

I think so many times people are afraid to write about the stereotype of Vietnam soldiers being drug addicts and alcoholics because they don't want to feed into the myths, but my uncle did fit into the stereotype, unfortunately . . . the cultural narratives of typical Vietnam vets shaped my paper in a way because I was unpacking that idea and seeing why vets are often depressed etc.

Later in her narrative, Kelsey further reflected on the politics of writing about a family member whom she never knew:

The ethical issues I had were mainly with my family. I wanted to write this paper so as I wouldn't offend my family or dig up too many painful memories, but I wanted to get the actual story across. I almost felt like I was being too crass because I didn't have as much emotional involvement in David's life because I wasn't there for his life.

For others, ethics of representation involved their willingness to situate their own perspectives and experiences within their projects. A full class workshop of both Mandy's and Margaret's projects raised this issue. Mandy's initial draft of her project, an examination of her mother's and aunt's experiences with breast cancer, concluded with a brief discussion of how Mandy and her three siblings were having genetic testing but didn't offer much insight into how this family legacy was impacting Mandy's perspective. In a similar vein, Margaret wrote about her distant uncle's experiences in a Polish ghetto and subsequent concentration camp and the legacy of these experiences on her mother but didn't reflect on the significance of these experiences in her own life. During the workshop session, class members asked the writers to account for the choices they had made in representing others and to provide rationales for why they hadn't acknowledged or situated their own subject positions within their projects. These questions of representation became a key theme in students' final research narratives. For instance, Mandy discussed how the class readings and discussions affected how she ultimately chose to represent herself and her family members in her writing:

In project three I had two goals: show how my family's experience with cancer has changed over 20 years and show how the information has changed. The problem was that no one remembered exactly what our family experience was in the beginning.

Kingsolver showed me it is possible to blend the two goals and Quindlen showed me I could take what I know and add to it. Both of these articles have kept me thinking about what it means to take someone else's story and make it your own. The story in project three is my mother's story but I used what I knew to create my own story based on my mother's experience. I realize this type of representation is dangerous because it means I'm speaking for someone else and I've kept this in mind throughout my writing.

That students benefited from discussing and exploring genre was another general sentiment in their writing. For many students, the course was valuable simply because it offered opportunities to explore new forms of writing. Lisa wrote:

I really enjoyed writing in a mixed genre form and am glad we had the opportunity to try writing in different forms. In past composition classes, everything was either all first hand narrative or more of a research style. It was like the two could not be mixed. If I did, I was told that I was losing the academic voice of a research paper.

The conception of genre as a rhetorical choice was also strongly evident in students' writing. Students were quite articulate about the rhetorical choices they were making, particularly for their third projects. For instance, Margaret explained her project format in this way:

When I started writing up this project, I decided to write everyone's story in first person. This was done for reasons on many levels; I think that organizationally this was the easiest and made most sense since I was dealing with multiple interviews to begin with. But this was also a rhetorical decision, especially in the case of Walter's narrative. I wanted to juxtapose Walter's personal story with the cold historical story that I told in italics. I wanted to make the reader think about the difference between these two types of history. Both are necessary to fully understand our histories.

Todd was also reflective about how he chose to represent his grandfather's experiences in World War II and his grandfather's silence when he returned home:

I think it was important to rhetorically talk about my purpose and reasons in the epilogue and prologue because it gave some context to the multi-genre format. I also think it complimented [sic] and specified the perspective from which I was writing. I wanted the

audience to get a well-rounded idea about my grandfather's experience. My favorite part is how I tried ... to use different genres to show how the same event is represented in different ways. In particular I really thought about how I was going to have my grandfather "speak" to the audience. Was he going to tell them the truth by letting them see his thoughts or is the audience only going to get to see his letter to his parents and how he represents the war to them? Maybe one or more representations of my grandfather is missing, which, in a sense, represents the silence that he chooses not to tell.

In contemplating course revisions, then, we have mainly focused on how we could better carry out our goals through the design of particular course projects and class activities to accompany them. While we found the terms "narrative," "representation," and "genre" useful for conceptualizing this particular course, we can also imagine several revisions that might better support and extend students' inquiry.

Modifying the first project is one important priority for us. Generally, the students' projects on home didn't focus enough on critical research and analysis of home and community narratives. Instead, students tended to write extended personal narratives, celebrating childhood experiences and showcasing artifacts from their communities rather than investigating or analyzing them. While a critical component to this project was lacking, student response confirmed what we already suspected: that students would enjoy writing about their home and family. In fact, after returning project two, Amy asked students which of the first two projects had been most useful for their learning. They replied that while they learned more from the second, they had found the first more enjoyable. In the future, then, we hope to revise project one so that it demands more cultural and rhetorical inquiry but still allows students freedom to pursue topics related to home that are important to them.

While project two was cited as important for students' learning, its goals were also the most difficult for students to comprehend, partially because it asked students to analyze HOW a writer constructs an argument in place of the more traditional request of having students argue for or against a writer's position. While students selected a rich diversity of texts and arguments for rhetorical analysis, they commonly fell into the pattern of taking a stance on the argument rather than investigating the strategies utilized by the writer to represent the argument. Students' response to project two may parallel their learning development at this stage: many students have been taught that argument is essentially a form of debate and have developed their skills at arguing a point. Thus when asked to analyze how an argument is being made, they may fall back on this prior knowledge of and experience with argument. Clearly differentiating between debate and analysis, then, is important as we

think about future conceptions of this course. We might, for instance, draw upon Deborah Tannen's work in *The Argument Culture* as a means of extending students' initial understandings of what arguments are and how they work in our culture. Or we might incorporate Linda Flower's rivaling strategies as a means of helping students explore multiple hypotheses, posit open questions, and examine underpinning assumptions.

One successful teaching tool was a list of rhetorical terms and questions that we gave students early on in unit two. While initially challenging -introducing terms like ethos, pathos, logos, etc.-this list was useful in providing students with a common language for interpreting rhetorical moves. Students also noted the importance of glossing in improving their writing. Adapted from a strategy used by Ann Berthoff, glossing asks students to work through a single paragraph or section of text at a time, noting in the margins not only what that piece of text says but also how it functions within the larger piece of writing. Throughout the semester, students glossed assigned readings as well as each other's work. Notably, while students had varying degrees of success with project two, it was clear that the rhetorical analysis they took up in project two helped them to think about their own goals as rhetors in project three.

Our challenges and successes with integrating discussions of genre into the course have committed us to having students explore genre and, at the same time, pushed us to search for ways to make these explorations more fruitful. Because our students weren't clear on what genre was or how it works in relation to argument (many of our students came into the class having never been asked to think about genre before), our early discussions about genre were particularly important in shaping students' conceptions of the term. We wanted students to begin to understand genres as sites of social and rhetorical action that shape how knowledge can be represented and understood. For instance, students read a poem, an editorial, and a personal essay in a magazine about the meaning of the events of September 11, 2001 in order to consider how genre participated in the ways these events could be represented and explored. In teaching this course again, we would develop more class activities designed to illustrate these ideas as well as invite students to conduct and present their own genre searches. As students worked on project three, it became clear that the students who were most engaged with the research and writing process were those who understood the relationship between genre and meaning and who were able to analyze and represent their research as an instantiation of genre rather than as a neutral display of objective facts. While we don't believe that having students read about genre theory is necessarily useful, we do think that it is valuable to provide students with multiple, ongoing opportunities to analyze genre rhetorically and to experiment in writing different genres as they represent their own research.

Our experiences in English 354 have led us to think in curricular terms beyond this particular class. As we worked to engage students in discussions about narrative, genre, and representation, we considered how 100- and 200-level composition courses in our department might be reconceptualized to lay more initial groundwork for such conversations. We could imagine, for instance, emphasizing glossing as a primary tool within the first-year writing curriculum or developing a framework for introducing conversations about genre more systematically. We also could envision structuring more explicit conversations and activities about how forms of evidence are utilized and valued differently in various contexts.

Finally, co-authoring this article invited us to reflect upon how our writing about teaching also functions as an argument that crosses boundaries between private and public spheres and models the type of inquiry we hope to provide for our students. When we asked students for permission to use their writing, they saw how their "private" texts could be used as forms of evidence for arguments about teaching for audiences beyond their classroom. In this respect, we hope to practice what we preach by writing their and our 354 experiences into more public conversations about ways to envision goals and practices for writing in college classrooms.

Lincoln, Nebraska

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SYLLABUS

**English 354: Advanced Composition
Writing Ourselves/Communities into Public Conversations**

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will explore how writers participate in public conversations and how our personal and community histories and narratives can join, contribute to, and sometimes change the form, content, and language of these conversations. To do so, we will center our writing and reading around three concepts—"narrative," "representation," and "genre." Using these concepts, we will continually look at the way writers, ourselves included, situate themselves in their research in order to enter and intervene in ongoing public conversations. We will be engaged with the rhetorical challenges that accompany larger writing projects and the invention, revision, and reading strategies that can help us develop, organize, and complicate our writing for public audiences. We will also be experimenting with alternative genres as a means of understanding and rendering our (and our communities') experiences and knowledges for public conversations.

* Note: Completion of a 200-level writing course is required for enrollment in Eng. 354.

TEXTS & MATERIALS

* Assigned readings have been placed on Love Library's Electronic Reserve. You are expected to print out these readings and bring them to class on the days that they are assigned. We will be using them for in-class activities, informal writings, and discussions.

* You should purchase several manila folders for turning in work. I do not accept work unless it is in a folder with your name on it.

* You will need a computer disk (preferably several) with your name and course number and section labeled on it. You should bring a disk to every class.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

* Three guided writing projects (each of which should result in approximately 10+ pages of polished prose). We will be writing multiple drafts of these projects, accompanied by author's notes, and will workshop them in small-group and large-class settings.

* Nine Informal Writings (2-3 page typed responses to discussion questions, readings, and guided inquiry on your formal projects). You'll receive a hand-out prompt for each.

* Typed peer responses to class members' project drafts.

* Participation in class writing activities, class workshops, and discussions.

* Midterm and final course narratives that analyze and assess the quality of your work and your overall contributions to the course.

GRADE BREAKDOWN

Project #1	15%
Project #2	20%
Project #3 (with presentation)	30%
Informal Writing	15%
Midterm/Final Assignments	10%
Participation (peer response, class activities, group work)	10%

DAY BY DAY SYLLABUS

UNIT ONE: Writing Home and Community

What is “home” and what role does it play in understanding ourselves and others? What are the “homes” we inhabit (physically, mentally, geographically, electronically)? How do our homes shape our writing lives? What tensions do we face as writers in representing our homes or communities to others? What do our representations accomplish?

Week #1

Tue	Introduction to course and each other
Thu	Bring: Informal Writing #1: “Letter of Introduction and Individual Goals” & three objects to class that suggest home In Class: Archeological writing on objects and Intro. to Project 1

Week #2

Tue	Read: Ted Kooser’s “Preface” to <i>Local Wonders</i> (reserve) In Class: Introduction to Glossing with “Preface” and Invention Writing
Thu	Read: Knopp’s “Homecoming” and Colon’s “Grandma, Please Don’t Come” (reserve) and bring Informal Writing #2: Glossing In Class: Discussion of Informal #2, readings, and more invention writing

Week #3

Tue	Read: Excerpts from <i>Genoa Leader Times</i> and Daddorio’s “They Get Milk Practically Every Day” (reserve) and bring Informal Writing #3 In Class: Representing/Creating a Community through Texts
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Thu	Read: Bragg’s “Prologue” from <i>All Over But the Shouting</i> (reserve) and bring home/community texts for class presentations In Class: analyzing community texts and developing purposes for writing
Week #4	
Tue	First draft of Project #1 for peer response (3 copies with author’s note)
Thu	Read Knopp’s OED Marginalia Texts (handout) and bring Informal Writing #4: peer response analysis and drive words In class: Revision Strategies on Drafts and workshop time
Week #5	
Tue	Final Draft of Project #1 Due In Class: Presentations/Readings from Project #1

UNIT TWO: Analyzing Arguments in Our Communities

What arguments are taking place in our communities (homes, clubs, workplaces, professional organizations, etc.)? In what forms or genres do these arguments take place? What rhetorical terms can we use to analyze them? How can rhetorical analysis enable us to participate in, intervene in, or speak back to these arguments?

Thu	Intro to Project #2: Analyzing Arguments Read: Chapter 1 from <i>Everything’s an Argument</i> In Class: Group analyses of editorials from <i>Newsweek</i> , <i>The Nation</i> , and <i>Time</i> using terms from <i>Everything</i>
Week #6	
Tue	Read Intro. and Chpt. 1 from <i>Holler If You Hear Me</i> Informal Writing #5: Analyzing how arguments are culturally framed In Class: Discussion and invention writing for Project #2
Thu	Bring 2 textual arguments you plan to analyze for Project #2 and do interpretive paraphrases for each (handout) In Class: Discussion of interpretive paraphrases and guided writing
Week #7	
Tue	Read: Chapter 3 from <i>Everything’s an Argument</i> In class: Analysis of Arguments
Thu	First Draft of Project #2 Due (copies and author’s note for peer response)

Week #8	
Tue	Full Class Workshop on Four Drafts (posted to Blackboard)
Thu	Bring Informal Writing #6 In Class: Discussion and revision writing
Week #9	
Tue	Editing Workshop for Midterm Portfolios
Thu	Midterm Portfolio due with final drafts of Project #1 and #2 Intro to Project #3: Multi-Genre Research of a Historical Event In Class: Review of Past Projects; Group Brainstorming
Week #10	Spring Break

UNIT THREE: Writing Ourselves into History

How do we use writing to enter into or to make sense of history? To probe more deeply into a historical event? To understand it? To learn from it? What forms or genres enable us to do this inquiry? What languages(s), conventions, and structures are used to tell these stories? What are the differences between “private” and “public” representations of historical events? Whose perspectives get told in these stories and whose are absent? To whom are they told and for what purpose? How can we use our writing to participate in our telling and understanding of history?

Week #11	
Tue	Read Shihab Nye’s excerpts from 19 Varieties of Gazelle and O Magazine and Anna Quindlen’s “Imagining the Hanson Family” and bring Informal Writing #7 In Class: How writers used different genres/forms to make sense of 9/11
Thu	Read Kingsolver’s “Foreword” and “Small Wonder” Proposal for Project #3 In Class: Continue discussion of genre and meaning making
Week #12	
Tue	Read: “The 2002 NCTE Presidential Address” In Class: continue discussion of genre for argument/persuasion
Thu	Bring Informal Writing #8: Secondary source analysis for Project #3 In Class: Genre Writing with sources
Week #13	
Tue	In Class: Genre Writing

Thu	First Draft of Project #3 due (multiple copies for peers & author’s note)
Week #14	
Tue	In Class: Full Class Workshop of Four Drafts (posted to Blackboard)
Thu	Bring Informal Writing #9 In Class: Style and Meaning Workshop
Week #15	
Tue	In Class: To be determined
Thu	Editing and Polishing Workshop & Course Evaluations
Week #16	
Tue	Presentations of Projects (in Bailey Library) Final Portfolios Due
Thu	Presentations of Projects (in Bailey Library)

COURSE READINGS

- Bloome, David. “Celebrating the Languages and Literacies of Our Lives-Televised... Not.” NCTE Presidential Address 2002. <http://literacy.net/presidentialaddress/howtoread.htm>
- Bragg, Rick. “Prologue: Redbirds.” *All Over But the Shouting*. New York: Pantheon, 1997. xi–xxii.
- Carter, Wes. “The Newspapers Tell Only Half of the Story.” *Newsweek* 13 January 2003: 12.
- Colon, Jesus. “Grandma, Please Don’t Come.” *A Latino National Conversation*. Chicago: Great Books Foundation, 1999: 21–24.
- Daddario, Wilma A. “They Get Milk Practically Every Day,” *The Genoa Indian Industrial School, 1884-1934.* *Nebraska History* (Spring 1992): 2–11.
- Genoa Leader-Times Special Edition Souvenir Issue*. 23 April 1997: 2–10.
- Kingsolver, Barbara. “Foreword” and “Small Wonder.” *Small Wonder*. New York: HarperCollins, 2002. ix–xii.
- Kinsley, Michael. “How Affirmative Action Helped George W.” *Time* 27 January 2003: 70.
- Knopp, Lisa. “Homecoming.” *The Nature of Home: A Lexicon and Essays*. Lincoln, NE: U of Nebraska P, 2002.
- Kooser, Ted. “Preface.” *Local Wonders: Seasons in the Bohemian Alps*. Lincoln, NE: U of Nebraska P, 2002. xi–xv.

- Lunsford, Andrea, and John J. Ruszkiewicz. "Chapter One" and "Chapter Three." *Everything's an Argument*. New York: Bedford/St. Martin 's, 2001.3–19, 37–45.
- Michie, Gregory. "Introduction" and "Room to Learn." *Holler if You Hear Me: The Education of a Teacher and His Students*. New York: Teachers College, 2000. xix–19.
- Quindlen, Anna. "Imagining the Hanson Family." *Newsweek* 24 September 2001: 96.
- Shihab Nye, Naomi. "Flinn, on the Bus" and "Introduction." *19 Varieties of Gazelle: Poems of the Middle East*. USA: Greenwillow Books, 2002. x-xviii.
- . "This Is Not Who We Are." *O Magazine* April 2002: 83–86.
- Williams, Patricia J. "Class Warfare." *The Nation* 17 February 2003: 10.