

English 106

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English 106
Introduction to Composition
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Required Materials:
Textbook: *Everything's An Argument*
Notebook and writing utensils
Fully functioning human brain

Recommended Materials:
MLA Handbook or
Strunk and White's *Elements of Style*

Writing: word.picture.byte

It is a bit of an understatement to say that communication is a premium in today's world. Since we live in the information age, the ability to communicate effectively is absolutely vital. But communication in our globalized, high-tech, rapid-paced world is not the quite the same as it used to be. The advent of the computer and the Internet, and the new forms of communication that emerged with it, are continuing to revolutionize our world. Sure, some things remain the same—we still read books, listen to radio, watch TV. But even here, there is a change, or at least an acceleration. We are inundated with words, spoken and written, but also visuals, from simple images to the most sophisticated video and film. For this reason, what it means to be literate today is somewhat different from what it was formerly. Of course, it still means reading and writing. But what we read, and how and with what we write, have expanded to incorporate electronic and visual forms.

One of the major goals of this course is to help you achieve this sophisticated, contemporary form of literacy. In other words, English 106 is designed to help you get critically and creatively involved in writing effectively. And yet, as the class progresses, we will also want to push at the boundaries of what it means to "write" to something more expansive that includes elements of visual design and the composition of texts that don't look like the traditional academic essay. We'll also be reading a variety of texts—essays, photo portfolios, ads and everything in between—that challenge us to re-think how messages reach us, how we respond to them, and how we, in turn, create them. Writing also helps you figure out what you think, helps you work through what others say and think, and helps you understand how their ideas compare to your own. Finally, we will be doing a bit more than firing up Microsoft Word. Our projects will ask us to experiment with different ways of creating and delivering a message, from creating portraits, to researching sustained arguments, to building websites. Regardless of your familiarity with any particular program or piece of equipment, we will all face challenges in thinking through how we can creatively and effectively utilize something as simple as a photograph or a hyperlink or even a different typeface to add dimension to a message, engage and

excite a reader, and (is it possible?) get some satisfaction out of the writing that you do.

Rhetoric: language.purpose.audience

One of my goals is to help you become rhetorically aware--that is, to help you learn that writing involves countless choices, and that you need to think carefully about what you want to say and why, who needs to "hear" it, and how you'll need to shape your text to be most persuasive to others. We can't guarantee people's reactions to what we have to say, but this doesn't mean we give up trying to reach and affect people. Think about the (rhetorical) choices you made when you moved into a new place at Purdue and put together your room. I bet, whether it was conscious or not, you found ways to say—to communicate—things about yourself with that room (both to specific and general others). From the way you organize to the pictures and slogans you put on the wall, from your sense of style to your evocation of boundaries, you are letting others know things about you with whatever means are at your disposal. Learning how to better understand, further control, and then expand on such rhetorical choices is in line with the goals of this course. While we may focus more directly on writing, in terms of rhetoric, the similarities are numerous.

Inquiry

An important aspect of the course is the cultivation of a "habit of inquiry." By this I mean an ingrained aptitude for initiating and pursuing questions via your available resources. We'll begin by learning to ask meaningful questions, and move on to doing some first-hand information gathering. Eventually, we'll end up navigating available information in order to locate sources related to the specific questions and goals driving your writing projects. It may be helpful for you to downplay or even lose the word "research." I want you to start thinking about questions and ideas in ways that you can be passionate about, especially in how you pursue them in books, articles, databases, online sites, archives, interviews, and whatever else makes itself available. Thus, how you go about learning will depend on identifying your interests and pursuing them energetically and wisely, not simply on visiting the first ten web addresses that Google gives you from a basic word search.

Argument

As the title of this textbook implies, I do not believe in any kind of static or foundational truth. Rather, I propose that everything we believe is a cultural construction that operates according to consensus and persuasion. The entire world is—or rather our access to it—is a shared linguistic social construction—a series of interconnecting arguments (some static, some in play). This course aims to make students more conscious of how to both construct and deconstruct these arguments circling around them. It is an initiation into how to recognize and join the conversations of our time. Given our hyper-mediated era, we need to be more aware

of the ways in which people places and ideas relate to each other—physically, emotionally, socially, and culturally.

Conferencing

Half of you are already scheduled to meet with me in Heavilon 225 on Mondays, the other half in Heavilon 225 on Thursdays. During the first week, we will acclimate ourselves to the rooms and cover my conferencing guidelines. You'll sign up to meet with me individually for ten minutes once every two weeks for the rest of the semester. This is your time to discuss with me a question or concern you have about your writing and/or reading for the class. For each conference, you will need to either

- bring a passage from your writing you would like us to discuss and a half-page, typed and single-spaced, in which you explain what you're trying to do in that passage, how it fits into the rest of the piece of writing, and why you're concerned about it, or
- bring a passage from your reading you would like us to discuss and a half-page, typed and single-spaced, in which you explain your question about the passage and what you think is going on in the passage.

The length (or type, as you'll soon gather from looking at *Picturing Texts*) of the passage is up to you, but keep in mind that we only have ten minutes. The purpose of the pre-conference writing is to get you to work through some specific ideas, issues, or insights *beforehand* so that we can get the most out of our conference time, and do so in a manner tailored to your specific needs. If you do not bring your passage and your half-page, or you're late to your appointment time, I'll count you absent.

Assignments and Grades

You have three major projects over the course of the semester. Each of these projects will include several parts, involve composing in various mediums, and lead to multiple revisions. These will be the focus of the course. I will also periodically assign short homework and writing assignments that might not seem to have an immediate connection with whatever project you are working on. These assignments should provide you with skills integral to completion of the final projects.

Project 1	30%
Project 2	30%
Project 3	30%
Instructor's Evaluation	10%

My evaluation is primarily based on attendance, class participation (I intend the class to be more about you talking than me) and effort (measured by attendance, preparation for conferences, visiting office hours, using the writing lab, etc.).

Attendance & Class Expectations

I expect everyone to contribute to class discussions. Although I will occasionally lecture and ask you to take notes, I hope I will spend the majority of my time acting as a moderator. You are all your brothers' teachers.

That given, attendance is mandatory. You are allowed to miss three classes. On your fourth absence, I will deduct one letter grade. I will continue to deduct one letter grade per absence. Please note that if you miss a conference, then I will consider it an absence.

Plagiarism & Intellectual Property

This is the copying, deliberate or not, of another person's work and/or ideas without the proper citation. This will result in failure of the project and other disciplinary action including academic suspension. We will discuss further in class as we move into project 2, but you also need to be aware of what it is and how to avoid it.

Late Work

I will count off a letter grade for each day your work is late unless you have made arrangements with me prior (at least two days) to the due date. Problems can arise, but the key to their successful resolution is communication. Keep me informed; avoid simply not showing up.

Disability

If you have a disability that requires special accommodations, please see me privately within the first week of class to make arrangements.