

English 106 First-Year Composition Fall 2009

Composing With Popular Culture

Instructor: Mark Pepper

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Course Website: <http://web.ics.purdue.edu/~mpepper>

Course Blog: <http://pepper106.blogspot.com>

Office and Hours: HEAV 209 Mondays 11:30-12:30

All Classes and Conferences Start at 10:30

Mondays: Computer Lab Day in ENAD 130

Tuesdays & Thursdays: HEAV 108

Wednesday or Friday: Conference Days in HEAV 225

Technical Expectations: We will be using a lot of programs in this class, including: Photoshop, Dreamweaver, Movie Maker and more. You do not have to buy them. All programs are free for you to use on the Purdue Servers. You are not required to know these programs in advance and instruction will be given on how to use them to basic competency. **That said, above average work will often require you to spend considerable time with these programs outside of class.** Therefore, they are a part of the course and the willingness to go the extra mile with learning them is an expectation.

Extended Course Overview

Composition is the study of how a text is constructed, tries to make meaning, gets interpreted, and finds a place in the culture around us. **Composition is understanding what kinds of texts can be produced in a given situation, what kinds of limitations are put on a text by the purpose or cultural context, and the choices composers make to communicate more effectively when creating a text.**

And I mean “text” in a much broader sense than you may be used to— a text can be anything that contains a meaning that can be interpreted. In this class we will mainly look at the “everyday” texts of pop culture. This could mean music videos, movies, clothing, photographs, product packaging, magazines, etc. etc. Looking at these things not only tends to be more enjoyable; but, I also find that understanding these texts proves far more relevant to our current lives and the kinds of composing you’ll do beyond college.

More important than analyzing these “texts” is learning the ability to construct our own cultural texts. I’m fairly unimpressed with so-called “traditional” English assignments where you write an essay, print it out, I read it, and then we both forget about it. I’m much more interested in having you produce texts that more accurately reflect the world we live in and that are actually seen, used, and interacted with by actual people beyond the confines of this classroom. To this end we will be making websites, taking photos, making videos, and yes, **writing for actual audiences and actual contexts whenever possible.**

Your Assignments and Grade Breakdown

Your final grade will break down on a fairly familiar percentage scale:
1000 points total

- >90% A**
- >80% B**
- >70% C**
- >60% D**
- <59% F**

Major Projects (700 points)

Here is a preview of the various assignments and how each one factors towards your final grade. I have also included what form the assignment will take and which software you will be learning to compose them.

1. Image/Text Manipulations (100 points)

Deliverables: Altered photos and short essay

Program: Photoshop

2. Purdue Organization Profile (150 points)

Deliverables: PowerPoint and short essay

Program: PowerPoint

3. Review/Critiques (100 points)

Deliverables: Visual Write-up

Program: Word Processing/Page Layout

4. Music Video (150 points)

Deliverables: .wmv music file

Program: Windows Movie Maker

5. Fandom Ethnography (200 points)

Deliverables: Original website

Program: Dreamweaver

Course Blog and Responses (200 points)

In this course you will be making weekly blog posts. We will spend a bit of time analyzing blog culture and looking at exactly what they are before you will be expected to start participating. The blog can be found at: <http://pepper106.blogspot.com/>

On Mondays I will give you a very short prompt or topic for you to explore for that week's blog post. By Thursday's class you should post your entry to the course blog. You will also be required to post at least one significant response to one of your fellow student's posts from the week before.

The blog entries should be roughly 500 words a piece. This is not a lot of words; therefore, you should shoot for maximum conciseness without a loss of intellectual depth and quality.

Presentation of a Major Project (100 points)

At some point in the semester everyone will be making a short presentation to the whole class on one of their course projects. I don't care which project you choose to present; however, people need to volunteer on each presentation day in order to make sure everyone goes by the end of the semester. There will be a sign-up sheet, but if nobody signs up for certain days (especially the ones early in the semester) I will be forced to volunteer people.

More details will be given about the presentations later, for the requirements will change slightly considering which project is being presented. In each case you will be expected to prepare a professional presentation and be graded on your prep, delivery, and presence.

Course Website

On our course website you will find .pdf copies of all the handouts I give in class. This includes this syllabus, major assignment prompts, and response paper prompts. I will occasionally also post additional readings there or classroom discussion reflections. I expect that you will check in with the website on a regular basis and be prepared for any course changes that are reflected there.

Other Factors that Will Effect Your Grade

Attendance & Lateness

Being here is perhaps the most important aspect of this course. You may miss **four** class sessions without any penalty (and yes, your conference days count as a class session). Don't waste them because you don't feel like showing up; save them for emergencies, illnesses, and other acts of fate. **Every absence past the fourth will result in your final course grade being lowered by 1/3.** Additionally, three tardies will equal an absence.

Late Work

I loathe it, loathe it, loathe it! You want the main reason? When your work is late it falls off the radar of my always very busy awareness and to-do list. This rarely ends well. Therefore, late major assignments lose a letter grade for every day they are late (this includes the day they are due, the moment it's not there in class or in my email by a preset time).

Semi-Exception (not really) on Late Work: I understand that we use a lot of software in this course that you may not be accustomed to. Programs like Photoshop and Movie Maker can potentially cause you some problems throughout the assignment and issues may also arise at turn-in time. I want to state that this really shouldn't be an excuse. You are given a fairly large amount of time on all the assignments; plenty of time to see if the program is going to cause you problems and plenty of time to turn them in semi-early if you're worried about delivery issues.

That said, technological issues and problems will arise and I do understand this. They will have to be dealt with on a case by case basis. With that said, the more you communicate with me ahead of time, ask questions via email, or make an effort to have a meeting with me outside of class, the more likely your problem will be understood and addressed fairly.

My Expectations

Complete all reading assignments by the day they are due—this is important for class discussions and participation. As much as I love to hear myself talk sometimes, I do not expect to be the only one talking (or even talking the most).

Actively participate in class discussions and group work—see above, and remember: just because your group can't vote you off the island, it doesn't mean they want to carry your dead weight either!

Certain Level of Common Sense and Respect—for me and your fellow classmates. Although we're all very important people, class is not the place to be using your cell phone (or even letting it ring, for that matter). Computer lab is not the place for AIM or checking new Myspace friends (unless it's before class, in which case, I don't mind). Finally, although spirited debate is good, rude interruption and absolute dismissal are other things all together.

Disabilities: Any disability documented with Adaptive Programs will happily be accommodated. I encourage you to make an appointment and come speak to me ASAP. This way we can help each other out and set you up for optimal success in my course.

Plagiarism: There are actually many types of plagiarism and ways it can happen. We will talk about these. Any student caught plagiarizing (and it's easier to catch than you might think) will be reported to the Dean of Students. You will certainly fail the particular assignment involved, and in extreme situations, you may fail the course.

With all that said (written), I hope we can have a great semester, and I hope we can produce some texts that we are all excited about and ultimately proud of!

Course Calendar for Project 1

This calendar is merely a guide. It may be followed perfectly, it may be changed at will. When changed, you will always be alerted well in advance.

Week 1

- M 24 Course Introduction
- T The Whole Course in 50 Minutes!
- W Conferences: Getting to Know You
- R What is Rhetorical Analysis?
- F Conferences: Getting to Know You

Week 2

- M 31 **Lab:** Image/Text Juxtaposition
Assign: Project 1
- T Connotation and Association
- W Conferences: Read Common Scents Comic
- R **Extra Lab Day:** Intro to Photoshop
Due: Posting #1 to Course Blog
- F Conferences: Read Common Scents Comic

Week 3

- M 7 **No Class: Labor Day**
- T Genre: Purdue as . . .
Read: Rhetorical Write-Ups
- W Conferences
- R Rhetorical Situations
Due: Blog Posting #2 and Response
- F Conferences

Week 4

M 14 Due: Project #1
Presentations of Project #1