

English 310: Applying Writing Theory
Spring 2014
T/R 2:00-3:15

Instructor: Dr. Jeff Kirchoff

Office: Schilling Hall 434D

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 9:30-12:30, Wednesday TBD and by appointment.

Email: jkirchoff@millikin.edu [This is the best way to contact me; I will make a good faith effort to respond to emails within 24 hours]

Phone: 217-424-6413

Course Description

This course introduces students to contemporary writing theories. We will cover both the history/application of writing theory to the teaching of college writing and, secondly, methods for analyzing written artifacts. As such, we will start by learning the origins of current-traditional rhetoric before exploring the many facets of process theory. Additionally, we'll look at unique movements within the field of writing theory, including teaching with technology, feminist approaches to teaching writing, and critical/cultural pedagogy. The semester concludes with students learning different approaches for studying written texts; these lenses will include rhetorical genre theory and cultural-historical activity theory. Note that this is a survey course, which means that the intention of this course is to give students a working knowledge of a wide range of writing theories, as opposed to an in-depth study of one aspect of writing theory.

Course Goals

By the end of this course, students should:

- Know classical and contemporary writing theories
- Be able to articulate their own writing processes
- Develop a personal philosophy regarding the best practices of teaching writing
- Synthesize theories to produce original writing scholarship
- Be able to analyze written texts from a variety of theories/perspectives

Required Texts

Cross-Talk in Comp Theory (3rd edition). Edited by Victor Villanueva and Kristin L. Arola.
ISBN 9780814109779

A Guide to Composition Pedagogies. Edited by Gary Tate, Amy Rupiper, and Kurk Schick.
ISBN 9780195125368

Course Policies

Attendance: Because so much of the learning process takes place in the classroom, attendance is an integral part of this class. Additionally, I value all voices in the classroom and enjoy the dynamic a full class offers. That said, I understand emergencies do occur and that individuals have a life beyond academia. Thus, students are afforded four "free" absences (the equivalent of two weeks of class); please note I do not need to know about the nature of your absence—just let me know ahead of time if you will miss class (a 24 hour notice is appreciated). For each absence after the fourth, the offending student's "Attendance and Participation" grade will go down a full letter grade (e.g., five absences will mean the best possible "Attendance and Participation" grade will be a "B"). Note that if a student has an extended and/or serious illness the result is usually an incomplete or medical withdrawal from the

course.

Tardiness: Try to be on time. I'm a punctual sort of fellow, and I tend to get class started at the scheduled time. When people come in late, it disrupts the flow of class and more importantly, the late individual will miss key information from the beginning of class. If tardiness becomes a problem for a particular student, I will talk with that person individually.

Late Assignments: I do not accept late work unless prior arrangements have been made. This is a non-negotiable policy; however, if you have questions or are worried about completing an assignment on time, talk to me well before the due date and we can come up with a plan of action. Note: "well before the due date" does not mean 24 hours before the assignment is due. I generally like to hold these sorts of conferences a week ahead of the due date. If someone contacts me 24 hours before a project is due, my response may not be very favorable. This policy extends to daily work as well.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism occurs when one person presents another person's words or ideas as her/his own. It is a serious offense that can result in an F for the course. Please see me if you have any questions concerning plagiarism. This is something we will discuss at length throughout the course.

Respect: My goal is for everyone to feel welcome and comfortable in the classroom, so please treat everyone in this class with respect. This should be a friendly, positive environment open to discussion and feedback. To that end, there is no tolerance for individuals who intentionally disrupt class or contribute to a hostile learning environment. Examples of disruptive behavior include (but are not limited to) talking or texting on a cell phone, speaking out of turn, facebooking, emailing, checking fantasy sport teams, swearing excessively, sleeping, attacking individuals verbally or physically, talking to friends while others are talking/working, or staunchly refusing to participate. If you have any questions or concerns regarding these policies, let me know and I'll be happy to answer any questions.

Food is permissible, as long as it does not become a distraction.

Participation is expected of all of us. Please come to class ready to ask questions, share ideas, and provide feedback to others. Please note that your participation will be a part of your overall assessment (see below).

Email is a great tool for communication. However, I ask that when you send me an email to use a proper salutation (e.g. Hi Dr. Kirchoff), complete sentences, and identifying information. This is a matter of common courtesy. As I mention above, I will make a good faith effort in responding to email queries within 24 hours.

Sending documents as *attachments* to an email is a perfectly valid way to get feedback on a project. To ensure readability, please save your documents as a .rtf, .docx, or .pdf.

Lastly, I prefer to be addressed as "Dr. Kirchoff," "Professor Kirchoff," or "Jeff"—whichever you are most comfortable with. I will not respond to nicknames, Mr. Kirchoff, or other variations of my name.

Inclement Weather

Part of the joys of living in the Midwest is the possibility of facing severe snow and ice storms during the winter months. As a commuter—as I'm sure many of you are—I may be unable to make class on bad-weather days that Millikin stays open for. If this unfortunate possibility becomes reality, I will email you (through Moodle's News Forum) at least 12 hours before class to let you know that we will not be

meeting in person that day, but will instead be having a virtual class. Instructions will be posted to Moodle; students will still be expected to participate virtually on these rare days.

Disability Accommodation Policy

Please address any special needs or special accommodations with me at the beginning of the semester or as soon as you become aware of your needs. If you are seeking classroom accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act, you should submit your documentation to the Office of Student Success at Millikin University, currently located in Staley Library 014.

Academic Honesty

All students are expected to uphold professional standards for academic honesty and integrity in their research, writing, and related performances. Academic honesty is the standard we expect from all students. Read the Student Handbook for further details about offenses involving academic integrity at: <http://www.millikin.edu/handbook/>.

Staley Library also hosts a web site on Preventing Plagiarism, which includes the complete university policy. It is located at: <http://www.millikin.edu/staley/services/instruction/Pages/plagiarism-faculty.aspx>. Visit and carefully read the Preventing Plagiarism web site.

The Faculty has the right and the responsibility to hold students to high ethical standards in conduct and in works performed, as befits a scholar at the university. Faculty members have the responsibility to investigate all suspected breaches of academic integrity that arise in their courses. They will make the determination as to whether the student violated the Academic Integrity Policy. Should the faculty member determine that the violation was intentional and egregious, he or she will decide the consequences, taking into account the severity and circumstances surrounding the violation, and will inform the student in writing, forwarding a copy of the letter to the Registrar and to the Dean of Student Development.

This letter will be destroyed when the student graduates from the University unless a second breach of integrity occurs, or unless the first instance is of sufficient magnitude to result in failure of the course, with an attendant XF grade recorded in the transcript. If an XF is assigned for the course, the faculty letter of explanation becomes a permanent part of the student's record. If a second violation occurs subsequent to the first breach of integrity, the Dean of Student Development will begin disciplinary and judicial processes of the University, as outlined in the Student Handbook.

If a student receives an XF for a course due to academic dishonesty, this remains as a permanent grade and cannot be removed from the transcript. However, students may repeat the course for credit toward graduation. Some programs and majors have more explicit ethical standards, which supersede this Policy, and violation of which may result in dismissal from some programs or majors within the University. If you have difficulty with any assignment in this course, please see me rather than consider academic dishonesty.

Course Assignments

Weekly Reading Responses

We will be covering a different writing theory each week and as such, we'll be reading multiple articles and chapters in any given week. To ensure student comprehension, each student is expected to write short (1-2 typed pages) synthesized responses to that week's readings. Simply put, these responses should put the texts in conversation with one another. Students should attempt to isolate the major

ideas presented in all the articles that week and, when appropriate, interrogate or explore specific aspects of an article. These responses can be exploratory, but they must attempt to make connections between at least two-thirds of the readings covered in the week. One should be able to tell the student spent thoughtful time with each reading assigned. These will be assessed on a ✓+, ✓, ✓-, or unsatisfactory scale. These can be uploaded to our Moodle as a .rtf or .docx; I ask that you adhere to this format so I can comment on your work electronically. Note that if you fail to turn in a response or turn one in late, you will receive an “unsatisfactory” grade for that particular response (akin to a D for a response turned in late; equivalent to an F for one not turned in at all).

Transitions

To help bridge one writing theory to the next, students will sign up to “transition” from topic to topic. These oral statements can be short (one to two minutes) and should summarize what was covered the week before and how that relates to what is being discussed the upcoming week. These should be formal addresses that should be taken seriously. Each student will be responsible for one transition. We will sign up for these in class. Kirchoff will “transition” the class the first couple of weeks so students can get a feel for the expectations of this short assignment.

Midterm

Roughly halfway through the semester, students will use readings covered in class—along with outside readings, interviews, videos, and podcasts—to explore an issue in classical or contemporary writing pedagogy. A detailed assignment sheet will be distributed in class well before the due date of this six to eight page researched analysis/exploration. Note that students will need to have their topic/research question approved by Kirchoff.

Writing Philosophy

In this one to two page text, you will use the writing theories/pedagogies discussed in class to generate your own philosophy regarding what you feel are (or should be) the best practices for teaching writing at the post-secondary level. You will want to use source support for this project. A more detailed prompt will be distributed in class.

Research Project

The last several weeks of class will be spent learning how to analyze written texts and artifacts. Using one of the theoretical lenses we discuss—rhetorical genre theory or activity theory—students will be asked to compose a six to eight page analysis of a written text. We’ll be looking at samples of these kinds of analyses in class. A more detailed writing prompt will be distributed over the course of the semester.

Attendance and Participation

As indicated above, attendance and participation will be assessed in this class. Because many of the readings we will be working with are complex in nature, it is imperative to not only attend class regularly, but also participate in class.

Grading Breakdown:

- 40% Weekly Reading Responses
- 20% Midterm (due 4.1)
- 20% Research Project (due 5.8)
- 10% Writing Philosophy (due 4.8)
- 5% Transitions

5% Attendance and Participation

Tentative Weekly Schedule (CP = A Guide to Composition Pedagogies; CT = Cross-Talk in Comp Theory; PDF = Available on Moodle)

Week 1 (Current Traditional Rhetoric): Have the following read by Thursday 1.23

“30 years of Current Traditional Rhetoric” by Connors (PDF)

→ Reflection due 1.23

Week 2 (Intro to Process Theory): Have the following read by Thursday 1.30

“Exploring Process Theory” by Tobin (CP)

“Composing Process: Review of Literature” by Emig (PDF)

“Initial Plans and Spontaneous Composition: Toward a Comprehensive Theory of the Writing Process” by Gebhardt (PDF)

→ Reflection due 1.30

Week 3 (Expressive and Social Construction): Have the following read by Thursday 2.6

“Teach Writing as a Process, not a Product” by Murray (CT)

“Expressive Pedagogy: Practice, Theory Theory, Practice” by Burnham (CP)

“Reflections on Academic Discourse” by Elbow (PDF)

→ Reflection due 2.6

Week 4 (Cognitive): Have the following read by 2.13

“A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing” by Flower and Hayes (CT)

“Cognitive Development and the Basic Writer” by Lunsford (CT)

“Cognition, Convention, and Certainty: What We Need to Know About Writing” (CT)

→ Reflection due 2.13

Week 5 (Critical): Have the following read by 2.20

“Critical Pedagogy: Dreaming of Democracy” by George (CP)

.pdf of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by Freire (PDF 25-51 and 52-67)

→ Reflection due 2.20

Week 6 (Cultural): Have the following read by 2.27

“Cultural Studies and Composition” by George and Trimbur (CP)

“The Point Is There Is No Point: Cynicism and Cultural Studies Composition” by Langstraat (PDF)

→ Reflection due 2.27

Week 7 (Post Process): Have the following read by 3.6

“Post Process ‘Pedagogy’: A Philosophical Exercise” by Kastman-Breuch (CT)

“Toward a Post-Process Composition: Abandoning the Rhetoric of Assertion” by Olson (PDF)

→ Reflection due 3.6

→ **Midterm distributed. Due 4.1.**

Spring Break 3.11 and 3.13

Week 8 (Feminism): Have the following read by 3.20

“Feminist Pedagogy” by Jarratt (CP)

“Composing as a Woman” by Flynn (CT)

“Feminism in Composition: Inclusion, Metonymy, and Disruption” (CT)

→ **Teaching Philosophy Distributed. Due 4.8**

→ No class 3.20 (Kirchoff at Conference)

→ Reflection due (electronically) 3.20

Week 9 (Computers/Digital): Have the following read by 3.27

“Technology and the Teaching of Writing” by Moran (CP)

“Made Not Only in Words” by Yancey (CT)

“From Analysis to Design” by George (CT)

“Composing Multimodal Assignments” by Hess (PDF from *Multimodal Composition*)

→ Reflection due 3.27

→ **Research Project distributed. Due 5.8**

Week 10 (Rhetorical Genre Theory): Have the following read by 4.3

“Genre as Social Action” by Miller (PDF)

“Integrating Rhetorical and Literary Theories of Genre” by Devitt (PDF)

→ Reflection due 4.3

Week 11 (Activity Theory): Have the following read by 4.10

“Activity Theory and Its Implications for Writing Instruction” by Russell (PDF)

Reading TBD by Erickson (PDF)

→ Reflection due 4.10

Week 12 Conferences On Final Research Project

Week 13-Week 15

Reading and discussing studies about writing (models)

Workshop

→ Final Project Due 5.8

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Midterm Project

We've spent the first portion of the semester learning about some of the primary theories of teaching college composition, paying particular attention to the roots of college writing instruction, prominent shifts in theory, and relevant complications (both positive and negative) to writing pedagogy. This midterm project asks you to take what you've learned thus far and craft a six to eight page researched essay that *explores, investigates, interrogates, or argues* a topic (or, if germane, topics) that we have discussed—or will discuss over the course of the next several weeks—in this class. To give you an idea of the kinds of essay topics that are appropriate for this midterm, I've included a couple of sample prompts. I would strongly encourage you to talk with me about a possible topic; not only can I let you know if it is suitable for six to eight pages, but I may be able to point you in the direction of some valuable resources for your research.

Sample Prompts

1. How does the advent of online teaching affect writing theory? How can we translate the “best practices” of writing pedagogy into an online environment? What is gained? What is lost?
2. Over the last thirty to forty years, writing scholars, as we have discussed, have been quick to distance themselves from current traditional rhetoric. But are all the traces of current traditional rhetoric *really* vanquished from writing pedagogy? Trace how current traditional rhetoric has influenced modern writing pedagogy.
3. How is writing gendered? How can instructors of writing be cognate of any gender differences in approaches to writing?

Guidelines

1. Six to eight pages
2. At least six sources are needed; no more than ten should be used
3. At least half of the sources should be “outside” sources that we have not discussed in class
4. MLA style
5. Academic tone/style
6. Thesis statement/introduction/conclusion/transitions are a given
7. Essay should be thoughtful; it can be exploratory, argumentative, evaluative, or speculative in nature

Due April 1st

20% of your final grade

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Teaching Philosophy

This short writing project (roughly one to two single spaced pages) has two options for students; I encourage you to explore and embrace the option that has the most meaning for you.

1. Articulate a short statement describing your philosophy regarding how college writing should be taught.
2. Articulate a short statement describing how *you would* approach teaching college writing.

If you are planning on pursuing any kind of graduate coursework in English, I strongly encourage you to respond to the second prompt. While your personal teaching philosophy will assuredly change, this is a document that might help you secure a graduate teaching assistantship. If graduate work is not on the horizon for you, you can still pursue the second option, but you may find responding to the first option a bit more rewarding.

Regardless of which prompt you pursue, you should be prepared to cite a couple of very specific pedagogues who we have read about this semester. Including personal experience, as long as it is done smartly, can oftentimes be appropriate. Your statement should be thoughtful, sincere, coherent, and unique. We'll look at a couple of these statements in class so you can get a better feel for the variety that exists.

Due 4.15

Worth 10% of your grade

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Research Project

This semester we have learned about two kinds of writing theory: pedagogy (that is, best practices for *teaching* writing) and artifact analysis (that is, ways to study written texts). We have had lots of practice—through discussion and writing—with the former; this final project asks you to closely interact with the latter.

Simply put, using Burke's pentad, rhetorical genre theory or activity theory—three lenses that can be used to analyze a variety of writing—conduct an analysis of a written text. While I want to purposefully leave this broad (I want you to choose a written text and an analytical lens that holds meaning for you), we can go over some possible topics in class.

I strongly encourage you to discuss your topic with me to ensure its suitability for this project.

Lastly, I can assure you that we will examine articles that have done what I am asking you to do (analyze written texts using activity theory or rhetorical genre theory); this can give you an idea not only of a topic, but also how to proceed in your analysis.

Due 5/8

6-8 pages

20% of your final grade