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WRIT 201.04: College Writing II

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WRIT 201: College Writing II | Exploring Rhetoric through Identity, Belonging, and Diverse Mediums

Course Information

- + Instructor: Maren Schiffer | maren.schiffer@umontana.edu
- + Class time & room: Tuesday/Thursday 11am-12:30pm
- + Office hours: Tuesday/Thursday 9:00-10:30am
- + Office: Corbin Hall 258
- + Mailbox: LA 129

Course Description

When we think of rhetoric, we often think of words used as strategic weapons in cultural or political battlefields; or we think of jargon used to exclude us from certain discussions or disciplines. But the study of rhetoric is more complicated than mastering the art of arguing and persuading; it is equally devoted to a practice of questioning, examining, and understanding. In this class, we will spend most of our time using analytical language to help us better understand the multitudes around us that we often choose not to examine. Throughout the semester, we will ask: *How is an author positioning their self within a broader cultural conversation? How can I resist my initial assumptions in order to make room for a more nuanced and complex understanding of a topic, situation, or text?*

Part of this work will involve researching, analyzing, and incorporating mediums in ways we may not have done before; we will look at visual art, videos, advertisements, music videos, and graphics with acute attention to what and how messages are communicated.

In addition, this course demands an examination of identity and self-definition, whether of our own or others'. We will ask how identities give unique insight into certain issues or fields, and how complex intersectional realities inform identities and texts. Work around identity tends to be a sensitive and precious area for most of us, and yet our unique experiences and knowledge are what provide us with unique insights and perspectives. We will be examining language in order to better understand our places in the world—in addition to how certain voices have been historically excluded from situations in which they belong. In this vein, we will parse out what unique experiences we have that lend us authority to contribute to certain ongoing discussions.

Our work in this class will be discussion-driven and collaborative; you'll work in small groups, write often, and share your discoveries. Because writing development is an important process that takes place over time and across different writing situations, all WRIT 201 classes use portfolio evaluation as a primary means of evaluation. By the end of the semester you should be able to accurately and creatively assess a given rhetorical situation and make effective rhetorical choices based on your assessment in order to write a graceful, convincing, beautifully written argument or analysis.

Our Community

As our class considers the concepts of belonging and identity, we'll inevitably run up against issues that are seemingly hot-button or conflict-laden. This is when you will be asked to step outside of your pre-conceived notions and consider the broader complex cultural reality surrounding an individual and their opinion. It is imperative, always, that you treat your peers with as much respect as you expect from them. This classroom **MUST** be a supportive and respectful environment for risk and exploration; ideally, the classroom should be the safest place to flesh out and develop your ideas without fear of being put down or embarrassed. Harmful words directed at individuals or groups will not be tolerated.

We will work together as a community to create an environment of mutual grace and respect in this classroom, one that allows each member to share their ideas. This doesn't mean you have to agree with each other's perspectives; in fact, part of our rhetorical study is to develop means of honestly discussing and parsing out differences, and learning to respect and value them.

Required Course Texts

- + *College Writing II: Rhetoric and American Cultures* (available at the UM bookstore only)
- + Outside readings accessible through Moodle (**must be printed and brought to class** unless we have spoken individually and made another arrangement)

Other Course Materials

- + Notebook for in-class writing
- + Folder for class materials & handouts
- + Folder for your final portfolio

General Class Expectations

- + All reading assignments will be completed by the assigned date
- + All writing assignments must be stapled and turned in on time
- + All major assignments must be typed. Please use 12 point Times New Roman font, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins on all sides
- + All homework must be typed unless otherwise noted
- + Attend class
- + Actively, vocally, and respectfully participate in class discussions
- + Any individual assignments (including requests for conferences) will be completed by the assigned date

WRIT 201 is an Approved Writing course. The university learning outcomes include:

- + Use writing to learn and synthesize new concepts
- + Formulate and express opinions and ideas in writing
- + Compose written documents that are appropriate for a given audience or purpose
- + Revise written work based on constructive feedback
- + Find, evaluate, and use information effectively
- + Begin to use discipline-specific writing conventions

- + Demonstrate appropriate English language usage

WRIT 201 Requirements

I encourage you to talk with me at any time to better understand my comments on homework and major assignments, or to discuss your overall progress and success in the class.

Grading

You must earn a C- or better, as well as turn in your portfolio and complete all major essays by their deadlines, in order to receive credit for this course.

Participation:	20%
Small assignments and reading quizzes	15%
Revision	20%
Final Portfolio:	45%

Vocal Participation

Vocal participation is a crucial step in forming thoughts and opinions and translating them to the page. Therefore, it makes up a significant portion of your grade. I know that vocal participation can be scary, unintuitive, and feel at times impossible, but I ask you to take risks by challenging yourself to speak up. This is a supportive community, and as previously mentioned, harmful language will not be tolerated. Therefore, use this as an opportunity to grow by speaking up. If this sounds difficult to you, speak to me individually as early in the semester as possible.

Email Decorum

I love getting your emails and am generally relieved/ excited when you throw questions my way. However, if you ask me a question about the homework a few hours before class, you run a high risk of not getting answered, as well as signaling to me that you aren't prioritizing my class. Please go to Moodle, read the reading and homework schedule, read the syllabus, or ask a class peer before emailing me about any confusion. Part of a college education is learning to find the answers yourself. That being said, don't hesitate to reach out if you feel lost. I can't help you if I don't know.

Additionally, email is a crucial form of everyday communication, and you need to employ rhetorical awareness and strategy in each email you compose. For all of your academic and professional communication, please be sure to email with an introductory phrase (i.e. Dear Maren,), practice conventional grammar and semi-formal language, employ straightforward language, and sign off with a signature (i.e. Best wishes, Amelia). If it's not intuitive yet, I promise it'll become so.

Technology

Laptops and tablets are not allowed in class except in cases of documented necessity. Cell phones should be silenced and put away except in cases of documented necessity, emergency, or specific in-class work. If you have an emergency, please leave the room to use your phone, EVEN if you're only texting. I hate having to call people out for being on their phones. If I have to tell you more than once, it means your participation grade has suffered.

The Writing Center

The Writing Center is a valuable resource. I recommend using it early and often. In your final portfolio, you may turn in a 300-word statement for any or all revised Major Assignments on your visit to the Writing Center led to specific changes in your final revision. I will take these statements as demonstration of effort when calculating your final grades.

Grading Policy

Students enrolled in WRIT 201 are graded by the traditional letter grade A, B, C, D, F or are given NC for no credit. The NC grade does not affect grade point average. It is reserved for students who have worked unusually hard, attended class regularly and completed all assignments, but whose skills are not at a passing level at the end of the semester.

If you have any questions about grading during the semester, please set up a time to speak with me individually. When you have a question or concern, address it sooner rather than later.

Major Assignments

Expect to write four essays and make major revisions over the course of the semester, in addition to other short writing assignments in and out of class. I will give you a detailed assignment sheet as we begin each of these major assignments.

You will have the chance to develop all of your major projects through a process of inquiry and drafting. You'll compose papers in and out of class, alone and collaboratively. All inquiry projects must be completed for you to pass the course. I will respond to these projects with written comments focused on suggestions for revision, but I will also mark them using a check system to help you know where you stand on a specific project.

Major Assignments

- + **Assignment 1:** Rhetorical Analysis (due 9/20) 4-5 pages
- + **Assignment 2:** Cultural Analysis Research Essay (due 10/16) 6-8 pages
- + **Assignment 3:** Persuasive Research Essay (due 11/13) 7-10 pages
- + **Assignment 4:** Cover Letter (due 12/6 with Portfolio)
- + **Final Portfolio** (due 12/6, last day of class)

Evaluating Assignments

You will receive comments from me on short assignments and homework, in addition to a scale evaluation of 0-5. Reading quizzes will be graded on a scale proportional to the number of questions, i.e. 0-4 if there are four questions. The overall Short Assignments and Reading Quizzes percentage grade will be a collective percentage of all assignment and quiz scores

throughout the semester.

All Major Assignment drafts will receive comments and an evaluation based this system:

OT (On track): A project with an “OT” generally meets its rhetorical goals in terms of purpose, genre, and writing situation without need for extensive revision; however, there will likely be many small revisions to make. Written comments will elaborate on strengths, weaknesses, and strategies for focused revision.

M (Major changes required): A project with an “M” meets the basic requirements but needs **significant** revision and a stronger understanding of rhetorical decision-making. Written comments will elaborate on strengths, weaknesses, and strategies for revision.

U (Unsatisfactory): A project with a U does not meet basic standards, and requires extensive development and attention. An unsatisfactory submission may be incomplete or inappropriate to the assignment. Such a submission may receive a request to rewrite within a week in order to receive teacher comments.

If an assignment is shorter than the page requirement or missing the required number of sources, it will not receive teacher comments.

Attendance

If you miss the first two classes, you will need to drop the course on Cyberbear and enroll in another semester. This is university policy and the reasoning behind it is that important groundwork for the semester is put in place in the first few class meetings. Students without that foundational framework are better served by taking the course when they can give it the attention it deserves.

More than two absences from a TR class will compromise your grade. 5 or more absences from a TR class will result in a failing grade. Here’s the breakdown.

- 3rd absence: final grade drops one letter grade (for example, A drops to B)
- 4th absence: final grade drops two letter grades (for example, A drops to C)
- 5th absence: final grade is an F

Here’s the reasoning behind the attendance policy. Without attending class, you cannot perform your role as a student involved in learning, planning, inventing, drafting; discussing reading and writing; learning and practicing rhetorical moves and concepts; or collaborating with your instructor and classmates. Required University events will be excused if you provide appropriate documentation. Personal situations inevitably arise that make it impossible for you to make it to class. Remember, however, that’s why a few absences are allowed; please reserve those for emergencies.

If you must miss class, *you are responsible* for obtaining any handouts or assignments for that class period. Make sure you talk with me in *advance* if you are worried about meeting a deadline or missing a class.

Late Work

Your work needs to be typed, printed, stapled, and in class with you to be considered on time.

- + Late or handwritten homework does not receive credit (unless I have explicitly stated that I will accept handwritten homework for a specific assignment)
- + Emailed assignments (unless specified) are considered late
- + **Late formal essays are unacceptable. They will receive no revision comments from me**
- + If you miss class, homework is due the next class period; it will be marked late unless your absence is excused
- + You are always welcome to complete assignments early if you will be missing class

Participation

Participation includes coming to class prepared and on time, taking part in class discussions, asking questions, contributing your knowledge and insights in whatever form is appropriate, and striving to make all your contributions excellent. It also includes doing the required reading and writing for each class. Note: Please come to class on time. Lateness will hurt your grade because it is an unnecessary interruption and because latecomers are likely to miss valuable information. Please see *Participation Grade Descriptors* for more information.

Academic Conduct & Plagiarism

You must abide by the rules for academic conduct described in the Student Conduct Code. If you have any questions about when and how to avoid academic dishonesty, particularly plagiarism, please review the Conduct Code and talk with your instructor. The Council of Writing Program Administrators describes plagiarism as follows: “plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else’s language, ideas or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source.” Academic honesty is highly valued in the University community and acts of plagiarism will not be tolerated.

If I suspect that something a student has written has been plagiarized, in full or in part, intentionally or unintentionally, I take the following actions:

- + I alert the student to areas of the text that are suspicious
- + The student receives no credit on the paper, pending failure, and it is up to them to prove that they turned in original work
- + Each student is asked to provide me with hard copies of the research they used in writing the paper
- + If the student cannot provide documentation of their research, the student will fail the paper

These measures are also put into action when a paper is poorly cited. When a student then brings their research to me I use the time to talk with them about citation and make sure that they understand how and when to cite in the future.

In the case that the student is unable to provide evidence of their original work, or in the case that I have evidence that the student has intentionally plagiarized their work:

- + The student will automatically fail the given assignment

- + The student may fail the course unless, at my discretion, I offer alternative assignments and/or conditions
- + I may pursue a plagiarism citation unless, at my discretion, I offer alternative assignments and/or conditions
- + The student may receive alternate assignments, etc. to avoid failure. In this instance, all conditions must be met. I need to see evidence of excellent work and effort, and work must be completed on time.
- + All other previously established conditions in the class (i.e. attendance, participation, homework grades, etc.) still stand and can still cause a student to fail the course
- + In the case of blatant or egregious offenses, I will not negotiate against course failure and will pursue a University Citation of Plagiarism

Students with Disabilities

Qualified students with disabilities will receive appropriate accommodations in this course. Please speak with me privately after class or in my office. Please be prepared to provide a letter from your DSS Coordinator.

Participation in University Assessment

This course requires an electronic submission of an assignment stripped of your personal information to be used for educational research and assessment of the writing program. Your papers will be stored in a database. This assessment in no way affects either your grade or your progression at the university.

Portfolio Grade Descriptors for WRIT 201

A

Superior portfolios will demonstrate initiative and rhetorical sophistication that go beyond the requirements. A portfolio at this level is composed of well-edited texts representing different writing situations and genres that consistently show a clear, connected sense of audience, purpose and development. The writer is able to analyze his or her own writing, reflect on it, and revise accordingly. The portfolio takes risks that work.

B

Strong portfolios meet their rhetorical goals in terms of purpose, genre, and writing situation without need for further major revisions of purpose, evidence, audience, or style/ mechanics. The writer is able to reflect on his or her own writing and make some choices about revision. The writer takes risks, although they may not all be successful.

C

Consistent portfolios meet the basic requirements, yet the writing would benefit from further revisions of purpose, evidence, audience, or writing style/mechanics (or some combination) and a stronger understanding of rhetorical decision-making involved in different writing situations and genres. The writer composes across tasks at varying levels of success with some superficial revision. The writer has taken some risks in writing and exhibits some style.

D

Weak portfolios do not fully meet the basic evaluative standards. Most texts are brief and underdeveloped. These texts show a composing process that is not yet elaborated or reflective of rhetorical understanding related to composing in different genres and for a range of writing situations. Texts generally require extensive revisions to purpose, development, audience, and/ or style and mechanics.

F

Unacceptable portfolios exhibit pervasive problems with purpose, development, audience, or style/ mechanics that interfere with meaning and readers' understanding. Unacceptable portfolios are often incomplete. A portfolio will also earn an F if it does not represent the writer's original work.

Participation Grade Descriptors for WRIT 201

A

Superior participation shows initiative and excellence in written and verbal work. The student helps to create more effective discussions and workshops through his/her verbal, electronic, and written contributions. Reading and writing assignments are always completed on time and with attention to detail. In workshop or conferences, suggestions to group members are tactful, thorough, specific, and often provide other student writers with a new perspective or insight.

B

Strong participation demonstrates active engagement in written and verbal work. The student plays an active role in the classroom but does not always add new insight to the discussion at hand. Reading and writing assignments are always completed on time and with attention to detail. In workshop or conferences, suggestions to group members are tactful, specific, and helpful.

C

Satisfactory participation demonstrates consistent, satisfactory written and verbal work. Overall, the student is prepared for class, completes assigned readings and writings, and contributes to small group workshops and large class discussions. Reading and writing assignments are completed on time. In workshop or conferences, suggestions to group members are tactful and prompt, but could benefit from more attentive reading and/or specific detail when giving comments.

D

Weak participation demonstrates inconsistent written and verbal work. The student may be late to class, unprepared for class, and may contribute infrequently or unproductively to classroom discussions or small group workshops. Reading and writing assignments are not turned in or are insufficient. In workshops or conferences, suggestions to group members may be missing, disrespectful, or far too brief and general to be of help.

F

Unacceptable participation shows ineffectual written and verbal work. The student may be excessively late to class, regularly unprepared, and not able to contribute to classroom discussions or small group workshops. This student may be disruptive in class. Reading and writing assignments are regularly not turned in or are insufficient. In workshops or conferences, the student has a pattern of missing, being completely unprepared, or being disruptive.