

Women Writing in Digital Spaces

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Ellis 019
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English 3060j | Women and Writing

Introduction & Course Summary

Welcome to English 3060j – *Women Writing in Digital Spaces*. This course will explore the ways in which new media and digital geographies both open up new possibilities and create new challenges for women writing in public spaces. We will examine the ways in which women have used digital media to create new kinds of writing, and also the backlash against women through movements such as #gamergate. We will also look at, and work to remediate, the under-representation of women and LGBTQA persons in online forums such as Wikipedia. To accomplish this work we will engage thoroughly with feminist theories and issues and how they are manifested in new media/digital spaces that have emerged as a result of advancements in communication technologies.

As fulfillment of your junior composition requirement, this course is also focused on helping you become a better writer. In my time teaching writing, I've learned that that happens when you begin to understand writing as a tool through which we mediate (influence) our daily social realities (including our identities, thoughts, behaviors, and beliefs). I can help you become more aware of how this works by asking you to pay attention to how writing and writers are always affected by a number of factors, including: different forms of digital and analog media; social communities, both f2f and online; rhetorical goals/purposes (what reader and writer hope to accomplish), the genres being used, and the audiences involved.

Attitudes for Success

The success of this course depends a great deal on the energy each of us brings. I want to ask that each of you do your best to bring three attitudes to our meetings, the assignments, and your interactions with each other and me. First, I ask that you be interested. Interest, to me, means a curiosity, a desire to learn something new and expand or develop your current ways of thinking. Second, I ask that you be engaged with this course, that you bring a sustained level of physical and mental attention to all of our activities. Finally, I ask that you bring an experimental attitude to the course, that you are open-minded and appreciative of readings and projects that are challenging or present ideas

Course Texts & Resources

Course Texts: Freely available online
CourseSite: <http://mattvetter.net/womenandwriting>
Style Guide: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>

Materials

- *flash drive (recommended)
- *journal/notebook (required)
- *computer & Internet access
- *Ohio Box Account

Course Work: Major Projects

This course is divided into 3 units with major assignments for each. At the end of the term, you'll compile your projects into a portfolio using your Ohio Box account.

1 Found Social Media Essay

A multi-modal personal essay comprised entirely of posts you have made to various social media (Facebook, Vine, Instagram, etc.) written in order to gain a better understanding of the online "self" you have constructed. Alternate: a biographical essay of a public figure.

2 Group Twine Game

You'll work in groups of three to compose a narrative game using Twine that examines an issue related to gender. You'll also research and create a group Annotated Bibliography that supports the intellectual work of the game.

3 Wikipedia Edit

Became familiar with conventions and practices of Wikipedia in order to contribute to its representation of women and trans issues and identities. You'll significantly develop or write a new Wikipedia article.

Journals & Informal Writing Assignments

Every student is expected to purchase and keep a journal in which to complete informal writing assignments (IWAs). Typically, whenever we have a reading, you'll also be expected to complete some kind of reading response. These assignments will vary depending on the readings and upcoming course projects. IWAs may also include proposals or other process-oriented pieces that will help you complete major projects. You should bring your journals to class every day. On days where you have written a reading response, I will check to make sure you have completed the assignment and I may ask you to share something you wrote to inform our discussion. You should also use your journal to take notes and record class activities. I'll collect your journals at three points in the semester to assess and give minimal feedback. It is your responsibility to keep up with IWAs. Late or missing IWAs will result in a minor violation.

Grades

Grades are problematic, especially in writing courses. Traditional ways of grading lead to a lot of stress and anxiety, for both teacher and student. But grades can also hinder learning when we become so focused on assessment that we lose sight of our main objectives: practicing, discussing, and learning about writing. My own approach to grades is to value effort rather than skill. I believe that all students should have an equal opportunity to succeed in my course, regardless of the literacies they bring with them.

As a teacher, I'm trying to level the playing field but I'm also trying to get you to work through multiple difficult tasks because that, I believe, is the best way to challenge you to learn. The most practical way (that I've found) to accomplish all of this is to use what's called a grading contract.

The Grading Contract

is meant to maximize learning and facilitate productive discussion about the essays you write. The gist of the contract is that I guarantee a grade of at least a B to everyone who meets its terms and in return, you promise to fulfill your side of that contract by doing your best to learn what we are trying to learn. Students who violate the contract (1 major violation or 3 minor violations) will see their promised grade reduced by a full letter grade. At the end of the course, you will have the opportunity to raise your grade by a full letter by producing a superior portfolio of writing gathered from the work you accomplished all semester. If you have violated the contract, superior writing can still raise your grade (if you're down to a C, you could still get a B). The grading contract, then, largely makes grading automatic, up-front, and, I hope, less stressful, which should allow us to worry less about grades and more about learning how to best take advantage of writing in school, work, and life.

Course Policies

*I use **e-mail** to communicate important information about the class. You are responsible for checking your school account regularly. You should also check the **CourseSite** often for announcements and informal writing assignments.

*Work on major projects is always public. Don't submit writing you can't let other students see. Drafts of papers must be polished and ready for classmates' feedback on the assigned dates to get credit for peer review. Journals are semi-private. I will never ask you to share with classmates if you are not comfortable doing so. Journals will be assessed and read by the instructor, however.

***Plagiarism: Cheating**—whether by claiming another's ideas or work as your own (fraud) or making up or falsifying information (fabrication) will result in a course grade of F and a report to Community Standards. You are at all times responsible for handling sources ethically by acknowledging the author and source of directly borrowed ideas and language in your writing.

***ADA: Class Accessibility:** Please let me know as soon as possible if you need an accommodation in order to work successfully in this class. This classroom strives for full accessibility, and it is not necessary for you to have an official accommodation letter from Disability Services in order to request changes to the classroom that will better serve your needs as a student, although you are encouraged to explore the possible supports they can offer if you are a student with a disability. Both able bodied students and students with disabilities are encouraged to suggest any improvements to the learning environment. We're all in this together!

*Everyone in our class, including me, must remain **civil and courteous** at all times. We will often have opportunity to share our opinions and beliefs, but no racist, sexist, heterosexist, or any other negative communication harmful to an individual or group will be tolerated.

Assessing Your Writing

The grading contract allows us to focus less on a quantitative judgment of your writing, and more on qualitative feedback. It might seem strange at first to not receive a grade on your essay, but remember that one of the goals of this course is to have a complex discussion about your writing and that we'll accomplish that goal through meta-commentary about how each of your projects succeeds and what you can work on in the future. I'll spend a lot of time thinking about and commenting on your work, and I expect you engage equally with my comments and to be constantly reflecting on your growth as a writer. I'll use Microsoft Word's comment feature to provide feedback and will also write a short letter at the end of your essay discussing what could be improved. I'll use a blue highlight for sentences/passages that are really well-written and a yellow highlight for sentences/passages that need some work. I'll highlight what I determine to be grammatical errors in yellow. If errors are numerous/distracting, I may ask you to rewrite the essay for credit. Furthermore, if your essay is not meeting the criteria of the assignment in terms of content, length, etc, I may ask you to rewrite the essay. For some of the essays, you will also be responsible for a review of a peer's project. I expect a high level of critical review here, one that earnestly attempts to help improve your partner's writing. If you fail to offer substantial advice, you won't receive credit for these (major) obligations.

Attendance & Participation

Absences in this course will result in a minor violation. 3 minor violations = reduction of final course grade by a full letter. I will consider, but not guarantee, excusing absences with written documentation, but they must be legitimate, e.g. severe illness. Participation is required in this course as well. We'll do a lot of small group work and frequent class discussions. Please come to class prepared to discuss the reading for that day. Bring your textbook and any notes that will benefit our discussion. Do the reading and be prepared to contribute, but not dominate, the discussion.

Learning Outcomes for all English J Courses

Read

- read a variety of texts and genres, such as articles from academic journals and popular magazines, visual texts or film, creative writing (e.g. poetry, memoir, literary journalism) and student texts);
- differentiate between primary and secondary sources;
- analyze and/or evaluate texts according to the audience, purposes, and writing situations;
- understand and use a variety of concepts or theories to analyze different texts (i.e. use rhetorical theories of composing or classical rhetorical appeals, feminist theory, use of literary elements such as, metaphor or symbolism; when appropriate, use concepts from film studies, and visual analysis, etc.
- understand and use rhetorical concepts (ethos, logos, pathos, kairos) to analyze texts;
- read own texts reflectively to identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas needing improvement;
- respond to peers' texts constructively at both global and local levels.

Research

- search a variety of academic databases using appropriate and effective strategies;
- evaluate the quality and validity of sources using clear criteria (e.g. online sources, journal articles, books, etc.);
- understand what constitutes plagiarism and how to avoid it;
- document sources correctly using an assigned documentation style or a documentation style from the students' field (i.e. MLA, APA, Chicago);
- demonstrate ability to develop a good question for research (i.e. open-ended, current or relevant, focused, etc.).

Write

- write for specific purposes, audiences and situations;
- show ability to quote, paraphrase, summarize, analyze, synthesize, and critique;
- compose original arguments using rhetorical strategies, such as appeals to ethos, logos, pathos;
- show ability to utilize and/or analyze visual texts along with alphabetic texts; (visual text analysis is not required but highly recommended).
- practice writing in a variety of genres (e.g.. researched arguments, thesis-driven essays, literary analyses, memoir, memos, reports, proposals, etc.);
- approach writing as a recursive process;
- use various activities to generate ideas for writing, including class discussion, group work, debates, focused learning logs, freewriting, etc.
- use informal writing as a tool for developing critical thinking (e.g. enacting Elbow's believing and doubting game, focused journal assignments, dialogue journals, double-sided research logs, etc.);
- revise at both global and local levels;
- use correct documentation, grammar, spelling, and punctuation;
- compose a minimum of 20 pages of formal, graded writing, not including revised writing.
- allow students to revise some of their work based on feedback from their peers, tutors, or their instructors