

WRT 205
Critical Inquiry and Research:
Piracy: Historical, Digital, Transnational

Spring 2010
Days: M/W 5:15 - 6:35
Section # 160 40360

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Course Description

Welcome to Writing 205, Syracuse University's sophomore level writing course focusing on research as critical inquiry. At its best, research affords us an opportunity to experience the "bliss" of Barthes' quote—to simultaneously acknowledge the limits of our understanding (maybe accompanied by shame or trauma or anxiety), and to seize the opportunity to complicate and enrich our understanding. And at the same moment that research brings us up against voices, discourses, ideas and worldviews that are strange and seemingly incomprehensible, it also provides us with the opportunity and inspiration to work with and within new discourses, ideas and worldviews.

This course recognizes that we all now compose in an informationally rich environment, so it is extremely important that we grow comfortable with (and adept at) asking researchable questions and locating, evaluating and writing research. Good questions, rather than making us vulnerable or revealing our ignorance, trigger active engagement with ideas and issues and concepts. Our good questions will inspire us to gather more information, so we will learn to access information on the web, in databases, at the library, and through primary research such as interviews and surveys. We will evaluate our sources knowledgeably and critically. We will locate ourselves in the middle of complex and competing claims, and produce texts in various genres (white papers, proposals, reports, arguments, analyses, explanations, summaries, "samples," etc.) that advance our collective understanding of these claims and arguments.

Course Goals

Goal #1: Students will compose texts that investigate a focused topic of inquiry that raises issues of diversity and community and that offers multiple points of entry based on their interest and expertise.

Goal #2: Students will develop a working knowledge of strategies and genres of critical research.

Goal #3: Students will learn critical techniques of reading through engagement with research-based texts.

Introduction to Topic of Inquiry

"Forbid a man to think for himself or to act for himself and you may add the joy of piracy and the zest of smuggling to his life." - Elbert Hubbard

"Piracy, n. Commerce without its folly-swaddles, just as God made it." - Ambrose Bierce

"Property is an intellectual production. The game requires coolness, right reasoning, promptness, and patience in the players." - Ralph Waldo Emerson

In book IX of Homer's *Odyssey* brave Odysseus - the shining star of Greek heroism, *hubris*, and guile - recounts how after leaving Troy and setting sail for the shores of his home in Ithaca he first stopped in Ismarus. Instead of slaying a great monster, distinguishing himself on the battlefield, or seducing a would-be queen to bed, Odysseus instead recounts how

*There I sacked the city,
killed the men, but as for the wives and plunder,
that rich haul we dragged away from the place --
we shared it round so no one, not on my account,
would go deprived of his fair share of spoils. (9.45-49)*

Impressed, Odysseus' host Alcinous begs him to continue his tale of conquest and mayhem on the wine-dark seas. After laboring over twenty years, Odysseus finally returns to his native Ithaca. With the help of his son Telemachus - and a loyal goatherd or two - Odysseus quickly sets to work executing the treacherous suitors for

*Bleeding my house to death,
ravishing my serving-women
-- [and] wooing my wife. . . (22.37-39)*

Fast forward roughly twenty-three centuries to November 22, 1718. Edward Teach - more commonly known as Blackbeard - has retired from his piratical activities; however, he is tracked down by Robert Maynard, shot five times, stabbed more than twenty times, and decapitated on the orders of the Governor of the colony of Virginia. Around the same time as Teach's execution, "pyrates" on London's Grub Street were partially responsible - through illegal reproduction and publication of texts by Newton, Diderot, Voltaire, and Kant - for creating the "Republic of Letters" or what most of us have come to know as the core texts of the European Enlightenment.

Fast forward again to 2008. After decades of civil war, humanitarian crises, and U.S. military "interventions" to prevent radical militant Islamification, Somali piracy ventures perilously close to the power centers of an international arms trade. The Ukrainian vessel *MV Faina* is hijacked off the coast of Kenya. Carrying a cargo of 33 Soviet-made T-72 tanks and ammunition destined for Juba in Southern Sudan, the *MV Faina* is a very valuable target. After receiving \$3.2 million in ransom, the pirates release the hostages; however, most of the pirates are killed by International Maritime Organization-affiliated navies while returning to Somalia.

Turning from the high seas to the high stakes world of information capitalism and intellectual property, 2009 sees the British megaband Coldplay battling plagiarism claims about its title track from the album *Viva la Vida*. Cat Stevens, Joe Satriani, and Enanitos Verdes all claim that the band's title track is a riff on their "original" work. Further, Martin Luther King Jr.'s *I Have A Dream* speech is scrutinized for plagiarist claims and software giant Microsoft suspends their Chinese social news feed service Juku after acknowledging it illegally - but *unwittingly* - pilfered code from another, much smaller, internet technologies firm.

What is our relationship with piracy, intellectual property, plagiarism, and authority? Over the course of the semester we'll consider as a class the following questions:

What is the history of piracy?
Who defines a pirate?
What is an author?
Who owns a text?
Is anything original?
What is fair use?
How have internet technologies and mass digitization changed piracy?
How has recent economic globalization changed piracy?
How is piracy global?
Can piracy be beneficial?

Work of the Course

You will devote time, thought, and energy to a variety of informal and formal reading and writing practices. During the course you might be asked to annotate readings, keep a record of ideas and responses, jot down observations, take notes on class discussions, experiment with different styles and organizational choices, and engage in a variety of drafting and revision activities. All these activities are important and will have an impact on your development and success as academic writers (and your final grade).

Writing well depends upon reading well. The course texts will provide you with ideas and arguments, facts and statistics. They will prompt thought as you agree or disagree or qualify those ideas. They enlarge the context for our class discussion. And they illustrate choices other writers have made as they composed. Writing and reading are interdependent practices, and you will move between the two regularly throughout the course.

General Course Trajectory

Unit One (5 weeks)

Here's how we'll use our time during the first unit:

- First, we'll get acquainted with the history of piracy by looking at a couple examples of how intellectual and physical theft has shaped the development of technology and philosophy from the ancients through the Enlightenment. **Emphasis: History**
- Next we'll consider the notion of the author, textual ownership, and plagiarism by looking to a couple of examples of academic and political thought that contest and confirm these positions. **Emphasis: Theory and Composition**
- We'll also look to a few recent examples of piracy to begin understanding how global economic and environmental factors generate contexts for piracy. **Emphasis: Science and Economics**
- Finally, we'll consider the ways that piracy through internet technologies are challenging capitalist paradigms of media distribution and closing the gap between developed and developing nations. **Emphasis: Technology, Literacy, and Economics**

In addition to familiarizing ourselves with piracy, we'll be practicing these skills during the first unit:

- Development of a shared inquiry-specific vocabulary/lexicon
- Identification of sourcing and sourcing strategies in our shared readings
- Library database research
- Critical reading strategies: claim identification, rhetorical tactics, reading beyond content
- Drafting: Paragraphs, claims, and peer review

Unit Two (6 weeks)

Here's how we'll use our time in the second unit:

- Initially, we'll continue our work toward understanding the myriad controversies involved in piracy
- Next, we'll work to develop deeper research awareness by considering potential sites for sustained research inquiry
- After developing research questions, we'll work closely with sources to identify: 1) claims and arguments across sources; 2) distinctions between sources; and 3) possible sites of dialogue among sources.
- Next, we'll practice pre-drafting and drafting strategies including: 1) creating annotated bibliographies; 2) developing analytical or argumentative theses; and 3) sketching structural/organizational heuristics.
- Finally, we'll practice constructive feedback on peer drafts, project titling, and MLA citation.

Unit Three (5 Weeks)

Here's how we'll use our time in the third unit:

- Because Unit Three is collaborative, we'll work early on to establish: 1) shared, collaborative groups based on research areas from unit two; and 2) guidelines for ethical collaboration.
- Next, we'll develop group project proposals that emphasize the "critical" nature of research.
- We'll consider what working with new technologies entails and will practice working with these new technologies in-class.
- We'll also provide time for class-wide project status updates to further refine our claims and projects.
- Finally, we'll review presentation strategies and will share our group projects with the class as a whole.

Course Texts and Materials

(the handbook is available in the SUB and Follett's Orange Bookstore)
Blakesly, David & Jeffrey Hoogveen. *Writing: A Manual for the Digital Age*
Various pdfs available on blackboard
approximately \$20 for copy expenses over the course of the semester

I will post course materials on blackboard—<http://blackboard.syr.edu/>—with great regularity. You will need your Mymail ID and password to access our course and I ask that you check your syr account at least once a day, since it is the only email address blackboard provides me to communicate with you.

Course Grading

Unit 1: Entering (20%) Portfolio (10%)	An essay of 6 pages in which you enter the conversation initiated by course readings, and present a focused and critical analytical review of the texts.
Unit 2: Sustained Research Essay (30%) Portfolio (10%)	A 10-12 page research essay explaining and analyzing a particular aspect of piracy, making use of the texts and theories of unit 1, but building on that foundation through further primary and secondary research. Unit work includes an annotated bibliography.
Unit 3: Collaborative Research Project (30%)	A multi-media group project in which group members create a sustained analysis or argument. Unit work includes collaborative written product as well as a group presentation.

Feedback

You will receive many different kinds of feedback during this course. Some will come from fellow students and some will come from me. Both are important; they tell you in various ways how your readers are responding to your writing. This feedback will also help you learn how to assess your own work.

Attendance and Participation

Writing studios are courses in language learning, and language is learned in communities; therefore, it is essential that you attend class and participate. Absences and lack of preparation for class will affect your classmates' work as well as your own. The work you do in class, the work you do to prepare for each class, is as important as any polished assignment you turn in for a grade. In addition, our syllabus is only a projection and may be subject to occasional changes and revisions as it seems appropriate, necessary, or just interesting. That is another reason why your attendance is vital.

If you must miss a class, you are responsible for work assigned. Please realize, however, that class time cannot be reconstructed or made up, and that your performance, your work, and your final course grade will be affected by absences. If you miss the equivalent of three weeks of classes or more without any official documented excuse it is unlikely you will pass the course. I don't anticipate any of you will be in that position, however, so let's all agree to do the work, come to class, learn a lot, and make the course a meaningful experience.

SU Email

To enhance student services, the University will use your Syracuse email address for communications. I will do so also. Please check your SU email on a regular basis. If you have problems accessing your email account, contact the Help Desk at ITS at <http://its.syr.edu/>.

Blackboard

Our course is loaded on blackboard, a University on-line teaching support system. I will teach you how to access our section of WRT 205 on blackboard, and will then expect you to be able to locate, download, and link to a range of course materials with some regularity throughout the semester. ALL of our readings will be posted to Blackboard and YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE for printing them out and having them in class. I will also contact you regularly via the blackboard course listserv, which has already been created using each student's "syr" email address. Please check your syr account at least once daily throughout the spring.

The url for blackboard is

<http://blackboard.syr.edu>

Once you access the main page you will be asked for your user ID and password. The following is from the student help page of blackboard:

Once a student registers for a course that is using Blackboard, a student account is set up for them and they are automatically enrolled in the appropriate course(s). Users login to Blackboard using their NetID and password. Your NetID is the portion of your SU email that appears before the @syr.edu. Your NetID password is also your Blackboard password. **If you do not know what your NetID and password are, visit the ITS website at <http://its.syr.edu/netid/> to obtain this information.** You can also obtain this information by calling 443-2677, or by going to the Student Computing Support Center in your dormitory.

Use of Student Writing

It is understood that registration for and continued enrollment in this course constitutes permission by the student for the instructor to use any student work constructed as a result of said enrollment in the course.

Computer Use

Most of the work you do for this class will be handed in word processed. Use an easily readable font, size 12 point. Include one inch margins and follow the page layout used by the MLA format described in your handbook.

We will also be using email for contact outside class. Use email to contact me about your coursework, to set up an appointment to meet with me outside class, or to ask a question.

Finally, we will be looking at a variety of sites on the Internet at times during the course. Please let me know if you have not had any experience using a browser such as Netscape or Explorer.

While computers save us great amounts of time over typewriters and make corrections much simpler, they are also susceptible to crashing and freezing. Save your work frequently, always make backup copies, and plan your projects with extra time allowed for those inevitable glitches.

Where to Find Help: The Writing Center

Experienced writing consultants at the Writing Center (101 HB Crouse Hall, on the Quad) can teach you how to succeed on individual assignments and ultimately become a better writer. They're prepared to work one-on-one with you at *any* stage of your process and with *any* kind of writing you're attempting while attending SU. Whether you need help understanding an assignment, brainstorming ideas, revising subsequent drafts, or developing editing strategies, face-to-face and online appointments are available for 25- or 50-minute sessions throughout the semester and can be reserved up to seven days in advance via their online scheduling program, WCOnline. In addition, drop-in appointments are welcome Monday through Thursday from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and brief concerns or questions can be emailed to consultants via the eWC. For more information on hours, location and services, please visit <http://wc.syr.edu>. This is a *free* resource to all students and highly recommended for every assignment you work on in this class.

Academic Integrity

All writing submitted for this course is understood to be your original work. In cases where academic dishonesty is detected (the fraudulent submission of another's work, in whole or part, as your own), you may be subject to a failing grade for the project or the course, and in the worst case, to academic probation or expulsion. For a more detailed description of the guidelines for adhering to academic integrity in the College of Arts and Sciences, go to:

<http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>

Private is Public Statement

Part of becoming a good writer is learning to appreciate the ideas and criticisms of others, and in this course our purpose is to come together as a community of writers. Remember that you will often be expected to share your scrutiny or what you feel strongly about with others. Unless otherwise noted, all of your work in this class can, and often will, be discussed in class in front of your peers. Please refrain from writing anything you do not wish to become public knowledge in your essays or any other public assignments.

Respect Statement

As we may confront several inflammatory issues during the term, it is essential that we behave as a community in the classroom. While you may not agree with someone else's viewpoint, you also cannot legislate their truth. This means that it is not OK to demean someone's position based on sexual preference, race, ethnicity or gender (or anything else for that matter). Please be respectful and tactful with all members of the class at all times. This does not mean that you are not entitled to an opinion but that you adopt positions responsibly, contemplating the possible effects of your statements on others.

Contacting Me

If you are unable to meet with me during office hours, please see me before or after class or send me an email so that we can arrange an appointment. I expect you to accept a responsible role as a communicator in this class and to keep me informed about your work, your progress, your questions, and your problems. Please do not hesitate to meet with me to talk about your work several times during the semester, preferably **BEFORE** your grade is the central concern. My office phone is 443-8691; additionally, my email address is jlewis04@syr.edu. I will try to respond to your emails in a timely fashion. During the week (Monday-Friday) I will do my very best to respond within 24 hours of your initial email. On the weekends, I will respond within 48 hours.

Special Needs and Situations

If you are a student with a disability (e.g. physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, etc.) and think that you might need special assistance or special accommodation in this class or any other class, please call the Office of Disability Services at 315.443.4498 or email at odsched@syr.edu. Students who need special consideration because for any other situation should make an appointment to see me right away.