

## WR430: Histories and Theories of Composition

Spring 2014

Days: T/Th, 10:00-11:50

Room: ITC002

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### Course Overview

The goal of WR430 is to introduce students into the “history and theories” of Composition. While there are many ways to approach such a broad subject, my own sense is that the best way to study the profession is to directly engage in the work of the profession -- the classic “learn-by-doing model.” For that reason, during the next 10 weeks, we will both study the history of the “field” while also directly engaging in the historiographic work that marks its current practices.

To begin, we will examine how the field has imagined its history by examining “classic” texts that range from the first issue of *CCCC's* to Miller's *Textual Carnivals* to Berlin's *Rhetoric and Reality*. These foundational texts will provide competing narratives about the development of the field: some will highlight its gendered history while others will focus on its relationship to Freshman Composition or technology. In the process of taking in these varied histories, it is my hope that you'll not only find a historical narrative that speaks to your own experience but that you'll also recognize the constructive and constructed nature of history-making itself. By reading across the rich history of composition histories, we'll collectively explore how the discipline of Writing came to be a discipline at all.

In addition to exploring historical accounts of the field, we'll also spend a bit of time considering how Writing Studies/Rhetoric and Composition have emerged at Western Oregon University. Working collectively as a group, we'll dig deep into archives at the library, from the faculty senate, and in the English, Writing, and Linguistics Department to uncover how writing came to be writing at WOU. This historiographic work is speculative and, at present, I'm not sure what we'll find. But don't fret -- not knowing what history one will discover when they set off on the path of research is the work of any historian worth her salt.

### Course Goals

Goal #1: Students will explore and compare competing histories of the field of Academic Writing at the postsecondary level in the U.S.

Goal #2: Students will participate in the process of history-making by conducting a collective archival research project on the development of writing courses at Western Oregon University

Goal #3: Students will develop a working knowledge of history-making processes, including: archival research, historical narrative writing, and institutional research.

Goal #4: Students will read and compose a research paper that summarizes and synthesizes competing historical narratives from across the field of North American Writing Studies.

### Course Requirements and Grading

End of Term Research Paper (30%)	An essay of 7-10 pages in which you summarize and synthesize the competing histories we've read over the course of the term. This paper will also require you to supplement our own histories with historical details from other peer-reviewed research from Writing Studies. In the end, you should argue for a particular historical narrative that you feel best describes your understanding of the field.
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Collaborative Project on Writing at WOU (20%)	This collaborative project will bring together the efforts of the entire class to create a historical narrative concerning the development of Writing classes at Western Oregon University. As this work is speculative, and because I'm not entirely sure what we'll find, this grade will be assessed at the end of the course and will be the same for everyone (assuming you contributed to the project).
In-Class Midterm Exam (20%)	The in-class midterm exam will test your reading comprehension and retention over the course of the first half of the term. You'll be asked one question from our readings and will be given one class period (1 hour, 40 minutes) to answer that question. You may bring one page of notes to use on the exam.
Ongoing (30%)	The "Ongoing" grade is directly related to your participation in-class, your preparation for class, your presence in class, and your interaction with other members of class. This grade is entirely at my discretion; however, if you come to class prepared and provide consistent and generative feedback for your peers, you'll do well in this category. I will notify you as the quarter progresses if you're in danger of losing points for the "Ongoing" percentage of your grade.

### Required Texts<sup>1</sup>:

Berlin, *Rhetoric and Reality*

Miller, *Textual Carnivals*

Connors, *Composition-Rhetoric*

Harris, *A Teaching Subject*

CCCC's 1<sup>st</sup> issue and 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary issue

PDF Selections from Heath, Brandt, Flower, Welch, Mathieu

### Schedule

#### Week 1 – COURSE EMPHASIS BEGINS WITH HISTORIES

Tu., 4/1: Course Introduction, Description of Major Assignments, Introduction to History of Composition

**HW:** Read Miller, "The Story of Composition."

Th., 4/3: Discuss Crowley. Begin mapping history of writing at university.

**HW:** Read Crowley, "Composition in the University," "The Toad in the Garden," and "The Invention of Freshman English."

#### Week 2

Tu., 4/8: Discuss composition as service course. Continue mapping history of writing at university.

**HW:** Read Miller, "The Sad Women in the Basement: Images of Composition Teaching"

Th., 4/10: Discuss composition as gendered discipline.

**HW:** Connors, "Gender Influences: Composition-Rhetoric as an Irenic Rhetoric" and Crowley, "A Personal Essay on Freshman English."

#### Week 3

Tu., 4/15: Discuss composition as gendered discipline. Discuss freshman composition as service course.

**HW:** Read Crowley, "The Bourgeois Subject and the Demise of Rhetorical Education."

Th., 4/17: Discuss the birth of composition as civic exercise. Begin brainstorming/action planning for archival research project.

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<sup>1</sup> Because of the abbreviated nature of the quarter system, we'll be reading excerpts from all of these works and will rarely read the entire monograph.

**HW:** Read Berlin, “The Method and the Major Theories,” “The Demise of the Classical Tradition,” and “Current-Traditional Rhetoric” from *Writing Instruction in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*.

*Week 4*

Tu., 4/22: Discuss Berlin’s history of rhetoric. Continue discussing brainstorming/action planning for archival research project.

**HW:** Read Miller, “The Subject of Composition” and Berlin, “An Overview,” and “The 19<sup>th</sup> Century Background” from *Rhetoric and Reality*.

Th., 4/24: Discuss Miller & Berlin’s accounts of the birth of academic writing.

**HW:** Read Berlin, “The Growth of the Discipline: 1900-1920,” and “The Influence of Progressive Education: 1920-1940” from *Rhetoric and Reality*.

*Week 5*

Tu., 4/29: Overview of course until this point. Preparation for midterm. Archival research project update/check-in.

**HW:** Prepare for midterm.

Th., 5/1: Midterm

**HW: No homework**

**Week 6 – COURSE EMPHASIS SHIFTS TO THEORIES OF WRITING & RESEARCH**

Tu., 5/6: Introduction to “movements” in composition pedagogy.

**HW:** Read Harris, “Process” from *A Teaching Subject*. Read Crowley, “Around 1971: The Emergence of Process Pedagogy.”

Th., 5/8: Discuss process movement. Invention session for final research paper.

**HW:** Read McComiskey, “The Post-Process Movement in Composition Studies” from *Teaching Composition as a Social Process*.

*Week 7*

Tu., 5/13: Discuss post-process theories of composition. Organizing ideas session for final research paper.

**HW:** Archival research project, pt. 1.

Th., 5/15: LAST DAY TO DROP CLASS WITH A “W”: 5/16. Discuss the archival research project.

**HW:** Archival research project, pt. 2.

*Week 8*

Tu., 5/20: Archival research project in-class workshop.

**HW:** Archival research project, pt. 3.

Th., 5/22: **NO CLASS – RSA CONFERENCE – SAN ANTONIO, TX**

**HW:** Continue working on research paper & archival research project.

*Week 9*

Tu., 5/27: **NO CLASS – RSA CONFERENCE – SAN ANTONIO, TX**

**HW:** Complete full draft of research paper.

Th., 5/29: Peer Review, pt. 1.

**HW:** Revise research paper in light of peer review.

*Week 10*

Tu., 6/3: Peer Review, pt. 2.

**HW:** Continue revising on research paper.

Th., 6/6: **NO CLASS – C&W CONFERENCE – PULLMAN, WA**

**HW:** Turn in research paper via email to [lewisj@mail.wou.edu](mailto:lewisj@mail.wou.edu) by 6/10 at midnight.

### **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 two weeks of classes (that's four meetings) 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.

### **WOU Email**

To enhance student services, the University will use your WOU email address for communications. I will do so also. Please check your WOU email on a regular basis. If you have problems accessing your email account, contact the Technology Resource Center (ITC204) or on: x8695.

### **Computer Use**

You are welcome to and encouraged to bring your laptops to class if they're being used for course purposes such as note taking, peer review, etc. 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.

We will also be using email and Twitter for contact outside class. Use email or Twitter to contact me about your coursework, to set up an appointment to meet with me outside class, or to ask a question. Obviously, Twitter is a public platform, so send me a PM or email if you don't want the rest of class to know about our conversation.

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 WOU Writing Center (APSC 301) can teach you how to succeed on individual assignments and ultimately help you become a better writer. They're prepared to work one-on-one with you on your writing at any time during your education at WOU. Whether you need help better understanding an assignment, brainstorming ideas, revising drafts, or developing editing strategies, face-to-face and online appointments are available throughout the quarter and can be reserved in advance. For more information on hours, locations, and services, please visit: <http://www.wou.edu/las/humanities/writingctr/index.php>. This is a *free* resource to all students and I highly recommend it for every assignment you work on in this class.

### **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 quarter, preferably **BEFORE** your grade is the central concern. My office phone is 838-8325; additionally, my email address is [lewisj@mail.wou.edu](mailto:lewisj@mail.wou.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.

I can be reached on Twitter for informal questions about class. My user handle is: @justalewis. I'd love for Twitter to become a backchannel for course communication where all of the students in the course can quickly and easily ask questions and receive answers. To that end, we'll be using a course hashtag (#wr430lewis) to collate all course communications. I'll go over how to use Twitter and the hashtag during our course meeting. Bonus points will be provided to students who actively use Twitter to answer each other's questions about the course.

### **Disability Statement**

If you have a documented disability that requires academic accommodations at Western Oregon University, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and the Office of Disability Services (ODS), APSC 405, or at [503-838-8250](tel:503-838-8250), as early as possible in the term to discuss your disability-related needs. Use of ODS services, including testing accommodations, requires prior authorization by ODS and compliance with approved procedures. Students needing medical or mental health care can access the Student Health and Counseling Center by calling [503-838-8313](tel:503-838-8313), emailing at [health@wou.edu](mailto:health@wou.edu), or by walking in to schedule an appointment.

*Veterans and active duty military personnel with special circumstances are welcome and encouraged to communicate these, in advance when possible, to the instructor.*

## **Academic Honesty**

The University requires that all students behave in a manner congruent with established community standards and in a manner conducive to the development of the individual. Actions detrimental to the mission of the University and the legitimate activities of the academic community are in violation of the Code of Student Responsibility and may be subject to judicial procedures. If you need clarification about the details of these behaviors—and the sanctions involved—you can view the Code at this site: [www.wou.edu/student/judicial/the\\_code\\_of\\_student\\_responsibility.pdf](http://www.wou.edu/student/judicial/the_code_of_student_responsibility.pdf). Remember that ignorance is not equal to innocence in the face of prosecution.

The following list comes from the Code of Student Responsibility, section 574-031-0030: Specific Standards and Policies, and describes prohibited forms of academic dishonesty, which includes but is not limited to:

- (a) Cheating- intentional use or attempted use of artifice, deception, fraud, and/or misrepresentations of one's academic work;
- (b) Fabrication- unauthorized falsification and/or invention of any information of citation in any academic exercise;
- (c) Facilitating dishonesty – helping or attempting to help another person commit an act of academic dishonesty. This includes students who substitute for other persons in examinations or represent as their own papers, reports, or any other academic work of others;
- (d) Plagiarism- representing without giving credit the words, data, or ideas of another person as one's own work in any academic exercise. This includes submitting, in whole or in part, prewritten term papers of another or research of another, including but not limited product of commercial vendor who sell or distribute such materials. And the appropriation of and/or use of electronic data of another person or persons as one's own, or using such data without giving proper credit for it; or
- (e) Any use or attempted use of electronic devices in gaining an illegal advantage in academic work in which use of these devices is prohibited, and such devices include but are not limited to cell phones, pdas, laptops, programmable calculators, etc.

## **Plagiarism**

Work you submit for this course must have been written by you for this course. You may not submit work in this course and in another (except with permission from me and the other instructor), and you may not submit under your name work written entirely or in part by someone else (unless you cite and document the source and mark quotations).

Patchwriting is copying from a source text and then deleting some words, altering grammatical structures, or plugging in one-for-one synonym-substitutes. If you submit work that is patchwritten, you will have done poor writing and will get a commensurately poor grade. I do not, however, treat incidents of patchwriting as academic dishonesty unless I have some reason to believe that you intended to deceive your readers. It is difficult to write from sources without patchwriting, and the better you can summarize without patchwriting, the better you will understand what you are

reading. For this reason, I teach writing from sources and summary techniques, and I welcome opportunities to work with students who want to acquire these skills<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Thanks to Rebecca Moore Howard for [this plagiarism policy](#).

