

WRD 500: Proseminar in Writing, Rhetoric & Discourse

Course Description

WRD 500 is the gateway course to the intellectual traditions and practices that students encounter in the department of Writing, Rhetoric & Discourse. Three questions motivate this course:

1. What is writing?
2. What is rhetoric?
3. What is discourse?

This course seeks to map the contours of the multifaceted answers to these questions and to consider what these answers mean for students, for society, for the academy, for teachers, for workers, for you, and for....(fill in the blank). These three questions and the implications of their answers are fundamental to the pursuit of inquiry that motivates the discipline of writing studies. In addition, how scholars in writing studies pursue these questions is what shapes writing studies as an academic discipline. This course also encourages students bring their own perspectives and experiences to these questions and to locate them in relation to the scholarship of the field. The main goal of the course is that students have begun to build their own place to stand amongst these three fundamental questions. This “place” will form a foundation for students’ studies going forward in WRD.

Course Readings

This course is structured around 4 core book-length readings. The book-length readings are supported by additional article-length readings.

Book-length readings

Digital Detroit by Jeff Rice

Literacy in American Lives by Deborah Brandt

Multiliteracies for a Digital Age by Stuart Selber

Writing Power by Dorothy Winsor

Sample article readings

Covino, W. A., & Jolliffe, D. (1995). What is Rhetoric? *Rhetoric: Concepts, Definitions, Boundaries*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 3-26.

Bitzer, L. F. (1992). The rhetorical situation. *Philosophy & rhetoric*, 1-14.

Gee, James Paul. "Literacy, discourse, and linguistics: Introduction." *Journal of Education* 171.1 (1989): 5-17.

Matsuda, Paul Kei. "The myth of linguistic homogeneity in US college composition." *College English* (2006): 637-651.

Haas, Angela M. "Wampum as hypertext: An American Indian intellectual tradition of multimedia theory and practice." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 19.4 (2007): 77-100.

Spinuzzi, Clay. "Secret sauce and snake oil: Writing monthly reports in a highly contingent environment." *Written Communication* 27.4 (2010): 363-409.

Assignments

Summarize, Synthesize, Response (SSR) Papers: Every week several class members will be responsible for preparing and reading to the class an SSR paper about an article reading that is either referenced in or topically related to the main book section assigned for the week.

Journal Report Handout: With a partner, students will analyze a well-known journal in writing, rhetoric, and/or discourse studies, familiarizing themselves with the journal's mission, topics, conversations and ideological paradigms.

Annotated bibliography: The goal of this assignment is to give students practice in developing important graduate-level research skills. Students will use this assignment to locate a scholarly "conversation" about a problem or issue of interest that will provide a foundation for future academic inquiry.

Keyword Journal and Personal "Keyword" Word Cloud: One of the practices of this class is to trace your initial movement through the disciplinary space of writing studies by keeping a keyword journal. Each week the instructor will create a class word cloud of the keywords generated from the readings as a starting point for discussion.