



SENSE OF WRITING

ENGL 4210 | Spring 2016 | MW 3:30-5:00pm | LANG 205 | UNT
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CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

Intensive study of writing theory, philosophy, history and practice in dialogue with emerging research in humanities, the sciences and the arts.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

English 4210 is a writing-intensive course centered on the question of how writing represents—and in this way alters and affects—how humans experience the world through the senses. Writing as most of us know it focuses attention primarily on what the writer expects the audience to imagine or conceive rationally. This operation of imagining (from Lat. *imago*: image) has roots in a visual experience of reality, and, in many contexts today, the visual, representational emphasis of writing is taken for granted. We assume that writers are bound represent reality faithfully, and what is most clear and coherent is evaluated in many contexts as the best writing. **BUT WHAT IF** we start from a different premise—that writing is an attempt to represent encounters that are always multisensory and thus always more multi-faceted and complex than writing can capture? With this premise in mind, we might ask what happens if we attempt to allow a wider range of sensory experiences into our writing. What happens if we make our writing **MORE SENSITIVE TO SENSE**? Beginning with these questions of sense and imagination, we will engage this semester in several writing projects that invite us to experiment with writing in a range of contexts and forms. Together, these projects aim to heighten our awareness of writing as a technology that conveys not only the “clear” messages we intend, but also many other dimensions of our personal, historical, and cultural circumstances that we can attempt to identify and study.

“There is no whole picture that can be ‘filled in,’ since the perception and filling of a gap lead to the awareness of other gaps”
– James Clifford

OUR READINGS THIS SEMESTER will focus on writing through ethnography—writing about people and cultures. We will read important texts by James Clifford, Steven Tyler, Sarah Pink, and Ellen Cushman, among others. This focus on ethnography offers an opportunity to explore descriptive and narrative writing in the context of traditionally “academic” motivations such as research,

argument, and problem-solving. In contrast to courses in anthropology or sociology, however, our focus will remain on writing itself as an object of study. We will end the course by reflecting on what we have learned about writing as a technology that affects how we think and act, especially in relation to other people with whom we share our experiences.

REQUIRED MATERIALS: Please have the following texts in hand during the class periods they are assigned.
Clifford and Marcus, eds. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. (25th Anniv. Ed.; ISBN 9780520266025)
Pink, Sarah. *Doing Sensory Ethnography*. (ISBN 9781412948036)
Cushman, Ellen. *The Struggle and the Tools* (ISBN 9780791439821)
Other articles and texts, made available on our course Blackboard Learn site.

GRADING BREAKDOWN

50% – WhiP Writing Projects (4)
WhiP1: Slice of Life: 5%
WhiP2: Autoethnography: 10%
WhiP3: Profile: 15%
WhiP4: Topical Study: 20%
15% – Revision Projects (3)
20% – In-Class Writing, Quizzes, and Participation
15% – Final Portfolio

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS (subject to modification)

Note: Please have all assigned texts read by the date they are assigned. Read thoroughly and carefully, and plan to read each assigned text at least twice. (WC) = Writing Culture. (DSE) = Doing Sensory Ethnography. (ST) = The Struggle and the Tools

Wk	Date	MONDAYS	Date	WEDNESDAYS
1	18-Jan	MLK Day, no class	20-Jan	INTRO TO ADVANCED WRITING STUDIES
2	25-Jan	UNIT 1: WRITING THE TRUTH Read <i>ESPN</i> , Cam Newton Article (posted on Blackboard) Read Spencer, "Sensing Violence" article (Blackboard) — <i>Invention: WhiP1</i>	27-Jan	Read <i>Rolling Stone</i> , Eagles article (Blackboard) — <i>Writing: WhiP1</i>
3	1-Feb	Clifford , "Partial Truths" (WC 1-26) DUE: WHIP1—SLICE OF LIFE —@ <i>In-Class: WhiP1 Revision</i>	3-Feb	Pratt , "Fieldwork in Common Places" (WC 27-50) Clifford , "On Ethnographic Allegory" (WC 98-121) — [p] <i>Due: WhiP2 Prospectus</i>
4	8-Feb	Tyler , "Post-Modern Ethnography" (WC 122-140)	10-Feb	Marcus , "Contemporary Problems" (WC 165-193)
5	15-Feb	Rabinow , "Representations are Social Facts" (WC 234-261) DUE: WHIP2—AUTOETHNOGRAPHY	17-Feb	— <i>Reflection and Revision: Writing the Truth</i>
6	22-Feb	UNIT 2: WRITING THE SENSES —@ <i>Due: WhiP2 Revision</i> — <i>Invention: WhiP3</i>	24-Feb	Shostak , <i>Nisa</i> Ch. 1 (Blackboard) Franz (CNN), "One Family's Story" (Blackboard)
7	29-Feb	Howes , <i>Sensual Relations</i> Ch.1-2 (Blackboard)	2-Mar	Pink , <i>DSE</i> Ch. 3 (44-60) — [p] <i>Due: WhiP3 Prospectus</i>
8	7-Mar	Pink , <i>DSE</i> Ch. 4-5 (63-96)	9-Mar	Pink , <i>DSE</i> Ch. 6 (97-116)
SB	14-Mar	Spring Break	16-Mar	Spring Break
9	21-Mar	Pink , <i>DSE</i> Ch. 7 (119-131)	23-Mar	Pink , <i>DSE</i> Ch. 8 (132-154)
10	28-Mar	DUE: WHIP3—PROFILE	30-Mar	<i>Reflection and Revision: Writing the Senses</i>
11	4-Apr	BEGIN UNIT 3: WRITING THE OTHER Pink , "An Urban Tour" (Blackboard) Hammer , "Pedaling in Pairs" (Blackboard) —@ <i>Due: WhiP3 Revision</i> — <i>Invention: WhiP4</i>	6-Apr	Cushman , <i>Struggle and Tools</i> Preface & Ch.1. (1-20); also skim Ch. 2-3 (21-66)
12	11-Apr	Cushman , <i>Struggle and Tools</i> Ch. 4-6 (67-140)	13-Apr	Cushman , <i>Struggle and Tools</i> Ch. 7 (141-168) — [p] <i>Due: WhiP4 Prospectus</i>
13	18-Apr	Cushman , <i>Struggle and Tools</i> Ch. 8-10 (169-222)	20-Apr	Cushman , <i>Struggle and Tools</i> Ch. 11 (223-240)
14	25-Apr	DUE: WHIP4—TOPICAL STUDY	27-Apr	<i>Reflection and Revision: Writing the Other</i>
15	2-May	@ <i>Due: WhiP4 Revision</i> <i>Discuss Final Portfolio</i>	4-May	<i>Discuss Final Portfolio</i>

FINAL EXAM: Wednesday, May 11, 1:30-3:30 pm. Final Portfolio DUE



INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES AND EXPECTATIONS: This course requires students to write, revise, and write again throughout each week of the semester. Most of this writing will be completed outside of class. Please be prepared to engage fully in the writing and revisions projects that this course requires. These projects will require you to observe people and places outside of the classroom. You should consequently make arrangements to have time free to travel to the places you want to write about and observe the environment **on multiple occasions**. The writing that we engage in during the semester will build off of these observations; you will not be able to make up or embellish details about scenes and people that you have not observed. Students will also be asked to read from several academic texts on ethnography and sensory studies during each of the three units of the course. A significant portion of class time will be given over to discussion of these texts in relation to the writing projects we are working on. In addition, we will spend much of our class time writing, revising, and talking about our projects. Direct instruction (lectures) will be rare. Instead, I expect you to come to class prepared to talk about your writing as well as your perspective on the course readings for the week.

ASSIGNMENT POLICY: All written work needs to be typed and submitted online to our Blackboard site. For written work, include your name and the page number on the top right of each page (i.e. : Heard 1). Please also include a date and the course number (ENGL 4210). Use a text font for all essays (Times Roman or Garamond for example) at 12 points, with all one-inch (1") margins, and double-spacing. Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date indicated by the assignment prompt. Save your documents with a filename that includes your last name and the name of the assignment (i.e. HEARD WP 1). Late work will not be accepted.

RUBRICS AND SCORING SYSTEMS:

For the purposes of this course,

"A" work will constitute a final score of 90-100% of total points, and will represent an overall response that is impressively sophisticated and illuminating: inventive, balanced, justified, effective, mature, and expertly-situated in time and context

"B" work will constitute a final score of 80-89.99% of total points, and will represent an overall response that is thorough and systematic: skilled, revealing, developed, perceptive, but not unusually or surprisingly original

"C" work will constitute a final score of 70-79.99% of total points, and will represent an overall response that is acceptable but limited: coherent, significant, and perhaps even insightful in places, but ultimately lacking in organization, articulation, perception, and/or effectiveness

"D" work will constitute a final score of 60-69.99% of total points, and will represent an overall response that is incomplete and severely lacking: incoherent, limited, uncritical, immature, undeveloped, and overall not reflective of the performance expected of UNT undergraduates

"F" work will constitute a final score of 0-59.99% of total points, and will represent an overall response that is unacceptable.

BLACKBOARD AND EMAIL: Our course will have a Blackboard site. Please check this site and your university email regularly for messages. (Note that if you do not use the university email, you need to have your UNT email forwarded to the address that you prefer.) All emails that you send me should identify you clearly as a student in this class in the subject heading (i.e. "ENGL 4200—Student Name"). Remember that when you write an email to a professor, you should assume a professional tone and present yourself well. I want to hear from you, but please communicate as clearly and professionally as possible.

ATTENDANCE and ABSENCE:

You have five free absences. Upon missing SIX (6) classes, you will be dropped from the course. Coming late to class or not participating in class may result in you being counted as absent. The only excused absences are the ones defined as such by university policy (<http://policy.unt.edu/policy/15-2-5>). Unless your absence fits one of these categories, I do not need to know your reasons for absences. Please do not bring me doctor's notes or other excuses for absences that do not fit the university policy.

COURSE POLICIES:

Note: by remaining in this class, you agree to the conditions stipulated in the syllabus

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT: I want every student to succeed in this class. My commitment is to create a classroom environment in which intellectual diversity and mutual respect for each other are promoted. I expect each student to share in this promotion of a respectful exchange of ideas. Please be sensitive to the views and beliefs expressed during class discussions, and show interest and respect for the contributions of your classmates.

DISRUPTIONS: Please contribute to the class environment by giving your classmates and me your full attention at all appropriate times. You should be on time, pay attention, stay awake, remain in your seat until the class is officially over, resist texting and other non-class related writing, and refrain from packing up until the end of class. The only books or notes on your desk should books or notes assigned for this class. Please note that excessive disruptions of our class time—including talking, sleeping, texting, cell phone usage, and doing work for other classes—hurt the class atmosphere and will hurt your grade should you engage in them. I will not warn you ahead of time if I dock points from your participation grade for disrupting class.

ASSIGNMENTS

WhiP Writing Projects: The four writing projects in this course will be the focus of our intellectual and physical energy. The projects are each fairly short in length. However, each project also requires significant planning and coordination. You will be asked to think about class readings and discussions as you write, and you should expect to spend the majority of your time out of class planning, writing, revising, and rewriting the text for each of these projects. A brief description of each project follows. Full assignment sheets, rubrics, and models will be provided during the semester. Value: 50% overall.

WhiP1: Slice of Life (5%)—A short description of a brief moment in your life, with attention given to environment, activity, and interactions.

WhiP2: Autoethnography (10%): A brief account of who you are in a particular moment. Includes a short narrative “snapshot,” connected to a subsequent conceptual paragraph linking specific details from the moment to habits, motivations, and expectations.

WhiP3: Profile (15%): Description of another person “in” his or her environment. Focuses on revealing a person’s identity through specific narration and description.

WhiP4: Topical Study (20%): A narrative-heavy account of a specific event or environment followed by a more general exposition of how the event/environment connects to a cultural/global/community issue. Uses narrative and description to transition into academic analysis.

REVISION PROJECTS: Each revision project will ask you to use your writing



project to respond to broader questions about writing and representation. Revision of specific parts of each writing project will also be required.

Value: 15% overall

IN-CLASS WORK: Quizzes and in-class assignments will often take place at the beginning of class and cannot be made-up if missed. Frequent tardiness or disruptions will affect your quiz/assignment grades. Expect quizzes once a week. Value: 20% overall.

FINAL PORTFOLIO: Final capstone project which requires you to use your four projects in the course to reflect on what you have learned about the ways that writing participates in the reflection and deflection of sensory experiences. More details will be provided during the semester. Value: 10% overall

TIPS FOR READING: The following guidelines will help you read carefully and prepare for discussion

READING:

- Browse the work. Look at the title. Note any chapter titles, subtitles, headings, etc.
- Read the author’s intro and conclusion.
- Read the entire work once, then again for comprehension. Note how the text works.

PREPARING FOR DISCUSSION

- Identify what is most important to the writer.
- Briefly explain how the writer is responding to what she or he finds important.
 - Find the 5-6 most important key terms in the text.
 - Note the authors / works the writer uses most often.
 - Write out the 3 most important questions that you draw out of the reading yourself.
 - Articulate tentative answers to the questions in the previous step. Respond with reference to the writer’s ideas, terms, and language.

ODA POLICY: The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student.

Essential competencies for this course include the abilities to read and interpret rhetorical and philosophical texts; to participate in class discussions about ideas in rhetorical theory and practice; and to write mature, coherent, academic prose. If you have a disability for which you will require accommodations, please register with the Office of Disability Accommodation and present your request for accommodation to me within the first two weeks of class. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at <http://www.unt.edu/oda>. You may also contact them by phone at 940.565.4323.