

Writing for Digital Environments

ENGL 408: Advanced Composition
Spring 2018
MWF 1100-1150
Merrifield 312

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Course Description:

The reports of reading's death have been greatly exaggerated; most reading today just happens to be done on a screen, not in print. In this course, we will confront this reality head-on by experimenting with writing *in* and *for* digital platforms.

This class is not only for English majors, but any student who would like to learn new techniques for producing and distributing their writing. Likewise, the projects for this course do not presume advanced technological literacy, but they will require students to practice new skills and develop new proficiencies. Learning to write in “medium-specific” ways will help hone your writing for professional contexts and/or graduate school by encouraging you to communicate to new audiences in a variety of different media formats.

This course is an Essential Studies Capstone Course, and fulfills the goals of Communication and Information Literacy.

Texts:

Required Books (available in campus bookstore and online)

Carroll, Brian. *Writing & Editing for Digital Media*, 3rd Edition. (2017)
Weir, Andy. *The Martian* (2011).

Various selections available on the course's Blackboard site. Marked in the syllabus as BB.

Course Objectives

- Introduce students to new methods for composing, designing, and distributing their ideas.
- Model process-based learning strategies for the composition, revision, and preservation of digital projects.
- Familiarize students with multimodal methods for composing narrative and argument in accordance with changing expectations in the workplace and graduate education.
- Encourage students to tinker with do-it-yourself and do-it-together strategies for composing, spreading, and remixing digital media.
- Enable students to reflect on the practical relationship between producers, designers, marketers, and audiences of digital writing.
- Foster proficiency in a wide variety of multimodal genres including digital journalism, infographics, videos, technical reviews.

Major Assignments

- I. Written Problem Pitch (20%)**
**Short research-based argument articulating
An issue you will explore and the story you would
like to tell about it.**
- II. Digital Narrative (30%)**
**A born-digital attempt at telling a story
using data, images, maps, comparisons,
and/or interactive elements.**
- III. Video: Visual Exegesis (30%)**
**A short video that explains an idea, a book,
or an event related to your problem.**

Additional Grade Elements

- IV. Homework and Peer-Editing Assignments (10%)**
- V. Class Participation (10%)**

Attendance, Class Participation & Lateness

I expect all students to be prepared for class every day; being prepared means paying close attention to scheduled assignments, doing the homework, and *bringing relevant materials with you to class*. If you do not bring the text we are reading to class, you will be considered absent.

You are allowed **five** absences without penalty— following your fifth absence, your grade in the class will begin to drop by a **half-a-letter grade** per absence. Plan ahead if you think you might miss class for religious holidays or for other scheduled events. Just because you inform me of an absence beforehand does not mean that it does not count towards your total. ***I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences – you are allowed five absences – be they excused or unexcused – before your grade begins to decrease, unless other special arrangements have been made with me ahead of time.*** For every two days you are late to class, you will be marked for one absence. If you are more than 15 minutes late to class, you will be marked absent for that day. If you miss a class meeting, you are responsible to contact your peers or **come to my office hours** for materials and information you've missed. Finally, you are responsible for keeping track of your own absences. A sign-in sheet will be used daily and absences will be thus recorded. Please be conscientious of your class participation – make sure you get the sign-in sheet, and please don't expect me to keep a running tally of your absences!

Scholastic Dishonesty

At UND, we trust in the excellence of our students and in the integrity of our academic programs. We also trust that your good ideas become better when you test them against the ideas of others. So for this course, feel free to discuss your ideas about the major writing assignments with other students. Collaborating on question/answer homework assignments or open-book quizzes, however, is not acceptable; these types of assignments are designed for me, your instructor, to monitor how you are handling specific parts of the course materials. Blatantly taking someone else's words, ideas or concepts, and using them without citing your source is plagiarism. So is using another student's essay, or part of his or her essay, as your own. In the world of writing (academic writing especially), this is a serious crime, and is treated as such. Anyone who uses non-documented material from another source, including online sources, will receive a **failing grade** for the entire course and will be referred to the Dean's office for possible further disciplinary action.

Plagiarism, or any other form of scholastic dishonesty, is a serious offense and will be subject to official university policy and punitive action as found in the "Code of Student Life" available at <http://sos.und.edu/csl/index.php?main=1&pg=s3&subpg=3-3>.

If you have any questions, always feel free to ask me. It's been my experience that those writers who plagiarize are those who feel overwhelmed by the assignment and out of desperation, use someone else's work to stand in for their own. If you get so frustrated with an assignment that you feel like your only option is to plagiarize, come see me. My role as a teacher is to help students, not to punish them— please use me as a resource to help you write, brainstorm or work out your essays.

Deadlines

All assignments must be submitted on the due date, and missing the class when the All written assignments must be submitted on the due date, and missing the class when the assignment is due doesn't mean your assignment isn't late. Turning in an assignment on time is part of doing the assignment, and late work will be graded down, regardless of how well it's executed.

Lateness penalties are as follows:

- Final drafts. For every day that a final draft is late, you will lose **five** points on the final grade.
- Short assignments. All late assignments may receive a maximum of **half-credit**, regardless of how late they are.

Using Recording Equipment in Class

If you need to tape or record classroom activities, you may do so for *personal* use or for all students presently enrolled in the class. However, you may not further copy, distribute, publish or otherwise use for any other purpose without my express written consent.

Technologies

This course is focused on digital writing, so I will ask you to consistently bring technology with you to class. Please get in the habit of bringing your laptops, tablets, and smart phones to class with you every day. You will also have access to the laptops provided in our room. Whenever you like to use one, just ask. That said, I expect you to use your technology class related work only. You will receive one warning about misuse. After that, you will be marked absent for the day. I also reserve the right to alter this policy, if need be.

Learning Disability

If you have a learning disability that could impair your progress in this course, please contact Disability Services on campus (<https://und.edu/disability-services/>). We can arrange to accommodate your learning style based on EOS recommendations. Please notify me at the semester's beginning of your learning needs--do not wait until the semester becomes overwhelming to acknowledge the problem.

General Guidelines For Submitting Assignments

- Unless otherwise directed, please submit all major assignments in .doc or .docx format via the SafeAssign feature on Blackboard. **(If your word processing software does not seem to save documents as .docx files, come see me and I will help you).**
- **Name your files according to this protocol: Lastname_AssignmentDraft.docx (For example: Jones_MidtermRoughDraft.docx)**
- All papers, including daily assignments, must be typed, double-spaced, with 1" margins. (Note: The default spacing in MS Word is 1.25")
- Include page numbers on all assignments longer than one page.
- **Staple** all printed out assignments longer than one page.
- Carefully edit and proofread all texts to eliminate problems in grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

- Spell-check your documents. A hint in this regard: typos typically occur in the last minutes when you are making final revisions to a text. Be sure, therefore, to always do a final spell check on at least the section of the document in which you have been making changes. Just because there are no spelling errors found by the spell check does not mean that your paper is error-free; often the spell check “fixes” errors by replacing a similar correctly spelled word. Closely re-reading every word you submit to me is the only fail-proof way to spell-check your papers.
- Any time you cite an essay, film, or book in your main essays, you will need to include a Works Cited section of your essay that provides complete and accurate bibliographic information

Documents that do not meet these and other assignment-specific requirements will not be graded. They will be returned to you and when resubmitted will be treated as late submissions. Pay attention to these details for handing in your final drafts. Superficial errors do not necessarily signify poor thinking, but they do indicate a lack of precision and nonchalance toward the task. When you write papers for your courses within your major, your professors will expect high quality, readable prose. Use this class as a stepping stone toward that end. You’ll have to plan your writing process to make time for proofreading—printing a just-written paper 10 minutes before class time will probably not yield terrific results.

On-Campus Writing Resources

I enthusiastically encourage all students to take advantage of the Writing Center in the basement of Merrifield Hall. All students are eligible for one-on-one tutoring, but you must make an appointment. Remember, though, that tutors are not editors. It is not their job to “correct” your work or simply edit it while you go on Facebook. Think of the writing tutors as supplementary instructors for the class. They can address some issues (from the lowest-level to the highest) in much greater detail than I can since are not responsible for teaching you academic argumentation. For those of you who feel anxious about the requirements of this class, I recommend that you establish a relationship with a tutor early in the semester and rely on their expertise regularly.

Writing Center, web address: <http://und.edu/academics/writing-center/>

ESL Resource Center, Merrifield Hall, Room 112. The ESL Resource Center arranges tutoring and/or conversation partners for multilingual speakers seeking more practice with the English language. Contact Mary Monette for more information: mary.monette@UND.edu or 701-777-3624.

Student Success Center, Memorial Union, Second Floor. The Student Success Center offers advising, learning services, and specific program to help students meet their educational goals. Individualized assistance and assessments are available. <http://und.edu/student-affairs/studentservices/>

Grading Policy And Scale

- A Exceptional. Assignment criteria met with creativity, rigor, and insight. Rich theoretical, historical, and creative analysis of the objects grounded within the larger academic context. Ideas articulated with convincing detail and display careful planning. Research

and writing is lucid. Errors in style in grammar are rare and never prevent easy comprehension.

- B Good work. Displays sustained analysis, concentration and effort, although mainly recapitulated from class discussion and/or directly from class sources. Minor style problems never completely obscure writer's meaning.
- C Acceptable, but uninspired. There may be a glaring conceptual or execution problems. Work mostly descriptive with little to no historical, critical, or theoretical analysis. Serious issues with validity and/or depth of research. (Note: this is the median grade in the university system)
- D Unsatisfactory work. Ideas never move beyond generalizations. No analysis of any kind. Lacking research and focus. Work displays little to no grasp of the goals of the assignment.
- R Fail. Student does not submit complete work or shows no attempt to engage the concerns of the assignment.

Expectations for Class Conduct and Devices

ENGL408 is a composition course; we will spend our course time thinking about and discussing writing—both professional examples and work from your peers. In order to be succeed in this class, you will need to actively participate in these discussions.

Much of the reading for this class will come from handouts distributed via Blackboard. You are required to closely read these articles. Furthermore, you are required to bring a version of each article to class. I prefer that you bring a printed copy, but I understand that many of you prefer to read on media devices. I will allow you to bring copies on your devices, but with a caveat. If, at any time in the semester, I get the feeling that people are not reading the articles or that they are using their devices for non-class related activities, I will revoke this privilege and require everyone bring printed copies of the articles to class.

Class Participation

Class time is yours; never forget that. We need to use our time together efficiently in order to give you all what you deserve. Making your voice heard during class discussion and brainstorming is the best way to ensure that we accomplish this together.

In terms of logistics, your in-class participation grade falls to my discretion and can nudge a borderline grade higher or lower. When you contribute to class discussion, be sure that your comments are helpful and constructive. You should be ready to participate in general class discussion at least once a week, and you should always be prepared to generate thoughtful input in small-group discussions and peer review work. Be sure to be supportive of your peers' ideas, even when you disagree with them.

Of course, all discussion should refrain from language and tone that could be considered inappropriate or offensive.

If you have questions about the policies of this class, review the syllabus first, and then contact me.

I reserve the right to make any alterations, additions, or subtractions I see fit.



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Course Schedule

UNIT I: What is Digital Writing?

Core concepts: mediation, attention, spreadable media, analytical design, bureaucracy, literacy, producer/marketer/audience, mode, platform, narrative vs. explanation.

Week 1

Wednesday January 10: Introduction and course preview.

Friday, January 12: Carroll, vii- 28 (Afterward *W&E*)

Week 2

Monday, January 15: No class; MLK Jr. Day

Wednesday, January 17: Jenkins, “Spreadable Media” (BB).

Friday, January 19: Carroll, 29-59. (*W&E*)

Homework Due: Explain Carroll’s definition of digital writing and digital editing. Make a case for what you deem most useful piece of advice he gives for each category. Do you prefer Carroll or Jenkins’ explanation?

Week 3

Monday, January 22: Carroll, 149-172 (*W&E*)

UNIT II: Prototyping.

Core concepts: literacy, problem solving, tinkering, DIY, prosumer, post-press literature, digital storytelling, the two cultures.

Wednesday, January 24: Weir, 1-100 and Hoberek, “No Man is an Island.”

Friday, January 26: Weir, 100-175 and “The Martian Reads like a r/DIY Post” (BB).

Week 4

Monday, January 29: **DUE: Rough Draft, Problem Pitch. (Submit via Blackboard Link) Peer Editing Session Following Carroll’s Guidelines in Chapter 2.**

Wednesday, January 31: Weir, 175-225.

Friday, February 2: Weir, 225-275.
DUE: Editor’s Statement on Problem Pitch to your partner and me.

Week 5

Monday, February 5: Weir, 300-end.

Wednesday, February 7: Hobbes, “FML” (BB).

Friday, February 9: **Due: Final Draft Problem Pitch. Submit via Blackboard link.**

Weir, “How Science Made Me A Writer” (the end of your book or on BB if your edition does not include it).

UNIT III: Art & Lies

Core concepts: visual rhetoric, headlines, grid, data point, visualization, reability, useability, approachability, transparency, efficiency

Week 6

Monday, February 12: Carroll, 59-91 (*W&E*).

Wednesday, February 14: Introduce software: Thimble, Juxtapose, Storyline, Piktochart, X-Ray Goggles.

Friday, February 16: Carroll, 93-122 (*W&E*).

Week 7

Monday, February 19: **No class; President's Day.**

Wednesday, February 21: Software Work Day.

Friday, February 23: Carroll, 123-148. (*W&E*).

Week 8

Monday, February 26: **Due: Digital Story Written Rough Draft and explanations of dreams for interactive/digital content.**

Peer Editing in Class.

Wednesday, February 28: Wallace, Excerpt from *The Pale King* (BB).

Friday, March 2: **No class; conferences. Please sign up on the class wiki.**

DUE: Editor's Statement on Digital Story Rough Draft to your partner and me.

Week 9

Monday, March 5: Tufte, "Mapped Pictures" (BB).

Wednesday, March 7: Carroll, 197-228. (*W&E*).

Friday, March 9: **Final Draft Due: Digital Story.**

Watch Everything is a Remix.

Unit IV: Seeing is Believing

Core Concepts: Exegesis, Visual Rhetoric, Assets, Copyright, Copy left, Fair Use, Criticism, Mediation, Ethics, Fake News.

March 12 – March 16. **No class; Spring Break; read!**

Week 10

Monday, March 19: Watch all the Al-Jazeera Media Studies videos. (BB).

Wednesday, March 21: Video Editing Introduction and Breakdown.

Friday, March 23: Wilson, “What Killed the Infographic?” (BB).

N.B. Extra credit opportunity. Attend an event from the 2018 Writers Conference and submit a 1 page analysis of how the author engages one key term from the class.

Submission due Monday, March 26 by 11:59PM, via Blackboard.

Week 11

Monday, March 26: Ventimiglia and Pullman, “From Written to Digital: The New Literacy” (BB).

Wednesday, March 28: Carroll, 261-300. (*W&E*)

Friday, March 30: No class; Spring Holiday.

Week 12

Monday, April 2: No class; Spring Holiday.

Wednesday, April 4: **Due Video Script and storyboard.**

Peer editing/workshop in class.

Friday, April 6: Video Troubleshooting workshop.

Week 13

Monday, April 9: Juhasz, “Four Hard Truths about Fake News.” (BB)

DUE: Editor’s Statement on Video Script to your partner and me.

Wednesday, April 11: Carroll, 229-260. (*W↔E*)

Friday, April 13: **DUE: Video proof in-concept.**

Peer editing/workshop in class.

Week 14

Monday, April 16: Tufte, “Corruption in Evidence Presentations.”

Decide on Video Presentation Timeline; rock, paper, scissors if necessary.

Wednesday, April 18: Gorbis, “New Workers, New Skills”(BB)

DUE: Editor’s Statement on Video Script to your partner and me.

Friday, April 20: Silicon Valley, “Daily Active Users.”

Week 15

Monday, April 23: Video Presentations, Group I.

Wednesday, April 25: Video Presentations, Group II.

Friday, April 27: Presentations, Group III.

Week 16

Monday, April 30: Presentations, Group IV.

DUE: Video Editing Process reflections.

Please complete short survey that will you receive via e-mail.

Wednesday, May 2:

Course Evaluations. Course wrap-up.

Wednesday, May 9.

Final Videos Due.

