

Topics in Writing Studies: Feminist Activism and Communities of Writing (ENG 481G)

Course Time: Tuesdays 5:30 to 8:00 p.m. Location: Simpkins 214 and QC 2108

I always wrote. I wrote from when I was 12. That was therapeutic for me in those days. I wrote things to get them out of feeling them, and onto paper. So writing in a way saved me, kept me company. I did the traditional thing with falling in love with words, reading books and underlining lines I liked and words I didn't know. -Carrie Fisher

Course Goals

This course will explore how women develop and use rhetoric and writing to challenge and change their worlds. We will evaluate how women use rhetoric in the public, private, and electronic spheres to create change. We will start with a grounding in feminist theory to situate discussion around feminist rhetorical practices in writing communities.

We will start with grounding ourselves in feminism (really quickly and not comprehensively). We will then examine Feminist Rhetoric and Rhetorica and apply feminist writing and rhetorical practices to the world around us.

Required Texts

Baumgardner, Jennifer. *Fem! Goo Goo, Gaga, and Some Thoughts on Balls*

Jones-Royster, Jacqueline and Gesa Kirsch (ed). *Feminist Rhetorical Practices: New Horizons for Rhetoric, Composition, and Literacy Studies (Studies in Rhetorics and Feminisms)*

Ngozi-Adichie, Chimamanda. *We Should All Be Feminists*

Various articles and book chapters

Rules and Expectations

Technology and Communication

We will be using the Wiki as the primary tool of communication for this course. Because of this, it is important that you have access to a computer and internet. You will be spending a great deal of time for this course on the Web. If you do not have a laptop and/or internet access, you might want to work on either getting access or taking this course when you have more opportunity to access the internet.

The best way to get in touch with me is through emails. If you email Monday through Friday, I will get back to you within 24 hours (usually sooner). If you email over the weekend, it might take longer. (Basically, if you email me Friday night or later, you might not hear back from me until Monday.)

Conversely, I need you to also respond to email in a timely manner. It is important that you are checking your email and social web accounts throughout the course. I will use your WIU email by default. If you have another email address you want to use instead, just let me know.

Community

Students often report that they learn a lot from each other. Because the content of this class is not fixed but evolving and because students often bring new perspectives and experiences that enrich the content, students are expected to behave as members of a collaborative learning community, listening to and learning from each other as well as from me.

Student Initiative and Participation

Learning requires that the student meet the instructor halfway. This course is designed to make the material as interesting as possible and to engage students in hands-on activities to promote active learning and student engagement. However, successful engagement requires students to approach the material and assignments with a positive attitude, an open mind and a desire to learn. I welcome your feedback and will be happy to hear any suggestions you have for improving the course. If you only want to do the minimum work necessary to get by, however, and are not interested in getting the most you can out of it, this course is probably not for you.

Personal Responsibility

This is a college class, and students are responsible for doing the work as assigned and striving to meet the content goals and reach the learning outcomes specified in the syllabus. You will have an opportunity to demonstrate what you have learned through your assignments and papers. If at any point you are unclear about the goals or expectations in this course, you should let me know. If you do not speak up, I will assume that you understand.

Writing Center

The Writing Center is available to help you at any stage in your writing process. Please feel free to talk with a tutor about larger issues such as organization and clarity or getting help with grammatical problems or other surface level concerns. The University Writing Center is located in Simpkins Hall 341. Call 298-2815 for an appointment.

Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)

In accordance with University policy and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), academic accommodations may be made for any student who notifies me of the need for an accommodation. For me to provide the proper accommodation(s), you must obtain the documentation of the need for an accommodation through Disability Support Services and provide it to me. It is imperative that you take the initiative to bring such needs to my attention, as I am not legally permitted to inquire about such particular needs. Students who may require special assistance in emergency evacuations (i.e. fire, tornado, etc.) should contact me as to the most appropriate procedures to follow in such an emergency. Contact Disability Support Services at 298-2512 for additional service.

Cell Phones

Please turn off all cell phones while you are in class. If you cannot go the class period without texting then you must leave class and take an absence for the period. There is no reason you would need to text during class that cannot wait until the class period is over. If I can go without my phone, so can you. If something is so important you can't wait for the call, text, status update, or Tweet, you probably shouldn't be in class or should okay it with me first. (Exceptions will be made if we use cell phones during class assignments.)

WIU Student Rights and Responsibilities

WIU Student Rights and Responsibilities are outlined on the web at <http://www.wiu.edu/provost/students>. You should be familiar with both your rights and responsibilities.

Academic Integrity Policy

Please be aware of WIU's academic integrity policy found at <http://www.wiu.edu/policies/acintegrity.php>. Any violation of this policy will result in immediate failure of the course.

Contract Grading

This course will be graded using Contract Grading. Because it is an upper division/graduate course, I expect for you to be actively involved in the course, completing all work, attending class, and working collaboratively with classmates. In order to receive a B in the course, you must complete the following.

1. Attend class regularly, not missing more than a week of class. (I do not count excused or unexcused absences. If you are not in class, you are absent.)
2. Meet due dates and criteria for all major assignment.
3. Participate in all in-class and on-line activities and discussion.
4. Complete all informal writing assignment (in-class writing, discussion questions).
5. Attend conference with me.
6. Attend the Wiki-a-Thon.
7. Give thoughtful feedback during collaborative projects.
8. Put an effort and investment into each draft of all papers.
9. Make substantive revisions when required (this means not just editing, but higher order changes).
10. Copy-edit final revisions of major assignments, meeting the conventions of edited, revised English as is appropriate for the online format of the work.

Basically, if you do everything required in the class, and put an effort into it, you receive a grade of B. (Undergraduates, the +/- for your grade will be determined by attendance and participation.)

Grades higher than a B will be based on my judgment of writing quality. To earn a higher grade, you must produce writing, especially the writing that is placed on the web as part of your final collaborative Social Web Projects, that I judge to be exceptionally high quality.

Students who fail to meet the above criteria by missing more than a week of class, failing to complete one to three major assignments on time, not making all meetings or not making substantive revisions to work, will earn a grade of C (+/-).

Students who fail to meet the above criteria by missing more than two weeks of class, failing to complete four or more major assignments on time, not making all meetings or not making substantive revisions to work, will earn a grade of D or F (+/-).

Major Writing Assignments

[One Pagers/Reading Reflections](#): For each week you will complete a one-page, single-spaced, reading reflection and critique. Graduate students must complete 10 and undergraduates 8.

[Wiki Discussion and Responses](#): You will respond to questions posted on the Wiki as a way to start (or continue) course discussions.

[Edited Volume Chapter](#): Together we will compile an edited volume on feminism, writing, and activism.

[Wiki Edit-a-Thon](#): We will be participating in a Feminist Wikipedia Edit-a-Thon.

[Manifesto](#): Manifestos are important to feminist rhetorical and activist practices. To this end, you will be creating your own manifesto--to take whatever shape you choose--for the end of the semester.

Each of these assignments has a number of elements that you must complete throughout the semester.