

ENGL 580 - ONL
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Tuesdays 11-12 or by appt



Writing and Rhetoric in a Post-Truth Society

Department of English Summer I 2022

Overview

This course examines the role of writing and rhetoric in a post-truth world. What does it mean to write and to study language at a time when fake news and "alternative facts" have become commonplace? How do we negotiate the need to amplify multiple voices and perspectives with the need to establish a stable truth? How does writing shared on social media shape both personal and public opinion? As we engage these and related questions, we will examine foundational concepts, theories, and methodologies in Rhetoric and Composition as well as more recent work that addresses, postcolonial and decolonial rhetorics, political discourse, and the evolution of public rhetoric in new media contexts. Our goal will be to better understand the historical roots of our current rhetorical moment, to determine how we can more fully participate in the discourses at work in a variety of media contexts, and devise perspectives and approaches for shaping our own and others' rhetorical work in public spheres.

Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate a working knowledge of prominent theories and concepts in Rhetoric and Composition
- Explain the relationship between rhetoric, public discourse, and notions of truth
- Analyze the credibility of a variety of sources types
- Synthesize scholarly and popular sources in an extended research project
- Produce written work suitable for publication, presentation, and/or application to graduate studies or professional employment

Required Work

All required work must be submitted to pass the course. Full instructions for each assignment (including minimum requirements for a B and enrichment activities for a grade boost) will be provided on Brightspace.

<p>Reading Reflections The forums on our course site will provide a space to reflect on course readings and engage with your classmates’ perspectives. You will submit 5 reading reflections of 300 words each (minimum).</p> <p>Due weeks 1-5.</p>	25%
<p>Everyday Media This short activity will address how the various forms of media we engage with in our daily lives shape our perception of truth. You’ll track your media activity for a single day then review your notes and compose a reflection that connects your experience to concepts addressed in course readings. You will submit your notes and a 800-word (minimum) reflection.</p> <p>Due week 4</p>	20%
<p>Research Project: Navigating a Post-Truth Society This project prioritizes the research process, allowing you to not only make discoveries about a given topic but also to learn about what it means to conduct research, ask questions, and examine sources in “post-truth” society that constantly produces and circulates information in multiple media. Rather than simply reporting the results of your research, you will compose a narrative of your process as you explore a topic that interests you and connects to our course content. As part of the process, you will submit a proposal with research questions, a project update with sources and a working thesis, and a research essay of 2000 words (minimum).</p> <p>Proposal & research questions (10%): Due week 5 Project update (10%): Due week 6 Research essay(20%): Due week 7</p>	40%
<p>Remix You will extend an aspect of your research project by developing an argument in an alternate genre and/or medium. This can take a number of forms, including (but not limited to): video, infographic, poster, visual essay, teaching materials, letter, op-ed, creative writing, etc. A prompt with additional guidance for this remixed argument will be provided.</p> <p>Due week 7.</p>	15%

Grading Scale

A	93-100%	B+	87-89%	C+	77-79%	D+	67-69%
A-	90-92%	B	83-86%	C	73-76%	D	63-66%
		B-	80-82%	C-	70-72%	D-	60-62%
						F	Below 60%

Course Readings

All required readings can be accessed through our Brightspace site, and you are not required to purchase any texts. The following represents a working list of assigned texts; this list will be finalized closer to the start of the course. You can expect to read about 40-60 pages per week for the first 5 weeks, with the final two weeks devoted to your own writing and independent reading/research. A full reading and assignment schedule will be provided on the first day of class.

Books/anthology selections

- *Propaganda and Rhetoric in Democracy: History, Theory, Analysis*. Edited by Gae Lyn Henderson and M. J. Braun. SIU Press, 2016.
 - Thomas Huckin, "Propaganda Defined"
 - Gary Thompson, "A Taxonomy of Bullshit"
- *Faking the News: What Rhetoric Can Teach Us About Donald J. Trump*. Edited by Ryan Skinnell. Imprint Academic, 2018.
 - Ryan Skinnell, "Introduction"
 - Ryan Skinnell, "What Passes for Truth in the Trump Era: Telling It Like It Isn't"
- *Post-Truth in Rhetoric and Composition*. Bruce McComiskey. Current Arguments in Composition Series. Utah State University Press, 2017.

Articles and other resources

- "Lies, Damn Lies, and Fake News." Hal Berghel. *Computer* (Feb 2017): 80-85.
- "Fake News as a Floating Signifier: Hegemony, Antagonism and the Politics of Falsehood." Johan Farkas and Jannick Schou, Javnost - The Public 25.3 (2018).
- The 1619 Project (Selections)
- "White Lies: A Racial History of the (Post)Truth." Robert Mejia, Kay Beckermann and Curtis Sullivan. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 15.2 (2018): 109-126.
- Snopes' Field Guide to Fake News Sites and Hoax Purveyors
<https://www.snopes.com/news/2016/01/14/fake-news-sites/>
- "Stop Calling Everything 'Fake News.'" Will Oremu. *Slate* 6 December 2016.
http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/technology/2016/12/stop_calling_everything_fake_news.html?wpsrc=sh_all_dt_tw_top.
- "Here's What Non-Fake News Looks Like." Michael Schudson, *Columbia Journalism Review* 23 (2017). <https://www.cjr.org/analysis/fake-news-real-news-list.php>;
- "Postracism: A Theory of the 'Post'- as Political Strategy." Kent A. Ono. *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 34.3 (2010).
- "Power-Knowledge in a 'Post-Truth' World," Roopali Mukherjee. *Flow: A Critical Forum on Media and Culture* 27 March 2017.
<https://www.flowjournal.org/2017/03/post-truth-world/>

Grading Contract

In this course, grades are based on the work you complete, rather than on subjective markers of the *quality* of your work. We will certainly address quality in terms of, for example, how to write effectively for a given audience and in a given genre. However, developing the quality of your work will be accomplished through discussion and feedback. Your grades will be tied to the degree to which you meet work expectations for each assignment. The research* on grading contracts has demonstrated several benefits, including:

- Avoiding unfairly penalizing or rewarding students for their level of knowledge about and experience with course content, writing, and language prior to entering our class
- Rewarding the time and labor students devote to the class
- Encouraging students to focus on their learning and writing development

If you meet the minimum work expectations for a required assignment you will earn a B on that assignment. If your work does not meet the work expectations, you will earn a lower grade. Alternatively, if you complete optional enrichment activities (see below), you could earn a higher grade. *In short -- if you would like to earn an A, complete all required work **plus** the optional activities.*

The minimum work expectations will vary depending on the assignment, but in general they include things such as:

- Minimum length/word count
- Due date/time
- Expectations for responding to a prompt
- Guidelines for how to organize and format the assignment
- Citation requirements and number of sources (if applicable)
- Expectations for revision (if applicable)

Optional Enrichment Activities

Each assignment will include enrichment activities that can boost your grade. Details will be provided with the instructions for each assignment but some examples include:

- Providing additional feedback on classmates' drafts
- Composing a reflection on an assignment
- Attending a Writing Lab appointment and reflecting on the experience

General Grade Breakdown

While each assignment includes detailed instructions and expectations, the following provides a general guide for how grades will be determined.

A	B	C	D	F
-All minimum expectations are met -Optional enrichment activities completed -Submitted on time	-All minimum expectations are met -Submitted on time	-Fails to meet one of the minimum expectations and/or submitted 48 hours after due date	-Fails to meet more than one of the minimum expectations and/or submitted 48 hours after due date	-Fails to meet all minimum expectations or not submitted

*Grading contracts originate from research and teaching in the field of rhetoric and composition by scholars like Asao Inoue and Peter Elbow, who seek more equitable and just grading practices. This grading contract has been adapted from their work. If you'd like more information about grading contracts and examples of other models, please let me know.

Feel free to consult the [Grading Contract FAQs](#) for additional information.

Attendance

Although this is an online course, you are expected to remain an active participant. Missing more than the equivalent of one week of classes will negatively impact your grade and is

grounds for administrative withdrawal. In an online class, missing one week means not turning in any assignments, not logging in to the course site, or not communicating with me for one week. I realize that life presents many challenges, especially now. Just remember to keep in touch with me so we can make sure you don't fall behind.

Academic Integrity

Academic misconduct, particularly plagiarism, is a serious offense in any academic setting. We will discuss proper use of sources this semester, and I expect you to employ the strategies we discuss. Failure to abide by the University's academic misconduct policies (Section I of the Student Handbook) will result in failure of the assignment or course, depending on the severity of the offense. If you have any questions about plagiarism, feel free to contact me.

Late Work

Please contact me as soon as possible if you experience difficulty with any of the coursework or if you are struggling to complete assignments on time so we can make arrangements to keep you on track for a successful course experience. I am willing to work with you but I need to know when you need help!

Accommodations

If you have a disability (e.g. attention, health, hearing, learning, mobility, physical, psychiatric, or vision) that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please inform me immediately so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. Students with a disability must register with the [Services for Students with Disabilities](#) office (SSD) in Schwitzer Center 206 (317-788-6153 or [online](#)) for disability verification and for determination of reasonable academic accommodations. You are responsible for initiating arrangements for accommodations for tests and other assignments in collaboration with the SSD and the faculty.

Sexual Harassment & Assault Assistance

Federal law, Title IX, and the University of Indianapolis policy prohibits discrimination, harassment, and violence based on sex and gender (including sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic/dating violence, stalking, sexual exploitation, and retaliation). If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can receive confidential counseling through the [Health, Wellness & Counseling Centers](#) (317-788-3437 or [online](#)) and the University Chaplains (317-788-2106).

You can also complete the online [Sexual Misconduct Anonymous Reporting Form](#). Alleged violations can be reported non-confidentially to the Title IX coordinator, Jessica Ward (317-788-2139, wardjl@uindy.edu). Reports can also be filed with the UIndy Police at 317-788-3386 or by visiting their office at 3920 S. Shelby Street. Please visit the [UIndy Title IX webpage](#) for more information.

**Though I will seek to keep information you share with me private to the greatest extent possible, as a professor and employee of the University of Indianapolis, I have mandatory reporting responsibilities to share information regarding sexual misconduct and crimes I learn about to help make our campus a safer place.*

Statement on Language & Cultural Difference

The ability to communicate in multiple languages, including varieties of English, is a valuable asset, and you are encouraged to use these linguistic and cultural resources in this course. Although we'll use English(es) and Standard Written English (SWE) for many situations, you may use other languages/ rhetorical practices in particular assignments. In any case, the same rhetorical principles apply; consider audience, purpose, and rhetorical appeals. For instance, if

your audience does not speak Spanish, you might need to include a translation or captions; if an image has certain connotations in your culture, you should provide adequate information so that your message clearly and effectively reaches the target.

Writing Lab

The Writing Lab at UIndy is a wonderful resource for students working on any form of writing at any stage of the process. I highly recommend scheduling appointments, as all writers benefit from working with others. Both online and in-person sessions are available and you can easily schedule your 30-minute appointment on MyUIndy (after logging in to the student site, scroll down to Tutoring and select Writing Lab).

Name and Pronouns

My pronouns are she/her/hers. Please feel free to share your pronouns with me and your classmates. Additionally, please let me know if your name is different from that listed in the university's record.