

Community-Based Writing and Rhetoric—Fall 2011
FYC 13200-04: The Rhetoric of Literacy and the Arts
T/R 12:30-1:45 pm in CM 231

My Contact Information

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Other Helpful Contacts

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Course Philosophy and Goals

"Rhetoric may be defined as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion."
--Aristotle, *Rhetoric*

The foundation of this course is that good writing, rigorous critical thinking, and active citizenship are inextricably linked. Writing and Rhetoric offers you the opportunity to develop these three skills through the study of rhetoric—the art of making choices about what to say and how to say it to effectively persuade an audience.

My objective is for you to leave the course confident in your ability to:

- locate and critically analyze the arguments you encounter in the classroom and everyday life.
- understand multiple perspectives on an issue and responsibly and credibly enter scholarly and public conversations.
- make your own persuasive, credible, and well-reasoned arguments—in multiple media and genres, including essays, websites, and oral presentations.
- implement intellectual habits that will help you produce your best work, including a writing process that emphasizes invention, revision, and dialogue.
- speak from a position of experience and investment about learning and the arts in the community of South Bend.

Course Theme: Literacy and the Arts in the Community

As a first-year scholar, you are at a crucial turning point in both your education and the development of multiple literacies. This course asks you to examine the nature of literacy, probe the ways it has shaped you personally, ethically, and academically, and then to begin to understand how learning takes place in contemporary American contexts, inside and outside the classroom. We will examine several debates related to literacy, both in historical and contemporary contexts: What is the relationship between literacy and the self? How is literacy related to equality? Does our current system of valuation foster the skills necessary for class mobility and global competitiveness? What is the role of creativity and oral expression in overall literacy, academic achievement, and self-development? Where and to whom, in turn, are those ways of learning valued and taught?

To address these questions, we'll read, write, and discuss in a variety of genres, beginning with the personal narrative, and then examining influential arguments from a variety of periods that have shaped and continue to shape American ideas about equality, creativity, learning, and education. Finally, you'll go on to explore some question related to creativity, learning, self-development, equality, or an intersecting theme that interests you, through independent research into a contemporary debate. I hope, then, that you'll come to see this course as both a venue for practicing all the fundamental skills you'll need to master as a novice scholar at a premier institution and as an opportunity to reflect on the role education and literacy have played in shaping you and your society.

Alongside the reading, writing, discussing, presenting, and researching you'll practice here, this course calls for another important learning activity-- "doing"! I would argue that any course that examines the very nature of learning must necessarily include an experiential element, one which places you in a live situation and calls on you to think critically about how it connects to the world of ideas.

Community-Based Learning Project

The context for your experiential learning is a non-school based educational program called the Robinson Shakespeare Club (RSC), whose members, local schoolchildren from the community surrounding Notre Dame, learn and perform William Shakespeare's plays. The Shakespeare Club is housed at the Robinson Community Learning Center, whose mission it is to bring together Notre Dame students and faculty with members of the surrounding community. Your role at RSC will be a symbiotic one, where you are both learning and contributing to others' learning. You'll join the RSC, not as a tutor or helper, but as an "ensemble member." This means that you'll experience the program just as the children do; you'll play all the same games, be assigned a Shakespeare scene, and, in conjunction with a youth partner, you'll learn the monologue and perform it at the end of the semester. By labeling the group an ensemble and your individual relationship with a youth member a partnership, we attempt to highlight the reciprocal nature of community-

based learning. We'll be adding some writing activities to the conventional acting and reading activities that the youth members normally do. You will serve as mentors to the students as they write and publish these pieces, but they'll often serve as mentors to you as you acclimate to South Bend and learn to perform your monologue.

Service-Learning and the Notre Dame experience

“The University seeks to cultivate in its students not only an appreciation for the great achievements of human beings but also a disciplined sensibility to the poverty, injustice and oppression that burden the lives of so many. The aim is to create a sense of human solidarity and concern for the common good that will bear fruit as learning becomes service to justice.

--Mission Statement, University of Notre Dame

As is true of many institutions, it is possible to be a student at Notre Dame for four years and learn a great deal about the world of ideas, but very little about what lies beyond the immediate boundaries of campus. However, the community is rich with evidence and experience which can deepen our learning and make it more relevant, and help us to develop the “disciplined sensibility” to the human condition called for in the University's mission statement.

In addition, I believe that it is impossible to reside in a community and not have an impact upon it. The question each of us must ask is not IF we will have an impact, but, instead, what our impact will be. To contribute to the common good, one must proceed from a position of knowledge and investment in one's environment, something I call “community literacy”. To be sure, the writing you will produce in this course, and the role you will play assisting the RCLC, are in themselves opportunities to contribute to the community. Your writing will help the RCLC board and administration to better understand the Shakespeare program's inner workings and impacts, and it may eventually serve as evidence for grant applications or public relations materials for the program. However, my goal is that your experience with the Shakespeare Club, and the relationships you build there, will also build your awareness and knowledge of the people surrounding Notre Dame, and thus your investment in their living conditions. You'll play an important role in this class as a representative of the university. Your involvement with RCLC can serve to strengthen the relationship between Notre Dame and South Bend.

Required Resources

- Faigley, Lester and Jack Selzer. *A Little Argument*. Pearson, 2010.
- Capdeveille, Matthew, Ed. *Fresh Writing*, Vol. 11. University Writing Program: University of Notre Dame, 2011.
- A Notre Dame e-mail account that you check daily.
- Regular Access to Microsoft Word.
- Regular Access to a University Printer: Other readings provided by me through our Sakai site must be printed and brought to class on the day assigned.

- After Sept. 15: Recording Software such as Garage Band or Audacity downloaded to your laptop OR a digital recording device of another kind (these can be checked out from Debartolo Media Center- please see me about details).

Policies

Class Attendance and Tardiness

Attendance and punctuality are essential components of a small class like this one, and thus, they make up a significant component of your overall course grade. If you miss more than two days of class, your final course grade will be lowered incrementally. If you miss more than five days of class, you fail the course. I will report all absences beyond the first two to your First Year of Studies advisor. If you are tardy more than twice, each additional tardy will constitute ½ of an absence.

Shakespeare Club Attendance and Participation

Because the Community-Based activity part of the course is uniquely project-based and group oriented, it carries a less flexible schedule than some other service opportunities, and, in order to stay enrolled in the course, you **MUST** be able to attend the group sessions. There are **two different groups** you can join, so you need to be available **weekly, starting Sept. 8 and ending Dec.1, at ONE of the two following times:**

Thursday evening from 6-7:30 pm OR Friday afternoon from 3-4:30 pm

(The clubs DO NOT meet the weeks of Sept. 12-16; during fall break; or the week of Thanksgiving. In addition, you are allowed to miss one Shakespeare Club meeting for personal reasons without penalty. Any additional absences will lower your grade.)

Other events you'll need to attend outside the RSC meetings:

In addition, you'll need to come to the Robinson Center for four one-hour writing activities during the semester (this amounts to approximately one hour per month) between 3:30 and 4:30 OR 4:30 and 5:30 on a weekday. The dates for the writing activities will be announced sometime over the next week.

Finally, we'll hold an **end-of semester celebration/recital** where all members of the RSC (you included) will present their monologues for parents, teachers, and community members. This is usually an hour and a half long and takes place on a Friday early evening in early December.

Academic Honesty

The discussion of course goals above emphasizes constructing credible and ethical arguments, which means, in part, giving credit to other writers and thinkers whose work you use in your writing. We'll be discussing how to do this in the context of each assignment over the course of the semester, and the work you submit for credit must demonstrate a clear

understanding of the rules of citation. Plagiarism may lead to an Honor Code Committee hearing and failure of the portfolio and/or course.

Please review the University's Honor Code:

<http://www.nd.edu/~hnr/code/docs/studentguide.pdf>, and the University of Notre Dame's library's website at <http://www.library.nd.edu/help/plagiarism.shtml> for a comprehensive discussion of plagiarism.

Document and Citation Format

Although the definition of plagiarism is universally codified in the Honor Code, citation styles vary among the disciplines. We'll be using MLA Style, which is comprehensively explained in Chapter of *A Little Argument*. This chapter provides a clear guide to the citation practices you should use to avoid plagiarism. For more detailed questions and many more examples, consult the Purdue OWL, an on-line writing resource. It is available through our Sakai page, and also at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>. Finally, don't forget that I'm here as a resource for any questions you have about how to credit sources ethically. Page minimum guidelines are also based on standard MLA format. All formal assignments should be formatted in MLA style, in 12 point Times New Roman or Palatino font, double-spaced with one-inch margins on all four sides.

Disability Services

If you are student with a disability and will need accommodations for this course, please register with Disability Services: <http://www.nd.edu/~osd/>. After you have discussed your accommodation needs with the Coordinator of Disability Services, please speak with me to finalize whatever arrangements may be necessary.

Saving and Submitting Assignments

All of the formal assignments will be submitted via Sakai in Concourse, the university's course management software. You can get to our Sakai page through the link near the Concourse section in Inside ND or directly at the following link: <https://sakailogin.nd.edu/>. In order to make sure your documents are identifiable to me, and to help you keep track of digital course files for the portfolio you will create throughout the semester, it is imperative that you follow the naming conventions I outline here. First, you must save all your word processing documents as Microsoft Word documents. If you don't have MS Office on your machine, you can purchase it at a deep discount through the OIT computer store.

- To save us both frustration, EVERY file for this course must be saved as the following, with no extra punctuation and this EXACT spacing and style:
 - [Last Name] [First Name] [name of assignment, e.g. RAKing] [date delivered].doc or .docx

Backing Up Documents

Protect all your work by establishing good saving habits. Save all your materials directly to your Net space so that in a worst-case scenario, you only lose the work you've done that day. Data is all too easily lost if only saved on your hard drive (your actual computer) or a disc. I do not give extensions for lost data, because you can prevent or reduce it by taking some of the following precautions:

- Save to your Net space (N drive)
- Save backup copies on your computer or on a flashdrive

- Print your drafts as you go and keep them organized so that you could retype if necessary
- Expect to lose one of these safety nets and plan by working early and saving multiple places

Writing Center—“Home of the Writing Irish”

The Writing Center at the University of Notre Dame is dedicated to helping students become better writers. When you visit the Writing Center, the tutors working there will help you by listening to your questions attentively, reading your papers carefully, and talking with you intelligently about your ideas. Writing Center tutors work with writers during all stages of the writing process—from understanding an assignment, to developing a thesis, to organizing the paper, to revising the first draft, to editing the final product. The tutors do not write or edit your papers for you. Rather, they help you develop effective rhetorical strategies for your written work.

You are required to work with a Writing Center tutor at least twice this semester, once before the start of midterm break, and again by the last day of class. You are not *limited* to those visits, however, and you may choose to go regularly. I recommend that you do, and I will reward extra credit participation points for supplemental visits. To learn more about the Writing Center, visit: <http://writingcenter.nd.edu>.

Grading Scale

You will receive a percentage grade on most assignments. The numbers correspond to letter grades as follows:

93-100=A, 90-92.9=A-, 87-89.9=B+, 83-86.9=B, 80-82.9=B-, 77-79.9=C+, 73-76.9=C, 70-72.9=C-, 60-69.9=D, below 60= F. *Failure to complete all formal assignments or to exceed the number of permitted absences will result in an F for the course.*

Assignment Descriptions, Due Dates, and Final Grade Breakdown

Final Portfolio

65%

Because this course involves a community program, the learning you do here may be of interest to civic leaders, funders, and regular citizens. Also, because the internet is an increasingly important medium, it is important to take advantage of the opportunity it presents to document and present your work to wider audiences. Thus, you will build a course website to document your and your partner's learning in the course, and, ultimately, this website will include a section that is your electronic final portfolio. In the portfolio system, writing grades are deferred until you submit the entire, revised portfolio, and you are allowed to select the pieces which you feel best represent your learning in the course. **The final portfolio is due the last day of classes, Thursday, Dec. 8, by 11:59 pm.** Your final portfolio should include one revised researched essay of your choosing, two revised short formal essays of your choosing, and your community-based narrative argument. You will submit a full draft of each of these formal assignments by the dates specified in the syllabus, and I'll provide feedback aimed to help you revise your work; in some cases, you'll also get feedback from peers and your community partner on your essays. NOTE: ALTHOUGH LETTER GRADES ARE DEFERRED UNTIL THE LAST CLASS DAY, AND YOU ARE ABLE TO

SELECT SOME OF YOUR ESSAYS FOR YOUR PORTFOLIO, FAILURE TO SUBMIT ANY FORMAL ASSIGNMENT DURING THE COURSE OF THE SEMESTER WILL RESULT IN AUTOMATIC FAILURE OF THE COURSE.

Grade breakdown for final portfolio:

**5% for website design and composition;
12.5% for each of the two short essays you choose
15% for the community-based narrative argument
20% for your research-based essay**

Short Formal Essays:

1) Literacy Autobiography (3-5 pages, formatted in MLA Style)

Peer Review Draft Due: 11:59 pm Wed. Sept. 7

Revised Instructor Draft Due: 11:59 pm Wed. Sept. 14

This assignment is designed to help you develop both your written narration and oral presentation skills. One of the central concepts we'll engage with in this course is "literacy," or the attainment of specialized knowledge and skills which signal proficiency in a specific area. In general, we'll explore how knowledge and ownership over texts such as Shakespeare's plays and fine art is related to power, and we will observe and ponder the ways that literacy acquisition can relate to the self. As a way to introduce yourself to the rest of the class and to consider this concept of literacy as it relates to your own life, your first formal assignment will be to write the story of how you attained some kind of "literacy" you possess, exploring its significance in your life. As one step in the writing process for this assignment, you'll tell your story to the class, using a visual aid to enhance your argument.

2) Rhetorical Analysis of a Written, Spoken, or Visual Argument (4-6 pages, formatted in MLA Style)

Peer Review Draft Due: 11:59 pm Mon. Sept. 26

Revised Instructor Draft Due: 11:59 pm Fri. Sept. 30

During the first part of the course, we'll explore narrative, visual art, and speech as forms of argument, and we'll learn to use the tools of rhetoric to dissect persuasive texts about art, literacy, and learning. You will develop your acuity as an analyst of persuasion, and you will also come to observe the ways that performance and presence can shape one's ethos and an audience's relationship with the speaker. For your essay topic, you will choose one of the assigned course texts, identify its main claim, and analyze the rhetorical strategies the speaker uses to persuade his or her audience to accept that claim. Your paper, in turn, will provide your reader with insight about how an argument was arranged and executed in a particular context, using the rhetorical and formal elements you have learned to enlighten them about the persuasive dynamics of that particular text.

3) Rhetorical Analysis of Shakespeare Monologue (4-6 pages, formatted in MLA Style)

Peer Review Draft Due: 11:59 pm Mon. Oct. 3

Revised Instructor Draft Due: 11:59 pm Fri. Oct. 7

As a member of the Robinson Shakespeare Club, you'll be assigned a monologue from one of Shakespeare's plays, and you must come to "own" this text over the course of the semester. Shakespeare's characters are often brilliant practitioners of rhetoric, and the actors that play them must not only develop an acute understanding of their characters' approaches to persuasion, but must also contribute to that strategy through vocal emphasis, pacing, gestures, facial expressions, and other creative choices. In this essay, you'll identify your character's rhetorical situation and persuasive strategy and the textual moves Shakespeare used to execute that persuasion, and you'll also reflect on the performance choices you'll make to contribute to your characters' appeals to ethos, pathos, and logos.

Research-Based Essays:

During the second half of the course, through a series of two formal papers, you will investigate a contemporary debate of your choosing related to youth culture, learning, the arts, self-development, or education. These assignments are designed to help you develop proficiency at using university library resources to learn about a topic, and to build the knowledge you need to credibly take a position on an important issue. As a class, we will together to develop research topics over a number of weeks, and, before midterm break, you'll choose one. With guidance from the university librarians and myself, you will independently investigate it through the two papers assignments outlined below. Note that one of the two Researched-Based Essays **MUST** be included in your Final Portfolio.

1) Exploratory Research Paper (4-6 pages, formatted in MLA Style; five credible sources you find on your own required)

Peer Review Draft Due: 11:59 pm Mon. Oct. 31

Revised Instructor Draft Due: 11:59 pm Fri. Nov. 4

The objectives of this assignment are to gain an understanding of a complex topic and a related, debatable question, and to then successfully impart that understanding to an intelligent, but uninitiated, audience. You'll be introduced to a variety of different resources in the university library which can help you to locate sources, and you learn strategies for evaluating their credibility and integrating them into your writing. Most importantly, this essay will help you develop your skills at ethical argumentation, teaching you to understand and synthesize facts and to develop a fair and probing analysis of multiple perspectives in a debate.

2) Researched Argument (5-7 pages, formatted in MLA Style; seven credible sources you find on your own required)

Peer Review Draft Due: 11:59 pm Mon. Nov. 14

Revised Instructor Draft Due: 11:59 pm Fri. Nov. 18

This assignment asks you to gather together all of the tools, skills, and strategies you have learned, and put them together with your knowledge of your research topic, to make your own scholarly argument. As a class, we will move through all the steps in the research process for a typical college-level researched argument paper, from shaping a research question and original claim, to developing a well-planned argument using a logical arrangement and diverse sub-claims, to building ethos by integrating evidence and

counterarguments from credible sources, to connecting your researched argument to your readers by using effective narration .

Community-Based Project/ Narrative Argument:

(4-6 pages, in MLA Style; sources: community partner interviews, your reflections and field journal)

Peer Review Draft Due: 3 copies printed for class, Dec. 6

Revised Instructor Draft Due: in portfolio, 11:59 pm, last class day

In some ways, this paper is the core of the course. It has the potential to be one of the most meaningful pieces of writing you will produce during your college years, because your paper or parts of it could be used to extend the Shakespeare club and opportunities like it to more children or to improve local practitioners' and educators' understanding of the value and/or limitations of the arts in learning. While the draft of this paper is due at the end of the semester, it will reflect a semester's worth of work. Your reflection on your involvement with the Shakespeare Club and the relationship you are building with your community partner will serve as the research and preparation for writing this essay. You will conduct and record a series of interviews with your partner over the course of the semester, and you will use reflective writing to record your observations about your partner's involvement and attitude during the course of the semester. We will develop interview questions as a class and in our individual conferences, and you'll be able to view some examples of data others have generated. However, your ability to get good "data" from your interview will depend on the relationship you build with your partner over the course of the semester. During the entire semester, we will study storytelling as it relates to argument. In this final essay, you'll write a narrative argument, in which you'll make a claim about something you have learned through the RSC experience, persuading your reader through storytelling.

Class Participation

15%

A seminar-style class such as this one has great potential for becoming a supportive and stimulating intellectual community, but that kind of environment depends on each of you. I expect each of you to participate actively in class every day. Doing so will not only boost your course grade; it will instill a sense of confidence in yourself as a scholar. This 15% includes your overall engagement in classroom discussions, group work, peer review, student-instructor conferences, and other in-class activities. Students earn high marks in this area when their questions and comments show they are: 1) well-prepared for class, having actively read assigned material and made notes for discussion; and 2) actively listening to their peers and me. Your participation must also demonstrate your understanding of good rhetoric: While you can and should disagree with opinions expressed in our readings and class discussions, you must express your disagreement and assert your position with good reasons and respect for your audience.

Obviously, sleeping in class, talking out of turn, texting, and other forms of "non-attendance" are not allowed. You will be marked absent if you engage in these any of these behaviors during class time. Electronic devices (laptops, cell phones, etc.) *must be put away* during class time, so that we can eliminate distractions during our limited time together.

Journal Entries, Informal Presentations, and Drafts **20%**

Making writing a regular habit is a key component to becoming a successful college writer, so you can expect to regularly submit a weekly journal entry or prepare an informal in-class presentation. Not only will you get much more out of the class if you put effort into these assignments-- you'll also earn points for those efforts. An essential component of a class involving experiential learning is reflection—the process by which one analyzes his or her experiences for patterns and connects them to the readings, research, and discussions taking place in the classroom. After Shakespeare Club begins, I'll often give you a journal entry assignment to help you reflect on your experiences there. The purpose of this writing is for your thinking to evolve, so it should be largely unrevised, and I won't evaluate it based on your writing style or grammar. Rather, your reflection grade will derive from your efforts to learn from your experiences and to improve the depth and quality of your reflections during the course of the semester. The quality of your reflections will also impact the quality of your narrative argument, since you'll consult these writings as a source of material for that essay.

Note on DRAFTS: Although I won't record the permanent letter grade for each of your formal assignments until you submit your final portfolio, **you cannot pass the class without submitting ALL the required formal assignments!** You will only achieve your best work if you bring your "A" game on each draft you produce. Deadline points reward you for 1) submitting assignments on time, and 2) meeting all the criteria of the assignment for drafts (argument type; sources; citation, etc.).