

Engl 697: Composition Theory

Course Info: Spring 2007

Details:

- Day/time—W 4:30 pm - 7:10 pm
- Room—Thompson Hall 107 (some days will be in a computer classroom)
- Online Syllabus—<http://classweb.gmu.edu/bhawk/697>

Professor:

- Byron Hawk
- Email—bhawk@gmu.edu
- Web site—<http://mason.gmu.edu/~bhawk>
- Office/hours—Rob A 405D, M 4:30-7:20, 24-7 email
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English office:

- Bldg/room—Robinson A 487
- Phone—703-993-1160

Course Description

In this course we will work to understand the histories and theories on which we ground composition pedagogies. It is extremely important to recognize the connections between the theories or concepts of writing that we hold and our pedagogical practices. To enact pedagogies outside of any theoretical context often means that those practices are misguided. At the very least we run the risk of being unclear in our direction for the course or assignments and inconsistent in our modes of evaluation. In order to begin thinking about these connections, we will explore some well-known works by reflective historians, rhetoricians, and teachers that have shaped current practice, as well as some recent work that is developing composition theory in response to changes in our culture and the technologies we use. Our goals in this seminar are (1) to improve our understanding of theories and theorists and (2) to encourage us to begin building bridges between our current practices and various theories of composition. We will proceed by reading and discussing an array of interesting and often controversial work, writing summary/responses to these works, and developing and sharing our own pedagogical practices.

The course will move historically from the earliest attempts to theorize rhetorical practice in ancient Greece to some of the most current thinking about composing in technological contexts. The purpose of this historical approach is to see both how theories and practices change over time and how the same issues and problems often recur in new contexts. You'll be asked to use what you've learned through this historical survey to ground a statement of your teaching philosophy, and to identify a key issue that seems important to you, your students, and your particular teaching/writing contexts that you can research further.

Course Texts

Required Texts:

Murphy, James, ed. *A Short History of Writing Instruction: From Ancient Greece to Modern America*. 2nd ed. Mahwah, NJ: Hermagoras Press/LEA, 2001.

Villanueva, Victor, ed. *Cross-Talk in Comp Theory: A Reader*. 2nd ed. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2003.

Wysocki, Anne Frances, Johndan Johnson-Eilola, Cynthia L. Selfe, and Geoffrey Sirc. *Writing New Media: Theory and Applications for Expanding the Teaching of Composition*. Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 2004.

Suggested Texts:

Sirc, Geoffrey. *English Composition as a Happening*. Logan, UT: Utah State UP, 2002.

Crowley, Sharon. *Composition in the University: Historical and Polemical Essays*. Pittsburgh, PA: U Pittsburgh P, 1998.

Lindemann, E. and G. Tate, eds. *Introduction to Composition Studies*. New York: Oxford U P, 1991.

Course Assignments

Teaching Statements:

Over the semester, you will write 2 teaching statements (one-page, single-spaced). At the beginning and at the end of the semester, you will write an initial statement of your teaching philosophy in the light of your current teaching practice and academic experience with composition theory. At the end of the semester, the second statement should be written in the light of your reading and thinking over the semester. Theoretically, the way you think about your practice should change over the course of the semester. It may be the case that your practices don't change, but that you have a new theoretical foundation to support those practices. Or you may see ways that you think your practice could or will change. The statements should document this rethinking.

Short Papers:

Over the semester, you will write 3 short papers (2-page double-spaced or 1-page single-spaced) that summarize and respond to the readings from the previous two weeks. The papers should look closely at the material and provide a clear articulation of the ideas and practices discussed before responding. Negative critique is not the only way to respond. An affirmative approach that links past ideas to current ones, remakes or refashions older ideas for contemporary contexts, or uses other ideas and practices as jumping off points to invent new ones is typically more

rewarding. The short papers are there for you to make these kinds of connections that may start your thinking about the final paper.

Final Paper:

The final paper (8-10 double-spaced pages) should identify and respond to an issue within the field of rhetoric and composition. We will be covering a long history in a short amount of time. As we do, look for issues and arguments that you could research further and develop a position on. You might take up a past issue and flesh it out in more detail, identify a contemporary issue and situate yourself with respect to it, or take up an emerging issue and discuss how it will change the practice of composition. There are many possibilities and we will try to address them throughout the semester. There are also many online journals and databases that should facilitate this extra research without too much trauma.

Participation:

Your participation grade will include:

- Attendance: Even though this is a graduate class, attendance is critical. The point of the class is to develop a foundation for your thinking, research, and teaching. Attendance is necessary for this development.
- Discussion: As with attendance, discussion is necessary to develop a basis for deriving a research project. Most discussion will be in class, but some listserv discussion will be required.
- Sentences: Each week I will ask you to summarize each reading in one sentence. If we read four articles, you will write four sentences, one that summarizes the argument of each article or chapter. At the beginning of class we will discuss the readings, and then after break we will go around the room and read the sentences as jumping off points for thinking about the previous discussion. The first half of class will be more formal and detailed in an attempt to understand the readings more fully; the second half of class more open and exploratory in an attempt to apply the readings to our current situatedness.
- Presentations: Each of your short papers will be read aloud in class on the day that it is due. We will discuss the papers as much as time permits.
- Proposal: In weeks 13 and 14 you will begin to think more specifically about a possible paper topic. In week 13 you'll bring in a short 250 word abstract of your topic idea instead of sentences on the readings. We'll discuss paper topics in the second half of class. As you do more work on the topic, you'll be asked to write up a more formal proposal for week 14. This proposal will more directly establish your argument, not just your topic or issue. I will provide a more formal assignment at that time.
- Peer reviewing: We will do a little peer reviewing this semester of the proposals in week 14 during class, but also of drafts of the final paper outside of class in week 15. I'll put you in groups of 3 and have you exchange papers via email. The peer reviews will be included with the final papers and will count toward the reviewer's participation grade. I'll provide a formal review sheet at that time.

Percentage Breakdown:

Statements	10 %
Short Papers	35%
Final Paper	45 %
Participation	10 %

	100 %

Course Syllabus

This is a tentative schedule by week and day, for assignments, readings, and activities. Tentative means I can vary it as much as seems appropriate. However, plan on sticking fairly close to this outline, especially on paper due dates. I will post all revisions of and additions to the syllabus on this web page. The updated web version will always override the printable PDF version.

Week 1 (Jan 24): Introductions

Before coming to class:

- Read the syllabus carefully and come with a question or two in mind.
- Read A Brief History of Rhetoric and Composition.
- Write a one-page, single-spaced statement of your current philosophy of teaching composition and bring it to class.

Week 2 (Jan 31): Ancient Composition

SHWI

- Murphy, Intro (1-7)
- Enos, "Greek" (9-34)
- Murphy, "Roman" (35-78)
- Lanham, "Late-Antiquity" (79-122)
- Woods, "Later Middle Ages" (123-144)

Week 3 (Feb 7): Modern Composition

SHWI

- Abbott, "Renaissance" (145-172)
- Ferreira-Buckley/Horner, "18-19 Britain" (173-212)
- Wright/Halloran, "19 America" (213-246)
- Hobbs/Berlin, "Century" (247-290)
- Murphy, Epilogue (291-297)

Week 4 (Feb 14): Paper 1 due

Prompt: Summarize a history of writing instruction, pulling out the key elements of the readings that stood out to you. Then discuss what you see in your current practice or understanding that derives from, connects to, or might be changed by this history. Make these connections explicit and give one or two concrete examples.

Week 5 (Feb 21): 1960s Composition

CTCT

- Rodgers, "Paragraph" (1966) - (175-88)
- Kinneavy, "Aims" (1969) - (129-40)

CE

- Rice, "Abolish" (21.7/1960)
- Kitzhaber, "Death" (21.7/1960)
- Kitzhaber, "New Perspective" (23.6/1962)
- Kitzhaber, "Prognosis" (23.6/1962)
- Guth, "Certainty" (24.2/1962)
- Roellinger, "Present State" (25.5/1964)

- Ohman, "In Lieu" (26.1)
- Steinmann, "Rhetorical" (27.4)
- Rineheart, "Comp Sequenece" (27.4)
- Tibbets, "Comments" (27.8)

- Coles, "Teaching" (29.2)
- Deemer, "Happening" (29.2)
- Bloom, "Argument" (29.2)
- Comment/Response to Coles (29.5)
- Elbow, "Method" (30.2)
- Larson, "Discovery" (30.2)
- Russell, "Question" (30.2)
- Elbow, "Definition" (30.3)
- Response to Elbow, Method (30.7)
- Coles, "Freshman Comp" (31.2)
- White, (31.2)

CCC

- Corder, "Story" (12.2/1961)
- Saalbach, "Defense" (12.4)
- Kitzhaber, "4C" (14.3/1963)
- Booth, "Rhetorical" (14.3/1963)
- Christensen, "Generative" (14.3/1963)

- Corbett, "Classical" (14.3/1963)
- Rohman, "Prewriting" (16.2/1965)
- Murray, "Voice" (20.2/1969)
- Lutz, "Happening" (22.1/1971)

Week 6 (Feb 28): 1970s Composition

CTCT

- Murray, "Process" (1972) - (3-6)
- Ong, Audience/Fiction" (1975) - (55-76)
- Shaughnessy, "Diving" (1976) - (311-18)
- Emig, "Writing/Learning" (1977) - (7-16)
- D'Angelo, "Ontological" (1978) - (141-50)
- Lunsford, "Cognitive" (1979) - (299-310)

CCC

- Corbett, "Open/Closed" (20.5/1969)
- Responses to Corbett, 1 and 2 (21.2/1970)
- Fulkerson, "Four Philosophies" (30.4/1979)

Week 7 (Mar 7): Paper 2 due

Prompt: Summarize the key debates in the 1960s and 1970s with respect to rhetoric, composition, and the teaching of first-year English. Do you see similar arguments happening today in your other courses, your discussions with other teachers and administrators, or even in the popular conceptions of writing or teaching? Why or why not?

Spring Break, March 11 - 18

Week 8 (Mar 21): 1980s Composition I

NOTE: I will be gone to CCCC in NY this week. You'll need to do the reading, email your sentences to me, and then discuss the reading on the class list. I'll expect a least 5 decent posts per person.

CTCT

- Sommers, "Revision" (1980) - (43-54)
- Flower/Hayes, "Cognitive" (1981) - (273-98)
- Witte/Faigley, "Coherence" (1981) - (235-54)
- Berlin, "Contemporary" (1982) - (255-70)
- Britten, "Spectator" (1982) - (151-74)
- Bizzell, "Cognitive" (1982) - (387-412)
- Ede/Lunsford, "Audience" (1984) - (77-96)

- Berthoff, "Teaching" (1984) - (329-44)
- Bruffee, "Collaborative" (1984) - (415-36)
- Bizzell, "Liberal" (1984) - (319-28)

Week 9 (Mar 28): 1980s Composition II

CTCT

- Hartwell, "Grammar" (1985) - (205-34)
- Rose, "Exclusion" (1985) - (547-70)
- Bartholomae, "Inventing" (1985) - (623-54)
- Myers, "Reality/Reform" (1986) - (437-60)
- Flynn, "Woman" (1988) - (571-86)
- Rose, "Narrowing," (1988) - (345-86)
- Berlin, "Ideology" (1988) - (717-38)
- Trimbur, "Consensus" (1989) - (461-78)
- Brodkey, "Class/Gender" (1989) - (677-98)
- Flower, "Cognition" (1989) - (739-72)

CE

- Cooper, "Ecology" (48.4/1986)

Week 10 (Apr 4): Paper 3 due

Prompt: Identify key issues or arguments happening in the 1980s that stand out to you as important. Go back through CCC, CE, and English Journal in JStor and find a few other articles on this topic. Summarize the issues at hand and situate yourself with respect to them. Why are they important to you looking back from today? How do they make you think differently about teaching writing? What can you learn from them for your current practice?

Week 11 (Apr 11): 1990s Composition

CTCT

- Ohmann (1990)
- Hairston, "Diversity" (1992) - (697-714)
- Haefner, "Democracy" (1992) - (509-22)
- Bizzell, "Contact" (1994) - (479-86)
- Lu, "Multiculturalism" (1994) - (487-504)
- Kirsch/Ritchie, "Beyond" (1995) - (523-46)
- Royster, "Voice" (1996) - (611-22)
- Miller, "Complicity" (1998) - (655-76)
- Ritchie/Boardman, "Feminism" (1999) - (587-610)
- Matsuda, "ESL" (1999) - (773-98)
- Anson, "Technology" (1999) - (797-818)

- Cushman, "Service Learning" (1999) - (819-28)
- Villanueva, "Racism" (1999) - (829-46)

- Sirc (Nevermind)
- Sirc (Stagolee)

Week 12 (Apr 18): 21st Century Composition I

WNM

- Wysocki, "Opening" (1-42)
- Selfe, "Toward" (67-110)
- Wysocki, "Sticky" (147-98)

Week 13 (Apr 25): 21st Century Composition II

WNM

- Selfe, "Students" (43-66)
- Sirc, "Box" (111-46)
- Johnson-Eilola, "Database" (199-236)

Prompt: Instead of sentences this week, write a 250-word abstract for your final paper. See the **full assignment**. For the paper, I want to see you take some of the issues that emerged in the 1990s and 2000s, which we have merely skimmed at this point, and research them more fully. Develop a sense of your own work and approach to composition in the context of these more current debates. For the abstract, simply summarize what you think you'll look into at this point.

Week 14 (May 2): Statements, proposals, and peer review.

For this week, write your second teaching statements, a formal **proposal** for the final papers, and even an initial 2 to 3 pages of the paper if possible. We will discuss the statements, review the final paper materials, and set up the **peer reviews** over email.

Week 15 (Finals Week): Paper 4 due