

## **ENGL 112**

### **Writing and Rhetoric II**

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Writing and Rhetoric II helps students use writing to develop and sustain an in-depth personal and intellectual inquiry into a subject of their choosing. The course unfolds in a series of assignments designed to lead students through a continually deepening creative research process that ripens into a written project of considerable length and complexity. Focusing on methodology, rather than specific course theme, students learn to generate worthwhile questions, collect primary data, locate secondary resources, and form original research insights.

Learning Outcomes: Students who successfully complete WR II will be able to

- Identify, immerse themselves in, and contribute to an intellectual conversation
- Identify and evaluate a diversity of sources in the library and online
- Synthesize sources into a project that represents the complexity of perspectives involved
- Understand fair use and intellectual property rights and use others' work ethically and legally
- Revise and edit a substantial project over several drafts, using multiple modes when relevant

#### Class schedule and format

Writing and Rhetoric I and II are part of the essential LAS core. For the hybrid version of this class, instructors will use in-class meetings and online learning. Instructors will be asked to divide their classes into two groups (Group A and B) and meet each group in class on alternate days (TH or MW) and use Canvas for online learning.

#### Course-specific organization, examples and ideas

**Unit One for Writing and Rhetoric II:** In the first unit, the whole class reads/watches/listens to a cluster of texts about an intellectual question or topic chosen by the instructor (for example, pandemic conspiracy theories); students practice analyzing and responding to the various perspectives—the authors and each others'; and students contribute to the conversation with a project that engages with (quoting, paraphrasing, summarizing) and synthesizes what they've read/watched/heard. This unit uses scaffolded activities and assignments to provide students guidance and practice in how to read critically and write using sources.

### **Unit One**

#### **Week One**

##### In Class

- Introductions and Focused Free Write:

Use the prompts to formulate a response of about 200 words.

1. What is the COVID 19 crisis teaching us? What has it taught you?
2. What do you think we're learning from the COVID 19 crisis? What are you learning?

- Review of key concepts genre, ethos, kairos, and logos using student generated definitions.

- Review relevant sections from *Key Concepts*.
- Apply the concepts to a preview of the shared texts for unit one:
  1. As we look ahead to reading, listening, and viewing these texts, consider the affordances and constraints of the genre of long-form journalism and the podcast. What does each allow authors/creators to do that some other genre would not? What are the constraints of long-form journalism and the podcast?
  2. How do we understand and assess the ethos of these authors? How will they be communicating their ethos?
  3. We often tend to think about logos as the use of facts and statistics, but what else does logos include? What other strategies might these authors use to communicate their message?
  4. Kairos has to do with finding or creating the opportune time to circulate a message. Read the titles of the articles and podcast. Explain how the authors are seizing a kairotic moment. What cultural moment do we find ourselves in that allows conspiracy theories to thrive?
- An introduction of the conversation metaphor adapted from Kenneth Burke's parlor in which students discuss what makes for "good" discussion and an application of those ideas to their work as readers/writers.

#### Online

- Read/Watch/Listen to assigned texts.
  - ["The Comforting Appeal of Conspiracy Theories"](#)
  - ["The Viral Power of Fake News COVID 19"](#)
  - ["COVID 19 and Conspiracies"](#)
- Students compose a response to the assigned texts, post it in the Canvas discussion, and engage with other students in an exchange of ideas
- In a shared/group assignment students generate questions that form the basis for a discussion in the next in-class meeting.

#### **Week Two**

##### In Class

- Use students' online responses and questions to initiate a discussion of the assigned texts from last week.
- Use students' week one definitions of key concepts to closely examine the assigned texts.
  1. How would you assess the ethos of each author? Are they knowledgeable and trustworthy? Why/Why not? Find an example from the text to support your assessment. What else might these authors want us to think about them?
  2. Each text seeks to make a contribution to the conversation on conspiracy theories. What is the central contribution/message of each source?
  3. How do the affordances of each text's genre help the authors communicate their message(s)?
  4. Each author uses multiple strategies to develop their text. Referring to our assigned texts, identify two examples of logos that you felt were most effective (for example, some form of

evidence like the use of an example or personal experience). Point us to specific passages the texts.

4. Can you find places in the sources where they to be agreeing? Any places where they seem to be disagreeing? What might this tell us about the conversation on conspiracy theories?

5. How might our understanding of kairos help us interpret the popularity of conspiracy theories?

### Online:

-Students use their work in class to compose a revision of their reading response and share it in a Canvas discussion.

Use our conversation in class to help you revise your reading response by extending one of your ideas or adding a new idea or perspective. You should also consider making any other revisions to your response that would make it more effective ( for example, rearranging the paragraphs). Your revised response should be about 750 words.

-Student view "[The Illusion of Understanding](#)"

-Students read "[Why Do We Believe Obvious Untruths](#)"

- Students engage in Canvas discussion.

You've read and viewed a number of perspectives on why we believe obvious untruths. Fernbach and Sloman in the NYT argue, for example, that because we're so good at dividing cognitive labor (think "hive mind" shared knowledge) most of what we "know" is just a placeholder for information stored elsewhere (experts, for example). This can give us the illusion we understand or know more than we really do. In Fernbach's TedTalk he refers to this as the "illusion of explanatory depth." In a sense, he seems to be suggesting that we are in some way hardwired or predisposed to think we know more than we do. In other words, it's not our fault, maybe?

1. Share with the class how the "illusion of explanatory depth" might contribute to our belief in conspiracy theories.

2. If you can, share with the class a strongly held stand/position that you came to question with more information. Does more factual information always lead us to correct our position?

Why/Why not?

Try to write 100 words for each reply. Then respond to a classmate's post.

-Students read "[How to Debunk Conspiracy Theories](#)"

-Students view "[COVID 19 Conspiracies Debunked](#)"

-In a shared group assignment on Canvas, students share examples of popular conspiracy theories or conspiracy that turned out to be true ([Big Tobacco](#))

## **Week Three**

### In Class

-Students collaborate in groups to answer these two prompts:

-The greatest harm caused by conspiracy theories is . . .

-To prevent this harm, we need to . . .

-In a Canvas discussion, students apply their knowledge about conspiracy theories and their rhetorical knowledge to create their own message:

Our reading, listening, and viewing this week have offered strategies for effectively debunking conspiracy theories. Use these strategies to create a meme (there are several meme generators on the internet if search) that sends a message to counter a conspiracy theory. You could focus on COVID 19 or some other topic popular with conspiracy theorists. Remember, a meme is a humorous image, video, piece of text, etc., that is copied (often with slight variations) and spread rapidly by users on various social media platforms. Its affordances allow us to rapidly create and share often humorous messages on timely topics.

Post your meme and a brief explanation of the message you wish to send with it.

-Students share their memes with the class.

-Working in groups (assign each group one section of the outline to complete), students complete this summary of the conversation so far on conspiracy theories and share their work.

In order to prepare to enter the conversation on conspiracy theories and make our own contribution, we need to summarize what we've learned about the conversation so far. Let's work together to create an outline that summarizes our work to understand the conversation on conspiracy theories. Each group should spend a few minutes filling out your assigned section.

#### I. Defining Conspiracy Theories

- a.
- b.

#### II. All conspiracy theories rely on the same strategies to communicate and spread their message.

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.

#### III. The dispositions (habits of mind) we practice can resist or reinforce conspiratorial thinking.

- a. habits of mind that resist conspiracies
- b. habits of mind that reinforce conspiracies

#### IV. COVID 19 Conspiracy Theories and why they are false

- a.
- b.
- c.

-Review the Project One Assignment Description

You've had the opportunity to consider several different voices in a conversation about conspiracy theories. Now it is time to add your voice!

Using two of the resources we discussed as part of this unit, create a text that effectively makes a contribution to the conversation on conspiracy theories. In this text, articulate a question you will pursue or an objective you will meet, and consider several different perspectives before adding your voice. Keep in mind organization strategies we have observed, which may include presentation of objective data and facts, exploration of opposing arguments, and personal anecdotes that help introduce ideas or present evidence. Your essay should be 4-5 pages, MLA format.

Multi-modal option: As an alternative to a traditional alphabetic text, you may choose to create a multi-modal project that addresses a question or objective you form on the subject of conspiracy theories. Ideas might include visual art or photography, graphic narrative/illustration, video, original music, or...? Playtime for a video or piece of original music should be five minutes or less. If you choose this option, your project must also be accompanied by a 1-2 page (typed, double-spaced, etc.) rationale that articulates your question, identifies the text sources you are drawing from to explore the question, and the role that each source played in informing your project. You should also explain the choices you made in selecting modes, genres, and/or platforms.

Whether you choose the traditional or multi-modal option, remember – this is your voice. Feel free, and invited, to bring your own unique and distinctive voice to this conversation.

Draft: T 10/2

Final Version: TH 10/9

### Online

-In an assignment on Canvas, students generate ideas for Project One.

Now that you've read through the assignment for Project One, let's generate some possible ideas. Try using these prompts to help you brainstorm and share/comment with your classmates.

1. Think about where you can enter the conversation. Try to fill in the blanks in this sentence: "The conversations on conspiracy theories has focused on \_\_\_\_\_, but what's missing/what needs further study is \_\_\_\_\_"

2. All the psychological and social issues that contribute to conspiracy theories can be explored by examining \_\_\_\_\_ conspiracy theory. What I know right now about this conspiracy theory is \_\_\_\_\_.

3. As college students, we often communicate using some form of the scholarly essay. Consider various combinations of purpose/audience/form and what they allow (afford). For example, Purpose(s): To inform my audience about the role of Facebook/Zuckerberg in spreading conspiracy theories, and persuade them that Facebook has a significant impact that must be more closely regulated.

Audience(s): classmates

Form: essay

The essay would allow me to inform, entertain, and persuade my classmates using alphabetic text arranged and organized in way that would allow considerable development in a familiar form.

Now, you try:

Purpose(s):

Audience(s):

Form:

4. Try listing the perspectives and experiences that you've had that might make a unique contribution to the intellectual conversation on conspiracy theories.

5. Try to write a few sentences about what you see as the challenges and/or opportunities of this project.

For example, you might write about the limited amount of time you'll have to work on this project. How might that challenge you? How can you consider this when you decide the direction of your project?

When you've posted, please offer a classmate some feedback. Share your knowledge, ideas, and experience.

## **Week Four**

### In Class

- Students work in small groups to share their ideas for project two. They can begin by referencing the Canvas assignment from last week in which they completed an exercise to generate ideas for Project One.
- Large group sharing in which students' ideas are developed, their questions answered, and directions given for preparing a draft.
- Introduce students to the draft of the rubric for Project One. Use the rubric last year's students developed to start. Put students into small groups and ask them to review the assignment description of Project One and the draft of the rubric. Ask them to match the criteria from the assignment description to the rubric. Ask them what might be missing? Are the performance levels clear? Are the points distributed fairly, according to what they feel is most important? As each group reports, the instructor records students' feedback. What changes can or should be made to make the rubric more fair or reflective of the assignment's criteria?
- Instructor posts the revised rubric to Canvas for students to reference.

### Online

- Students work to complete their draft of Project One.

## **Week Five**

### In Class

- Peer Review of students' draft of Project One.

Find a partner. Use these questions to guide your feedback, but don't limit yourself to these. Provide any additional comments that you think would help the writer improve their draft.

1. In your own words, try to restate what you think the writer is trying to accomplish with project. Are they trying to answer a question, meet an objective, or something else? What is that question or objective? Is it clear? How could the writer make it clearer or more effectively guide readers into their project?
2. Describe the writer's ethos (how we want others to view us) in this draft.
3. What are the main ways the writer is developing their project (facts/statistics, reasoning, examples, analysis, etc.)? What's one way this project could be developed that the writer hasn't included?
4. Point the writer to specific places in their draft when you became interested and when you became confused or lost. This will help the writer consider arrangement, transitions, and overall organization.
5. What do you think is the most important thing this writer needs to focus on in revising this draft?

### Online

- Students submit their draft of project one with memo for instructor feedback.

Please upload your draft here so that I can give you some feedback. Please include as a separate document or simply add to the end of your draft a writer's memo that includes the following:

1. Tell me about how far along you are. Do you feel 25% done, 50% done . . . ? What have you accomplished so far? What do you need to do to complete Project One?
2. What pleases you most about the draft in its current form?

3. What challenges or problems did you confront in your drafting? How did you overcome them?
4. How can I help you in my feedback?

**Week Six**

Final Draft of Project Six Due