

ENGL 301: Writing Theory & Practice Syllabus

Instructor: Professor Erin Brock Carlson

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Virtual Class: Thursdays, 11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m. via Zoom [[link to standing Zoom](#)]

Virtual Student Hours: Most Tuesdays, 11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m. when we don't have Writing Group meetings; and other times by appointment (just email me to set up a time/tell me you'll attend!)

Weekly Class Schedule: [[link to schedule](#)]



Overview

While much of your professional writing and editing curriculum emphasizes the practice and products of professional communication, this course invites you to the theoretical discussion of *why* we write, and communicate, and design, and how we can improve upon these practices in a deliberate, systematic way. To these ends, you will engage in rhetorical analysis of a variety of documents, learn about rhetorical thought and how that influences our writing practices today, and immerse yourself in current research about concerns related to our field. ENGL 301 is all about more carefully considering the choices we make when we write—for ourselves, for our jobs, and for our communities.

This is now an **online course**, which I know is not the ideal situation; however, I promise that this course is designed and paced so that you can both work at your own pace (to a certain extent), but also collaborate with your peers and myself. Each week will follow the same pattern that mimics (sort of) what we would have done if we were meeting face to face, so that we can tackle course content in a range of ways so that *all of us* are engaged. Here are some key things to remember:

- We will always have one day of live class a week via Zoom: Thursdays during our designated class time of 11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m. Because of the reality that some folks might not have reliable internet access, or some people might get sick, these sessions are not required; however, they are **strongly recommended**. I promise that they will be worth your time and will help you succeed.
- Work for this class will be split into two sections each week with most weeks having **two** hard deadlines: **Thursday by class time (11:30 a.m.)**, and **Sunday by 11:59 p.m.** The first half of the week will 1) prepare you for class and 2) set the foundation for the second half of the week, which typically will contain the more substantive assignments. [The schedule for the course](#) will always be updated and clearly show you what needs to be done and when.
- In addition to the weekly synchronous Zoom meetings, some weeks I will invite you to meet in smaller virtual groups with me on **Tuesdays during the scheduled class time**. Each group would meet for about 20 minutes during our typical class meeting, and these sessions would be devoted to focusing on your own writing, as we brainstorm, draft, revise, and edit. Again,

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these are not required, but I can say with complete confidence that you will do better in the course if you make the time for these meetings.

- More on these smaller groups: Since we can't be together in-person, I wanted to give y'all as many opportunities to work together in low-stakes situations (read: ways that don't impact your grade negatively if someone disappears) as possible. I will group you in small groups of 4-5 based on your interests, experiences with writing, and goals for the class. These will become your Writing Groups, which you'll meet with on *some* Tuesdays (with me!). In addition to these occasional meetings, I'll ask that y'all check in with one another each week via email or text or whatever, to see how things are going and if there are any questions that I can clarify or help with. My goal is that this group becomes a space for you to develop your writing skills outside of class, and to build community during this very strange semester.
- I will hold Virtual Student Hours (or Office Hours) during our class times on Tuesdays, 11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m., in weeks when Writing Groups are not meeting. These are for you to talk with me (via Zoom, phone, text chat) about the class, to ask questions, to get extra feedback on your work, to talk about more general writing concerns or college concerns; whatever. They're for you! Please shoot me an email so that we can arrange a way to meet.

Here's a quick illustration of what each week will look like:

Tuesday	Thursday	Sunday
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some weeks, Writing Group meetings, a 20 minute period within the 11:30 a.m.-12.45 p.m. time frame• Most weeks, Virtual Student Hours, 11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m.• Check-In with Writing Group, anytime	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Virtual Class, of 11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m• First Weekly Deadline; Assignments due by 11:30 a.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Second Weekly Deadline; Assignments due by 11:59 p.m.

Course Goals and Means

By the end of the semester, students who earn a passing grade in the course (C- or above) will have demonstrated their ability to:

- **Define** rhetoric, including concepts such as *kairos*, *techne*, and *praxis*
- **Apply** key rhetorical concepts in your own writing and discover them in others' writing
- **Evaluate** how rhetorical concepts inform professional writing practices
- **Describe** research methods and approaches relevant to professional communication
- **Research** and **analyze** a current issue in professional communication
- **Articulate** why rhetorical thought matters in everyday life

Required Materials

There are two textbooks for this class:

- *Rhetorical Analysis: A Brief Guide for Writers*, Longaker & Walker (ISBN 978-0-205-56570-2). It's about \$25 used from the campus bookstore, and it's a good text.

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- *Research Design: Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Arts-Based, and Community-Based Participatory Research Approaches*, Leavy (ISBN 978-1-4625-1438-0). [We have unlimited access to it through the library, just click this link.](#)

We will be using Google Classroom as a headquarters for our class (code to join: [vhliehh](#)). Classroom has a mobile app version. We will also be using Zoom for synchronous meetings, and I might introduce other optional technologies that are free to use throughout the semester. (For best results, please make sure that you have the latest version of Zoom on your computer.)

Major Units & Assignments

Each unit is made up of several components, including shorter writing assignments and the final product. Everything we do in this class will help you with putting together your final project, so missing major components does lower your overall unit grade. English 301 does not have a final examination.

1. Learning Rhetorical “Traditions” and Foundations 20%

This first segment of the class is dedicated to histories of rhetorical thought and key rhetorical terms, including ancient Greek and Roman traditions (which have largely shaped the study of rhetoric). We will look at argumentation and persuasion strategies that were codified throughout history, including in more recent centuries. You will complete two rhetorical analysis assignments: one of a written text, and another of a multimodal artifact. You will also create an infographic about a rhetorical fallacy of your choosing.

2. Using Rhetoric and Writing to Understand Our Lives 25%

After we get the basics down, we'll investigate different ways that rhetoric and writing have been used as frames for inquiry. We will complete readings on visual rhetoric, technology and social media, crisis communication, nonhuman and posthuman thought, technical and professional communication, public writing, research methods, and perhaps more, depending on the interests of the class. During this portion of the class, you will complete three extended response papers that incorporate multiple readings: one in traditional response paper form; one in a written genre of your choice; and one in a digital, multimodal format.

3. Investigating Writing and Rhetoric 30%

For your final project, you will take what we've discussed all semester and identify a question related to rhetoric or writing that you'd like to pursue. You'll write a brief proposal explaining this question and its importance, and then do some research. You will collect 8-10 peer-reviewed sources and complete a literature review matrix, and write a brief proposal for how you would build on the literature that's out there if you were to conduct a research project of your own. (And maybe you will; part of my method with this is that these projects could become independent research projects or perhaps related to your senior capstone course.) You could work in small groups, if you wish.

Course Meta-Reflection 5%

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This course promises to be a fun and wild ride, so at the end of the semester, you will write up a short reflection that discusses how your understanding of writing and rhetoric has shifted over the course, and how you might apply this new knowledge.

Reading Responses and Community Building 20%

Obviously, we're working under imperfect circumstances, but our success depends on how well we can engage with the content and one another throughout the term. So, to that end, you can demonstrate your level of engagement with the course in a variety of ways, including by completing reading responses (250-300 words) or other activities that prepare us for live discussions *and* participating in discussions with thoughtful and reflective contributions and questions, as well as taking notes for sharing with peers.

A note on reading responses: As an upper level course, this class involves a substantial amount of reading, and of course, discussion about the readings and their many applications to our everyday lives. You are responsible for keeping up with **all** of the readings in the class. Most weeks, I will assign reading responses in order to allow you to delve into the concepts discussed and why they matter. I expect you to write 300-500 words in these responses, and I offer questions to get you started, but feel free to talk about ideas from the reading that interest you. The most important thing to remember about reading responses is that you **should use them to illustrate that you read**: whatever approach you take, you should be directly referencing the text, showing off your understanding of the concepts central to the readings.

Grading

Specific criteria and rubrics for each major assignment will be provided; however, all of the writing you produce in this course should meet the requirements of the specific project, be well-informed and thoughtful, be respectful of audience, be grammatically and stylistically sound, and be rhetorically effective for its intended purpose.

In compliance with relevant privacy laws (FERPA), I must discuss grades with you in confidence. This means I cannot email grades to you; please set up a meeting where we can discuss virtually. **I post grades on GoogleClassroom regularly, so you can keep track of them there.**

letter grade	range	letter grade	range	letter grade	range
A+	100-98%	B-	82-80%	D	67-63%
A	97-93%	C+	79-78%	D-	62-60%
A-	92-90%	C	77-73%	F	59-0%
B+	89-88%	C-	72-70%		
B	87-83%	D+	69-68%		

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Revision policy

If you are unsatisfied with your grade on a major assignment, you may revise it for a higher grade; but, you must correspond with me about those revisions and write a brief memo that explains your changes. (After all, this is what would happen in a professional environment.)

Course Policies

Engagement and participation

Obviously, engagement and participation takes on a different meaning in our current scenario; however, this offers a valuable experience for all of us, as remote working environments are becoming more and more commonplace. (Especially, um, while we live through a global pandemic.) While our schedules might shift throughout the semester, you must still demonstrate your active involvement with the course by completing tasks on time, posting reading responses and thoughtful replies, and asking good questions in class meetings or student hours.

A note on Zoom: Zoom is weird. We will get tired of it, but it does have affordances that I plan to use to break things up (breakout rooms, polls, etc.). I will have my camera on so that you can see me and slides, but that doesn't mean that you must have your camera on. Please feel free to use the chat function, to ask questions, to engage in whatever respectful ways you feel comfortable with. See [this best practices guide](#) I developed for more.

Late work and technological difficulties

I set deadlines for a reason – to help you be better students and me be a better teacher. This class is modeled after real work environments, where deadlines matter. That being said, in professional environments, you may ask for an extension. An approved extension will not affect your grade, but do not over use this professional courtesy. Additionally, if you submit an assignment late, you will not get the same amount of written feedback. If you do not ask for an extension **before** the due date, your late work will not be accepted, and you will receive a zero for that assignment. Additionally, lost files, crashed computers, or other technical difficulties will not be considered a legitimate excuse for late work. Because computer problems are a fact of life, always try to complete your assignments early and ALWAYS save your work in multiple places (e.g., USB, Google Drive, etc.).

Academic integrity

Dishonesty is not accepted in our class, and will definitely not be accepted in the workplace. For more information visit the WVU [Academic Standards Policy](#). All academic honesty violations will result in a failing grade of 1% for the assignment and likely, the course. If you have any questions about this, please come and talk to me before an assignment is due.

Accommodations and accessibility

I strive to make my courses as accessible and accommodating to all persons as I can. If you require any specific accommodations, please send me an email within the first week of the term in order to discuss any necessary adjustments. For more information, consult the [Office of Accessibility Services](#).

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Professional conduct and community

Always feel free to email me if you have questions or concerns; I don't often check my email after 7 p.m., so if you email me after this time, you probably won't get a response until the next day. Please use appropriate email etiquette when communicating with me and your classmates.

I take seriously the need to provide a respectful and supportive environment in our classroom. You are expected to behave professionally in class and out of class (this includes while corresponding through email), and to treat everyone in our community with kindness and respect. I have a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination and harassment in all forms.

Health and safety

WVU is committed to maintaining a safe learning environment for all students, faculty, and staff. If you become sick or are required to quarantine during the semester, you should notify me immediately via email. You will work with me to develop a plan to receive the necessary course content, activities, and assessments to complete the course learning outcomes. **I am here to support you however I can.**

Student success and safety

WVU has a number of resources and offices dedicated to student success. Of special note, when it comes to writing, is the [Eberly Writing Studio](#), which will have online and phone appointments available this term. Further, any student who faces challenges securing their food, housing, mental health, or other elements of wellbeing, and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Student Advocacy Center for support. Furthermore, please notify me if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable me to provide any resources that I may possess and to try and connect you to others.

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Schedule is subject to change based on class needs. **Previous weeks will be moved to bottom of document.**

Remember, Tuesdays are for Student Hours (to talk with me) and Writing Group Check-Ins and Meetings!

Week 1 (8/26-8/30): Introduction to Writing Theory & Practice

	By Thursday, 11:30 a.m.	By Sunday, 11:59 p.m.
Read	301 Syllabus and Schedule	Unit 1 Overview Longaker & Walker, Chp. 1 (PDF)
Do	Download Zoom, set up account Join Classroom	Introduction to Class Introduction Survey
Notes	8/27 Class: Starting from the Bottom, Then We There	

Week 2 (8/31-9/6): Rhetoric: Situation, Appeals, and Argumentation

	By Thursday, 11:30 a.m.	By Sunday, 11:59 p.m.
Read	Understanding Rhetoric, Chp. 1 (PDF) Longaker & Walker, Chp. 2	Jones, "Finding the Good Argument" Bilton, "Don't Fight Flames with Flames"
Do	Reading Response: Rhetoric, Fun Sign Up for Rhetorical Fallacy	Reading Response: Argument and Agreement Topic Proposal for Rhetorical Analysis 1
Notes	9/3 Class: Aristotle, Plato, Socrates, and more Old Dudes	

Week 3 (9/7-9/13): Rhetoric, II: Argumentative Structures and Other Approaches

	By Tuesday, 11:30 a.m.	By Thursday, 11:30 a.m.	By Sunday, 11:59 p.m.
Read	Wetherbee, "Picking Up the Fragments"	Longaker & Walker, Chp. 3	Mao, "Thinking Beyond Aristotle: The Turn to How in Comparative Rhetoric"
Do	Start thinking through what's interesting about your artifact	Rhetorical Fallacy Infographic	Reading Response: Opening up Rhetorical Histories
Notes	9/8 Writing Group: Developing a Rhetorical Analysis	9/10 Class: Wow, This Stuff (Fallacies) Still Works?! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bring: Infographic 	

Week 4 (9/14-9/20): Structure and Genre

	By Tuesday, 11:30 a.m.	By Thursday, 11:30 a.m.	By Sunday, 11:59 p.m.
Read	"What is paragraph replanning"	Longaker & Walker, Chp. 4 (PDF) Dirk, "Navigating Genres"	Cohn, "Understanding Visual Rhetoric"

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Do	Draft of Rhetorical Analysis 1	Reading Response: Playlists and Genres, Fun	Rhetorical Analysis 1 Topic Proposal for Rhetorical Analysis 2
Notes	9/15 Writing Group: Peer Review of RA 1	9/17 Class: The House Won't Fall if the Bones Are Good	

Week 5 (9/21-9/27): Style and ~Flair~

	By Thursday, 11:30 a.m.	By Sunday, 11:59 p.m.	
Read	Longaker & Walker, Chp. 5 (PDF) House, "In My Own Country" "Why Comic Sans Works"	Unit 2 Overview Ronald, "Style" (PDF)	
Do		Reading Response: Stylings of Style	
Notes	9/24 Class: Cicero is Bae <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bring: 		

Week 6 (9/28-10/4): Public and Civic Rhetorics

	By Tuesday, 11:30 a.m.	By Thursday, 11:30 a.m.	By Sunday, 11:59 p.m.
Read		TBD (based on class interest)	TBD
Do	Draft of Rhetorical Analysis 2	Collaborative Reading Log	Rhetorical Analysis 2
Notes	9/29 Writing Group: Peer Review of RA 2	10/1 Class:	

Week 7 (10/5-10/11): Cultural Rhetorics

	By Thursday, 11:30 a.m.	By Sunday, 11:59 p.m.	
Read	TBD	TBD	
Do	Collaborative Reading Log		
Notes	10/8 Class:		

Week 8 (10/12-10/18): Professional and Technical Writing

	By Thursday, 11:30 a.m.	By Sunday, 11:59 p.m.	
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Read	TBD	TBD
Do	Collaborative Reading Log	
Notes	10/15 Class:	

Week 9 (10/19-10/25): Other Sites of Study: Technology and Nonhuman Rhetorics

	By Thursday, 11:30 a.m.	By Sunday, 11:59 p.m.
Read	TBD	TBD
Do	Collaborative Reading Log	
Notes	10/22 Class:	

Week 10 (10/26-11/1): Developing Research Strategies for Writing and Rhetorical Inquiry

	By Tuesday, 11:30 a.m.	By Thursday, 11:30 a.m.	By Sunday, 11:59 p.m.
Read	Unit 3 Overview	Leavy, Chps. 1-2 (PDF)	CCCC Ethics Guidelines Butler, Principles for Cultivating...
Do		All 3 Extended Response Papers Must Be Turned In By This Date	Reading Response: Research Ethics
Notes	Writing Group 10/27: I Am Lost (insert Tik Tok)	10/29 Class: How 2 Not Be a Research Jerk	

Week 11 (11/2-11/8): Working with Published Research

	By Thursday, 11:30 a.m.	By Sunday, 11:59 p.m.
Read	Notetaking Practices Starting Research	Working with Research Slides
Do	Final Project Topic Proposal	Find 5 Sources
Notes	Required conferences this week 11/5 Class: Just Tell Me How To Find This Article Please	

Week 12 (11/9-11/15): Seeking Answers Through Research Methods

	By Tuesday, 11:30 a.m.	By Thursday, 11:30 a.m.	By Sunday, 11:59 p.m.
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Read	Leavy, Chps. 4-5	Choose one pairing: -Leavy, Chp. 6 -Leavy, Chp. 7 -Leavy, Chp. 8 +	Research Methods Slides Driscoll, Intro to Primary Research
Do	Reading Response: ALL THE METHODS	Find Other 5 Sources	Fill in Lit Review Matrix
Notes	11/10: OH BOY HERE WE GO	11/12: I LOVE RESEARCH OK BYE	

Week 12 (11/16-11/22): Designing Research Projects and Posing Research Questions

	By Tuesday, 11:30 a.m.	By Thursday, 11:30 a.m.	By Sunday, 11:59 p.m.
Read		Leavy, Chps. 3 (PDF) Creswell & Creswell, Chps. 1 & 7 (PDF)	
Do	Work on Project	Peer Review of Matrix Reading Response: Brainstorming	Draft of Research Design
Notes	11/17 Writing Group: Checking In, Please	11/19 Class: Let's Get It Perculatin', Triangulation (Mary J. Blige reference, I'm old now)	

Week 13 (11/23-11/29): Thanksgiving Break

	By Thursday, 11:30 a.m.	By Sunday, 11:59 p.m.
Read		
Do		
Notes	Take a break. Or work on your final projects. Whatever u want.	

Week 14 (11/30-12/6): Polishing Connections and Pitching Future Research Projects

	By Thursday, 11:30 a.m.	By Sunday, 11:59 p.m.
Read	Brock Carlson, "Embracing a Metic Lens for Community-based Participatory Research in Technical Communication"	
Do	Rough Draft of Proposal (share by 11:59 p.m.)	Peer Review of Proposal

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Notes	12/3 Class: Started From the Bottom, Now We Here <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Bring: Short spiel about your project and anything you'd like to share
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Finals Week (12/7-12/12): Reflecting on Writing Theory and Practice

Please turn in the following by 11:59 p.m. on Tuesday, December 8th:

- Final Literature Review Matrix
- Final Research Proposal
- Course Meta-Reflection
- Group Assessment, if you worked in a group