|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| WRIT 6500  Rockefeller 189  Section 004 (M/W 11:40-12:55) | Instructor: Dr. Michelle Cox  Office Hours: by appt.  Office: B5 McGraw  michelle.cox@cornell.edu |

**WRIT 6500: Learning to Write for Your Field**

One of the greatest challenges of graduate school is learning the writing practices of your discipline: learning how to write with the processes, in the structures and styles, and with the rhetorical moves favored by the field. How do people learn to write as “disciplinary insiders” when writing for the field is so infrequently taught? This course introduces students to strategies that be can used to learn how to write for a field, including learning from experienced writers in the field, identifying resources that support writing in your field, and answering questions about writing through the analysis of texts in the field.

**Course Learning Objectives**

* to understand more deeply the connections among writing, audience, and context (i.e. the rhetorical situation)
* to learn strategies for learning about writing from “insiders” in your field
* to learn strategies for locating resources that support writing in your field
* to learn strategies for using mentor texts to answer questions about writing in your field related to rhetorical situation, organization/structure, and style/discourse/language

**Course Texts**

If you would like to purchase a writing handbook, I recommend:

* Carlock, Janine, Maeve Eberhardt, Jaime Horst, and Lionel Menasche. *The Condensed ESL Writer’s Handbook*. Pitt Series in English as a Second Language. University of Michigan Press, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-472-03534-2

I may also be creating handouts and PDFs of readings from the following:

* Swales, John and Christine Feak. *Academic Writing for Graduate Students: Essential Tasks and Skills, 3rd ed.* University of Michigan Press: 2012. 978-0472034758
* Graff, Gerald and Cathy Birkenstein, *They Say/I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*, 3rd ed. Norton: 2014. ISBN: 978-0393935844
* Caplan, Nigel A. *Grammar Choices for Graduate and Professional Writers.* Michigan Series in English for Academic and Professional Purposes. Michigan University Press: 2012. ISBN978-0-72-03501-4

These books are on reserve in Uris Library.

**Activities and Projects**

How do we learn about writing in a field? We learn by talking with people who are already insiders in the field, by learning about resources that support writers in the field, and by analyzing texts produced within the field. These three projects are designed to give you experience with these three strategies:

**Interview Project:** For this project, you will:

* Locate a professor in your field who is willing to be interviewed
* read an article written by this professor (for this project, it is more effective to choose a recently published article and to choose an article for this which professor was the first author)
* interview the professor. This interview should focus on three areas:
  + the process the professor used to write this article
  + how the professor learned to write in this genre, with this style (in other words, as a disciplinary insider)
  + advice the professor has for graduate writers

This project results a brief report (bulleted list with responses from above questions) and a reflection (discuss what you learned from this experience).

**Resources for Writers Project**: For this project, you will write a descriptive list targeting graduate students in your field that includes:

* recommendations for 2-3 resources available through Cornell Libraries that support research and/or writing that would be useful to students in your field (i.e. databases, library guides, archives, subject librarian)
* recommendations for 2-3 books, articles or websites on writing and/or research methods in the field
* recommendations for 2-3 types of writing support available through Cornell (this may be a resource available only to students in your field, like a professional communication course for engineers, or a resource available to all graduate students, like the Graduate Writing Service)

For each recommended source, write a brief description (about 75- 100 words), telling the reader about the resource and highlighting why this resource would be useful to new graduate students in your field. The final draft should be formatted as a handout—the kind of thing that might be handed out during an orientation. Please limit the handout to 1-2 pages, single-spaced. When you hand in this project, include a cover letter that answers the following questions: Which resources from your project do you already use? Which resources did you discover during this project? How do you plan to use the resources described in your project to support your writing in your field? If you plan to actually distribute the handout in your department, let me know in your cover letter, and I will help you with copyediting.

**Learning from a Mentor Text Project:** For this project, you will identify a genre used in your field that you want to learn more about, find an effectively written sample of this genre to use as a mentor text, and then analyze this text to answer questions related to rhetorical situation, organization, and style/discourse/language. This project results in a PPT presentation.

**In this course, we will also use a blog:**

**Writer’s Blog:** Keeping this blog will help you reflect on what you are learning about writing as well as provide a space to practice writing in a low-stakes setting. Each week, post a brief reflection (minimum: 200 words) to Blackboard by **2:00 pm on Friday** in response to the prompt supplied in the syllabus.

Each week, instead of writing a blog entry, one or two students will prepare to lead a brief (20-minute) discussion on the entries. The **blog discussion leader(s)** will read peers’ blog entries and prepare the following:

* a brief summary of the blog entries (no need to mention every entry; simply note prominent or note-worthy themes)
* 2 or 3 discussion questions, based on the week’s blog entries

**Course Policies**

**Course attendance:** The graduate writing and speaking courses are highly interactive. Knowledge gained by attending the course cannot be replicated by reading a textbook or peers’ notes. Thus, attendance in each class meeting is crucial. If you know ahead of time that you will need to miss a class meeting, discuss the situation with the instructor and work together to create a plan for keeping up with the class. To avoid penalties for late work, homework and projects may be submitted electronically. **Students are who are regularly late for class, regularly leave class early, and/or who miss more than two class meetings are in danger of receiving an Unsatisfactory (U) for the course.**

**Academic Honesty:** All the work you submit in this course must originate with you in form and content with all contributory sources fully and specifically acknowledged. Carefully read Cornell’s Code of Academic Integrity. The Code is contained in *The Essential Guide to Academic Integrity at Cornell*, which is available at newstudentprograms.cornell.edu/AcademicIntegrity-Pamphlet.pdf. In addition to the Code, the *Guide* includes Acknowledging the Work of Others, Dealing with Online Sources, Working Collaboratively, a list of online resources, and tips to avoid cheating. In this course, the normal penalty for a violation of the code is a “U” for the term.

**Note to Students with Disabilities:** If you have a disability-related need for reasonable academic adjustments in this course, provide the Instructor with an accommodation notification letter from Student Disability Services. Students are expected to give two weeks’ notice of the need for accommodations. If you need immediate accommodations or physical access, please arrange to meet with the Instructor within the first two class meetings.

**Assessment**

This course is a credited un-graded course. In order to earn a Satisfactory (passing) mark for the course, students must not have more than two absences and must actively engage in the course:

**Class Participation:** I consider class participation to include five elements:

* preparedness (bringing necessary books, materials, completed work, and drafts for workshops to class)
* being present (consistently being in class, on time for class, and staying for full class meetings)
* active listening (active engagement when the instructor or a peer speaks)
* active contributions to class discussion (offering comments and questions that enhance class discussion)
* active writing group, workshop, and conference participation (offering useful questions, suggestions, and comments to peers’ writing as well as being open to feedback).

**Writer’s Blog:** If your blog entries are consistently posted and posted on time, are original (does not repeat a past entry or a peer’s entry), and respond to the prompt provided in the syllabus, you will receive full credit for this aspect of the course.

**Projects:** To earn full credit for each project, you must keep up with deadlines associated with the project and complete each aspect of the project fully and thoughtfully.

**Course Schedule:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Week 1 | Wed,  Oct 14 | **In class:** Introductions. Go over syllabus, Blackboard site. Sign up to lead blog discussions. Class discussion: What is “good writing”? What areas of knowledge are needed to write like a “disciplinary insider”? How, where, and when do we learn these areas of knowledge? Discuss Interview Project (due Nov 2) and what to think about when selecting an article by this professor.  **Blog prompt (due by Friday at 2:00):** Identify the professor you’ll interview for the Interview Project, find an article by this professor, and read it. While you read, keep track of questions you’d like to ask your professor on the process he/she used to write the article and how he/she learned to write in this style. In your blog entry, tell us the name of the professor and the article you chose, and share the questions you came up with as you read. |
| Week 2 | Mon,  Oct 19 | **Blog discussion led by:**  **In class:** Share drafted interview questions (create class list). Discuss interview plans: How will you contact the professor? How will you describe the interview to the professor? Do you plan to record the interview? What strategies will you use to take notes during the interview?  **Please Note:** For our next class, we will meet in Olin Library.  **For next time:**  Contact the professor to set up an interview (project due Nov 2). |
| Wed,  Oct 21 | **In class (held in Olin Library):** Meet with a librarian from your field to learn about resources available through Cornell Libraries that support research/writing in your field.  **For next time:** Write drafts of descriptions for at least five of the resources that you’ll use for your Resources for Writers project. Post to your group’s discussion board in Blackboard.  **Blog prompt (due by Friday at 2:00):** Which resources have you used while at Cornell to support your writing and research? Of these, which would you recommend that students in this course explore for the Resources for Writers project and why? |
| Week 3 | Mon,  Oct 26 | **Blog discussion led by:**  **In class:** In small groups, workshop the drafts. Do the source descriptions effectively describe the source and how it would be useful to graduate students in that field? What other resources should the writer include?  **For next time:** complete a full draft of the Resources for Writing project, formatted as a handout that could be used during an orientation for graduate students in your discipline. Post to the your group’s discussion board in Blackboard. |
| Wed, Oct 28 | **In class:** Workshop the full drafts of the Resources for Writers project. While you read, pay attention to the following: Has the writer included 2-3 resources for each category? (resources that support research/writing available through the library, articles/books/websites on research or writing in your filed, support on research/writing available through Cornell that would be useful to students in your field); Do the source descriptions effectively describe the source and how it would be useful to graduate students in that field? Are the descriptions succinct and clear? Overall, does the handout look well organized?  **Instructor feedback:** I will be collecting the second drafts from Blackboard to provide feedback. If you would like me to wait until you’ve had a chance to revise based on feedback from your group, let me know and email me the draft by Friday.  **For next time:** Complete the interview project and be prepared to share a few highlights from the interview during an informal presentation.  **Blog prompt (due by Friday at 2:00):** How does your writing process compare that the writing process of the professor you interviewed? What approaches did the professor describe that you might try? |
| Week 4 | Mon,  Nov 2 | **Blog discussion led by:**  **In class:** Interview Projects due; informal presentations.  **For next time:** Complete the Resources for Writers project – email me the final handout and a cover letter (see assignment description for the prompts). **Please note:** I do not expect these drafts to be fully edited. If you plan to share this handout with graduate students in your field or if you would simply like to learn more about editing, please make a note on this in your cover letter and sign up for an appointment during my office hours. |
| Wed, Nov 4 | **In class:** Resources for Writers project due (email before the start of class); informal presentations.  **Blog prompt:** How do you currently use texts from your field to answer your questions about writing in your field? If you haven’t yet done this, what questions about writing do you think can be answered by analyzing a text from a field? If you have used this strategy, what kinds of questions did you answer by analyzing a text from your field? |
| Week 5 | Mon, Nov 9 | **Blog discussion led by:**  **Class discussion:** What kinds of questions about writing in the field can be answered by analyzing text from the field? (using the questions from the blogs as a beginning point, brainstorm list). Walk through a sample text to think about how to answer questions related to rhetorical situation, genre, organization, style, discourse, and language.  **For next time:** Identify a genre from your field that you want to learn more about and find an effectively written sample from that genre to use as your mentor text. Post this mentor text to the discussion board in your group’s page on Blackboard. In your post, list the questions that you most want to answer through the Learning from a Mentor Text project. |
| Wed, Nov 11 | **In class:** Strategies for answering questions related to rhetorical situation (discuss and then apply to your project).  **For next time:** In preparation for the final project, draft a PPT slide focused on the rhetorical situation of the mentor text.  **Blog prompt (due Friday by 2:00):** Share insights about writing in your field gained from analyzing the rhetorical situation of the mentor text. |
| Week 6 | Mon, Nov 16 | **Blog discussion led by:**  **In class:** Strategies for answering questions related to organization and structure (discuss and then apply to your project)  **For next time:** In preparation for the final project, draft a PPT slide focused on the organization and structure of the mentor text. |
| Wed, Nov 18 | **In class:** Strategies for answering questions related to a style/discourse/language (discuss and then apply to your project)  **For next time:** In preparation for the final project, draft a PPT slide focused on issues related to style/discourse/language of the mentor text.  **Blog prompt:** Find a second sample of the genre you analyzed **or** a sample from a separate genre (perhaps on the same topic as your mentor text). Choose one of the features you analyzed in your mentor text and compare it with the new sample. What similarities and differences do you see? What do these similarities and differences tell you about the genre you’ve focused on for your project or about writing in your field more broadly? |
| Week 7 | Mon,  Nov 23 | **Blog discussion led by:**  **In class:** Meet with your writing group and share what you’ve learned from your analysis. What similarities and differences do you see when you compare your insights? Collectively, what have you learned about writing in your field from this project? (Report out to the class.)  Meet in cross-disciplinary groups. What similarities and differences do you see when you compare writing from different disciplines? (Report out to the class.)  **For next time:** Finalize your presentation for the Learning from a Mentor Text project. This presentation should contain at least 5 slides:   * a slide that introduces us to the genre (why did you choose this genre for analysis? Do you have experience writing in it? Will you write in this genre in the future? How common is this genre in your field? What is this genre’s role in your field?) * a slide on the rhetorical situation of your mentor text * a slide on the mentor’s texts organization/structure * a slide on the style/discourse/language used in your mentor text * a slide summarizing what you learned about writing in your field by analyzing this mentor text. |
| Wed,  Nov 25 | Thanksgiving Recess – No Classes |
| Week 8 | Mon,  Nov 30 | Presentations on Learning from a Mentor Text Project |
| Wed,  Dec 2 | Presentations on Learning from a Mentor Text Project and Course Evaluations |