**ENG 6040: Graduate Writing (online)**

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**Office Phone:** **Office Hours:**

**Course Description**

This course invites class members to explore and expand their writerly repertoires as they enter graduate studies in English. In addition to reading scholarship that theorizes graduate writing as a complex cognitive, social, and cultural activity, class members will take a hands-on approach to investigating the purposes, audiences, genres, and expectations often found in academic settings. Students will critically investigate their own writing processes throughout the course, using course readings as a conceptual frame.

As a class, we will focus on three strands of work throughout the semester. First, class members will work toward building a rich theoretical framework about writing at the graduate-level, a framework grounded in scholarship from the discipline of rhetoric and composition. Second, class members will complete multiple short writing projects in which they critique their own writing practices—including the environments in which they write, affective associations with writing, and rhetorical features of writing they have produced for another class or audience. Finally, class members will work to translate insights from the course into concrete pedagogical practices that will inform their professional lives as English scholars and teachers. By the end of the semester, class members will:

* develop a rich theoretical background with which to understand writing as a complex rhetorical and material act,
* develop a language to discuss graduate-level writing critically and with precision,
* develop a deeper understanding of one’s self as a writer, thinker, and member of a disciplinary community,
* develop practical strategies for analyzing one’s own writing,
* translate insights about writing into concrete pedagogical practices.

**Required Texts**

* Hayot, E. (2014). *The elements of Academic style: Writing for the humanities*. Columbia University Press.
* Additional course readings will be included in the Canvas shell and linked to online

**Course Projects**

Throughout the semester, class members will complete 4 short writing projects. Each of the 4 projects, upon submission, will be between 1000-1500 words (about 3-4 double-spaced pages). Be advised that all writing submitted will be read by other members of the class.

**Writing Project #1: A Writer’s Self-Assessment: Space, Workflow, and Schedules** (15%). For this project, students will analyze the material conditions surrounding their writing. Specifically, students will analyze the typical spaces in which they write—such as a desk, a kitchen table, a booth at Starbucks—and its relationship to workflows and schedules of production. Ultimately, students will produce an articulation of their typical work habits and strategies for shaping more effective writing habits. Students are encouraged to include photos and other visuals to complement their prose.

**Writing Project #2: Why Am I Uncomfortable? Or, Reverse Engineering Adaptive Challenges** (15%). For this project, students will analyze a piece of writing they have completed for another class or purpose outside ENG 6040. On that piece of writing, students will mark places in the text in which they felt uncomfortable and comfortable as writers. Students will then consider reasons for the discomfort (or comfort) while writing. The final project submission will be an essay articulating what aspects of writing cause discomfort and explanations of reasons why, with an eye toward changing circumstances in the future writing situations. Students are encouraged to draw on class discussions of course readings to inform their analysis.

**Writing Project #3: Joining the Conversation: A Rhetorical Self-Analysis** (20%). For this project, students conduct a rhetorical analysis of a piece of writing they have produced for another class or purpose outside ENG 6040. The rhetorical analysis will draw directly from the Applied Practice sessions taking place during Weeks 11, 12, and 13 of the semester. Specifically, students will apply a “CARS model” (Swales), a “BEAM model” (Bizup), and an “Uneven U model” (Hayot) to their writing in an effort to arrive at subtle insights about their written products.

**Writing Project #4: Writers as Theory Builders: Translating Insights into Professional Practices** (20%). For this project, students will articulate a theory about writing and writing instruction based on their learning throughout the semester. This writing project is intended for students to synthesize various elements of the course into a “working theory” that can guide professional action as an English scholar and teacher. That is, students are encouraged to integrate their knowledge from readings with insights gained from studying their own writing over the course of the semester.

**Participation** (30%). Participation is an essential component of any graduate course. Class members will be expected to post responses to the readings (“reading response posts”) as well as responses to peers (“cross-talk posts”) on a weekly basis. Participation grades are based on the level of engagement with the course material, and will be assessed on an ongoing basis. If at any time you are unsure whether you are meeting expectations, please do not hesitate to contact your instructor. I am happy to discuss this important component of our online graduate course.

**Course Procedures**

**Reading response posts**. Each week, class members will post in Canvas one-page repsonses to the required readings (at least 300 words). These posts are not intended to be summaries; rather, response posts should look for ways to grapple with the intellectual content of the writing, examining themes across readings, considering applications, critiquing, and otherwise building connections. **Reading response posts are due each week on Thursday by 5 p.m.**

**Cross-talk posts**. In addition to the reading response posts, students will also be required to compete weekly cross-talk posts, which are responses to peers’ “reading response posts.” These posts are intended to fuel discussion throughout the week and build a lively intellectual exchange. **For each cross-talk post, respond to at least one other class member (about 150 words at least). Cross-Talk posts due by Saturday midnight each week.**

**Public nature of writing**. Respectful, constructive dialogue is at the heart of any successful graduate course, particularly an online one. It is essential that discussion posts assume a spirit of respect, inclusion, intellectual growth, and community building.

**Attendance**. Attendance will be based on participation in online discussion forums. If you do not post in a given week, you will be marked absent as well as docked points for not fulfilling a weekly assignment. Missing more than one class (i.e., incurring more than one absence) will result in a full letter grade reduction for each class missed.

**Contacting your professor**. I am happy to meet with you at any point throughout the semester to discuss your standing in the class. Please do not hesitate to get in touch. During office hours (posed above), I will be in my office and available via email or Canvas chat. In addition to the office hours posted above, I am happy to arrange a time to meet that is more suitable to your schedule, over Skype, phone, or in person. I am most easily reached via email and, on weekdays, will respond within 24 hours. On weekends, however, I may be a bit slower to respond to emails. Again, do not hesitate to set up a time to meet

**Accessibility**. Accessibility Services provides equal access and reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities attending BGSU. Students wishing to discuss their eligibility for such accommodations are encouraged to contact the office at phone: 419-372-8495, fax: 419-372-8496, or email: [access@bgsu.edu.](mailto:access@bgsu.edu)

**Academic Integrity**. All assignments submitted must be the product of your intellectual work and follow appropriate standards of citation and attribution. Please familiarize yourself with the Codes of Conduct in the BGSU Student Handbook ([www.bgsu.edu/student-handbook/code-of-conduct.html](http://www.bgsu.edu/student-handbook/code-of-conduct.html))

**Grading**

A—excellent 90-100%  
B—good 80-89.99%  
C—acceptable 70-79.99%  
D—poor but passing 60-69.99%  
F—failure under 60%

Writing Project #1 15%

Writing Project #2 15%

Writing Project #3 20%

Writing Project #4 20%

Participation 30%

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Total 100%

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Course Calendar

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**Note:**

* All “response posts” are due by Thursday by 5 p.m.
* All “cross-talk posts” are due by Saturday midnight.

**Important dates in the academic calendar**

* Be sure to consult BGSU’s academic calendar for fall 2017: <https://www.bgsu.edu/registration-records/academic-calendars/fall-academic-calendar.html>

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**Week 1: Introductions and course rationale**

Required readings:

* Micciche, L., & Carr, A. (2011). Toward graduate level writing instruction. *College Composition and Communication 62*(3), 477-501.
* Hayot, E. (2014). Chapter 2: Unlearning what you (probably) know. *The elements of academic style: Writing for the humanities* (pp. 7-16). New York: Columbia UP.

Writing prompt (to be posted in appropriate discussion board; due Thursday by 5 p.m. each week):

* Share a profile of yourself as a graduate student, writer, and/or professional. Some questions you might address are: What brings you to graduate studies? What brings you to graduate studies in English in particular? What is your disciplinary background? What kind of writing do you typically do? What kind of writing would you *like* to do, but are unable to? What kind of writing do you do on the job? If you teach, how is writing part of your professional charge? What do you hope to get out this course? What would you like others to know about your writing history? What else would you like others to know about yourself?
* What experience do you have with online classes? With using Canvas as a course management system? What insights can you share about successful online experiences that might be beneficial for the rest of us in the class to be aware of?

Cross-talk Prompt:

* Feel free to respond to one another’s posts. This week’s cross-talk post is optional, but will be required in subsequent weeks.

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**Week 2: Perspectives on and strategies for producing scholarly writing**

Required Readings:

* Casanave, C. (2008). Learning participatory practices in graduate school: Some perspective-taking by a mainstream educator. In Christine Pearson Casanave & Xiaoming Li (Eds.), *Learning the literacy practices of graduate school: Insiders’ reflections on academic enculturation* (pp. 15-31). Ann Arbor: U of Michigan Press.
* Boice, R. (1997). Work habits of productive scholarly writers: Insights from research in psychology. In Gary A. Olson & Todd W. Taylor (Eds.), *Publishing in rhetoric and composition* (pp. 211-228). New York: SUNY Press.
* Hayot, E. (2014). Chapter 3: Strategies for getting writing done. *The elements of academic style: Writing for the humanities* (pp. 17-35). New York: Columbia UP.

*Optional reading*:

* Matsuda, P. K. (2008). Coming to voice: Publishing as a graduate student. In Christine Pearson Casanave & Xiaoming Li (Eds.), *Learning the literacy practices of graduate school: Insiders’ reflections on academic enculturation* (pp. 39-51). Ann Arbor: U of Michigan Press.
* McNabb, R. (2001). Making the gesture: Graduate student submissions and expectation of journal referees. *Composition Studies 29*(1), 9-26.

Response post prompt (choose to respond to any questions below that strike you as appealing; due Thursday by 5 p.m. each week):

* The required readings for this week offer “disciplinary participation” as a metaphor for learning the literacies of graduate school (Casanave), as well as specific strategies for producing scholarly writing (Boice and Hayot). To what extent does the metaphor of participation help you understand your own writing background? What about the writing you hope to be doing in the future?
* Do the writing obstacles discussed by the authors resonate with your experience? How so? What challenges do you face as a writer? To what extent have the strategies proposed by the authors helped you overcome writing challenges? Do you have other strategies you can offer that are not discussed in the readings?

Cross-talk prompt (due Saturday by midnight each week):

* Please respond to the post of one or more class members. The idea is to keep the discussion alive and energetic throughout the week. What has a colleague written about that resonates with your experience or ideas? How are your ideas broadened because of something a class member wrote? What connections do you see across the class’s discussion for the week (or across prior weeks)? Use this space to build knowledge collectively.

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**Week 3: The rhetorical situation**

Required Readings:

* Bitzer, L. (1968). The rhetorical situation. *Philosophy & Rhetoric 1*, 1-14.
* Vatz, R. E. (1973). The myth of the rhetorical situation. *Philosophy & Rhetoric 6*(3), 154-161.
* Edbauer, J. (2005). Unframing models of public distribution: From rhetorical situation to rhetorical ecologies. *Rhetoric Society Quarterly 35*(4), 5-24.

*Optional reading*:

* Biesecker, B. (1989). Rethinking the rhetorical situation from within the thematic of *différence*. *Philosophy & Rhetoric 22*(2), 110-130.

Response post prompts (choose to respond to any questions below that strike you as appealing; due Thursday by 5 p.m. each week):

* Using Bitzer’s scheme, how might we describe the rhetorical situation of graduate writing? What about academic writing in general?
* It may be tempting to pit Bitzer and Vatz against one another, but how can we build a more flexible understanding of rhetorical situations by uniting the two positions? What situations can you think of that fit Bitzer’s description? What situations fit Vatz’s description? Why might we benefit from an understanding of both views?
* How does Edbauer’s intervention into this discussion about rhetorical situations reframe the discussion?
* How conscious are you of rhetorical situations when you write? Is your rhetorical knowledge explicit (i.e., are you aware that you are thinking rhetorically when you write)? Is it possible *not* to think rhetorically while writing?

Cross-talk prompt (due Saturday by midnight each week):

* Please respond to the post of one or more class members. The idea is to keep the discussion alive and energetic throughout the week. What has a colleague written about that resonates with your experience or ideas? How are your ideas broadened because of something a class member wrote? What connections do you see across the class’s discussion for the week (or across prior weeks)? Use this space to build knowledge collectively.

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**Week 4: Activity theory and writing**

Informal writing workshop:

* In the appropriate discussion board for this module, please feel free to pose questions about Writing Project #1, due next week, to troubleshoot writing issues, or to share your working drafts and solicit feedback.

Required Readings:

* Kain, D., & Wardle, E. Activity theory for the writing classroom. (2014). In E. Wardle & D. Downs (Eds.), *Writing about writing: A college reader* (pp. 273-283). Macmillan.
* Russell, D. R. (1995). Activity theory and its implications for writing instruction. In J. Petraglia (Ed.) *Reconceiving writing, rethinking writing instruction* (pp. 51-78). Hillsdale: Erlbaum.
* Lundell, D. B., & Beach, R. (2003). Dissertation writers’ negotiations with competing activity systems. In C. Bazerman and D. Russell (Eds.), *Writing selves / writing societies: Research from activity perspectives* (pp. 483-515). Fort Collins: WAC Clearinghouse.

*Optional reading*:

* Prior, P. (2006). A sociocultural theory of writing. In C. A. MacArthur, S. Graham, and J. Fitzgerald (Eds.) *Handbook of writing research* (pp. 54-66). New York: Guilford.

Response post prompt (due Thursday by 5 p.m. each week):

* Activity Theory says that all actions are motivated by some pragmatic goal, and that there are no actions that fall outside activity. How does AT build on the previous week's readings on the rhetorical situation? How can these two theoretical perspectives be integrated?
* Using terms discussed in the readings (subject, tool, object, rules, community, and division of labor), how would you describe an activity system in which you produce texts? What are the elements in the activity system? And, importantly, where are there conflicts or tensions between elements in the activity system or across layered activity systems? (For example, do tacit and formal rules conflict, thus making it unclear how to act? Or are the tools available insufficient for composing texts? Is the division of labor inefficient in some way?)
* How is your thinking about writing changed by the view that writing is always part of some activity, that no one writes for no reason? What implications does this view have for how you teach writing? For how you do writing yourself?

Cross-talk prompt (due Saturday by midnight each week):

* Please respond to the post of one or more class members. The idea is to keep the discussion alive and energetic throughout the week. What has a colleague written about that resonates with your experience or ideas? How are your ideas broadened because of something a class member wrote? What connections do you see across the class’s discussion for the week (or across prior weeks)? Use this space to build knowledge collectively.

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**Week 5: Speech acts**

**Writing Project #1 Deadline (see syllabus and assignment sheet for details)**

* Please paste in your work in the appropriate discussion board

Required Readings:

* Austin, J. L. (1979). Performative utterances. In J. O. Urmson and G. J. Warnock (Eds.), *J. L. Ausin: Philosophical papers* (pp. 233-252). Clarendon Press.
* Overviews of “speech act theory” (read as much of the online articles as is helpful):
  + <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2015/entries/speech-acts>
  + <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Speech_act>
* Bazerman, C. (2013). Chapter 5: Changing the landscape: Kairos, social facts, and speech acts. *A Rhetoric of Literate Action: Literate Action, Volume 1* (pp. 65-75). Fort Collins: The WAC Clearinghouse.

*Optional reading*:

* Searle, J. (1965). What is a speech act? In Maurice Black (Ed.), *Philosophy in America* (pp. 221-239). London: Allen and Unwin.

Response post prompt (due Thursday by 5 p.m. each week):

* Speech act theory approaches language from a pragmatic perspective. Any use of language is also a performance of some action in the world. How does understanding language use as social action influence the way you view writing? (For this question, feel free to address writing you read, or writing that you produce, or writing that you assign).
* We have read about rhetorical situations, activity theory, and speech acts in successive weeks. How do these theories add up to a theory of writing so far? What consequences does such a theory have for the way you interact with writing (as a writer, reader, or teacher)?
* If none of the preceding questions allows you to address what is on your mind after reading for this week, use this discussion board post to explore speech act theory in general or your current thinking on writing in relation to speech act theory. Where are you at the moment? What questions are you grappling with? What conflicts are you experiencing? What problematics are you exploring?

Cross-talk prompt (due Saturday by midnight each week):

* Please respond to the post of one or more class members. The idea is to keep the discussion alive and energetic throughout the week. What has a colleague written about that resonates with your experience or ideas? How are your ideas broadened because of something a class member wrote? What connections do you see across the class’s discussion for the week (or across prior weeks)? Use this space to build knowledge collectively.

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**Week 6: Genre**

Required Readings:

* Miller, C. (1984). Genre as social action. *Quarterly Journal of Speech 70*(2), 151-167.
* Freadman, A. (1994). Anyone for tennis? In A. Freedman and P. Medway (Eds.), *Genre and the new rhetoric* (pp. 43-66). Bristol: Taylor and Francis.
* Devitt, A. (2004). A theory of genre. *Writing genres* (pp. 1-32). Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP.

*Optional reading*:

* Bawarshi, A., & Reiff, M. J. (2010). Chapter 6: Rhetorical genre studies. *Genre: An introduction to history, theory, research, and pedagogy* (pp. 78-104). Fort Collins: WAC Clearinghouse.
* Bazerman, C. (1994). Systems of genres and the enactment of social intentions. In A. Freedman and P. Medway (Eds.), *Genre and the New Rhetoric* (pp. 79-101). Bristol: Taylor and Francis.
* Miller, C. (2015). Genre as social action, revisited 30 years later. *Letras & Letras 31*(3).

Response post prompt (due Thursday by 5 p.m. each week): The authors this week push the notion of genre into new territory. Specifically, they resist the idea that genres are static, forms or containers for information. Rather, genres can be seen from a pragmatic, action-based perspective. Genres \*participate\* in social activity, and, in doing so, change based on uses in particular contexts. With these ideas in mind, consider any of the following questions as you post this week:

* What understanding do you have of genre (prior to entering this class), and how do the authors this week challenge that understanding?
* How are genres you use/create/modify uniquely suited to the tasks for which they are employed?
* How are various genres you use linked together in a larger system of genres? How do the genres rely on or implicate one another? Can you map a genre system you are a part of?
* What implications does a action-oriented view of genre have for you as a writer or as a teacher of writing?

Cross-talk prompt (due Saturday by midnight each week):

* Please respond to the post of one or more class members. The idea is to keep the discussion alive and energetic throughout the week. What has a colleague written about that resonates with your experience or ideas? How are your ideas broadened because of something a class member wrote? What connections do you see across the class’s discussion for the week (or across prior weeks)? Use this space to build knowledge collectively.

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**Week 7: Discourse**

Required Readings:

* Gee, J. P. (1989). Literacy, discourse, and linguistics: Introduction. *Journal of Education 171*(1), 5-17.
* Foucault, M. (1981). The order of discourse. In R. Young (Ed.), *Untying the text: A post-structuralist reader* (pp. 51-77). Boston: Routledge.
* Clifford, J. (1991). The subject in discourse. In S. Miller (Ed.), *The Norton book of composition studies* (pp. 861-873). New York: Norton.

*Optional reading*:

* Gee, J. P. The importance of discourse analysis. Unpublished blog post

Response post prompt (due Thursday by 5 p.m. each week): In this week's readings, the term discourse is imbued with somewhat more technical definitions than we might be used to. Consider any of the following questions as you post this week (and feel free to create your own prompt as well, if nothing here allows you to discuss what you'd like):

* How does Gee's notion of big D Discourse help you understand writing in a different way? What about your own writing--does the notion of a big D Discourse change your understanding of your writing itself or your writerly identity?
* What implications does Gee's view of d/Discourses have for the way you teach writing?
* For Foucault and Clifford, discourse does not unproblematically originate with the author. Rather, discourse emerges from the social context and is mediated by (often tacit) structures of power. How do the views of Foucault and Clifford inform the way you think about writing as a social act? Are there any implications for the way you write or teach writing?
* What issues do the readings prompt in you?

Cross-talk prompt (due Saturday by midnight each week):

* Please respond to the post of one or more class members. The idea is to keep the discussion alive and energetic throughout the week. What has a colleague written about that resonates with your experience or ideas? How are your ideas broadened because of something a class member wrote? What connections do you see across the class’s discussion for the week (or across prior weeks)? Use this space to build knowledge collectively.

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**Week 8: Countering dominant discourses, part I**

Required Readings:

* Bizzell, P. (2002). The intellectual work of “mixed” forms of academic discourse. In C. Schroeder and P. Bizzell (Eds.), *Alt Dis: Alternative discourses in the academy* (pp. 1-10). Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.
* Powell, M. (2012). Stories take place: A performance in one act. *College Composition and Communication 64*(2), 383-406.
* Banks, A. (2015). Funk, flight, and freedom. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EYt3swrnvwU>
  + Feel free to read the published transcript, which can be found in our Canvas shell, entitled “Ain’t No Walls behind the Sky, Baby! Funk, Flight, Freedom”
* Artz, K., Hashem, D., & Mooney, A. (2017). Transmodality in action: A manifesto. Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy. <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/22.1/disputatio/artz-et-al/index.html>

Response post prompt (due Thursday by 5 p.m. each week):

* Use ideas from one or two of this week’s readings to critique a well-established convention of academic writing that you think warrants modification.

Cross-talk prompt (due Saturday by midnight each week):

* Please respond to the post of one or more class members. The idea is to keep the discussion alive and energetic throughout the week. What has a colleague written about that resonates with your experience or ideas? How are your ideas broadened because of something a class member wrote? What connections do you see across the class’s discussion for the week (or across prior weeks)? Use this space to build knowledge collectively.

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**Week 9: Countering dominant discourses, part II**

Informal writing workshop:

* In the appropriate discussion board for this module, please feel free to pose questions about Writing Project #2, due next week, to troubleshoot writing issues, or to share your working drafts and solicit feedback.

Required Readings:

* Horner, B., NeCamp, S., & Donahue, C. (2011). Toward a multilingual composition scholarship: From English only to a translingual norm. *College Composition and Communication 63*(2), 269-300.
* Horner, B., et al. (2011). Language difference in writing: Toward a translingual approach. *College English 73*(3), 303-321.
* Trimbur, J. (2006). Linguistic memory and the politics of U.S. English. *College English 68*(6), 575-588.

*Optional readings*:

* + Students’ right to their own language. (1974). *College Composition and Communication 25*(3), 1-18.

Response post prompt (due Thursday by 5 p.m. each week):

* Use ideas from one or two of this week’s readings to critique a well-established convention of academic writing that you think warrants modification.

Cross-talk prompt (due Saturday by midnight each week):

* Please respond to the post of one or more class members. The idea is to keep the discussion alive and energetic throughout the week. What has a colleague written about that resonates with your experience or ideas? How are your ideas broadened because of something a class member wrote? What connections do you see across the class’s discussion for the week (or across prior weeks)? Use this space to build knowledge collectively.

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**Week 10: Disciplinary enculturation**

**Writing Project #2 Deadline**

* Please paste in your work in the appropriate discussion board

Required Readings:

* Lave, J. (1991). Situated learning in communities of practice. In Lauren Resnick, Levine B., M. John, Stephanie Teasley & D. (Eds.), *Perspectives on Socially Shared Cognition*. American Psychological Association.
* Berkenkotter, C., Huckin, T., & Ackerman, J. (1995). Social context and socially constructed texts: The initiation of a graduate student into a writing research community. In C. Berkenkotter and T. Huckin (Eds.),
* Ding, H. (2008). The use of cognitive and social apprenticeship to teach a disciplinary genre: Initiation of graduate students into NIH grant writing. Written Communication 25(3),

Response post prompt (due Thursday by 5 p.m. each week):

* The response post this week is open--please use this post to address any issue that you find compelling from this week's readings.

Cross-talk prompt (due Saturday by midnight each week):

* Please respond to the post of one or more class members. The idea is to keep the discussion alive and energetic throughout the week. What has a colleague written about that resonates with your experience or ideas? How are your ideas broadened because of something a class member wrote? What connections do you see across the class’s discussion for the week (or across prior weeks)? Use this space to build knowledge collectively.

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**Week 11: Applied practice, part I**

*Note: readings for Week 11, 12, and 13 are shortened to allow more time for class members to apply concepts to analyses of published scholarship.*

Required Readings:

* Swales, J. M. (1990). “Create a research space” (CARS) model of research introductions. Adapted from *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings. Cambridge: Cambridge UP*.
* Bizup, J. (2008). BEAM: A rhetorical vocabulary for teaching research-based writing. *Rhetoric Review 27*(1), 72-86.

Response post prompt:

* For this week’s post, you will select an article of your choice and conduct an informal analysis using the analytical models discussed in this week’s readings. Please share your findings in the discussion board, along with any other contextual material class members will need to know to understand your analysis.

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**Week 12: Applied practice, part II**

*Note: readings for Week 11, 12, and 13 are shortened to allow more time for class members to apply concepts to analyses of published scholarship.*

Required Readings:

* Hayot, Chapters 8, 9, 10 (59-88)

Response post prompt:

* For this week’s post, you will select an article of your choice and conduct an informal analysis using the analytical models discussed in this week’s readings. Please share your findings in the discussion board, along with any other contextual material class members will need to know to understand your analysis.

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**Week 13: Applied practice, part III**

*Note: readings for Week 11, 12, and 13 are shortened to allow more time for class members to apply concepts to analyses of published scholarship.*

Required Readings:

* Hayot, Chapters 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 (pp. 89-148)

Response post prompt:

* For this week’s post, you will select an article of your choice and conduct an informal analysis using the analytical models discussed in this week’s readings. Please share your findings in the discussion board, along with any other contextual material class members will need to know to understand your analysis.

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**Week 14: Rhetorical analysis of your own writing**

**Writing Project #3 Deadline**

* Please paste in your work in the appropriate discussion board **(post any time this week)**

*Note: I am available for consultation on Monday and Tuesday of this week to discuss any aspect of your project.*

*Optional readings*:

* Hayot Chapter 19 (pp. 151-163)
* Rose, S. K. (1996). What’s love got to do with it? Scholarly citation practices as courtship rituals. *Language and Learning across the Disciplines 1*(3), 34-48.

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**Week 15: Theory into (teacherly) practice**

Required Readings:

* Flower, L. (1994). Teachers as theory builders. In L. Flower et al. (Eds.), *Making thinking visible: Writing, collaborative planning, and classroom inquiry* (pp. 3-22). Urbana: NCTE.

Response post prompt:

* Professionals of any sort are theory-builders. That is, they perceive aspects of the world and develop interpretations that then feedback into their everyday practice. Each element of this process is active rather than passive--perception, interpretation, and practice. Drawing on Linda Flower's chapter, look back over insights you've arrived at this semester in 6040 and work toward translating them into concrete practices relevant to your professional context. Share your thinking in this discussion board post--a precursor to WP4.
* Note: you may not find yourself working in the same kind of context that Flower describes (i.e., as a teacher). That's perfectly OK. In this post, feel free to position yourself as a professional in a more general sense, and focus attention on translating insights into practices that are relevant to your specific professional context.

Informal writing workshop:

* In the appropriate discussion board for this module, please feel free to pose questions about Writing Project #4, due next week, to troubleshoot writing issues, or to share your working drafts and solicit feedback.

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**Week 16: Course synthesis and keeping the conversation alive**

**Writing Project #4 Deadline**

* Please paste in your work in the appropriate discussion board **(post any time this week)**

Writing prompt (optional):

* How might class members keep the conversation going beyond the semester? Any practical suggestions for continuing the lively discussions you all have made possible?
* Is there anything else you'd like to say about how you might take insights from the class into the future contexts?

*Note: Please be sure to complete course evaluations*

**Writing Project #2:**

**Why Am I Uncomfortable? Or, Reverse Engineering Adaptive Challenges**

**Project overview (from syllabus)**

For this project, students will analyze a piece of writing they have completed for another class or purpose outside ENG 6040. On that piece of writing, students will mark places in the text in which they felt uncomfortable and comfortable as writers. Students will then consider reasons for the discomfort (or comfort) while writing. The final project submission will be an essay articulating what aspects of writing cause discomfort and explanations of reasons why, with an eye toward changing circumstances in the future writing situations. Students are encouraged to draw on class discussions of course readings to inform their analysis. (1000-1500 words; due 10/28 by midnight)

**Project rationale**

*Discomfort as a proxy for learning*. Learning theorists suggest that discomfort or dissonance can be a source of learning. It is in those moments of discomfort/dissonance that we recognize something is wrong and decide to alter the way we think and act. This project asks you to discover and analyze moments of discomfort in your own writing as a way to gain a better understanding of the challenges you face as a writer. (While the primary focus of this project is on *dis*comfort, it can also be helpful to look at moments of comfort, places in a text where you feel particularly confident as a writer. You can include moments of comfort in your essay if they are particularly salient.)

*Reverse engineering adaptive challenges*. We tend to consider writing problems to be “technical” rather than “adaptive.” A technical problem is something that can be diagnosed and fixed using existing tools and know-how. For example, a website might not function properly due to a faulty line of computer code, a problem that could then be resolved by bringing in a programmer familiar with the language and willing to locate and apply a “fix.” This is a technical problem because a solution already exists among those who work in the field. But problems in writing are rarely this way. More often than not, a single “fix” to a writing problem simply does not exist. This is because writing problems are highly contextual and socially defined, open to endless interpretation depending on who is reading, who is writing, and what purposes are motivating the collective activity. Because of their highly contextual nature, writing problems are what I refer to as “adaptive challenges” (a term borrowed from Ronald Heifetz). Adaptive challenges cannot be fixed by existing knowledge; rather, adaptive challenges require substantive *changes* to a person’s understanding, beliefs, values, attitudes or behaviors. This writing project is about identifying and theorizing adaptive challenges in your own writing—those writing-related issues that call for a change in your understanding, beliefs, values, attitudes, or behaviors. Probing for moments of discomfort on the surface of a text is a strategy for learning about the deeper, adaptive issues at work beneath the surface of your writing.

**Project procedures**

1. Locate a piece of writing you have produced, preferably a piece written in an academic context. Since this is a course in graduate writing, it is preferable that you locate a piece that is tied to your academic life, either as a student or as a professional. If that is not possible, you can select a text you have written for another purpose.
2. Read your writing slowly, recalling what it was like to compose the piece, and mark places in the text where you felt uncomfortable or comfortable while writing. (Note: no one will see this portion of your project; this step is for you to gather data that will be analyzed in later steps.)
3. Compile all the marks you’ve made in a separate document and search for patterns. What patterns do you see when you look at the all the marks together? Can you classify the marks in helpful ways? (Again, no one will see this portion of the project, so find a way to compile your marks that is most helpful for you.)
4. Work toward developing new understandings based on your analysis. What insights can you uncover?
5. Write an essay in which you use textual evidence from your analysis to describe key challenges you face as a writer. (Note: be sure to provide enough detail about the essay you examined so that readers can follow your analysis.)

**Resources for critically analyzing and explaining moments of discomfort**

The course readings are there for you to theorize the challenges you identify in your writing. Once you have identified moments of discomfort/dissonance in your text, work backwards to try to explain how these surface-level features of your text reflect much deeper adaptive challenges. I recommend reviewing some of the theoretical concepts from prior weeks and using those concepts to pose questions to yourself. Below are some examples of what I mean—see what questions you can come up with to help you theorize your writing:

* **Rhetorical situation**: Does this textual feature reflect a difficulty I am having with some aspect of the rhetorical situation? Perhaps I feel uncomfortable because I do not really have a clear sense of who my audience is. Or perhaps I feel uncomfortable because the exigency has been formulated for me by someone else, and I feel needlessly locked into a certain position.
* **Activity theory**: Do elements of the activity system I am working in conflict in some way? Perhaps I am using tools for writing that are really designed for another kind of activity. Or perhaps the tools I am using are simply not conducive for completing the object/motive. Maybe I do not have a good understanding of the rules of the genre. Or maybe the division of labor is segregated in unproductive ways.
* **Speech acts**: How are the actions my words performing helpful or harmful for my purposes?
* **Genre**?
* **Discourse**?
* Hegemony of **conventionalized academic discourse practices**?

**Assessment**

As a reader and assessor, I am concerned with the following questions:

* Does the writer discuss multiple aspects of a text that are tied to feelings of dis/comfort in the act of writing? [yes] [sort of] [no]
* Does the writer provide reasons for, or explanations of, why those feelings exist? [yes] [sort of] [no]
* Does the writer formulate a coherent argument or theory about him- or herself as a writer that is supported by textual evidence? [yes] [sort of] [no]
* Does the writer consider ways forward in light of the analysis? [yes] [sort of] [no]
* Does the writer show careful attention to manuscript preparation and polish of the submitted draft? [yes] [sort of] [no]

**Writing Project #3:**

**Joining the Conversation: A Rhetorical Self-Analysis (20%)**

**Project overview (from syllabus)**

For this project, students conduct a rhetorical analysis of a piece of writing they have produced for another class or purpose outside ENG 6040. The goal of this analysis will be to assess the ways in which students have used writing to enter existing academic conversations, one of the chief aims of graduate-level writing. The rhetorical analysis will draw directly from the Applied Practice sessions taking place during Weeks 11, 12, and 13 of the semester. Specifically, students will apply a “CARS model” (Swales), a “BEAM model” (Bizup), and an “Uneven U model” (Hayot) to their writing in an effort to arrive at subtle insights about their written products. **(1000-1500 words; due 11/25 by midnight)**

**Project Rationale**

*The Burkean Parlor*. A useful way to understand graduate writing is to invoke the metaphor of unending conversation taking place in a parlor room, a metaphor formulated by the rhetorician Kenneth Burke.[[1]](#footnote-1) Here is Burke in his own words:

Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress. (110-111)

This scene offers an interesting perspective on academic discourse—namely, that discourse of the academy is made up of many conversations among specialists; that the conversations have been going on for a long time (sometimes centuries!); that the conversations have undergone many twists and turns, which make it difficult to describe every element of each conversation concisely; and that the purpose of rhetor/writer/interlocutor is to move a conversation in some direction. The metaphor also hints at why so much scholarly writing is challenging. One reason for this is that the language reflects (i.e., “indexes”) long-running, complex, and circuitous lines of thought. With the Burkean parlor in mind, it comes as much less of a surprise that academic conversations are hard to follow for someone just starting to listen in!

*Graduate writing as strategic conversation-joining*. The Burkean parlor can be a lens through which to discuss the purposes of academic writing, especially the formal writing published in scholarly journals and monographs. These types of writing address a topic that is recognized by others in the field. Typically, the author gives an overview of what other scholars have said about the topic, and then often identifies a perceived problem with that treatment. The body of the written text (i.e., the article or book or chapter or seminar paper), then, is a direct response to a perceived problem and a step toward resolving it. In other words, the text is a speech act, one intended to frame a problem and then resolve it in some way. To borrow Burke’s terminology, writing is the mechanism used to “put in your oar.”

A chief motivation for many academic writers—graduate students, faculty, scholars, researchers, and other professionals—is to join an ongoing discussion about a topic relevant to one’s field of study. When we look closely at writing—and take into account the details of the rhetorical situation and author’s purposes—we can recognize certain “moves” writers use to set up problems, present ideas, and position themselves to effect changes in readers. This writing project asks you to think of your own past writing as an attempt to contribute to an ongoing disciplinary conversation (even if you didn’t think that’s what you were doing at the time!). For WP3, you will be asking, “How have I used writing as tool for entering into specialized conversations about a particular topic? What can be learned by analyzing my past writing and considering the kinds of writing I will be doing in my graduate studies in English?”

**Project procedures**

1. Locate a piece of writing you have produced, preferably a piece written in an academic context. Since the purpose of this assignment is to analyze writing that contributes to an academic conversation, it will be helpful to find a source that at least imitates such a purpose. Most literary analysis papers are a good example of this kind of writing; so are most history, philosophy, or humanities-based papers. If it is not possible to locate a suitable text, get in touch with you instructor to make other arrangements.
2. Use course readings from Weeks 11, 12, and 13 to analyze your own writing. I recommend playing around at this stage, testing out each reading as an analytical method just to shake ideas loose and to see what you find. You are welcome to use any method suggested by the readings—either a single method (such as Swale’s CARS model) or some combination that you find useful. (Note: no one will necessarily see this portion of your project; this is for you to generate ideas about your writing. This step is about exploration and will likely require lots of scratch paper.)
3. Identify and compile the interesting findings from your analysis. Interesting findings might answer questions such as the following: How do I construct problems in my writing? What types of sources do I cite? For what purposes do I cite sources? How do I position myself as a writer, thinker, contributor, and how do I position myself in relation to sources I cite? What does my writing suggest about my writerly purposes? How is the construction of my text—its organization, transitions, meta-discourse, use of evidence, conclusion—reflective of my writerly purposes? Where am I writing as a genuine disciplinary contributor, and where am I writing as a student?
4. Interpret your findings. Based on your analysis, work toward developing new understandings about graduate writing, academic writing in English, or yourself as a graduate writer. What insights can you uncover?
5. **Finally, write an essay in which you use textual evidence from your analysis to describe yourself as a writer aiming to contribute to disciplinary or other professional conversations. (Note: be sure to provide enough detail about the essay you examined so that readers can follow your discussion.)**

**Assessment**

As a reader and assessor, I am concerned with the following questions:

* Does the writer present an analysis of his/her writing based on course readings from Weeks 11, 12, 13? [yes] [sort of] [no]
* Does the writer use concrete evidence from a prior paper to establish the claims made in WP3? [yes] [sort of] [no]
* Does the writer interpret findings through the lens of “writing as mechanism for joining a conversation” (that is, the Burkean parlor metaphor)? [yes] [sort of] [no]
* Does the writer articulate new insights and present them in a coherent way? [yes] [sort of] [no]
* Does the writer consider ways forward in light of the analysis? [yes] [sort of] [no]
* Does the writer show careful attention to manuscript preparation and polish of the submitted draft? [yes] [sort of] [no]

**Writing Project #4**

**Writers as Theory Builders: Translating Insights into Professional Practices (20%)**

**Project overview (slightly modified from syllabus)**

For this project, students will articulate a theory about writing and writing instruction based on their learning throughout the semester. This writing project is intended for students to synthesize various elements of the course into a “working theory” that can guide professional action as an English scholar and teacher. That is, students are encouraged to integrate their knowledge from readings with insights gained from studying their own writing over the course of the semester. **Due December 11 by midnight; 1000-1500 words**

**Project rationale**

*Threshold concepts*. According to learning theorists [Meyer and Land](https://www.ee.ucl.ac.uk/~mflanaga/thresholds.html), “threshold concepts” refer to ideas or ways of thinking that alter one’s understanding at a deep level. Among the many features of threshold concepts are the following:

* they are *transformative* (i.e., “once understood, a threshold concept changes the way in which a student views the discipline”);
* they are *irreversible* (i.e., “given their transformative potential, threshold concepts are likely to be irreversible—that is, they are difficult to unlearn”);
* they are *troublesome* (i.e., for the learner initially, threshold concepts are likely to be counter-intuitive, alien, or seemingly incoherent).

As Meyer and Land put it, “threshold concepts are “akin to passing through a portal” or “conceptual gateway” that opens up “previously inaccessible ways of thinking about something.” Once having passed through a conceptual portal, so the theory goes, learners move closer to becoming expert practitioners in a particular discipline, field of study, or professional practice. This project asks you to consider ways in which your understanding about writing has undergone a significant change this semester. How might your learning be understood as akin to passing through a portal? What aspects of your learning have been transformative, irreversible, and troublesome?

*Theory building*. Linda Flower tells us that teachers (and, I would add, professionals of any sort) are theory-builders. This is because they work from a body of specialized knowledge, make predictions based on that knowledge, test those predictions against experiences on the ground, and use insights from the process to guide practice. This assignment asks you to flex your theory-building muscles by being explicit about the theory-building process. Specifically, you will (a) discuss ideas, concepts, theories, and/or frameworks from the semester that significantly inform your view about writing, (b) formulate and discuss predictions or projections that are suggested by that body of knowledge in your professional context, (c) articulate a way forward that derives from your analysis and discussion. Ultimately, you will participate in the process of using specialized knowledge about writing to guide future actions as graduate writers, teachers/tutors of writing, or, more generally, as literate professionals of any sort.

**Required components of the project**

*Component A*: Develop a summary of insights about yourself as a graduate writer. Specifically, look back over your work from Project 1, 2, and 3 as well as posts from the weekly discussion boards. What patterns do you notice across those projects? What are some threshold concepts or core principles that you have encountered this semester, and how do they help you see the world differently? What theories from the semester have shaped your view of writing in important ways?

*Component B*: Turn those insights into a “situated theory” (see Flower pp. 8-9) about how to act wisely and effectively as a professional, whether that be as a scholar, teacher/tutor of writing, or literate professional of any sort who uses writing to get things done.

* For this component of the project, it will be helpful to describe specific moments of conflict that can stand as representative of challenges you face in the professional context you are examining. For example, if you are concerned with your facility with grammar and mechanics as a scholar of English, you might describe a critical incident in which grammar and mechanics seemed to be at issue and use insights you’ve discussed from *Component A* to make sense of that issue, reframe it, and figure out a productive way forward. Or, perhaps grammar and mechanics are an issue for you as a teacher of writing. If that’s the case, how can you use insights from *Component A* to frame the problem and theorize it in light of the research we have read this semester? (Of course, there are virtually an infinite number of topics to examine here, so don’t feel the need to focus on grammar and mechanics.)
* I encourage you to draw on Flower’s essay to help you develop a working, situated theory about writing in your professional context that is derived from insights you’ve developed throughout the semester and discussed in *Component A*. Flower pp 8-9 are particularly helpful discussion of a situated theory.
* Remember that you have analyzed yourself as a writer fairly extensively in three projects this semester, so you have some helpful concrete data—i.e., observational-based knowledge—to draw on as you build a situated theory.

*Component C*: This component will be relatively short. Conclude the essay by consolidating your insights from *Components A* and *B* and directing readers to the future. What coherent view of writing has emerged in this project and, perhaps, over the course of the semester? What coherent self is emerging—a scholar or teacher or tutor or poet or public intellectual or something else? What challenges do you anticipate facing in the near future, and how might your working, situated theory be revised to account for those challenges? In short, use this part of the essay to distill your insights into a concise philosophy-like set of statements that can serve as guides for future action.

**Assessment**

As a reader and assessor, I am concerned with the following questions:

* *Component A*: does the writer discuss key insights, conceptual gateways, or core principles that have been learned throughout the semester? [yes] [sort of] [no]
* *Component B*: does the writer work to theorize those insights, while pointing to specific experience-based tensions and formulating hypotheses that are informed by disciplinary knowledge on writing? [yes] [sort of] [no]
* *Component C*: does the writer distill insights discussed in the essay to articulate a productive way forward as a professional? [yes] [sort of] [no]
* Does the writer show careful attention to manuscript preparation and polish of the submitted draft? [yes] [sort of] [no]

1. The metaphor can be found in his 1941 work *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (Berkeley: U of California Press). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)