Rhetorics, Publics, and the Construction of Communities

Introduction:

The main goal of this course is to assist you in developing writing skills that will serve you well in college and the world beyond. Over the next several years of your studies here at Kutztown, you will be asked to negotiate a range of audiences, engage in original and independent research, and express yourself both clearly and critically in writing. Academic writing, like all forms of writing, has its own conventions and values that are distinct from writing with which you may already be familiar. One of the goals of this course is to ensure that you will be taken seriously as a student and intellectual in the university community.

However, it is also important to discuss what it is we mean by “good writing” or “developing” your writing skills. It’s common for students to enter a composition class thinking that they will be discussing writing in terms of paragraph development, grammar, catchy introductions, considering both sides of an argument, and accurately citing sources. While all of these are important aspects of polished writing, they do not, on their own, add up to “good writing.” One of the things that we will discuss extensively is the purpose of writing within the university and our culture at large. In particular, we will continue to inquire into the role of writing in a democratic society in an increasingly global context. This course emphasizes processes of “inquiry.” That is, we will be asking a whole lot of questions about “good” writing, our culture, and our rhetorical contexts in order to better understand how literacy is practiced today, not only how it is regulated or written into “official” rules and codes.

We will examine the ways in which different types of “literacy” frame our understandings of the world and how the rhetorical, cultural, and material contexts frame the “available means” we have at our disposal to effectively intervene in the public sphere. This course will ask you not only to read and write critically, but it will also ask you to analyze and effectively intervene in current discussions and debates. The writing in this course will focus on critical writing—writing that is consciously situated within distinct “modes of intelligibility” or “world views.” That is, while every individual may have unique experiences, HOW we make sense of those experiences relies upon the historically available ways of understanding those experiences. This class assumes that when we write we are taking part in a collective process of making knowledge. Writing is both an individual act and a social act simultaneously. For example, when we are writing about something we utilize the available cultural explanations, narratives, and knowledges to make our writing “cohere”—to explain cause and effect, to assign intention, and to draw lines of inclusion and exclusion. In short, writing is a process of making sense that connects the individual to the social in a way that positions a writer politically, socially, and materially within an on-going historical struggle over the meaning and organization of society and culture.

Writers’ BlogK: Blogging and Public Writing

One important consideration for all writers is the issue of audience. One of the problems with dealing with audience in college courses is that most of writing you do for classes, especially your process or draft writing, is only seen by your teacher or, in some cases, other students. It’s true that sometimes you will be asked to “imagine” a “general audience” or “public.” However, most of the time you are still writing for a “real” audience: your teacher and other students in the class. In order to try to foreground the issue of audience in more concrete ways, last year Dr. Aaron
Barlow and I piloted a project called “Writers’ BlogK.” This year, this class will continue the project through the use of “blogs” or “web logs” as part of this class. You’ll notice I’ve given you a web address for a blog at the top of the syllabus. Many of you may already be familiar with blogs. But for those who are not, a blog is an on-line space in which people can post their writing, comment on people’s writing, and save online conversations in archives. In many ways, it’s a web version of the kind of on-going email conversations you may have with friends or family (you know, all those messages that read “Re: Subject line here”). With a blog, however, your writing does not remain in your inbox. It is posted to the web for anyone, yes ANYONE, to read: other students, faculty, friends, your parents, a woman in St. Louis, or a guy in Tokyo. Not only can anyone read your writing, they can comment on it. Therefore, writing on a blog becomes instantly public writing. As part of the writing you will do for this course, you will be posting messages and comments to our class blog. We will be using the blog to consider issues of audience at all stages of writing.

You’ll also notice that the blog to which you will be posting is not empty. Our class blog contains the postings from students from previous semesters. I’ve decided to keep these posts active to highlight how the conversations we will be having in this class are on-going and that you are entering a conversation that is already in progress. In fact, we will be talking about writing as an on-going conversation all throughout this class. In his book The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action, Kenneth Burke, a literary and rhetorical scholar, gave us the following metaphor of a “parlor” to highlight the conversational nature of knowledge making and, I would argue, writing:

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 [or her]; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself [or herself] against you, to either the embarrassment of 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, brackets mine).

Required Textbooks and Supplies:

- Additional readings may be posted on eReserve in the library. To access these readings, refer to the directions attached at the end of the syllabus (page 12).
- A good college dictionary
- Email account/Blog registration
- Notebook for class and reading notes
- Folder to keep assignment sheets, copies of your papers, and class syllabus

You may also be asked to make several copies of your papers for in-class writing workshops.

Major Writing Assignments and Grading:

You will receive detailed assignment sheets for each paper.

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Paper #1 Rhetorics of Space and Place [Due 9/25]</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper #2 Imagined Communities [Due 10/30]</td>
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<td>American Images/Visual Analysis [Due 11/8]</td>
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<td>Paper Proposal [Due 11/20]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Research Paper [Due 12/8]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Best of Blog [Due 12/6]</td>
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<td>Blog posts (including abstracts and proposals)</td>
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<td>Participation</td>
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Note on Grading:
You will be graded on a plus/minus system on each paper. However, Kutztown University does not currently use a plus/minus grading system for calculating your GPA. I use the plus/minus system throughout the semester to provide you with a better sense of your performance in the class.

- All papers (with the exception of blog postings—see below) must be word-processed or typed, double-spaced, stapled (not paper-clipped or folded), and follow MLA style guidelines. I will not accept papers that are not stapled.
- For each paper you hand in you should include the following information in your header:
  o your name
  o course name and section number
  o my name
  o the assignment name/paper number (e.g. Paper #1)
  o the date you are handing in the paper
  o a title
- Save all your work! I can’t stress this point enough.

Late Papers and Email Copies:
- To receive full-credit you must hand in your papers in class on the due date. If you hand in your paper late, you will be graded down for that paper. For each day your paper is late, you will be graded down by a third of a letter grade. In other words, an “A” becomes an “A-;” an “A-” becomes a “B+,” and so on. If you do not hand in a paper, you will receive a zero (0) for that assignment.
- Emailing papers. If you cannot make it to class on the date a paper is due, or if you need to hand in a paper on a non-class day, you may email me your paper. To be accepted, you must send your paper as an attached Microsoft Word file. DO NOT copy your paper in the body of an email message, and DO NOT send your paper as a Microsoft Works file. Make sure your name is on your paper and you “sign” your email. Never send an email copy of your paper without a short message telling me what you are sending. Papers received by 5pm on the due date will not be marked late.
  o YOU MUST PROVIDE ME WITH A HARD COPY OF YOUR PAPER THE NEXT CLASS PERIOD. I will not consider your paper handed in until I receive a hard copy from you in the format outlined above.
  o The only purpose of emailing me the paper is to avoid any additional late penalties. I will not read your paper until you give me a hard copy.

General Guidelines for Blog Postings:
- To receive full-credit for your blog writing, your posts should be thoughtful, engaged, and significant. Just a few sentences here and there will not be considered significant. You can use 250 words as a guideline. This does not mean that every time you post to the blog you have to write three or four paragraphs. But you should plan on at least one major contribution a week (see assignments on the course calendar).
- While posting to the blog is more informal, you should still adhere to some general guidelines. I will hand out the article, “Weblog Ethics,” (there is also a link to the article on our class blog). “Weblog Ethics” will introduce some of the issues you will need to consider in your postings. Consider “Weblog Ethics” to be a baseline for ethical posting. We will, however, complicate and extend our notions of ethical writing over the course of the semester.
- When possible, you should post to the blog at least two days before class to ensure that there will be adequate time to read and respond to your postings.
- Blatantly offensive, vulgar, or harassing language will not be permitted. I will delete any such postings and you will be given a zero (0) for that week. Persistent harassment will be treated as a violation of the Student Code of Conduct (see your student handbook, The Key) and dealt with accordingly.
- The same guidelines for plagiarism hold for blog postings.

Class Policies:
- It is crucial that you attend every class to do well. Unlike a lecture class, this course depends on active discussion and in-class work. In addition, I will frequently give short assignments in class that are not
listed on the syllabus. If you need to be absent, it is your responsibility to find out what happened in class from another student.

- If you are not in class when I hand out paper assignments you will need to go to the course website to download a copy of the assignment or come to my office to pick up a hard copy of the assignment. I WILL NOT carry extra copies of assignment sheets around with me. To download assignment sheets, go to the course website at http://faculty.kutztown.edu/mahoney/Courses/ENG025.htm.
- If you are not in class when I hand back your papers, you must pick up your paper in my office, 237 Lytle Hall.
- You should be prepared for each class. This includes completing all the reading and writing assignments due on that day. Reading is NOT optional. Active reading entails taking notes on the reading, reflecting on the reading, and coming to class prepared to have something to say about what you have read. If I notice that people are coming to class without reading, I will begin giving quizzes at the beginning of each class.
- Turn off or set to silent all cell phones prior to class.
- Respect your classmates.

**Special Note on Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty:**

Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this class. Plagiarizing one of your papers or a significant portion of one of your papers will result in failure of the course. In addition to failing the course, I will notify the University of the violation. If you have not already, please review the University’s Academic Dishonesty policy at the following web address: http://www.kutztown.edu/admin/conduct/. The university subscribes to an anti-plagiarism service for checking student papers against material posted on the Internet—this includes websites that require payment to download papers.

Academic Dishonesty is defined in the student handbook, *The Key*, as follows:

**Definitions of Academic Dishonesty**

Academic dishonesty involves any attempt to obtain academic credit or influence the grading process by means unauthorized by the course instructor. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to the following situations and examples.

1. Providing or receiving unauthorized assistance in course work and lab work, or unauthorized assistance during examinations or quizzes.
2. Using unauthorized notes, materials, and devices during examinations or quizzes.
3. Plagiarizing the work of others and presenting it as one’s own without properly acknowledging the source or sources. At its worst extreme, plagiarism is exact copying, but it is also the inclusion of a paraphrased version of the opinions and work of others without giving credit. It is not limited to written materials. It includes the wrongful appropriation in whole or in part of someone else’s literary, artistic, musical, mechanical, or computer-based work.
4. Presenting material to fulfill course requirements that was researched or prepared by others (such as commercial services) without the knowledge of the instructor.
5. Falsifying or inventing data to be presented as part of an academic endeavor.
6. Gaining unauthorized access to another person’s or the University’s computer system. Violations include tampering with or copying programs or data or access codes associated with coursework.
7. Possessing or arranging for someone else to possess course examination or quiz materials at any time without the consent of the instructor.
8. Altering or adding answers on exercises, exams, or quizzes after the work has been graded.
9. Making fraudulent statements, excuses, or claims to gain academic credit or influence testing or grading.
10. Taking examinations or quizzes for someone else or arranging to have someone take examinations or quizzes in place of the person registered for the course.
Special needs: If you have any special needs including physical or mental disabilities, please contact the Office of Services to Students with Disabilities (SAB 220) so that we can make all the necessary accommodations.
Course Calendar  
Fall 2005

All readings in Reading Culture (RC) unless otherwise indicated. The course calendar is subject to change depending on how the class develops. I will notify you of any changes in class. If necessary, I will provide you with an updated calendar.

Week 1  
Wed 8/30
Introductions. What are the goals of this class? What is a blog, and why are we using one?

Today you will have a chance to introduce yourself to the class and I will have the chance to introduce myself to you. I will also give you an introduction to the course goals and how we will be approaching writing. We will also discuss blogs or “weblogs.” Think of a blog as a kind of online journal or discussion space (see description of Writers’ BlogK project above).

All of you have a KU email address. If you have not activated your KU email address please do ASAP. Once you have accepted your invitation, you will be asked to set up a blog account. It’s pretty self-explanatory. Please create your blog account immediately so we can troubleshoot any problems you may run into.

Your assignment for the next class is to begin posting to our class blog. Since many of you may be new to blogging, we’ll keep it simple. I would like you to introduce yourself and post your thoughts on the reading for next class. All I am asking for at this point is for you to get used to posting your responses to the blog. I would also like you to comment on at least two posts by other students. We will be looking at your postings in class the next time we meet.

Week 2  
Mon 9/4 NO CLASSES—LABOR DAY

Tue 9/5 FOLLOW MON SCHEDULE, OUR CLASS MEETS
In class today we will discuss three ways of examining a text:
  1) sympathetic reading
  2) critical reading
  3) rhetorical reading

In-Class Writing: Analyzing our classroom space.

Readings: RC: Raymond Williams, “Culture is Ordinary,” 4-6

Assignment #1: In order to get used to posting to the blog, introduce yourself to everyone in the class (and beyond) on the blog.

Assignment #2: Post your thoughts about the reading to the class blog. Raymond Williams’s article is only a couple pages long, but he introduces a range of ideas that we will consider over the course of the semester. In addition to WHAT he says, consider HOW he writes. That is, writers are never only concerned with “stating the facts.” They are also very conscious of how they convey their ideas. What choices has Williams made in writing this short piece? How does the title of his essay connect to the landscapes he describes? Williams repeats “culture is ordinary” several times, suggesting this is an assertion that he wants to emphasize and argue for. Ordinary as opposed to what? In addition to posting your own response to the reading, you should post comments to at least two other students’ posts. We will look at some of your posts in class.
Wed 9/6

**Assignment:** Take a look at Kutztown University’s website and any materials you have received from the university this semester. Review the materials and takes notes for a rhetorical analysis of how the university seeks to construct itself and you. What “truths” does the university want you to accept? What does it mean to be an “appropriate” or “good” member of this university? Who is important? Who is not represented? You should focus on texts in which the university is explicitly constructing an image itself and its members.

Bring copies of the texts you are reviewing and your notes to class.

Week 3

Mon 9/11

**Readings:**

**Blog:** Post a response to the readings to the blog.

**Assignment:** Take a walk. More specifically, take a walk around campus. Pay attention to the ways in which the space is constructed. Take a detour through some campus buildings—the library, the student union, the science building, Lytle Hall, the Academic Forum, dorms, etc. Take notes and/or pictures of specific places. Pay attention to design. That is, pay attention to the purpose, assumptions, and “truths,” embedded in the physical landscape of our campus. Come to class with your notes and at least a page of rich description of a particular site on your tour.

Wed 9/13

Handout on writing an abstract

**Readings:**

**Blog:** Post a response to the readings to the blog.

**Assignment:** What are the values embedded in Kutztown’s image, self-representation, and physical space? What does someone have to be in order to be comfortable and welcome within this constructed space? Also, how do people use the university space in ways that contradict, contest, or resist the dominant construction of the “culture of Kutztown?” Are there “other” narratives or representations of the culture of Kutztown?

Week 4

Mon 9/18 Draft of Paper #1 DUE

Conferences in my office, Lytle 237

My conference time is: _______________________________________________________

Wed 9/20 Paper #1 Abstract DUE

Pitching your paper

**Assignment:** Post your abstract to the class blog by Tuesday night. Read the other abstracts posted to the blog and comment on at least one. Come to class prepared to “pitch” your paper using your abstract.
Week 5

Mon 9/25 Paper #1 Due

Readings:
- Mary Louise Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone,” (eReserve)

Blog: Post a response to the readings.

Assignment: As you are reading Pratt’s essay, I want you to mark places in her text where she shifts voices, audiences, and focus. For example, at one point she is telling us about her son Sam, and then she shifts to discussing how she came to be presenting this paper at a Modern Language Association conference. After you have read her essay, I want you to write a paragraph or two on the connections between her rhetorical choices and the content of her essay. Bring your paragraphs to class.

Wed 9/27

Readings:
- RC, Amitava Kumar, “Passport Photos,” 494-503
- RC, Gloria Anzaldúa, “How to Tame a Wild Tongue,” 543-551

Blog: Post a response to the readings.

Week 6

Mon 10/2 Paper #1 Due

Readings:
- Margaret Mead, “We Are All Third Generation,: 106-114

Blog: Post a response to the readings. I would like you to consider two issues in your response. First, how does your “home language” compare to your “school language?” In what sites is your home language and in what sites is it not? Second, what do you know about your family’s history? Do you have an “immigrant” story or is your story different? How does this story get told (or not told) in your family?

Wed 10/4

Readings:
- Michael Powell and Michelle Garcia, “PA City Puts Illegal Immigrants on Notice,” (eReserve)
- Sean Scully, “When the Melting Pot Boils Over,” (eReserve)
- Geoffrey Nunberg, “Lingo Jingo,” (eReserve)

Blog: Post a response to the readings. For this post, pay particular attention to the patterns of language used to frame the debate on illegal immigration. What terms/concepts/arguments seem to repeat across all of the articles? Which terms/concepts/arguments seem to be specific to particular position/article? Which arguments would you consider most familiar or “dominant?”

Week 7

Mon 10/9 NO CLASSES—COLUMBUS/INDIGENOUS PEOPLE’S DAY
Wed 10/11

Readings:
- George Lakoff and Sam Ferguson, “The Framing of Immigration,” (see link on ENG 025 blog)
- Luntz, Maslansky Strategic Research, “Respect for the Law and Economic Fairness,” (eReserve)

Blog: Post a response to the readings.

Week 8

Mon 10/16

Assignment: Using Lexis-Nexis, Google News Search, and Academic Search Premier (EBSCO), begin to gather some textual examples of public discourse on the immigration debate. Rather than finding any one “definitive” article, I want you look for patterns of discourse and to look for the range of positions on immigration in the current debate. Try to limit your search to the past year. Come to class with some representative articles highlighting key examples. Come prepared to present your findings. You should post a brief (250 word max) abstract of your findings to the blog. If possible, include links to the articles you will be discussing.

Wed 10/18

Paper Workshop

Week 9

Mon 10/23 DRAFT OF PAPER #2 DUE

Conferences in my office, Lytle 237

My conference time is: __________________________________________________________

Wed 10/25 Paper #2 Abstract DUE

Pitching your paper

Assignment: Post your abstract to the class blog by Tuesday night. Read the other abstracts posted to the blog and comment on at least one. Come to class prepared to “pitch” your paper using your abstract.

Week 10

Mon 10/30 Paper #2 DUE

Readings:

Assignment: Bring in a copy of an image that you think represents “America” or some aspect of America. You do not need to limit yourself to images of the United States government or official institutions. Bring in an image that provides a complex representation of America, not simply a picture of a flag, for example.
Wed 11/1
Readings:

Blog: Post a response to the readings.

Week 11
Mon 11/6
Readings:
- *RC*, Marita Sturken, “Spectacle of Memory and Amnesia,” 488-493

Discussion of final project. Call for Papers.


Week 12
Mon 11/13
Conferences in my office, Lytle 237
My conference time is: ____________________________

Wed 11/15
Assignment: Blog post: Refining focus, identifying sources.

Week 13
Mon 11/20 PAPER PROPOSAL DUE

In-class work: Finalizing work schedule for remaining two weeks.

Assignment: Blog post: Crafting text for public audience.

Wed 11/22 NO CLASSES—THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 14
Mon 11/27
Assignment: Blog post: Two more weeks?????

Wed 11/39

Workshop


Week 15
Mon 12/4

CONFERENCES? WORKSHOP? REVIEW?

Wed 12/6 BEST OF BLOG DUE
CONFERENCES? WORKSHOP? REVIEW?

Fri 12/8 LAST DAY OF CLASSES—FINAL PAPER DUE

Week 16 FINAL EXAM WEEK

Have a great break!!!
Accessing eReserves

Instructions for Use

- Go to the library eReserves webpage at: <http://ereserves.kutztown.edu/>.
- Click on “Electronic Reserves and Course Materials”.
- On the MAIN COURSE INDEX screen, select “Mahoney, Kevin” from the “Select an Instructor” drop down list, and click on the GO button.
- On the COURSES screen click on ENG 025.
- On the next page, type in the password “k up” (must be lower case). Click on the ACCEPT button.
- On the next screen, click on the title of the reading you want to view.
- When the password screen appears, type the password (kup). Click on the CONTINUE button.
- Adobe Acrobat Reader will open and your document will appear on the screen.
- You can print or download the article from this screen.
- If you have any problems or comments, call the library at: 610-683-4480, or send an email to Susan Czerny.