

WRA 150
Evolution of American Thought: Rhetoric and Popular Culture

Section #018 :: Tu Th 8:00 – 9:50 am
310 Ernst Bessey Hall

Kate Fedewa
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274 Bessey Hall
OH: Th 10 am -2 pm
and by appt.

Section #030 :: Tu Th 3:00 – 4:50 pm
A318 Wells Hall

Course Description and Objectives

Literacy informs the identities, beliefs, and ethics of both individuals and communities. During this semester, we will consider how our own literacy practices shape and are shaped by the ideas and artifacts of American popular culture. We will also consider the rhetoric of many contemporary American writers and thinkers in order to theorize how literacy is tied to education, employment, and entertainment in a variety of cultural communities within the United States. This theme will provide a variety of opportunities for inquiry, including:

- what is the relationship between literacy, rhetoric, and popular culture, both for the individual and the community?
- how do literacy practices inform our everyday lives, especially the ways we view ourselves and others?
- how can we recognize the types of literacies we observe in unique communities? And how might literacy skills move between communities?
- how does rhetoric work in unique communities? What types of rhetorical purposes, moves, and effects are visible and how might we theorize them?

Tier 1 Objectives

This course is a First-Year Writing Course and, as such, shares the pedagogical objectives of all Tier 1 writing courses. The shared learning outcomes for WRA 150 (which we will discuss in class) can be found on page v of your *Little Brown Compact Handbook*. In addition, the Department of Writing, Rhetoric, & American Cultures explains on their website that “As part of the general education requirement, First-Year Writing contributes to the larger mission of the University by focusing on inquiry-based teaching and learning that encourages students to begin to understand themselves as:

- contributing members of MSU’s community of scholars
- committed to asking important questions and to seeking rich responses to those questions
- developing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to improve the quality of life for themselves and others through their scholarly, social, and professional literacy activities.”

Course Materials

Ballenger, *The Curious Researcher*

MSU edition of the *Little Brown Compact Handbook*

Online readings and handouts – available on ANGEL, but please bring *printed* copies to class

Printer or MSU e-tokens for printing

A folder for turning in your portfolios

Course Requirements

Portfolios

We will complete five major portfolios during the course of this semester. These projects will combine practice in the rhetorical processes of invention, arrangement, style, delivery, and revision as you work to nurture writing, reading, and research skills and strategies. More specifically, these portfolios will allow you to acquire and support the analytical thinking, communication, and integrated reasoning expected for participation within the scholarly community.

I'll provide you with a much more detailed project description as we begin working on each portfolio. Please note, however, that your each portfolio will be due at the beginning of class on the following days:

Portfolio 1: Literacy Memoir – **due Thursday, February 5**

Portfolio 2: Artifact Analysis – **due Tuesday, March 26**

Portfolio 3: Disciplinary Literacies – **weekly, January 15 – April 18; portfolio – April 18**

Portfolio 4: Remix – **project and presentation due Tuesday, April 9***

***please note:** members of WRA 150-018 will attend a conference on April 12

Portfolio 5: Revising Literacy – **due Thursday, April 25**

You may pick up your Revising Literacy Portfolio during our "exam period." Just let Kate know you're stopping by.

Sec. 018 = **Monday, April 29 from 7:45 – 9:45 am**

Sec. 030 = **Tuesday, April 30 from 3:00 – 5:00 pm**

Writing is a process. Good writing takes time. Practicing writing usually works best with plenty of audience feedback. The portfolio system is designed to provide each writer with the steps, the time, and the feedback necessary to create an excellent final product. The majority of your grade for this course will be determined by the work you turn in through your portfolios. Each portfolio will include different specific items; pay careful attention to the checklist attached to each project description. Failure to turn in portfolio items will result in receiving a zero for that portion of the grade.

PLEASE NOTE: All portfolios assigned for this course must be completed in order to receive a passing grade in WRA 150. I do not accept late work.

Daily Work

We will write during each class meeting: in response to a reading; as part of the invention process; during face-to-face peer reviews; to apply, summarize, reconsider, and interrogate course material. Consider this daily writing as an opportunity to practice new skills and ask big questions in a low-stakes environment. As part of the third portfolio, you will also be writing regular blog posts and comments. These posts are not only an opportunity to continue your efforts from our in-class writing, but are also meant to provide you with the experience of communicating with a public audience and acquiring literacy on a topic of your own choosing.

Much of the work for WRA 150 happens *outside* the classroom. You'll be drafting and revising throughout the semester. You will also have regular reading assignments and research-directed reading. Read as thoroughly as you write; take notes, ask questions, and be prepared to discuss and apply the material you've both written and read.

Because this is a four-credit course, you should plan on between six and ten hours of work outside of class every week. If you are doing significantly less work each week, you are likely not putting in the effort necessary to complete the course's objectives. If you are spending significantly more time on WRA 150 each week, you may need to consider more effective and efficient ways of accomplishing the course's objectives. In either case, please feel free to speak with me about ways to make your work in this class both manageable and effective.

Course Policies

Classroom Citizenship

This course asks you to consider the relationship between community membership, language, literacy, and ethics. This course also asks you to *practice* an ideal form of such a relationship. Our class meetings are intended to provide a safe space in which everyone feels comfortable sharing perspectives, asking questions, and taking productive risks. Each member of our community will be treated with respect;

disrespect toward members of our community or the goals and activities of our community will not be tolerated. Such unacceptable behaviors include: leaving early, arriving late, or otherwise indicating that you're "not really here"; reading or writing outside material – electronic or print – during class meetings; making rude comments regarding students, me as the instructor, or course material; inhibiting others' participation or refusing to engage in learning activities. *Displaying any of these unacceptable behaviors may result in being marked absent for the class period.* If you feel uncomfortable within the class community or are upset with any aspect of our course, please let me know in a mature, respectful way. I'll be happy to work with you to find a solution.

Electronic Communication

We'll be talking quite a bit about writing and reading in digital media this semester. It's efficient and is increasingly becoming the mode of communication in which many students are most comfortable. Electronic communication, however, often distracts from communication in other media. Because effective communication requires concentration, please refrain from using computers or cell phones during class unless specifically asked to do so. Turn your phones, iPads, iPods, computers, and all other electronic devices *off* and leave them in your bags during class. *Failure to do so may result in being marked absent and/or receiving a participation grade of "0" for the class period.* If you have been assigned a reading on ANGEL, please print it. Do not plan to read it on your computer during class.

I am more than happy to work with you on your writing and to answer questions you have regarding course material. Feel free to ask any questions you may have during class. You may also email me with questions. Please note the following, however:

- I check my email during normal business hours (M-F, 8 – 5). If you send an email outside of these times, I will not see it immediately.
- I will respond to you as quickly as possible, but this will often be between 24 and 48 hours. If you email me and haven't heard back after two week days, please email me again.
- Opening emails without a subject line or recognizable address is a great way to get viruses. So I don't do it. Make sure your emails are properly marked with a subject and your name.
- Course emails are a semi-formal, business-like communication. Please be polite, clear, and thorough in your email. Use your name and mine. *Don't send me a text message masquerading as an email; doing so is detrimental to your ethos as the email's writer.*
- Think carefully about the questions you're asking in your email. If you're asking about material you can find elsewhere (Tuesday's assignment, for example), just find it elsewhere. That's what I'm going to tell you to do in my reply. If you're asking about something that will require more than a few lines in response, set up an appointment to meet with me in person instead.
- I will not accept or comment on work via email, nor will I be able to accommodate requests to meet on the day before a project is due. I have intentionally cancelled a class period before most portfolio due dates; use this extra time to arrange a conference well in advance of the due date.

Academic Honesty

Article 2.3.3 of the *Academic Freedom Report* states that "the student shares with the faculty the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards." You are expected to develop original work for this course; therefore, you may not submit course work you completed for another course to satisfy the requirements for this course. You may not submit work in which you have used someone else's intellectual property without proper acknowledgement. You are not authorized to use www.allmsu.com to complete any course work in WRA 150. *Students who violate MSU academic integrity rules may receive a penalty grade, including a failing grade on the assignment or in the course.* The *Little Brown Compact Handbook* has a useful section (53) on avoiding plagiarism. Check that and contact me if you're unsure about the appropriateness of your course work. You can read more about MSU's policy on academic honesty at www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/dishonestyFAQ.html.

Grading

Final grades will be earned by calculating a total grade out of a 4.0 scale.

Portfolio One:	15% of total grade
Portfolio Two:	20% of total grade
Portfolio Three:	15% of total grade
Portfolio Four:	15% of total grade
Portfolio Five:	15% of total grade
Daily Work & Peer Review:	10% of total grade
Participation:	10% of total grade

Each portfolio will be graded using a rubric which we will discuss in class before the portfolio's due date. Short work (handouts, peer review, and other short assignments) and class participation points will be earned throughout the semester, always using a 4.0 scale. You can keep track of your grades on your Green Grade Record Sheet or by making an appointment to discuss your work with me.

A grade of 2.0 is given for work that is satisfactory, acceptable, and meets the standards for passing work. A grade of 3.0 is given for work that is in some way above average, going beyond the criteria for passing the course. Only work that is consistently outstanding and exceptional in all ways is awarded a grade of 3.5 or 4.0. Grades below 2.0 and above 3.5 are, by definition, highly unusual.

I will average the grades you earn within each required component of the course and then apply that averaged grade to the percentage of the course grade total. Generally speaking, in order to receive a 3.5, you must thoughtfully complete all work for the course, produce consistently strong portfolio drafts, and be an active and productive participant in the intellectual atmosphere of the class. In order to receive a 4.0, you must thoughtfully complete all course work (drawing connections across course concepts and activities and applying what you've learned to your own writing and literacy), produce consistently excellent portfolio drafts, and vitally and productively contribute to the intellectual atmosphere of the class.

Please note that *you will not earn points toward daily writing, class participation, and peer review if you are not in class*. If you must miss class for any reason, please speak with me at least 2 days prior to the missed class so that we can work together to develop an alternate means of your participation during the missed class. *In addition, each absence in excess of the first three will result in a reduction of 0.2 points from the final term grade.*

A Final Note: the "Shit Happens" Policy

We're all human. Life happens. There will be moments during the semester when you and I both struggle to accomplish the requirements of the course while managing other aspects of our lives. I ask that you deal with these moments in accordance with our classroom citizenship policy – respectfully and responsibly. If you let me know in advance that you're struggling with something, I'll do what I can to help. If things fall through, you may invoke the "shit happens" policy and ask for leniency. But be careful – you can only invoke this once and you must do so in person either before or immediately following the "shit." We'll talk and figure out a way to help you complete the course requirements.

Resources for WRA 150

Your classmates

If you miss class or need help with any aspect of class material, the first place to turn is your peers. Your colleagues bring a wealth of knowledge (and note-taking skills) to every class meeting. Become an active participant in our classroom community by asking for help when you need it and offering help when you can.

contact info on ANGEL

Your instructor

fedewak3@msu.edu
274 Bessey Hall
Thursdays 10 am – 2 pm
& by appt.

Don't hesitate to ask me any questions you have about material before, during, or after class – I'm happy to work with you! I'll also be in my office on Thursdays between 10:00 am – 2:00 pm (and probably many other times as well). You're welcome to stop by my office hours – just let me know you're coming (by email or in class) so that I make sure to leave the door open. We can also arrange other appointment times if you have scheduling conflicts during my office hours. You can also ask questions by email; I'll respond as soon as I'm able (though I may direct you to course materials or my office hours if your question requires an extended explanation).

Your textbooks

You're responsible for all of the material in our course books, regardless of whether we discuss that material in class. The *Little Brown Compact Handbook* is a fantastic resource when looking for help with grammar, punctuation, style, and citation, as well as writing, reading, and research strategies. *The Curious Researcher* will provide you with step-by-step instructions (and even an optional timeline!) in research writing. The ANGEL readings can provide you with writing models and new perspectives on course concepts. These readings complement in-class activities; they do not repeat them. In order to succeed in this course, you'll need to be an active learner in both your out-of-class and in-class activities.

The Writing Center

MSU Writing Center provides an amazing resource for you as a writer. Writing tutors and graduate students are available to discuss your writing with you, one-on-one. For more information, call 517-355-8270, or visit the website at <http://writing.msu.edu/>.

300 Bessey Hall

The Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities

Students with disabilities should contact the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities to establish reasonable accommodations. For an appointment with a disability specialist, call 517-353-9642 (voice), 517-353-1293 (TTY), or visit MyProfile.rcpd.msu.edu.

120 Bessey Hall