

WRA 130: American Radical Thought (section 002)

Michigan State University
Fall 2012

Meeting time & location:

M/W 12:40-2:30pm
C001 Wilson Hall

ANGEL:

<https://angel.msu.edu>

ELI:

<http://elireview.com>

Instructor contact info.:

K. Livingston
living70@msu.edu

Office hours:

301 Bessey Hall
W 10:30am-12:30pm (in office)
And by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

American Radical Thought invites you to study theories and practices of writing and rhetoric through critically analyzing the projects and positions of radical thinkers. In WRA 130, you will write / make projects informed by readings on American radicalism in order to develop skills in narration, persuasion, analysis, and documentation. The purpose of this course is to practice writing and reflection activities that will enable you to translate writing processes (invention, arrangement, revision, style, and delivery) across inquiry situations into future personal / professional / community / activist work.

This section (002) will focus specifically on how LGBTQ and feminist communities use writing, art, and performance to survive, thrive, and get work done. In this writing course, you will tell stories and analyze your personal experiences using larger frames. You will learn to acknowledge and account for your own assumptions, beliefs, values, and practices. You will pose questions about community issues, seek to answer them through research, and carry out a community-based project. Most significantly, you will learn to use writing and rhetoric to get work done in the world.

COURSE QUESTIONS

Throughout the semester, in addition to our intensive focus on writing and rhetoric, we will also entertain the following thematic questions:

1. What is 'normal'? What's radical? Who decides?
2. How and why might we use our languages in radical ways?
3. What is a community? How do we join communities?
4. Who are these radical thinkers? How do they use writing and rhetoric to get work done?

A TYPICAL CLASS

There will be nothing typical about this course. We will immerse ourselves in queer and feminist texts and visual culture in order to turn your concept of 'normal' on its head. This is not a heavy lecture course where you will be asked to simply consume, memorize, and repeat information through rote exercises. This is a writing-intensive course requiring significant preparation and attendance at every class period. Be prepared to read / view / listen to various radical media that may stir or perturb you. We will play with ways to invent / arrange / revise / style / deliver your ideas. Come prepared to draw, make lists, write a poem, make a collage, listen to a guest speaker, search the internet, listen to music, look at zines and political posters, watch performances, organize an event, and so on. Pay attention. Be present. Speak your mind, and you will do fine. I expect our work will provoke you to ask tough questions, challenge your assumptions, and consider the power and pleasures of writing.

COURSE MATERIALS

Required materials:

- * Notebook w/ tear-off pages; pencil & pen
- * Pocket folder or 3-ring binder

- * Internet access (Many of the materials for this class will be accessed and submitted on ANGEL).
- * ELI: <http://elireview.com> (cost: \$25)

Recommended materials:

- * Laptop (Optional, but useful)

Required texts:

- * Ballenger, Bruce. *The Curious Researcher* (6th ed). White Plains: Longman, 2009.
- * *The Little Brown Handbook*.
- * *Selected readings, which I will provide*

MAJOR PROJECTS

There are five major projects in the First-Year Writing sequence. Here are brief descriptions and due dates.

* **Note:** You must complete all major projects to fulfill the First-Year Writing requirement and receive a passing grade in this course.

Project 1 (15%) Personal narrative + Reflection

This project invites you to tell and theorize a story or stories from your personal / political / educational / professional life prior to coming to this class. In Project 1, you will work to *remember and reflect on your personal experiences*, analyzing them light of the theories of radical thinkers and projects in the US. The purpose of this project is to practice telling stories, while developing some questions and theories about American radical thought you might follow through the semester.

Rough Draft due: 9/17

Final Draft due: 9/19 (by midnight)

Project 2 (15%) Cultural analysis + Reflection

This project asks you to do background research and practice reading a culture of your choice. (* We'll talk in class about how to choose). Project 2 asks you to choose an image / word / sound / practice from popular or radical culture in the US. To do so, you will collect and critically analyze an image / word / sound / practice of your choice, describing the assumptions, beliefs, values, and practices it represents, in relation to your own. The purpose of this project is to develop skills in background research and cultural analysis, while situating yourself in our study of American radical thought.

Rough Draft due: 10/8

Final Draft due: 10/15

Project 3 (20%) Community research essay + Reflection:

This project wants you to think about what it means to conduct research within communities. Working individually and / or in groups, you will pose some questions that, as you work to answer them through various research methods, will teach you how to carry out the community-based project you intend to do for Project 4. Each of the decisions you make regarding how to go about your research – the questions you pose, the methods you choose, the sources you engage, and so on – should be geared toward helping you make your intended community-based project and deliver it to your intended audiences.

Rough Draft due: 10/31 (by midnight)

Final Draft due: 11/7

Project 4 (20%) Community-based project + Reflection

This project requires you to take a popular audience. In Project 4, you will use your work throughout the semester to make a distributable piece of media that speaks to, interrogates, or performs a radical theme or issue that is meaningful to you. The purpose of this project is to practice speaking to potential audiences beyond the classroom.

Rough Draft due: 11/19

Final Draft due: 11/28

Project 5 (20%) Reflective project

This project involves reflecting on your thinking about an issue, question, or theory in American radical thought. To do this, you will remember and re-frame your thinking, telling stories using what you've learned, what challenged you, what you question, what you believe now, etc. The purpose of

this project not only to reflect and re-frame, but also to envision how you might translate your work this semester into other (personal / political / educational / professional) contexts.

Rough Draft due: 12/5

Final Draft due: Friday, December 14, 10am-noon

SHORT ASSIGNMENTS

Writing is a practice. Knowing this, we will practice making words work for us through various IARDS activities, both in- and outside of class. You will respond to in-class prompts, make things for the purposes of invention, write reading responses, perform / present your writing or research, read and respond to your peers' writing, be asked to talk about your own writing, and so on. These activities are all listed on ANGEL as responses. Here is a more detailed description:

In-class writing

You will often be asked to respond to a prompt: an idea, quote, experience, image, etc. in the form of a quick, brief writing that will be used to guide class discussion or as an invention activity for the major projects.

Invention activities

How do you come up with ideas? Draw, free write, map, listen to music, phone a friend, etc. We will play with a variety of ways to develop ideas for writing.

Reading responses

Reflect on what you've read / viewed / listened to and respond. A short, informal reading response will be required for each reading assignment, in order to give you ground to work from when we discuss and use readings in class.

Performance / presentations

There will be opportunities to perform and present your work on several of the major assignments. These can be as formal / informal as we like (TBD).

Peer response / writing groups

Your peers are one of your most valuable resources in terms of understanding the major projects. You will have the chance to bounce ideas off one another, problem solve, and give feedback that will make your writing and revisions more directed and purposeful.

GRADING

Project 1 (15% or 150 points) Personal narrative + Reflection

Project 2 (15% or 150 points) Cultural analysis + Reflection

Project 3 (20% or 200 points) Community research essay + Reflection

Project 4 (20% or 200 points) Community-based project + Reflection

Project 5 (20% or 200 points) Self-reflective essay

Averaged major project grade: worth 90% or 900 points

Participation: Includes the guidelines discussed in the community participation document, which we will discuss in class together: 20% or 200 points

Peer response / Writing groups: Because of its in-depth nature, peer response feedback is worth 20 points each x 5: 10% or 100 points

Short assignments (in-class prompts, invention activities, reading responses, performances / presentations, etc.) Responses are graded credit / partial credit / no credit. Or, 10 points/ 5 points / 0 points. To get full credit, you must do the assignment thoroughly and thoughtfully and turn it in on time: 150% or 150 points

The total points possible in this class are 1350. Your **course grade** is calculated by dividing the number of points you have, out of the total possible so far to get a percentage. Course grades use MSU's grading scale:

- 93-100% 4.0 (A)
- 90-92% 3.5 (A-/B+)
- 83-89% 3.0 (B)
- 80-82% 2.5 (B-/C+)
- 73-79% 2.0 (C)
- 70-72% 1.5 (C-/D+)
- 63-69% 1.0 (D)
- 60-62% 0.5 (D-)
- 59-less%..... 0.0 (F)

Late assignments: Late major projects will be dropped 1.0 per day past the due date, with the first reduction occurring at the end of the class when the project is due.

Revising major projects: You may revise one of the first three major assignments *within two weeks of getting them back*. Revising does not guarantee a higher grade—you must revise significantly and with purpose.

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT: SHARED LEARNING OUTCOMES

As part of the general education requirement, First-Year Writing contributes to the mission of Michigan State 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 activities

The First-year Writing shared learning outcomes support inquiry-based learning that transfers across writing situations in relation to three major issues: writing, reading, and researching.

Writing	Reading	Researching
Use writing for purposes of reflection, action, and participation in academic inquiry	Engage in reading for the purposes of reflection, critical analysis, decision-making, and inquiry	Apply methods of inquiry and conventions to generate new understanding
Work within a repertoire of genres and modes to meet appropriate rhetorical purposes	Understand that various academic disciplines and fields employ varied genre, voice, syntactical choices, use of evidence, and citation styles	Demonstrate the ability to locate, critically evaluate, and employ a variety of sources for a range of purposes

Exercise a flexible repertoire of invention, arrangement, and revision strategies	Read in ways that improve writing, especially by demonstrating an ability to analyze invention, arrangement, and revision strategies at work in a variety of texts	Demonstrate the ability to generate and apply research strategies that are purposeful, ethical, and balanced
Demonstrate an understanding of writing as an epistemic and recursive process and effectively apply a variety of knowledge-making strategies in writing	Demonstrate an understanding of reading as an epistemic and recursive meaning making process	Demonstrate an understanding of research as epistemic and recursive processes that arise from and respond back to various communities
Understand diction, usage, voice, and style, including standard edited English, as conventional and rhetorical features of writing	Understand that academic disciplines and fields employ varied genre, styles, syntactical patterns, uses of evidence, and documentation practices that call for a variety of reading strategies	Understand the logics and uses of citation systems and documentation styles and display competence with one citation system / documentation style

PROGRAM & UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Academic Honesty: Michigan State University has adopted the following statement about academic misconduct:

1.00 PROTECTION OF SCHOLARSHIP AND GRADES

The principles of truth and honesty are fundamental to the educational process and the academic integrity of the University; therefore, no student shall:

- 1.01** claim or submit the academic work of another as one’s own.
- 1.02** procure, provide, accept or use any materials containing questions or answers to any examination or assignment without proper authorization.
- 1.03** complete or attempt to complete any assignment or examination for another individual without proper authorization.
- 1.04** allow any examination or assignment to be completed for oneself, in part or in total, by another without proper authorization.
- 1.05** alter, tamper with, appropriate, destroy or otherwise interfere with the research, resources, or other academic work of another person.
- 1.06** fabricate or falsify data or results.

Procedures for responding to cases of academic misconduct and possible repercussions are outlined in Spartan Life: Student Handbook and Resource Guide. They can also be found on the web at: <http://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/RegsOrdsPolicies.html#General>

Anti-discrimination: Michigan State University will not discriminate against or harass any University community member(s) through inappropriate limitation of employment opportunity, access to University residential facilities, or participation in educational, athletic, social, cultural, or other University activities on the basis of age, color, gender, gender identity, disability status, height, marital status, national origin, political persuasion, race, religion, sexual orientation, veteran status, or weight.

Attendance: All courses in the First-Year Writing Program are interactive and require high levels of student participation. Attendance at all class sessions is expected. *You may miss one week of class without impacting your grade. You should reserve these absences to address the observance of religious holidays not acknowledged by the University calendar, family events, serious illness, etc. * **If you miss more than one week of class (2 days), your final grade for the course will be lowered .3 for each additional absence.**

Check out your student handbook or the university Ombudsman's web page for procedures for obtaining an excused absence at MSU: <https://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/>

Completion of Assignments: The First-Year Writing Program requires that students produce a significant amount of writing to fulfill their writing requirement. You must complete all major assignments to fulfill the First-Year Writing requirement and receive a passing grade in this course.

Mandatory reporting: Essays, responses, and other materials submitted for this class are generally considered confidential pursuant to the University's student record policies. However, students should be aware that University employees are required to report suspected child abuse/neglect and allegations of sexual assault to the appropriate campus authorities when they become aware of such matters in the course of their employment. Sexual assault survivors are encouraged to meet with the Sexual Assault Program at the MSU Counseling Center for confidential counseling and advocacy services.

UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

The Counseling Center: Individual and group counseling and support groups for MSU students, faculty, and staff. www.couns.msu.edu, 207 Student Services Building, 355-8270, 353-7278 (TTY).

English Language Center: Provides instruction to international students to improve English language skills for coursework. For more information, visit: <http://www.elc.msu.edu>

The Learning Resources Center: Assistance to MSU students who want to improve their studying skills. For more information, visit: <http://lrc.msu.edu>

Resource Center for People with Disabilities (RCPD): Leads MSU in maximizing ability and opportunity for full participation by persons with disabilities. To register with them, visit: www.rcpd.msu.edu, 120 Bessey Hall, 884-RCPD, 335-1293 (TTY).

The Writing Center: Consultations with writers at all levels of proficiency, at all stages of the composing process, and on a wide variety of composing projects including essays, resumes, presentations, websites, and digital movies. Set up an appointment at <http://writing.msu.edu>

IMPORTANT DATES

University holiday (no class): 9/3

End of tuition refund period: 9/24, 8pm

Middle of semester (last day for withdrawal or dropping courses with no grade reported, close of on-line drops for Fall): 10/17, 8pm

Date/Time of Final: Friday, December 14, 10am-noon