

Instructor

Dr. Mike Ristich

Office

269 Bessey Hall

Office Hours

Fridays 3-5pm and by
appointment.

Specifically, I am
available to meet in-
person or via Skype on
Mondays and
Wednesdays.

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Course

WRA 150-044

Course Wiki

www.spring2014wra150044.pbworks.com

Meeting Days and

Times

T/Th 3:00pm-4:50pm

Room

B106 Wells Hall

We often think of history as an all-encompassing linear, cause-effect process whereby an action gives rise to a reaction that consequently gives rise to another reaction. Although this view might be commonplace, the consequences of it are not. Echoing Fredrich Nietzsche, the French historian of ideas, Michel Foucault, suggests that such a view of history “aims at dissolving the singular event into an ideal continuity—as a teleological or a natural process.” To put it another way, Foucault alleges that by examining “the noblest periods, the highest forms, the most abstract ideas, the purest individualities,” “traditional” historians and their histories seek to discount the random, chaotic, and emergent by neatly bringing all events and ideas under one goal-oriented process (88-89).¹ After all, Foucault argues, “We want historians to confirm our belief that the present rests upon profound intentions and immutable necessities (89)”

Despite the prevalence of this version of “history,” one can approach the past (and its effects) in a variety of ways. Indeed, much of the thought stemming from the mid-twentieth century and today suggests that history and many other cause-effect relationships are much more complicated, complex, and chaotic than we once assumed. We might, for instance, look to Foucauldian genealogy, emergent causality, feminism, World-Systems analysis, subaltern studies, New Historicism, or “nomadology” as modes of thought that challenge the assumptions of “traditional history.” While these various figurations are not of interest to us per se, they do confirm what I take to be a starting point for our course: “knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for

cutting.”² That is, because historical knowledge or knowledge of the historical is “cut” to present different perspectives, we might begin to ask “how” and “why” knowledge is cut the ways they are. So, as we inquire into the “evolution American thought,” we must take into consideration that “evolution,” development, and change are “rhetorical”—arguments that support some particular position/set of values. To offer a set of questions that we might

¹ Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rainbow, (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 88-89.

² *Ibid.*, 88.

begin to address throughout our course: How do ideas emerge/come into being? Why do certain ideas emerge and give rise to a host of descendents (continue to have prominence over other ideas)? What influence does the past have on our thoughts and actions today? How can we approach the study of the past and the emergence/descent of ideas? Why does all of this matter?

Before developing answers to the above questions, we must first examine 1) how the use of language shapes our perception of and relationship to the past, present, and future, as well as the and political, economic, and social institutions we encounter,³ and 2) how to influence these worlds and change perceptions through the construction of persuasive arguments.⁴ In order to address these two goals, our course will employ the vocabulary of “literacy studies” and “rhetorical studies.” In particular, we will investigate and write about five different “literacies:” *personal, cultural, disciplinary, remix, and revision*. As we focus on these “literacies,” we will also discuss how *subject, writer, audience and purpose* (SWAP) influence each other and shape communication. In other words, employing the vocabularies of rhetorical and literacy studies will allow us to inquire and argue about the emergence and evolution of ideas in American thought (including the very notions of “evolution” and “American thought”).

While our common readings will help to bring to light and develop our understanding of literacy and rhetoric, I hope that you will direct your own inquiry towards a set of ideas, discipline, body of knowledge that you find interesting/relevant. Here is what I mean: if you are majoring in pre-med, why not study why/how the “white lab coat” has come to be synonymous with physicians? Or, if you are studying business, you might investigate why/how “business” came to be different from finance, economics, and/or marketing. Or, to satiate the point, someone studying film might study the evolution of “aliens” in science-fiction movies. By taking up and writing about your own research interests, my hope is that you will not only develop a keen understanding of rhetoric and literacy, but will take away some new understanding of your particular field, interest, hobby, etc.

Required Texts:

- *Reading and Writing Literacies*. Ed. Collin Craig, Nancy C. DeJoy, Bonnie Williams, and Steven T. Lessner. Boston: Pearson, 2011.
- Ballenger, Bruce. *The Curious Researcher* 7th ed. Boston: Pearson, 2012.
- Aaron, Jane E. *The Little Brown Handbook* 7th ed. Boston: Pearson, 2010.
- Trove, Richard. *Rhetoric: A Very Short Introduction* (Ebook via Amazon). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

³ See David Barton, *Literacy: An Introduction to the Ecology of the Written Language* 2nd ed., (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007).

⁴ The construction of arguments that accord with subject, writer, audience, and purpose is called “rhetoric.” When we study how and why arguments were/are constructed in a certain way, it is called “rhetorical analysis.”

- Other readings will be provided in class or via ANGEL

Course Aims/Objectives:

As part of the general education requirement, Tier I Writing contributes to the Michigan State University mission 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.*

In pursuit of these goals, Tier I Writing and Preparation for College Writing courses engage students in writing and reflection activities that make overt the ways that invention, arrangement, and revision activities:

- can be engaged across inquiry situations (scholarly, social, and professional)
- require the development of knowledge about the importance of contextual factors that affect the application of these methods of inquiry

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

Writing

- Use writing for purposes of reflection, action, and participation in academic inquiry.
- Work within a repertoire of genres and modes to meet appropriate rhetorical purposes.
- Exercise a flexible repertoire of invention, arrangement, and revision strategies.
- Demonstrate an understanding of writing as an epistemic and recursive process and effectively apply a variety of knowledge-making strategies in writing.
- Understand diction, usage, voice, and style, including standard edited English, as conventional and rhetorical features of writing.

Reading

- Engage in reading for the purposes of reflection, critical analysis, decision-making, and inquiry.
- Understand that various academic disciplines and fields employ varied genre, voice, syntactical choices, use of evidence, and citation styles.
- 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 an understanding of reading as an epistemic and recursive meaning making process.

- 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.

Researching

- Apply methods of inquiry and conventions to generate new understanding.
- Demonstrate the ability to locate, critically evaluate, and employ a variety of sources for a range of purposes.
- Demonstrate the ability to generate and apply research strategies that are purposeful, ethical, and balanced.
- Demonstrate an understanding of research as epistemic and recursive processes that arise from and respond back to various communities.
- Understand the logics and uses of citation systems and documentation styles and display competence with one citation system/documentation style.

Academic Honesty:

Michigan State University has adopted the following statement about academic policy:

GENERAL STUDENT REGULATIONS

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.

Helpful Resources

MSU Writing Center
www.writing.msu.edu
300 Bessey Hall
(517) 432-3610

MSU ESL Lab
www.elc.msu.edu
714 Wells Hall
(517) 353-0800

MSU Learning Resource
Center
www.lrc.msu.edu
202 Bessey Hall
(517) 355-2363

MSU Counseling Center
www.couns.msu.edu
207 Student Services
Building
(517) 355-8270

Resource Center for
Person with Disabilities
www.rcpd.msu.edu
120 Bessey Hall
(517) 884-7273

Student Supportive
Services
(The Source for all
MSU Student Support
Services and
Resources—LBGT,
Family, Health and
Alcohol, etc.)
www.vps.msu.edu/inf
ormation-for-
students/supportive-
services

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 honesty 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/honestylinks.html>

Course Policies and Procedures:

Both the University and the Tier I Writing program specify several policies and requirements that we must observe. In addition, I have my own expectations for how we will conduct ourselves throughout the semester. These policies and requirements are outlined below. If you have any questions or concerns about this course at any time throughout the semester, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Assignments

Remember: The Tier I Writing program requires that students produce a significant amount of writing to fulfill their University writing requirement. You must complete all five major projects to fulfill the Tier I Writing requirement and receive a passing grade in this course (listed below). All five of the major projects, as well as the “radical writings” assignments, will be clearly explained and detailed in a corresponding handout that will be posted to our class wiki and ANGEL.

In addition to our major projects, your final grade will be determined by the completion of short responses and peer-review exercises that will be assigned throughout the semester. There are no quizzes or exams in this course. Due dates for all assignments will be found on our class wiki and communicated in advance of submission. The assignments (and final grade distribution) are listed below:

- Project One (Literacy Autobiography): 15%
- Project Two (Cultural Artifact Analysis): 15%
- Project Three (Disciplinary Literacy): 17.5%
- Project Four (Remix): 17.5%
- Project Five (Revising Literacies): 20%
- Participation / Responses/Peer Review Exercises: 10%
- [Infographic](#) (to accompany final paper) 5%

“It is no longer a question of judging the past in the name of a truth that only we can possess in the present, but of risking the destruction of the subject who seeks knowledge in the endless deployment of the will to knowledge”

Assessment

Regarding assessment, grading rubrics will be developed collaboratively and distribute/posted online in advance of final draft submission. Furthermore, I encourage you to ask questions, send me drafts via email, meet with me during my office hours, visit the MSU Writing Center, and make effective use of peer-review sessions to ensure that you are meeting assignment guidelines and composing well-crafted arguments.

Class Wiki

As a complement to ANGEL, this course utilizes a class wiki.⁵ This site allows for the centralization of all our course materials: your responses and papers will be posted on the wiki, as will our class documents (syllabus, paper rubrics, etc). Moreover, all of our class notes and discussions will be available for remote access.

The wiki will also house your responses, drafts, etc. and will serve as the center of our class discussions, so make sure that our responses are posted in a timely manner, void of “textspeak” and other informalities. Our wiki will also have a “Useful Links” page that includes links to writing sources, research information, and other sites pertinent to our course. Please take advantage of this technology, as it will only make our class discussions more dynamic, and our writing more effective.

Policy for Late Assignments

Students may submit one major project (other than the final project) up to one week late, no questions asked, provided they notify me in advance of the original due date. (Note: This option is not extended to Project Five since it will be completed too late in the semester for late grading, as I am given a deadline for grade submission by the registrar.) Additionally, please note that this only applies to the submission of a final revision/draft and cannot be applied to responses, drafts, etc. **Other than the process described above, I will not accept late work!**

Attendance Policy

All courses in the Tier I Writing Program are interactive and require high levels of student participation. Attendance at all class sessions is expected. You may miss up to three (3) class meetings without affecting 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 three (3) class meetings, your final grade for the course will be lowered by 0.2 on the 4.0 scale for each additional individual absence.

Additionally, excessive tardiness will not be tolerated. I will take attendance at the beginning of the course. If you arrive late, be sure to talk to me, so you are considered tardy and not absent. A student who arrives late to class three (3) times will be considered absent

⁵ <http://spring2014wra150044.pbworks.com/>

for one (1) class period. If a student arrives to class considerably late, it may be counted as an absence for that class period.

Note: I do not differentiate between excused and unexcused absences. All absences are treated equally.

If you are absent, you are also encouraged to make use of office hours either by appearing in my office in person, speaking via phone, or chatting online via Skype.

Additional information regarding absence policies at Michigan State University can be found at the Office of the Ombudsman's web page (<http://www.msu.edu/~ombud/>).

Classroom Expectations

It is important to note that this class warrants participation. The more we talk, read, research, and write, the more we all stand to gain. So, be ready to engage with our readings, our writings, and our classmates! With that said, however, this class asks us to consider question of politics, which, because they can sometimes force us to question deeply held beliefs, demands that we are always respectful, kind, and courteous to each other and ourselves. Remember, we can debate and argue, but that never implies disrespect (belittling, using derogatory/sexist/bigoted/racist language) or otherwise uncouth behavior.

"The world we know is not this ultimately simple configuration where events are reduced to accentuate their essential traits, their final meaning, or their initial and final value. On the contrary, it is a profusion of entangled events."

If, at anytime, the guidelines for decorum described above are violated, you will be asked to leave the class and a meeting with me must be arranged within twenty-four hours of the event. Also, depending on the severity of the encounter, I may ask WRAC administrators to attend the meeting. To put it clearly, I expect a classroom that is inclusive and respects all ideas and individuals, and any threat to that inclusivity will not be tolerated.

Important Dates and Course Schedule:

Below is a brief outline of the first month of class. Our entire course schedule can be found at our class wiki: <http://spring2014wra150044.pbworks.com>. Here, however, are some important dates:

1/6/2014	Spring 2014	Classes begin for Spring semester 2014
1/6/2014	Spring 2014	Late enrollment fee (\$100) begins. (fee waived for newly admitted and readmitted students)
1/10/2014	Spring 2014	Last day to change to or from CR/NC or Visitor -- must be done in the Registrar's Office by 5 p.m.

WRA 150: The Evolution of American Thought: Rhetoric, Writing, and the Study of Emergence

Spring
2014

1/10/2014	Spring 2014	Online open add period ends at 8 p.m.
1/31/2014	Spring 2014	End of tuition refund period for Spring semester courses --no refund after this date. NOTE: Special Session refund dates can be found by clicking on the course section number in the web Schedule of Courses at www.reg.msu.edu .
2/26/2014	Spring 2014	Middle of Semester; 8 p.m. – deadline to drop full-semester courses for the spring semester with no grade reported (drop deadlines for courses with non-standard meeting dates are available in Schedule Of Courses). NOTE: Special Session Middle of the Term dates are calculated separately. See web Schedule of Courses at www.reg.msu.edu .
2/27/2014	Spring 2014	Late enrollment fee (\$200) begins. (fee waived for newly admitted and readmitted students)
3/3/2014-3/7/2014	Spring 2014	Spring Break
3/10/2014	Summer 2014	Enrollment by appointment time begins for Summer 2014.
3/22/2014	Summer 2014	Open Enrollment begins for Summer 2014.
4/12/2014	Summer 2014	Initial tuition billing statements for Summer 2014 are available electronically on STUINFO (no paper bills are mailed).
4/25/2014	Spring 2014	Classes end for Spring semester
4/26/2014	Spring 2014	Online grading available to instructors (by 10 a.m.) Grades are available to students on STUINFO the following business day.
4/28/2014-5/2/2014	Spring 2014	Final Exams for Spring