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### ENGL 110: College Writing (Media Literacy)

Rachael Miller Benavidez

*CUNY Queens College*, [rachael.benavidez@qc.cuny.edu](mailto:rachael.benavidez@qc.cuny.edu)

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**English 110 | College Writing I**  
**Media Literacy: Critically Reading and Responding to Media**

*“Writing is how we think our way into a subject and make it our own.”*  
—William Zinsser

**Instructor:** Rachael Benavidez | [rachael.benavidez@qc.cuny.edu](mailto:rachael.benavidez@qc.cuny.edu)

**Office Hours:**

**Class Meeting Time:**

**Course Website:** <http://english110medialiteracy.qwriting.qc.cuny.edu>

**Required Course Texts:** This is an Open Educational Resources (OER) / Zero Textbook Cost (ZTC) course. All course materials, including the syllabus, assignments, and readings are provided at no cost to students.

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

While it may seem obvious that media pervades our lives through numerous and diverse forms and outlets, it may seem impossible to discern the “truth” about any given topic or event. However, understanding how media is encoded with meaning that shapes our culture requires us to critically decode its meaning. Developing media literacy allows us to critically analyze how existing beliefs and stereotypes beneath the stories and headlines draw us in to read. In this course, you will learn the expectations and strategies of academic writing by critically reading and responding to media. To write about how media literacy functions in contemporary society, we will examine media on current and historic events through historical, cultural, and economic lenses.

Through our thinking and writing about the media, you will use writing to participate in the many conversations that exist in our intellectual communities at QC and beyond. You'll learn how to navigate the processes of composing and respond effectively in a variety of writing situations. Therefore, in College Writing I, you will learn and practice a dependable, manageable, and reproducible writing process that allows you to find and develop your own strong ideas and express them clearly and persuasively as an emerging scholar.

Over the course of the semester, you will read and discuss texts from several source types, complete regular informal reading and writing exercises, and write three longer essays in which you analyze media in terms of its rhetorical devices and journalistic ethos. To do so, you will pay special attention to the practices of close reading and analysis, research, collaboration, and revision. My hope is that you will learn that **writing is a thoughtful conversation** and develop the confidence to enter such conversations, or, even better, start ones of your own. Rather than approaching writing as an innate talent, we will understand writing as a skill and process that anyone can learn and improve through practice.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Course Goal	Assessed by
Produce writing that <b>responds</b> appropriately to a <b>variety of rhetorical situations</b> with a particular focus on academic argumentation.	Discussion posts, annotations, writing assignments, essay drafts
Learn reading strategies to summarize, synthesize, analyze, and critique other people’s arguments and ideas fairly.	Writing assignments, quizzes, essay drafts
Learn <b>research practices</b> that will help strengthen their writing and thinking.	Writing assignments, Multimodal Researched Argument
Produce writing that shows how writers may navigate the diverse processes of composing, including revision and collaboration.	Writing assignments and essay drafts and revision
Produce writing that strategically employs <b>appropriate language conventions</b> in different writing situations and for different audiences.	Writing assignments, essay drafts and revision, and peer review
<b>Take ownership of their work</b> and gain an understanding of their own voice, style, and strengths.	Writing assignments and essay drafts and revision

## COURSE POLICIES

### Student Expectations

To receive a passing grade (D or above) in this course, students must at minimum:

- Submit a final draft of the three essays ranging from 1200 to 2000 words, each accompanied by a zero and a formal draft. **Students must submit all three final essay assignments to pass this class.**
- Come to class every day (barring rare emergencies) and participate in class discussion. Missing more than two classes will affect your grade and ability to complete the assignments required for this course.
- Complete reading and writing exercises on time. **Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are due at 9:00 a.m. on the date noted on our course website.**
- View and annotate online lecture videos.
- Complete and annotate readings in response to authors.
- Take notes in class and complete in-class writing assignments.
- Check email and course website regularly for updates.

### Contact Me

**Don’t be shy—I’m here to help you learn!** Reach out if you need anything necessary to support your learning and well-being. If you’re unclear about any of the assignments or you’re unable to complete classwork, please let me know so we can work out possible alternatives together.

### Attendance and Lateness

Your regular participation is crucially important to developing a **learning community**. To do well in this course, you need to be present for our classes in order to participate in discussions. The discussion and workshop elements that are at the center of this course cannot be made up, so attendance is vital. Additionally, lateness is disruptive to the entire class and interferes with your ability to participate, which affects your grade.

**If you must miss class**, please write me a brief, formal email to notify me; you do not need to explain the reason for your absence. It is your responsibility to catch up with the learning you missed; I suggest contacting peers and reviewing posted materials as a first step. If you want to further discuss class materials or topics covered, you are welcome to visit me during office hours. Please do not write to me requesting that I summarize a missed class for you over email.

**If you miss more than 3 classes by the middle of the semester**, I'll ask you to meet with me to discuss your capacity to successfully complete the course. If you will miss classes due to religious observance or if you have a chronic condition that you believe will cause you to miss more than two classes, please inform me of the dates during the first week of classes.

### **Practicing Professionalism**

**Our intellectual goal is to question, critique, and challenge ideas—not people.** Be thoughtful and respectful in your communication with your classmates and your instructor. We will discuss and formalize principles for classroom and online interactions during our first few classes.

**Please note, some of our readings and materials not only deal with controversial and sensitive topics but also contain explicit language and imagery.**

## **FORMAL WRITING ASSIGNMENTS**

### **Essay 1: Rhetorical Analysis**

Use a close reading of a news article on a current event to create an argument that critically analyzes the reporter's rhetorical choices and in terms of ethical journalism. You should aim not only to characterize how the reporter discusses the event but also how his or his writerly choices are meaningful in terms of the rhetorical situation and appeals. Your essay will help a student audience understand how and why identifying and understanding rhetorical devices is essential to media literacy.

### **Essay 2: Lens Analysis of a Text with Image**

Using three news articles that report on the same subject and from different media types, construct an argument on the relationship between text and image and the ways in which they speak to each other. Your analysis will focus on how the intended and unintended messages of the sources convey meaning.

### **Essay 3: Multimodal Researched Argument**

Use a variety of contextual, theoretical, and argument sources to produce a ten-minute video that analyzes the depiction of a historical event. You will select exhibits on your topic from diverse media forms and genres to explore how language and imagery in the reporting illuminate cultural and social power structures. As you engage with what existing conversations about the event seem to ignore or leave out, you will also examine how alternative reporting might address the lasting consequences of misinformation.

## EVALUATION

In English 110, you will learn and practice a reflective, recursive, and collaborative writing process as you develop final drafts of your writing for a public audience. Therefore, your final course grade will be a combination of your final draft grades and your writing process grade:

### Final Draft Grades (50%)

Essay 1: Rhetorical Analysis	10%
Essay 2: Lens Analysis	15%
Essay 3: Multimodal Researched Argument	25%

### Writing Process Grade (50%)

Informal writing assignments	20%
In-class writing and participation	15%
Essay drafts	15%

## Academic Integrity

College Writing will provide you with strategies for working ethically and accurately with the texts you engage. We will discuss source use practices that prevent plagiarism, a serious academic offense that runs counter to our academic community's core values of honesty and respect for others. According to the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity (<https://www.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/administration/offices/legal-affairs/policies-procedures/academic-integrity-policy/Academic-Integrity-Policy-051911.pdf>), plagiarism is the act of presenting another person's ideas, research, or writing as your own.

## Accessibility and Accommodations

If you have or develop any condition that might require accommodation in this class—for example, a medical condition—you should immediately contact the Office of Special Services (OSS) in Frese Hall Room 111 at 718-997-5870 or via email at [qc.spsv@qc.cuny.edu](mailto:qc.spsv@qc.cuny.edu). OSS will ensure you receive any additional support needed to fully participate in and succeed at this course (and QC). You are welcome to inform me if you are comfortable doing so. We all have different ways of learning. Please communicate with me as soon as you can about your individual learning needs and how this course can best accommodate them.

## Writing Resources

If you need additional help with your writing beyond our class or my office hours, you are encouraged to utilize any of the following writing resources:

- **The Writing Center** in Kiely Hall 229 (phone: 718-997-5676) provides free writing support services to all enrolled Queens College students and is a helpful resource for writers at any level. Visit the website to make an appointment: <https://sites.google.com/qc.cuny.edu/qcwritingcenter/home>.
- **The Queens College Benjamin S. Rosenthal Library** provides students with remote access to its database and electronic collection from anywhere, using their QC ID or login credentials. Library help is available, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for questions, locating materials, research, and citation: <https://library.qc.cuny.edu/>.
- **The Purdue OWL Writing Lab** is an invaluable reference for citation formatting and style: <https://owl.purdue.edu/>.

## COURSE TEXTS

The required readings in this section are available via the links on the Course Calendar. Links to required readings and videos and readings on writing are also posted to our course website.

*Keep in mind that since this course explores media literacy, we will also be examining media from various news sources.*

### **Readings on Writing**

Our texts on writing will help you think about what your writing is **doing**, along with how and why to apply specific practices in academic writing.

- [“A Brief Guide to the Elements of the Academic Essay”](#) by Gordon Harvey is an essential text for any academic writer.
- In order to develop our writing and research practices, we will read selections from [The Craft of Research \(TCOR on the Course Calendar\)](#) by Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams, which is available as an eBook in the Queens College Library and on the Internet Archive. During our first week of class, we’ll work on accessing the text together.

### **Readings on Media**

We will read excerpts from three texts that focus on media in order to facilitate our entry into the conversation of writing about media.

- [Journalism, 'Fake News' and Disinformation: A Handbook for Journalism Education and Training \(UNESCO MIL\)](#): This text was created by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for teachers. It provides us with articles that help us to think about the nature of journalism and the importance of trust.
- [Media Studies 101 \(MS 101\)](#): This text is one collaboratively curated for media and communication studies students in New Zealand, Australia and the Pacific. While some of the exercises in the text are specific to that area of the world, it provides us with the conceptual vocabulary to analyze media.
- [“SPJ Code of Ethics”](#): The Society of Professional Journalists asserts four specific principles as the foundation of ethical journalism that they urge people in all media to practice.

### **Video Texts on Media**

**Watch any required videos before you begin reading the texts, as they will help you to better understand the concepts explored in them.**

#### **Video Texts for Essay 1: Rhetorical Analysis**

- [“Creating critical thinkers through media literacy: Andrea Quijada”](#) (video)
- [“Fake News”](#) (video)

#### **Video Texts for Essay 2: Lens Analysis**

- [“Ferdinand de Saussure and Structural Linguistics”](#) (video)
- [“Stuart Hall – Race, Gender, Class in the Media”](#) (video)

#### **Video Texts for Essay 3: Multimodal Researched Argument**

- [“But Wait: Do We Really CONSUME Media?”](#) (video)
- [“Stuart Hall’s Representation Theory Explained!”](#) (video)

## COURSE CALENDAR

Dates for reading and writing assignments are subject to change. Please pay attention to all announcements made in class, posted on our course website, or sent via email.

### Essay Unit 1: Rhetorical Analysis Assignments

Date	Reading Due	Writing Due
<b>Class 1</b> Succeeding in this Course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>READ: The Syllabus</li> </ul>	None
<b>Class 2</b> Reading for Rhetorical Conversation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WATCH: <a href="#">“Creating critical thinkers through media literacy: Andrea Quijada”</a> (video)</li> <li>WATCH: SPJ <a href="#">“Fake News”</a> (video)</li> <li>READ: <i>Media Studies 101</i> <a href="#">“Analyzing Media Texts: Media and Theory”</a></li> </ul>	Exercise 1.1
<b>Class 3</b> Identifying and Understanding Writing Choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>READ: <a href="#">“A Brief Guide to the Elements of the Academic Essay”</a> by Gordon Harvey</li> <li>READ: <i>MS 101</i> <a href="#">“Communication and Culture”</a></li> <li>READ: <i>MS 101</i> <a href="#">“Intercultural Communication”</a></li> </ul>	Exercise 1.2
<b>Class 4</b> Identifying Intellectual Problems and Asking Intellectual Questions I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>READ: <i>UNESCO MIL</i> <a href="#">“Truth, trust and journalism: why it matters”</a></li> <li>READ: <i>Society of Professional Journalists</i> <a href="#">“SPJ Code of Ethics”</a></li> <li>SKIM READ: “News Article 1”</li> <li>SKIM READ: “News Article 2”</li> </ul>	Exercise 1.3
<b>Class 5</b> Using Sources: Summarizing, Paraphrasing and Quoting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RE-READ: “News Article 1”</li> <li>RE-READ: “News Article 2”</li> <li>READ: <i>MS 101</i> <a href="#">“Codes”</a></li> </ul>	Exercise 1.4
<b>Class 6</b> Conducting a Rhetorical Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RE-READ: <i>MS 101</i> <a href="#">“Analyzing Media Texts: Media and Theory”</a></li> <li>RE-READ: “News Article 1”</li> <li>RE-READ: “News Article 2”</li> </ul>	<b>Pre-Draft Essay 1</b>
<b>Class 7</b> Analyzing and Arguing I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>READ: Your Essay Draft</li> <li>READ: <i>TCOR</i> <a href="#">“Making Good Arguments”</a> pp. 108-118</li> <li>READ: <i>TCOR</i> <a href="#">“Making Claims”</a> pp. 120-126</li> </ul>	Exercise 1.5
<b>Class 8</b> Peer Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>READ: Your Classmate’s Essay</li> <li>RE-READ: “News Article 1”</li> <li>RE-READ: “News Article 2”</li> </ul>	<b>Formal Draft Essay 1</b>
<b>Class 9</b> Introducing a Problem and a Thesis I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>READ: Your Essay Draft</li> </ul>	None

## Essay Unit 2: Lens Analysis Assignments

Date	Reading Due	Writing Due
<b>Class 10</b> Conducting Lens Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ WATCH: <a href="#">“Ferdinand de Saussure and Structural Linguistics”</a></li> <li>▪ READ: <i>MS 101</i> <a href="#">“Semiotics”</a> (including definitions)</li> <li>▪ READ: <i>MS 101</i> <a href="#">“Signs and Signifiers”</a></li> <li>▪ READ: <i>MS 101</i> <a href="#">“Sign Systems”</a></li> </ul>	<b>Annotations</b> <b>Final Draft</b> <b>Essay 1</b>
<b>Class 11</b> Applying a Lens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ WATCH: <a href="#">“Stuart Hall–Race, Gender, Class in the Media”</a></li> <li>▪ READ: <i>MS 101</i> <a href="#">“Semiotics and Communication Process”</a></li> <li>▪ SKIM READ: <i>UNESCO MIL</i> <a href="#">“Combatting disinformation and misinformation through Media and Information Literacy (MIL)”</a></li> </ul>	Exercise 2.1
<b>Class 12</b> Analyzing and Arguing II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ READ: “Exhibit 1”</li> <li>▪ READ: “Exhibit 2”</li> <li>▪ READ: “Exhibit 3”</li> </ul>	Exercise 2.2
<b>Class 13</b> Identifying Intellectual Problems and Asking Intellectual Questions II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ RE-READ: “Exhibit 1”</li> <li>▪ RE-READ: “Exhibit 2”</li> <li>▪ RE-READ: “Exhibit 3”</li> </ul>	Exercise 2.3
<b>Class 14</b> Engaging Multiple Viewpoints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ READ: <i>MS 101</i> <a href="#">“Habermas’ Public Sphere”</a></li> <li>▪ READ: <i>MS 101</i> <a href="#">“Agenda Setting”</a></li> <li>▪ READ: <i>MS 101</i> <a href="#">“Uses and gratifications model”</a></li> </ul>	<b>Pre-Draft</b> <b>Essay 2</b>
<b>Class 15</b> Developing and Structuring Argument I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ RE-READ: “Exhibit 1”</li> <li>▪ RE-READ: “Exhibit 2”</li> <li>▪ RE-READ: “Exhibit 3”</li> </ul>	Exercise 2.4
<b>Class 16</b> Peer Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ READ: <i>TCOR</i> “Introductions and Conclusions” pp. 242-248</li> </ul>	<b>Formal Draft</b> <b>Essay 2</b>
<b>Class 17</b> Developing and Strengthening Argument I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ READ: <i>TCOR</i> “Acknowledgement and Responses” pp. 139-150</li> <li>▪ RE-READ: Your Essay</li> </ul>	None
<b>Class 18</b> Radical Revision Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ READ: <i>TCOR</i> “Revising Your Organization and Argument” pp. 203-211</li> </ul>	Exercise 2.5



### Essay 3: Multimodal Researched Argument Assignments

Class	Reading Due	Writing Due
<b>Class 19</b> Identifying Intellectual Problems and Asking Intellectual Questions III	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ READ: <a href="#">“On Reading a Video Text”</a> by Robert Scholes</li> <li>▪ WATCH: <a href="#">“But Wait: Do We Really CONSUME Media?”</a> (video)</li> <li>▪ READ: <i>MS 101</i> <a href="#">“Ideology”</a></li> <li>▪ READ: <i>MS 101</i> <a href="#">“Discourse, Institutions, and Power”</a></li> </ul>	<b>Final Draft Essay 2</b>
<b>Class 20</b> Identifying and Researching Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ SKIM READ: <i>UNESCO MIL</i> <a href="#">“Fact-checking 101”</a></li> <li>▪ READ: <i>TCOR</i> “From Topics to Questions” pp. 35-48)</li> <li>▪ READ: <i>MS 101</i> <a href="#">“Institutions”</a></li> <li>▪ READ: <i>MS 101</i> <a href="#">“Discourse and Institutions”</a></li> </ul>	Exercise 3.1
<b>Class 21</b> Expanding the Conversation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ READ: <i>TCOR</i> “Engaging Sources” pp. 84-100</li> <li>▪ READ: <i>MS 101</i> <a href="#">“The Propaganda Model”</a></li> <li>▪ READ: Your Sources</li> </ul>	Exercise 3.2
<b>Class 22</b> Introducing a Problem and a Thesis II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ READ: Your Presentation Outline</li> <li>▪ RE-READ: Your Sources</li> </ul>	<b>Pre-Draft Essay 3 Presentation</b>
<b>Class 23</b> Analyzing and Arguing III	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ READ: <i>TCOR</i> “Revising Style: Telling Your Story Clearly” pp. 249-268</li> </ul>	Exercise 3.3
<b>Class 24</b> Peer Review Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ READ: Your Presentation</li> <li>▪ RE-READ: <a href="#">“A Brief Guide to the Elements of the Academic Essay”</a> by Gordon Harvey</li> </ul>	<b>Formal Draft Essay 3 Presentation</b>
<b>Class 25</b> Developing and Structuring Argument II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ RE-READ: <i>TCOR</i> “Revising Your Organization and Argument” pp. 203-211</li> </ul>	Exercise 3.4
<b>Class 26</b> Radical Revision and Finalizing a Thesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ RE-READ: <i>TCOR</i> “Introductions and Conclusions” pp. 242-248</li> </ul>	Exercise 3.5
Individual Conferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ READ: Your Presentation</li> </ul>	None
<b>Final Submission Due</b>	<b>Not a class day</b>	<b>Final Draft Essay 3 Presentation</b>