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ENGL 200: Writing about Writing (The Problem of the University)

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WRITING ABOUT WRITING

The Basics

This course is officially listed as English 200W-02. You don't really need this information going forward, but just make sure this is the class you're actually registered for! This class meets in Kiely Hall, Room 321 on Tuesdays and Thursday from 12:15 to 1:30 pm.

I'm your instructor, Flora (please call me Flora!), and you can contact me at fdetournayoden@gc.cuny.edu. My *official* office hours are before class on Thursdays, from 11:00 to 12:00 pm in Klapper Hall, Office 350, but I'm also available at other times--just send me an email or message via Discord!

And speaking of Discord, we'll be using it as THE platform to hold all of our course stuff and connect outside of class time. You should've already received an invite to join our class' server, but you can also access it here. And don't worry, I'll guide you through the joining process and help you use Discord. (It's worth it, I promise.)

This course is a Writing Intensive (W) course and fulfills one Writing Intensive requirement. W classes include a significant portion of time devoted to writing instruction. This may include things such as revision workshops, discussions of rhetorical strategies, or reflective writing about writing assignments.

What's this class about?

A frequent topic for news outlets and cultural commentators, the university serves as a unique site, space, and subject because of how much it informs our perceptions of what knowledges we value and who gets to participate in knowledge making. This semester, we'll dive deep into these questions and interrogate them in relation to academic writing. We'll explore and engage in lots of writing strategies, focusing our attention on available choices in argument, language, tone, style, and all-around intentions when communicating our ideas.

Books, communication & technology

There are no books to buy or rent for this class. In fact, everything we read'll be available to you via links on [our course site](#). All texts we read for this class are either Open Access, meaning they are accessible

without any paywall, or through the library and its agreements with various news sources.

In addition to these resources, we'll be using a course site, Discord (join [here](#), if you haven't already), your Qmail accounts (as a back up for announcements and updates), and whichever word processing app you're most comfortable with (e.g., Google Docs, Microsoft Word, etc.). All of these things are accessible/available on both phones and computers.

If you don't have access to an internet-enabled device, the university can provide one via the Provost's office, and I'm happy to help you figure this out (just let me know as soon as possible!).

Acknowledgements

I'd like to acknowledge some of the people who have inspired and encouraged a lot of the choices I've made for this course, including Carmen Kynard, Anna Zeemont, Jesse Rice-Evans, Andréa Stella, Chy Sprauve, Lindsey Albracht, Amy Wan, Gloria Fisk, Traci Gardner, and Jody Shipka, sarah madoka currie, among others.

Learning goals

The college's English department has established some key learning goals and objectives for students across all sections of English 200W. By the end of the course, you'll ideally walk away with

- An increased writing fluency and comfort with regular writing;
- Mindfulness around your writing habits and processes, and be able to articulate strategies for improvement;
- A clear knowledge of rhetorical terminology to describe your own writing and the writing of other people;
- The ability to distinguish rhetorical situations and to choose among a variety of strategies to meet a communicative goal;
- Practiced writing strategies to address a number of rhetorical situations, genres, and modalities.

Accessibility

Access is a cornerstone of this course's design and your needs are of the utmost important to me. (It's why we're using Discord, which is one of the most accessible platforms available, unlike Blackboard.) Let's hold space for physical disabilities, mental & emotional health, neurodivergence,

illness, injury, grief & loss, and any other needs that I haven't listed. Let me know how I can best support you and your learning.

If you need support in other classes, please reach out to Dr. Mirian Detres-Hickey at the office of Special Services for Students with Disabilities via email at gc.spsv@qc.cuny.edu. I'm also happy to help you navigate this process. Additionally, mental health services are available to all students via the Counseling, Health & Wellness Center, which offers confidential peer support and counseling for free.

Writing support

If you find yourself in need of additional writing assistance, something beyond what you're getting from me and your peers, you can make an appointment with the Queens College Writing Center. They offer one-on-one assistance, small group tutoring, and larger workshops that can help you address your specific writing goals. I can also offer you some extra resources, if needed.

Attendance

So, my position is that you're all adults and I trust you to make your own decisions about your time. I don't formally take attendance and I don't hold absences against you, grade-wise. That said, this course moves fast and a huge part of our work will necessitate interacting with one another and actively engaging in various activities and discussions in class, on our Discord server, and in your writing.

If joining our class regularly is going to be difficult for you, whatever the reason, let me know and we'll figure something out.

Late work

Simply put, there's no official grade penalty for late work or missed deadlines in this class. However, there are some assignments that kind of require you to be on time (e.g., workshops) out of fairness and consideration to your classmates, but I'll be extra clear about which ones these are and which dates they should be submitted.

Regardless of the assignment, I'll still recommend deadlines because we do have a finite amount of time together and maintaining a sense of schedule can help you and me better manage it. That said, if you can't submit something by a recommended deadline, it's okay. Just keep me updated on your progress so I can support you.

Grading

I could give you a whole speech about my approach to grading, but I'd like to keep it simple. If you do the work, and by that I mean engage in the process (in class and out of class) and submit it, you'll get an A. If you do some of the work you're asked to submit, you'll get a B.

We can talk about what this looks like in practice, but my goal for us is to really use this time together to consider new perspectives, try some different approaches to thinking and writing, and see what we can gain by emphasizing process over product.

Plagiarism & academic integrity

Citing your sources is a practice of respect and care. In this class (and beyond!), let's be deliberate and thoughtful in our work, and freely acknowledge those who came before us, those who've influenced our thinking, and those who we are in conversation with in our own writing.

We'll talk a lot about citational practice within the larger context of whiteness and cultural appropriation, but we'll also look at some of its formal conventions and how we can best use them as a tool to support the ethical and equitable sharing of knowledge.

Assignments

I don't really like the language of "assignments," but it's a word we're all familiar with, so let's stick with it for now. However, I'd like you to consider the assignments for this class as only snapshots in time or works-in-progress, and not final products.

We'll do a couple different kinds of assignments this semester, and I'd like us to think about how we might work together to come up with some expectations around how I and you will evaluate this work. Here are the categories of work that you'll produce and some loose definitions of them.

- Weekly exercises, which are regular writing activities clocking in at 500-750 words. There are 6 exercises in total, but only some of these entries will be one-offs while others will build on other ones to create longer pieces of writing.
- Workshops, which include feedback giving and receiving as a short personal reflection of 200 to 300 words. These are central to our class culture and to your ability to revise your own work for the portfolio, so you can't really opt out of them.

- Deep dives, which are longer pieces of writing (1,250 to 1,500 words) that you may expand from your Weekly exercises. These will be analysis-heavy assignments where you can really put your argumentative power to work!
- Portfolio, which is like "best of" collection of your (revised) writing throughout the course, including a set number of exercises and two (2) of your best bits of feedback you gave to others during workshops.

Proposed assessment structure

As I mentioned above, I prefer to keep my grading simple and uncomplicated so we can really focus on the work and not how it's evaluated. But because we're all part of a learning community, and I really want to make this class as cooperative and collaborative as possible, what I'm proposing below is just one way to break things down, but I'd like to decide together what the final assessment structure will be.

Weekly exercises, which are regular writing activities clocking in at 500-750 words. There are 6 exercises in total, but only some of these entries will be one-offs while others will build on other ones to create longer pieces of writing.	40%
Deep dives, which are longer pieces of writing (1,250 to 1,500 words) that you may expand from your Weekly exercises. These will be analysis-heavy assignments where you can really put your argumentative power to work!	30%
Workshops, which include feedback giving and receiving as a short personal reflection of 200 to 300 words. These are central to our class culture and to your ability to revise your own work for the portfolio, so you can't really opt out of them.	15%
Portfolio, which is like "best of" collection of your (revised) writing throughout the course.	10%
Participation & Community Care, which refers to your engagement in the class via discussions, Discord chats, and small group work. This also includes how you contribute to our classroom community by providing support to its members.	5%
Total	100%

Week-by-week schedule

Things can change and the realities of an ongoing global pandemic means that we might have to move some things around. Let's use this schedule as a general guide and any updates will be made directly on Discord in the #announcements channel.

Thursday, January 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Syllabus review (in-class)
Tuesday, January 31	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read Gitanjali Dasbender's "<u>Critical Thinking in College Writing: From the Personal to the Academic</u>"<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Only pages 37-44• Read bell hooks' <u>Teaching Critical Thinking</u> chapters (in class)<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ "Critical Thinking"◦ "Intellectual Life"
Thursday, February 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read Gitanjali Dasbender's "<u>Critical Thinking in College Writing: From the Personal to the Academic</u>"<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Only pages 45-51
Tuesday, February 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read Tiffany Buckingham Barney's "<u>Unpacking the Process of Rhetoric</u>" (in class)
Thursday, February 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read Paulo Freire's <u>Pedagogy of the Oppressed</u><ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Chapter 2 (pages 71-86)
Tuesday, February 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Submit weekly exercise #1
Thursday, February 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read Jonathan Malesic's "<u>My College Students Are Not OK</u>"<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Review the comments section and identify two (2) comments to discuss
Tuesday, February 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No class (Monday schedule--please refer to academic calendar)

Thursday, February 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit weekly exercise #2 • Workshop #1 (in-class)
Tuesday, February 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit workshop worksheet • Read Jacques Derrida's "<u>The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of Its Pupils</u>" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Only pages 3-14
Thursday, March 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Jacques Derrida's "<u>The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of Its Pupils</u>" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Only pages 15-20
Tuesday, March 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit weekly exercise #3
Thursday, March 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class canceled
Tuesday, March 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch the Center for Humanities Research, UWC's panel discussion, "<u>The University and its Worlds</u>" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Only minutes 43:45-1:01:19 (Judith Butler) • Read op-eds from CUNY students (in class) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Naurin Shaki's "<u>More Than a Grade</u>" ◦ Alex Pellitteri's "<u>The CUNY Board of Trustees Should Reflect the CUNY Community</u>"
Thursday, March 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing intensive (in class)
Tuesday, March 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Deep dive #1 • Workshop #2 (in class)
Thursday, March 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit workshop worksheet • Read Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang's "<u>Refusing Research</u>" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Only pages 223-231

<p>Tuesday, March 28</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang's "<u>Refusing Research</u>" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Only pages 232-244 • One-on-one conferences (in-person)
<p>Thursday, March 30</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit weekly exercise #4 • One-on-one conferences (remote)
<p>Tuesday, April 4</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read two (2) threads on "Academic Twitter" (Twitter) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Options on Discord or find your own! • One-on-one conferences (in-person)
<p>Thursday, April 6</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No class--Spring break
<p>Tuesday, April 11</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No class--Spring break
<p>Thursday, April 13</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No class--Spring break
<p>Tuesday, April 18</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit weekly exercise #5 • Workshop #3 (in class)
<p>Thursday, April 20</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit workshop worksheet • Read Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's <u>The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Chapter 2 (pages 25-34)
<p>Tuesday, April 25</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's <u>The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Chapter 2 (pages 35-43)
<p>Thursday, April 27</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit weekly exercise #6

<p style="text-align: center;">Tuesday, May 2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read la paperson's <u>A Third University is Possible</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ "A Third University Exists in the First"
<p style="text-align: center;">Thursday, May 4</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Toni Cade Bambara's "<u>Realizing the Dream of a Black University</u>"
<p style="text-align: center;">Tuesday, May 9</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Deep dive #2 • Workshop #4 (in class)
<p style="text-align: center;">Thursday, May 11</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit workshop worksheet • Exit interviews (in class)
<p style="text-align: center;">Tuesday, May 23</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit final portfolio