City University of New York (CUNY)

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FIQWS: Writing and Social Justice

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Freshman Inquiry Writing Seminar
Spring 2018
Writing and Social Justice
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Writing and Social Justice

What does it take to move the world, to change opinion, to make progress toward social justice? In this course, we'll take a look at and practice using the strategies social activists use in documents that further the causes of social justice. The central aim of the course is to identify an audience (or audiences) that can help you further the cause of social justice in your local context, to create the document (or documents) that you think will persuade that audience to help, and to justify your choices by describing them in terms of the concepts provided in the course readings.

We intend for the term "social activists" to be broadly defined; it includes not just leaders of organizations like Black Lives Matter or the Women's March, but also leaders of local social service, civic, and religious institutions. You'll need to identify an organization that you want to learn more about (it can be an organization to which you already belong), identify the key players of the organization, determine the agency's rhetorical needs through observation, interview, and research, and then craft a message to audiences that are in a position to make a difference for your agency.

The course is arranged in a series of six steps:
- **Identify** a local issue that interests you or has had an impact on you or your family.
- **Identify** an organization in your community (broadly defined) that aims to address these social issues
- **Observe** the workings of the agency by spending time in the main office or attending a meeting
- **Interview** some of the agency's program leaders and members to better ascertain their goals and needs
- **Create** an archive of materials
- **Address** one of the agency's needs by finding an audience that is in a position to help your agency and creating a document--written, image, video, or something else--that will influence your audience. Whatever document(s) you create, you'll create a secondary document that describes the rhetorical choices you made and that will use the course readings as a justification for those choices.

Please note: this class will take place in a technology rich environment. You don't any equipment of your own (though it'd be useful to have a cell phone camera), and you don't have

to know anything about how to use the equipment, but you should know that part of the course will be figuring out how to use digital tools for academic purposes. Some of your work will be published on the web (with instructions for how to maintain your privacy).

Course Learning Outcomes
Every Freshman Inquiry Writing Seminar (FIQWS) is made up of two courses: a topic section (in this case, Writing Social Justice) and a writing section (which is always English 110). Learning communities like FIQWS provide students an opportunity to focus their energies. Instead of designing two courses with two separate sets of assignments and learning objectives, FIQWS instructors combine their efforts so that the assignments help students achieve learning outcomes for two courses. The following list shows the learning outcomes from English 110 and from Writing Social Justice.

FIQWS Writing Section
- Explore and analyze, in writing and reading, a variety of genres and rhetorical situations.
- Develop strategies for reading, drafting, collaborating, revising, and editing.
- Recognize and practice key rhetorical terms and strategies when engaged in writing situations.
- Engage in the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes.
- Understand and use print and digital technologies to address a range of audiences.
- Locate research sources (including academic journal articles, magazine and newspaper articles) in the library's databases or archives and on the Internet and evaluate them for credibility, accuracy, timeliness, and bias.
- Compose texts that integrate your stance with appropriate sources using strategies such as summary, critical analysis, interpretation, synthesis, and argumentation.
- Practice systematic application of citation conventions.

FIQWS Topic Section (Writing Social Justice)
- Examine how an individual's place in society affects experiences, values, or choices.
- Articulate and assess ethical views and their underlying premises.
- Articulate ethical uses of data and other information resources to respond to problems and questions.
- Identify and engage with local, national, or global trends or ideologies, and analyze their impact on individual or collective decision-making.

Course Policies

CCNY's Statement on Community Standards

https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/studentaffairs/community-standards

Academic Integrity
https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/about/integrity

Attendance
Students are expected to attend every class session of this course and to be on time. If you miss five classes, your final grade will be dropped by one-half of one letter (a 90 to an 85, for example). If you miss six classes, your final grade will be dropped one full letter. If you miss seven classes, you will not be able to pass the course. Consistent late arrivals and early departures will have a negative impact on your grade. I will notify you by email if course absences (for full or partial classes) are having an impact on your grade. If you have special circumstances, please see me. I'm happy to work with you to help you complete this course.

Student Support Services

Gateway Advising Center, NAC 1/220
http://www.ccny.cuny.edu/gateway/
Students without a declared major can receive academic advising, especially if you have questions about your course of study, core requirements, etc.

AccessAbility Center Tutoring Services, NAC 1/218
http://www.ccny.cuny.edu/accessability/
Provides one-on-one tutoring and workshops to all registered students with learning or physical disabilities.

Major Writing Assignments

Sequence 1: Source-based Essay (15%)

A rhetorical analysis of the initial research that the student finds on their subject. A source-based article, in which the student goes beyond summarizing to analyze/make connections between the concepts of genre, audience and rhetorical situation, and begin to develop a theory of writing. Students summarize the sources, make connections between them, and conduct genre analyses.
Key terms: Genre, Audience, Rhetorical Situation, Reflection

Sequence 2: Inquiry-based Essay (30%)

This essay both expands the research begun in the first essay, presents a research questions, and moves to answer that question. This essay includes:
- research plan
- identification of a local agency
- description of a local agency
- interviews with personnel or other members of the agency
- observation of the agencies operations
- survey of the the documents that circulate in the agency, including a discussion of discourse community
- research from popular and scholarly sources on this kind of agency
- proposal for two documents based on agency's exigence

Key terms: Exigence, Critical Analysis, Discourse Community, and Knowledge

Sequence 3: Composition in Two Genres (30%)

Create documents in two different genres to communicate to a targeted audience about the research topic explored in the second major assignment; includes rhetorical analysis of the documents using the terms audience, purpose, stance, rhetorical situation, genre, exigence, and discourse community, context, and circulation.
Key terms: Context, Composing, and Circulation

Sequence 4: Reflection and Portfolios (25%)

The reflection asks students to identify key terms they believe are most important to their writing practices and to theorize about the choice. In other words, it asks students to create their theory

of writing, using the idea of their own "made knowledge" about writing and the idea of reflection as both theory and practice.

Key terms: Knowledge and Reflection