

WRI 1000: ACADEMIC INQUIRY AND WRITING SEMINAR

Seattle Pacific University, fall 2017
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:00-11:00
Otto Miller Hall 126

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Office Hours: MW, 10:00-noon,
and by appointment

SEATTLE PACIFIC UNIVERSITY MISSION

Seattle Pacific University is a Christian university fully committed to engaging the culture and changing the world by graduating people of competence and character, becoming people of wisdom, and modeling grace-filled community.

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As I often say to freshman—the problem with the thesis is that it often comes before you know what you are talking about. More than anything else, you need to learn to think of ideas as provisional and strategic; of the opening as a way of getting started with a topic; of summary as a point to push off from. If you are lucky, you will find that the thesis doesn't hold, that you have come upon counter-examples or side tracks too interesting and too compelling to ignore.

David Bartholomae

“Everything Was Going Quite Smoothly
until I Stumbled upon a Footnote”

This is a course in resisting the tyranny of the thesis. What's that? It's what the Bartholomae of my epigraph describes: it's when you have an idea, then look for examples to support it, discard anything that doesn't fit nicely into the thesis statement, and then, in the conclusion of the paper, restate the thesis. The problem with that model of writing is that it is backward: the thesis comes first, before doing the hard work of inquiry. This makes the thesis stagnant. There's no space for it to evolve, no affordance for it to fall in on itself, no room for possibility.

And so, we resist the thesis, and this resistance is in the very course title: “Academic Inquiry and Writing Seminar.” Each of those words is important. We will be studying *academic* writing, meaning writing written for a specific audience by a specific type of person: an academic, that is, you. And this is a course in *inquiry*, a course in resisting the easy answer, the hasty conclusion. In this course, your first answer is never the final answer. Academics inquire. You will be taught to think provisionally, to think with an agility that allows you do inquire into the subjects at hand rather than go with your first reactions. This inquiry happens through *writing*. WRI 1000 is built on the belief that we come to learn something through writing, and writing is never an act that stands on its own: writing entails writing, yes, but so too reading and much revision. These are the cornerstones of the course: writing, reading, and revision. And this writing happens within a *seminar*, a small, intimate

space where people read, write, and think together. This is not a lecture course, and our work in WRI 1000 will, accordingly, be markedly different than the large lecture course.

Because writing is a means of inquiry, this is a course in revision. Revision is where the real work of writing happens. To revise, we ask three questions: (1) what is this writer's project? (2) how well does it work? and (3) what's the next step for this writer? We will ask these questions of each reading we read, and of our own writing as well. Your writing will be a centerpiece of this course: we will read at least one piece of student writing every day in class. My rationale is simple: by reading the work of your peers, you not only see how one writer approaches a problem, but you also gain practice in reading work in progress. This is the most important skill I can teach you in this course: to be a reader. You can think of this course, then, as a course in practical criticism, a course where we read with a critical eye for the practical purpose of improving our writing.

THE DAILY WORK OF THE COURSE

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

demonstrate understanding of the relationship between writer, reader, text, culture, and medium in various genres of academic writing. This is *rhetorical knowledge*.

ask good questions of the texts you read and write, attending especially to relationships between assertion and evidence, to patterns of organization, and to the interplay of verbal and nonverbal elements. This is *critical inquiry*.

practice flexible strategies for reading, drafting, revising, and editing texts. This is the writing *process*.

negotiate the *conventions* of academic writing, including grammar, spelling, and citation, exploring the concerns that motivate each.

To reach these four outcomes you'll need to engage in the daily practices of a writer. You will need a schedule for writing, a time and a place where you work. There is nothing fancy about this. You need to learn to organize your time so that there is time for writing, so that it becomes part of your routine. Routine is not glamorous, it's not sexy, it's not the image of the writer overtaken by inspiration pouring words onto the page. Writing is not like that. Writing is ordinary. You sit down and you write. Verlyn Klinkenborg reminds us that "Your job as a writer is making sentences," and to that, I'd add that this making entails not only writing, but also reading and revising sentences. We move through a text sentence by sentence. This requires discipline, a sort of physical and mental training to be able to sit in one place and think inside of sentences, both yours and those of others. You should spend at least two hours outside class in preparation for each hour we spend together.

I can insist on this kind of care and attention, but I cannot teach it. You will have to develop these habits of mind on your own. My job, as your teacher, is to guide you along the way, to offer a bit of correction, or a thought to consider. I have come to believe the most important skill I can teach in a writing class is reading. To be a good writer, you must be a good reader. You must learn to read other people's writing as a writer yourself, and you must be able to read your own work soberly.

Because revision figures so heavily into the course, I write comments on your essays to suggest problems, changes, new directions, ideas for revision. I spend a lot of time on these comments, and

I expect you to take time to read what I have written. These comments are a writing lesson in themselves. The best way to read my comments is to start at the beginning of the essay, reread what you have written, and stop to read my comments along the way. This is how I write my marginal comments, while I am reading. They show my reactions and suggestions at that moment. The final comment is where I make a summary statement about your essay. Be warned: I tend to be blunt and to the point. If I sound angry, I am not. I speak to you frankly, as I would to any adult. If your work seems thoughtless or quickly done, I will notice. I have taught writing for many years, and I know when writers are working hard and when they are fooling around. I will tell you if I think you are fooling around.

Please come to class prepared to engage the materials and your classmates. Our goal here is to pool our resources, to question each other, to look carefully at the texts in question—to reach the point where we can say something together we could not have said alone. I will frame our discussions, but I will not lecture. I recommend coming to class with one question and one comment prepared in advance; if others dominate the discussion, it is up to you to step in.

There are two texts required for the course. Both are available in the bookstore.

Greene, Stuart, and April Lidinsky. *From Inquiry to Academic Writing: A Practical Guide*. 3rd edition, Bedford/St. Martin's, 2014.

Bullock, Richard, Michal Brody, and Francine Weinberg. *The Little Seagull Handbook*. 3rd edition, Norton, 2016.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Because this is a course in revision, your final grade will be determined in large part by a portfolio. I do not grade individual pieces of writing. To do so suggests the writing is finished rather than a draft working toward a larger project. I want you to be able to write freely during the term, without the weight of grades, and then to revise intentionally for the portfolio once you've had a chance to get a feel for writing in and for the academy. For the portfolio, you will need to save copies of all your essays and all your homework and all my commentary on each. These will be the materials you draw from in assembling your portfolio. Think of your portfolio as an opportunity to display your best work of the term; an incomplete portfolio cannot display fully what you've accomplished. Your portfolio will collect samples of your work (revisions along with original drafts) this quarter accompanied by a cover letter where you assess your writing in light of the course goals. Leading into the portfolio, you can expect to have some piece of writing due each week—what I call a passage-based paper—along with an essay due week 4 and another week 8.

This portfolio is 70% of your final grade; the remaining 30% comes from participation.

Participation, in WRI 1000, means two things: turning work in on-time and showing up to class. All essays must be complete to pass the course. Your first late assignment will be a freebie; after that, each late or missing assignment lowers your final grade 5%. Regarding attendance, remember that class time is limited and valuable. Each student will be given two absences; a third lowers your final grade 10%, and a fourth is grounds to fail the course. Remember that you are to be present physically as well as intellectually. Laptops and phones are not allowed in class; inappropriate use of either will lower your final grade 5%.

This course sets higher standards for writing than you've probably experienced before. It's not uncommon for papers that might have earned an A in high school to be considered no better than a C in college. Here's how the Writing Program defines each grade level:

- A = superior attainment
- B = meritorious attainment
- C = adequate attainment
- D = minimal attainment
- E = insufficient attainment, no credit

Note that “meritorious” means commendable or praiseworthy: a B, in other words, reflects a well-written paper, not an average result. You must earn a C-minus in order to receive credit for WRI 1000 and advance to WRI 1100.

A final note: The Writing Program distinguishes between unintentional and intentional plagiarism. Unintentional plagiarism is a conventional issue, one that can be addressed through instruction on citation. Remember, you must cite your sources, even when paraphrasing. We will address citation in class, and if you need assistance beyond classroom instruction, please consult a handbook, set up an appointment at the Writing Center, and/or speak with me. Intentional plagiarism, however, is a breach of trust and integrity, a violation of the atmosphere of scholarship we work hard to establish and maintain at the University. If the instructor verifies an act of academic dishonesty has occurred, the Department Chair, Dean, Assistant Provost, and Dean of Students will each be notified. Depending on the severity, plagiarism can result in failing an assignment or failing the course.

COURSE CALENDAR

WRI 1000 works from the premise that all writing is part of a conversation, a response to something—another person, another idea, an observation. For that reason, our first four weeks will focus on reading rhetorically, that is, reading with questions of audience and purpose in the fore. Weeks five to eight will focus on writing, again with questions of rhetoric driving what we do. You will have two conferences with me outside of class.

READING RHETORICALLY, WEEKS 1-4

Week 1: Habits of Mind

We begin with the habits of mind of academic writers—they inquire, value complexity, understand that writing is a conversation, and understand that writing is a process—and then we will discuss how these habits shape your own coursework here at SPU. The first step is to resist binary thinking.

- 9.26 Course introductions, Names, Chapter 1, “Habits of Mind,” pp. 1-15
- 9.28 Chapter 1, Literacy Narratives, pp. 16-27, *passage-based paper 1 due*

Week 2: Reading Rhetorically

I'd bet that the question you ask most often when reading is “what does this text mean?” This week, I want to introduce you to a new question: “what does this text do?” And to answer it, you'll have to start thinking rhetorically. You'll have to start annotating too.

- 10.3 Ch. 2, Reading Rhetorically, pp. 29-48
- 10.5 Ch. 2, Rhetorical Analysis, pp. 49-54, *passage-based paper 2 due*

Week 3: Analyzing Claims

There's a famous textbook called *Everything's an Argument*. A better title might be *Everything's Rhetorical*. How's that? Because everything seeks to get you to think, feel, or do something. This week, we'll continue exploring how rhetoric works. Centuries ago, people said it was magic. Also this week, we'll be holding conferences outside of class.

- 10.10 Ch. 3, Analyzing Claims and Arguments, pp. 55-67
- 10.12 Ch. 3, Comparing Arguments, pp. 74-79, *passage-based paper 3 due*

Week 4: Inquiry and Argument

After three weeks of inquiry into issues surrounding education, we're now ready to say something on our own. At the end of the week, you'll have your first paper due. It will draw upon your first three short papers, but rather than make a bulldozer argument to flatten the opposition, it will be an argument grounded in inquiry, one that analyzes how others make their own claims. It would be wise to visit the Writing Center before turning in your paper.

- 10.17 Ch. 4, Identifying Issues, pp. 80-104
- 10.19 *Essay 1 due*, Mid-Quarter Review; discuss Day of Common Learning rhetoric

WRITING RHETORICALLY, WEEKS 5-8*Week 5: Writing Our Way into a Thesis*

We turn a corner this week, midway through the quarter, and turn our attention to writing. We'll now be asking how a writer might think rhetorically when putting together a sentence, a paragraph, an argument. Who is your audience? What is your purpose? And, after four weeks of inquiry, we're finally ready to introduce "thesis" to our discussions of writing.

- 10.24 Ch. 5, Developing a Thesis, pp. 106-118
- 10.26 Ch. 5, Analyzing a Thesis, pp. 118-128, *passage-based paper 4 due*

Week 6: Using Sources Rhetorically

A writer never writes alone; we are always in conversation with others. This week, we'll discuss how using sources is more than just a matter of citing them; it's a matter of how generously we read the work of others, and how we represent that work in our own writing.

- 10.31 Ch. 7, Summary, Paraphrase, Quotations, pp. 151-63
- 11.2 Ch. 7, Using Sources Rhetorically, 194-210, *passage-based paper 5 due*

Week 7: The Available Means of Persuasion

Aristotle defines rhetoric as "finding and using, in any given situation, the available means of persuasion." This week, we'll discuss what these available means might be, as well as hold conferences outside of class.

- 11.7 Ch. 8, Ethos, Pathos, and Logos, pp. 221-34
- 11.9 Ch. 8, Appeals in Research, pp. 234-48, *passage-based paper 6 due*

Week 8: Putting It All Together

Your second essay is due the end of the week. Now that we've got eight weeks of inquiry under our belt, and now that we've had a chance to write working, tentative, provisional thesis statements, we're finally ready to put it all together in a tightly wound argument. Now is the time to make a claim based on your eight weeks of reading. It would be wise to visit the Writing Center before turning in your paper.

- 11.14 Writing an argument
- 11.16 *Essay 2 due*, Late-Quarter Review

PORTFOLIO REVISIONS, WEEKS 9-10, FINALS WEEK*Week 9: Revising and Editing*

The last article I published went through four rewrites before the editor finally accepted it. Prior to that, I'd been rewriting it over the course of three years. In these final weeks of the course, we take time to refine the claims we've made. You'll pick one of your two essays and begin reworking it, again, for the portfolio.

- 11.21 Ch. 9, Introductions, Conclusions, and Paragraphs pp. 257-85
- 11.23 No Class, Thanksgiving

Week 10: Revising and Editing

Our final week of the quarter will be spent workshopping each other's portfolios. Remember, revision isn't about fixing typos (that's editing); revision is an opportunity to step back, evaluate your work, and make smart decisions about where and how to proceed. It would be wise to visit the Writing Center this week as you continue revising your work.

- 11.28 Chapter 10, Revising and Editing, pp. 286-88, 296-98, 300-01, 305-06, 311-12
- 11.30 Course Evaluations; Workshop Portfolio

Finals Week

- 12.7 Final portfolio due during our portfolio meeting, 8:00-10:00

STUDENT RESOURCES

THE WRITING CENTER (in Ames Library, room 103) is an excellent resource for working on your writing. Check the library website or email writingcenter@spu.edu more information.

DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES (Lower Moyer Hall) provides educational access through support, resources, advocacy, collaboration, and academic accommodations for students with disabilities. Call 206-281-2272 or 206-281-2224 (TTY). Email: dss@spu.edu.

THE STUDENT COUNSELING CENTER (Watson Hall) is dedicated to student well-being and providing services collaboratively with compassion, respect, and sensitivity to students' unique challenges and cultural backgrounds. Call 206-281-2657 or email scc@spu.edu.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE INFORMATION

REPORT AN EMERGENCY OR SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY

Call the Office of Safety & Security (OSS) at 206-281-2922 to report an emergency or suspicious activity. SPU Security Officers are trained first responders and will immediately be dispatched to your location. If needed, the OSS Dispatcher will contact local fire/police with the exact address of the location of the emergency.

LOCKDOWN/SHELTER IN PLACE—GENERAL GUIDANCE

The University will lock down in response to threats of violence such as a bank robbery or armed intruder on campus. You can assume that all remaining classes and events will be temporarily suspended until the incident is over. Lockdown notifications are sent using the SPU-Alert System as text messages (to people who have provided their cell phone numbers as described below), emails, and announcements by Building Emergency Coordinators (BECs), and electronic reader board messages.

If you are in a building at the time of a lockdown:

- Stay inside and await instruction, unless you are in immediate visible danger.
- Move to a securable area (such as an office or classroom) and lock the doors.
- Close the window coverings then move away from the windows and get low on the floor.
- Remain in your secure area until further direction or the all clear is given (this notification will be sent via the SPU-Alert System).

If you are unable to enter a building because of a lockdown:

- Leave the area and seek safe shelter off campus. Remaining in the area of the threat may expose you to further danger.
- Return to campus after the all clear is given (this notification will be sent via the SPU-Alert System).

EVACUATION—GENERAL GUIDANCE

Students should evacuate a building if the fire alarm sounds or if a faculty member, a staff member, or the SPU-Alert System instructs building occupants to evacuate. In the event of an evacuation, gather your personal belongings quickly and proceed to the nearest exit. Most classrooms contain a wall plaque or poster on or next to the classroom door showing the evacuation route and the assembly site for the building. Do not use the elevator.

Once you have evacuated the building, proceed to the nearest evacuation location. The “Stop. Think. Act.” booklet posted in each classroom contains a list of evacuation sites for each building. Check in with your instructor or a BEC (they will be easily recognizable by their bright orange vests). During emergencies, give each BEC your full cooperation whenever they issue directions.

SPU ALERT SYSTEM

The SPU-Alert System provides notification by email and text message during an emergency. Text messaging has generally proven to be the quickest way to receive an alert about a campus emergency. To receive a text message, update your information through the Banner Information System on the web, www.spu.edu/banweb/. Select the Personal Menu then choose the Emergency Alert System. Contact the CIS Help Desk if you have questions concerning entering your personal contact information into the Banner Information System.

Additional information about emergency preparedness can be found on the SPU web page at www.spu.edu/info/emergency/index.asp or by calling the Office of Safety & Security at 206-281-2922.