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Writing Intensive in the Major: Literature

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This course is designed for a 15-week semester. It is an upper division writing in the major course that could be easily adapted for other fields of study.

Driving Question:

What kind of work are people in this particular field of study doing? How can students critically engage with “real world” academic work in order to improve their research-based writing in upper division literature courses where they work with both primary and secondary sources?

Subjects: Composition and Literature

ENGL 302: Advanced practice in analyzing rhetorical situations to understand the conventions at work. Attention to developing a greater sensitivity to language through critical reading of complex and varied texts. Students explore and practice the conventions of academic prose genres through intensive drafting and revision.

The goal of this course is for students within the major of Literature to study the kind of academic writing that happens in the field through investigation of various scholarly journals, articles within those journals, the kinds of motivating questions authors in the field work from, rhetorical moves specific to the field, and the like. Students will begin by looking at and rhetorically analyzing published work so that they may consider what it means to actively participate in scholarly conversations through writing. This is a Composition course, so the content of the course uses Composition theory and practices as a means for students to develop conceptual and theoretical knowledge about scholarly writing that happens in the “real world.”

Students will be given a list of “inspiration” primary texts as suggested by Literature Professors on campus (things related to what they teach or adjacent to what they teach but not necessarily the exact content of their courses) to choose from or they may “choose their own adventure” with their own primary text selection. They are welcome to choose from any genre or time period according to their interests. The student is solely responsible for reading and understanding this text and developing their own potential research questions for their scholarly paper.

There are several projects that will take place.

The first is the Journal Analysis Group Presentation where groups will present to the other students in the class on a specific scholarly journal, what they learned about the journal itself and academic writing by reading the articles.

During the first five-week unit of the class, students will choose and read their primary text.

As a class we will discuss Joseph Harris’s *Rewriting: How to Do Things with Texts*. They will choose their specific journal and groups.

There is an individual component to this project where students must individually read articles from that journal (see Choosing Articles section below for description of that assignment).

The students will have to take what they learned individually and put it together into a group presentation where they not only explain the specifics about the journal they chose, they will also have to show specific examples from articles that relate to the writing concepts discussed in *Rewriting: How to Do Things with Texts*.

Each group will present on a different scholarly journal. Both an individual component and the group presentation will be due by the 5th week of the term, but students may schedule their presentation and/or turn in their individual contribution at any time during that five-week unit.

The goal of this unit is for students to develop a conceptual writing vocabulary through their analysis of published texts. I have found that simply being exposed to this kind of conceptual knowledge improves student writing quite a bit. This project aims to take that a step beyond simple class discussion of the writing concepts discussed *Rewriting: How to Do Things with Texts*, by asking students to then take those concepts and identify them in the works of other authors and then teach what they learned from doing that to their classmates. Their individual article investigation will be assessed for engagement with the materials and will also help the instructor see each group member's contribution to the group presentation.

While the poster session is an individual presentation (faculty from the department/campus will also be invited to the poster session), a component of that will be for the students to consider how their individual projects connect to others so that they may create journals out of their articles. The poster session will be the culmination of the second five-week unit where students would do research on their primary text, submit their Annotated Bibliography and Article proposal, write a near complete draft of their article ("Submission for Publication"), and engage in peer review sessions. During the poster session, students will work together to decide which articles should be connected to create their own scholarly journals. Those articles will then have to go through a round of peer review during the final five-week unit where all authors are also editors for the journal and must sign off that the article is ready for "publication." Students will have to collaboratively design their journal's cover, front matter, submission requirements, write a collaborative letter from the editors, decide what the focus of their journal is, decide the order in which the articles will be published, and create a table of contents. Size of groups for this project will vary depending on size of the class and the various topics the students choose to write about and how they connect with each other's projects. I would then work with printing services to see if we can get hard copies published for the students and with IT to see about potentially creating an online space to publish as well.

The goals for the second five-week unit is for students to listen to the "conversation" on their primary text in the form of conducting research in various scholarly fields and considering what kinds of non-scholarly sources might be useful to their project. Often students develop a research and writing process that works backwards, meaning first they decide what they are writing about and then they go find sources that support what they already think they know. This class requires that students first conduct research on their primary text and associated themes and then decide from there what the focus of their

article will actually be. This is based on what is commonly referred to as “The Parlor Metaphor” from “The Philosophy of Literary Form” by Kenneth Burke.

The goal of the final five-week unit is for students to bring the course content full circle. Having done rhetorical analysis of published articles and how those authors are responding to specific journal criteria, now having written their own articles, they will have to conduct a similar analysis to decide which articles should be grouped together to form their journals. After having grouped their articles, students will engage in another round of peer review as editors of their own journal to work to ready all the articles for publication. This round of peer review will focus on providing feedback for the individual articles. The “journal” created by students will address how these articles fit together within the journal space they have created.

Significance and Relevance: Why are these subjects important to teach:

Out of the classroom scholars in all academic fields engage in interdisciplinary research and writing. However, the kinds of writing that often being asked of students in the context of a classroom is very different from the kind of writing that people publishing in that particular field of study are doing. The goal here is for students to critically look at the kinds of work authors in the field are doing and through this process develop a deeper sense of what is possible when writing academically with the hope that students will see how academic and research writing doesn’t have to be boring or bland; there is room for individuality and creativity in academic writing as well (in fact, many of the rules they have learned about academic writing are straight up wrong and don’t apply to anyone other than “students”).

What will be graded?

Attendance
Individual Journal Analysis
Journal Analysis Group Presentation
Annotated Bibliography and Article Proposal
Meeting with instructor for article feedback
Peer Review Participation
“Submission for Consideration” Article
Poster created for Poster Session
Group Journal Creation
Final Published Article

Course Curriculum:

Academic Journal Investigation:

Decide on a “Literature” Journal as a group (there are lots of different kinds of literature journals that focus on different genres, time periods, theory based, interdisciplinary etc.).

This can be paired with an information literacy session from the Library if the professor so chooses.

What is the focus? Is it interdisciplinary? What are they looking for in submissions/guidelines for authors? MLA or APA? How long has the Journal been around? Can you find any information on the history of the journal? Have its goals changed over time? Has the focus or mission statement of the Journal changed over time? If it has changed, what does that tell you about the field in general? What is the mission or mission statement of the journal? How does this reflect the kind of submissions for publication they are looking for? Locate at least one article from as far back as you can access online just to get a sense of how it might have changed over time. Look at any “special issues” that may have been published and how they differ from regularly published issues. What makes a “special” issue special? Why would this particular journal focus on those “special” topics? Why are those topics given their own space? Look into a couple of the members of the editorial board. If there are several, divide and conquer. Who are they? Where do they work? What are their specialties etc.?

Choose Articles:

Each group member should read at least 5 articles. Group members should choose different articles from each other. Download the PDF files so that you can look at the actual printed structure and formatting of the articles.

Read the abstracts of all the articles in an issue or two of the Journal. What can you learn about writing an abstract? Then look in more depth at how the abstracts of the articles you read function. How do the article abstracts “sum up” the complex work being done in the article? Does it address all the aspects of the text or just some of them? Why do you think the author made the choices he/she/they did in the abstract? What can you take from this as important information for writing your own abstract for your work?

Look at the key words associated with the articles. Are there patterns across articles? How do those key words relate to the focus/mission statement of the Journal they are being published in?

What kinds of primary texts are being discussed? What kinds of questions are being asked/answered? Do articles address a single question or multiple questions? Are the questions being addressed straight forward/simple, or are they complex and require unpacking to get the question? Is there a single “thesis” statement or multiple thesis statements? Or is there a thesis statement at all? What does this tell you about how scholars approach their work?

What kind of evidence is being used? Look at the Works Cited/References/Notes page. Are they using books, journal articles (what disciplines?), pop culture sources like movies, TV shows, magazine or newspaper articles? Categorize all the sources on the Works Cited page. What can you learn from this about what counts as evidence in this kind of writing or what kind of research you should do to write a good article?

How is the article structured? Are there section titles or headings? If the article is divided into sections, what is happening in those individual sections? How long are they? Does each section work from its own thesis? How does each section contribute to the whole of the article? If there aren't sections, look at the paragraphs and how one idea flows into the next and how each build toward the whole? What does this tell you about how you structure a good article?

Consider Harris's work in *Rewriting: How to do Things with Texts*. Can you identify the writerly moves he discusses in one of articles (or a lengthy sections of an article) you read? Explain 5 specific examples of different kinds of moves the authors are making and how they reflect Harris's concepts.

How does the article conclude? Do the author/s come to a single conclusion or multiple conclusions? Is it even a conclusion at all, or does/do the author/s offer/s the possibility for further research to be done? Or something else? What does this tell you about how academic authors in the field conclude their articles and what the genre expectations are?

Once you have completed this analysis, reflect in a paragraph (350-500 words) about what you have learned from this process. Does this "real" academic writing resemble the academic writing you have been doing in your courses? In what ways is it similar? In what ways is it different? What can you take from this and apply to writing your own article for this course?

Each individual should respond to all of these questions about their chosen articles (this will be submitted to me for a grade).

Group Presentation:

Once you have completed your individual article analysis, come together as a group and discuss what you have learned. Now you must put together a dynamic presentation (meaning don't just create a Power Point and then stand in front of the class and read said Power Point). Tell us all the things you've learned about your journal and the way the articles you've read approach meeting the specific journal criteria, kinds of questions asked, kinds of sources used, article structuring and formatting, give specific examples of writerly moves that authors are making, and any other meaningful things you have learned from this process.

Your presentation format can be whatever your group chooses: video, presentation slides, posters, interpretive dance... whatever you think is best and aligns with your skills and interests. Make it a presentation that you would want to watch (we have all been forced to sit through presentations that are terrible and boring, just do your best to not be that). Do something that matches the style or personality of the Journal you have investigated.

Article Research:

You will choose your own primary text for your article. Read/re-read your primary text. What are some questions you'd like to investigate about your text? What stood out to you as you were reading? What do you want to learn more about when it comes to your primary text? What other disciplines besides literature do you think would be useful for you to look into to help you answer these questions? You should read articles that are about your primary text as well as articles outside the literary field on important topics contained within your primary text. You need to pay attention to the conversation that has already taken place concerning your primary text so you can think about how to contribute to that conversation in a meaningful way.

Finding the Conversation:

DO YOUR RESEARCH BEFORE WRITING YOUR PROPOSAL

Annotated Bibliography:

There is no "correct" number of sources for your article. I would like to see scholarly sources from a variety of academic disciplines (if possible) and non-scholarly sources (if appropriate). Annotations would be written using the model found in:

Woodworth, Margaret K. "The Rhetorical Précis." *Rhetoric Review*, vol. 7, no. 1, 1988, pp. 156-164.

Article Proposal:

The article proposal (maximum 700 words) in which you discuss the context of the article, the purpose of the article, the method by which the topic will be explored and possible conclusions to be drawn from the undertaking. What you propose in this assignment is not written in stone. This is just where you will begin. Your article could end up going in unexpected directions as you write it. As you research, write, and revise change is expected. Your sources may even change. This is the nature of writing.

Write Your Article:

2800-3500+ words

(This is the prompt. Because academic writing can take on any number of styles, the student will have to work out what kind of academic style works best for their article. The student has chosen their primary text, rhetorically analyzed published articles in the field of literature, done individual research, decided on what kinds of sources are useful and necessary, and what their article will focus on so this is essentially meant to function as: OK... we've looked at how all these other people in the field do what they do, now how will you do what you do as a scholarly author in your article.)

Peer Review Sessions and Instructor Feedback:

Peer review sessions would be done with the understanding that these articles would be “published.” The goal is to make the drafting process more collaborative knowing that all the work is going to exist together in the same space. Essentially, we are putting these articles through a scholarly peer review process during drafting.

Staub, Richard. “Responding—Really Responding—to Other Students’ Writing.” *The Subject is Writing: Essays by Teachers and Students*. Ed. by Wendy Bishop. 1999 by Boynton/ Cook Publishers, Inc. 136-146.

We will develop peer review criteria as a class based on the analysis of the academic journals, articles, and presentations. While developing the peer review criteria we will also create the assessment criteria and rubric that will be used to grade the final product.

Students will meet with instructor for feedback at least once during the drafting process for points.

Once Your Article is Ready for Submission for Consideration for Publication:**Poster Session:**

Students will create posters that represent their projects so that final journal groups can be created. All department faculty will be invited to participate in viewing the poster session.

Together we will decide as a class how we will go about choosing the final journal groups.

<https://guides.nyu.edu/posters>

<https://writing.colostate.edu/guides/guide.cfm?guideid=78>

<https://colinpurrington.com/tips/poster-design>

Create Your Journal!!

Give it a title, decide on what the Journal’s focus is in terms of the kind of work it is looking for and what the submission criteria is, design cover, create cover art (if you want it), write a collaborative letter from the editors. Create table of contents and the order in which the articles will be published.

Post Submission for Consideration Peer Review:

All editors will to peer review all articles that are going to be published in the journal and sign off on “publication ready.” This may take multiple rounds of peer review and editing over the final unit of the term.

Each author will to also write an abstract of their article and choose relevant key words to associate with it.

Possible Texts to Assign/Course Content

Byard, Vicki. *Bibliographic Research in Composition Studies*. Parlor Press, 2009.

Harris, Joseph. *Rewriting: How to Do Things with Texts*. 2nd ed., Utah State University Press, 2017.

Lowe, Charles, et al. *Writing Spaces.: Readings on Writing Volume 1*. 2010.

-- *Writing Spaces.: Readings on Writing Volume 2*. 2011.

Swales, John M., and Christine B. Feak. *English in Today's Research World*. University of Michigan Press, 2011.