Swarthmore College

Works

Digital Humanities Curricular Development

Faculty Development

Spring 2018

Visual Rhetorics And Multimodal Writing (ENGL 2V) Syllabus

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English 2V
VISUAL RHETORICS and Multimodal Writing
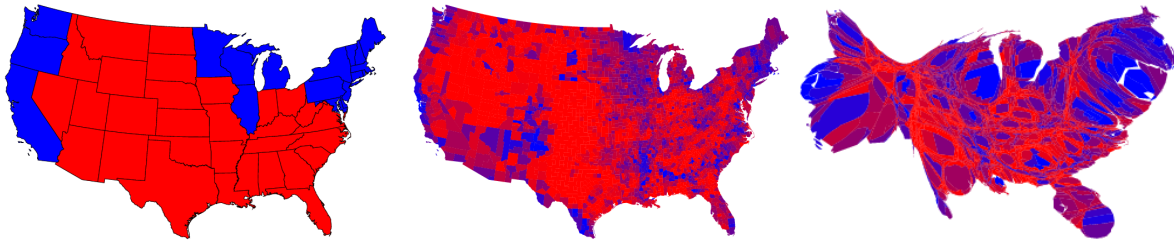
Professor Alba Newmann Holmes
Spring 2018

Time and Place: T/Th 9:55-11:10, Pearson 5   Course website: Moodle
Professor's Office: Trotter 103
Office hours: Tue 11:15-12:15, Wed 11:00-12:00, and by apt.
E-mail: aholmes2@swarthmore.edu

Course Description

Visual Rhetorics and Multimodal Writing is a course in rhetoric (the art of persuasion) and composition that focuses on arguments made via digital media. In this course we will read, watch, listen and respond to arguments put forward in online settings, including maps, video essays, newspaper and magazine articles. Students will also gain hands-on experience gathering interviews and combining the modes of text, image and sound to create their own arguments. Students should expect to produce at least 20 pages of revised writing, spread out over a series of assignments, as well as a number of visual arguments, which may make use of still images (such as photos, drawing, collage) or moving images (such as video).

Unit 1: Maps and Visual Arguments

> *The question is no longer whether maps have power. That's settled: they do.*
> *Now the question is where that power comes from.*
>   -Denis Wood and John Fels

Mapmakers translate experiential data into symbolic representations, and the choices they make in the translation process have real consequences: maps make visual arguments. This unit includes a brief history of cartography, and a more in-depth examination of what grants maps power and authority, how that power and authority can be utilized (for good or ill) and how digital media facilitate the production and dissemination of map-driven arguments. Students will gain experience producing and analyzing maps.

Unit 2: Unexpected Homelands

> *[L]ived experiences can generate immediate and vivid narratives rich in detail.*
> *Moreover, these narratives can be articulated with explanatory force in clear*
> *contradistinction to widely disseminated official representations . . . leading to*
> *rich multivocal monologues that become even more complex when co-*
> *constructed in conversations involving more than one person.*

-Andrea Smith

Whether we define homeland as nation of origin, ancestral site, or beloved landscape, our desire to know others better by knowing where they come from can be fraught. Ask anyone in the US who has encountered the question: "Where are you from?" And then, "But, where are you really from?" At the same time, being from a specific place is profoundly important to many people, sometimes in unexpected ways. In this unit, students will work collaboratively to produce video essays linked to the theme of unexpected homelands. The videos will be the culminating effort of designing a research project, collecting interview data and choosing how to represent those data through image, sound and text. Each group's video will be showcased at a public opening, supported by a Mellon Foundation grant for interdisciplinary collaboration.

Unit 3: Multimodal Writing and Public Discourse
To persuade public audiences, you must be aware of your audience's unstated beliefs and assumptions, as well as your own. You must also develop the rhetorical savvy to frame arguments in ways that will substantiate your claims and reasons with credible evidence and help the reader imagine the world you are writing about. Writing with digital media also means recognizing the affordances of still and moving images, as well as sound, to help you reach your audience. In this unit, students will compose an argument-driven piece (article, podcast, video) that illuminates an idea, challenges an assumption, or makes connections about a topic you feel public audiences need to understand more fully.

Student Learning Outcomes
This course is designed to give students an opportunity to:
- Demonstrate practical knowledge of "rhetorical situations," through the ability to analyze, write, and design effectively for different audiences and situations
- Recognize the rhetorical advantages and limitations of different modes (writing, image, singly or combined) and media (print, online, video, etc.)
- Produce writing that effectively provides evidence and reasoning for assertions, for audiences of educated readers
- Effectively incorporate written sources into their own work and document those materials
- Use feedback to revise their own work and provide useful feedback to others
- Demonstrate the ability to edit and proofread their writing
- Effectively contribute to classroom discussions and activities

Texts (see powerpoint)
Readings will drawn from the following:
- Arola and Wysocki, *Composing Media, Composing Embodiment*
- Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places*
- Bawarshi, Anis. *Genre and the Invention of the Writer: Reconsidering the Place of Invention in Composition*
- Harris, *Rewriting*
- Lunsford, Ruszkiewicz, and Walters, "Visual Rhetoric" in *Everything's an Argument*
- Mamdani, "When Does a Settler become a Native?"
- Marshal, *Composing Inquiry*
- Mode, PJ, "Not Maps At All –What Is Persuasive Cartography? And Why Does It Matter?"
- Rushdie, "Imaginary Homelands"
- Smith, Andrea, "Heteroglossia, 'Common Sense,' and Social Memory"
- Warhus, Mark *Another America: Native American Maps and the History of Our Land*
- Wood and Fels, *The Natures of Maps*
- Wysocki, Anne F. "Opening New Media to Writing: Openings and Justifications"
- Video essays, podcasts and animated infographics linked to our Moodle page (see powerpoint)

- Texts you find through your own research.
- Purdue's Online Writing Lab site: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/

Grading

- **Class citizenship** 10%
- **Drafts on time** 5%
- **Major Projects** 85%:
    - **Map and Analysis** 20%
    - **Group Video Essay** 35%
    - **Argument-driven "essay"** (could be podcast, video, web article) **for distribution via an online platform** 25%
    - **Self-Reflection** 5%

The Composing Process

Revision is an integral part of both the writing and designing process. We will conduct a number of **peer review sessions** and revision workshops in class. Each of your major projects must be revised, not only cosmetically, but conceptually, before it is submitted for a grade. If you are unsatisfied with the grade you receive on any paper, you may arrange with me, within two weeks of receiving the graded project, to complete an additional revision without penalty.

Conferences We will meet at least once during the semester to have a one-on-one conversation about the class, your current project, etc. Often you can learn more in a conversation than you can by reading and responding to written comments alone, and I am happy to meet with you more than once. Any time you have a question, please email me or come visit me in my office hours; that's what they are for. It will help.

The Writing Center is available to you as an additional out-of-class resource for strengthening any aspect of your writing—from brainstorming a topic, organizing a draft, to final editing before turning in a revision. The Writing Center is located on the ground floor of Trotter Hall: Trotter 120. For information on how to schedule an appointment, please see: http://www.swarthmore.edu/writing/how-to-schedule-a-writing-center-conference

Additional Course Policies

Attendance and Participation. Your participation grade will be based on your degree of preparation and engagement during class time as well as the degree to which you help to foster an inclusive classroom environment. This means not only speaking in ways that are respectful of others, but making room for the perspectives and insights of others and actively listening to your classmates as well. Please bring any texts you have read as homework to class. Absences will negatively impact your grade. Excessive absences (i.e., more than 4 absences) may result in failure of the course. Please communicate with me proactively if circumstances prevent you from being in class. It is your responsibility to check in with classmates to get notes, assignments, etc. You may also set up an office hours appointment with me to discuss what you missed. I am not likely to email you a description of everything you missed.

ADA Compliance. If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services (Parrish 113W) or email studentdisabilityservices@swarthmore.edu to arrange an appointment to discuss your needs. As appropriate, the Office will issue students with documented disabilities a formal Accommodations Letter. Since accommodations require early planning and are not retroactive, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services as soon as possible. For details about the accommodations process, visit the Student Disability Service Website at http://www.swarthmore.edu/academic-advising-support/welcome-to-student-disability-service. You are also welcome to contact me privately to discuss your academic needs. However, all disability-related accommodations must be arranged through the Office of Student Disability Services.

Class Distractions (Cell Phones, Email, etc.) If you are physically in the class, you should be mentally in the class as well. Turn cell phones off before class begins and place them out of reach; do not use your computer to check Facebook, email, etc. These activities will impact your grade in the class. If you are texting in class, you may be asked to leave the classroom and/or be counted absent.

Contacting the Instructor. Email is the best way to reach me: aholmes2@swarthmore.edu. Please do not expect me to have read emails sent immediately before class by the time class starts. I will, however, check email at least once a day and respond as promptly as possible. You are also welcome to stop by my office, Trotter 103. **For Office Hour Visits Please Note:** If you have scheduled an appointment with me, please give me at least 5 minutes of leeway before you give up and disappear. It sometime takes a little longer than expected to get from point A to point B, but I take my appointments seriously and will be there. Also, if you are unable to attend a meeting we have scheduled, please email me to let me know or leave me a message on my campus phone: 610-957-6110.

Format for Papers and Homework. Each of our assignments will be composed using a different medium. We will discuss the particulars prior to submission. When submitting electronically, save your documents as YournameAssignmentDraft (ie, AlbaP1draft) or YournameAssignmentFinal (AlbaP1final).

Late Assignments and Drafts. Documents, drafts, and other out-of-class assignments must be turned in at the time they are due. If you cannot attend class on the date an assignment is due, let me know in advance and submit your work electronically. Failing to turn work in when it is due will affect your final grade in the course.

Scholastic Honesty. Turning in work that is not your own, or any other form of academic misconduct, will result in a major course penalty, possibly failure of the course. For more information, please see http://www.swarthmore.edu/student-handbook/academic-policies#academic_misconduct.