

ENG 2070 – Intermediate Writing
Understanding Identity and Queer Theory in Academic Communities

“Queer teaching opens up ‘the field of possibility...without dictating which kinds of possibilities ought to be realized.’”

-Jacqueline Rhodes (quoting Judith Butler)

Class meetings: MWF 3:30-4:20 p.m.

Classroom: College Park Office Building 002

Meeting dates: January 8-May 4, 2018

Instructor: Kristin LaFollette

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Office: East Hall 360

Office hours: Mondays from 12:00-2:00 p.m. and by appointment

Required Texts

- *Writing about Writing* (Second Edition) ed. by Elizabeth Wardle and Doug Downs
- Additional readings will be posted on Canvas throughout the course of the semester

Course Description

This course introduces students to key terms, concepts, theories, and approaches to rhetoric and writing and asks students to draw on that knowledge to analyze and produce a variety of genres, both alphabetic and multimodal, for a variety of audiences and purposes. As a gateway to the Writing Minor, this course provides a broad theoretical framework intended to help students critically analyze authentic texts characteristic of their discipline/major as well as texts that circulate beyond and across traditional academic boundaries. Students will develop a nuanced understanding of concepts and practices widely used by contemporary rhetoricians to better understand and manipulate the discourses that suffuse their literate worlds. Major course projects include critical analyses of rhetorical practices in and across academic settings, developing a communication strategy for intervening in an ongoing public dialogue, as well as a culminating reflective project in which students assess their own learning trajectory throughout the semester and describe the features of their emerging expertise in rhetoric and writing.

Queer theory will provide a critical lens/theoretical framework for this course. Queer theory is all about identifying and remixing (or reimagining) long-standing divisions, dichotomies, and categories, and we will particularly be using queer theory as a lens for seeing how texts cross boundaries and how we can critique those boundaries. In addition, one of our assignments will further discuss the crossing of boundaries by using queer theory to analyze the ways that the public and private are eroded through the use of social media/public forums. In an effort to stay true to the goals of queer theory, our discussions, assignments, and the overall structure of the course will be queered. Queer theory will be used in two ways throughout this course: first, we will be using queer theory to open up new ways of teaching/experiencing a writing course and, second, students will actively use queer theory as they work toward becoming active members of their discipline. As Jacqueline Rhodes and Judith Butler note, queer teaching makes room for a

number of possibilities and leaves room for students to discover some of those possibilities themselves.

Learning Outcomes

- Students will critically analyze how the principles of rhetoric work together to promote effective communication by inserting themselves into the conversations taking place in rhetoric and composition studies as well as in their own disciplines
- Students will participate in the rhetoric and composition discipline and their own discipline through an application of queer theory and queer rhetorics
- Students will construct materials which respond effectively to the needs of a variety of audiences and will demonstrate critical thinking, reading, and writing strategies when crafting written work that synthesizes multiple points of view
- Students will be critical of what it means to participate in a classroom space, read a text, and complete an assignment and use queer theory in their own lives to build inclusion, value diversity, and see the ways that identities intersect

Course Requirements and Policies

Classroom Expectations

The classroom is a place for learning, and learning requires a respectful and appropriate environment. While traditional classrooms often require that students fully listen and participate in class by logging off of Facebook, Twitter, email, chat, and any other part of the Internet that is not part of a required class activity, I'm interested in remixing this policy as we are working toward a queered classroom space. That being said, the students and instructor will work together during the first week of class to develop a policy for electronics usage in class. How can we work with one another to devise a way that cell phones, computers, and other electronics can be used in this class to support learning?

In the spirit of a queered course, students should listen, engage, and appreciate an atmosphere of diversity and open discussion. Class discussion must be respectful; whenever students speak, they should be considerate of other students' feelings, use appropriate language, and make their points without being combative or confrontational. Students should not use discriminatory language regarding their fellow students' gender, sexual orientation, race, color, religion, national origin, age, or anything else. Students should listen to one another, ask questions, and explain their disagreements without attacking others.

Attendance

Attendance in this class is mandatory. I realize, however, that sickness or emergencies can occur; should you need to miss class, please be sure to contact me, preferably beforehand, to discuss what might be done to assist you with getting on track. Students may miss 5 class sessions without penalty to their grade; missing more classes can put the student in jeopardy of not passing the course. In addition, late arrivals and early departures are also to be avoided. A late arrival means arriving to class 10 minutes (or more) late and an early departure refers to leaving

class 10 minutes (or more) early. Two late arrivals or 2 early departures will constitute 1 absence.

Late Work

My general policy is that I do not accept late work. However, to queer this policy, I'm making room for students to decide on a way to make up for what was missed. For example, if a paper is turned in late a student would like to make up the deducted points, they should plan to propose a way to compensate for what was missed (for example, attending an event, completing a short project or writing assignment, giving a brief in-class presentation, etc.). That being said, if you have to submit any late work, then I encourage you to touch base with me about the reason for the lateness. This must be done before the due date or the date prior to the due date. At that time, we can discuss a way to make up the work.

Religious Holidays

It is the policy of the University to make every reasonable effort to allow students to observe their religious holidays without academic penalty. In such cases, it is the obligation of the student to provide the instructor with reasonable notice of the dates of religious holidays on which he or she will be absent. Should you need to miss a class due to a religious holiday, you should understand that absence from classes for religious reasons does not relieve you of responsibility for completing required work. In such an event, you should consult with me well before you leave for the holiday to find out what assignments will be due while you are absent. You subsequently should have the assignments completed and turned in to me prior to missing class.

(Dis)Abilities Statement

If you have a documented disability which requires accommodations in order to obtain equal access for your learning, please make your needs known to me, preferably during the first week of the semester. Please note that students who request accommodations need to verify their eligibility through the Office of Disability Services.

Student Veteran-Friendly Campus

BGSU educators recognize student veterans' rights when entering and exiting the university system. If you are a student veteran, please let me know if accommodations need to be made for absences due to drilling or being called to active duty.

Academic Honesty

Please refer to BGSU's current *Student Affairs Handbook* for information regarding BGSU's academic honesty policies. These policies and penalties apply to our class, as well as to all other classes at BGSU.

Grading

Our course will adhere to the following grading scale. You will be required to complete five assignments throughout the course of the semester, each worth 20% of your final grade.

A	450-500
B	400-449
C	350-399
D	300-349
F	299 and below

Assignments

Project #1: Interview of a Faculty Member and Analysis of a Written Work in Your Discipline –
100 points

This project will give you the opportunity to further explore writing in your discipline. You will perform an interview with a faculty member in your discipline at Bowling Green State University.

- Here are some questions to guide your interview (but you can certainly ask other questions in addition to these)
 - What does the faculty member do?
 - Who are they as a researcher and a scholar?
 - How does the faculty member “do” writing? For example, if they write emails, how are they written and who are they written to?
- You can also think about questions through a queer theory lens by asking about prescribed academic practices
 - What are the established ways to be an academic?
 - How has their writing been influenced by their history?
 - How is gender/sexuality treated in the discipline?

After completing the interview, find an article written in your discipline; you will explore the rhetorical practices characteristic of the discipline and analyze the genre(s) produced by people in your discipline. The interview should lead into an analysis of the article you’ve chosen.

- What writing genres are unique to your discipline?
- What types of writing are happening in your discipline that other disciplines aren’t doing?
- Does the writing in your coursework and in your discipline/field match?

The assignment will be completed in two parts. The first part of the assignment will take the form of a formal report (4-5 pages) in which you analyze your chosen article. However, we will be queering the assignment when it comes to conveying the interview. You will discuss the interview using multimodal means: a video recording, an audio recording, a Prezi, a VoiceThread, a Piktochart, etc. In the multimodal part of your project, you will discuss/convey/portray the interview and your thoughts about the interview and writing in your

discipline. If you are unsure about how to queer your project or if your idea is acceptable, don't hesitate to talk with me or schedule an appointment in my office.

Project #2: Writing Across Boundaries – 100 points

For Project #2, you will pull an interesting issue or topic from Project #1 and think about it in a public space outside of academic boundaries. You can choose something that you find interesting in your specific field of study or something that led you to study in your discipline (ex. an engineering student might choose to examine car design). You will focus on how this particular issue or topic is discussed in a text outside of academia (Reddit, Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, a magazine article, etc.).

- Analyze the communication strategies taking place in that venue
 - What is the issue or topic you've chosen to examine?
 - In what space is this topic discussed? What is the space like?
 - In what ways are people communicating about the topic?
 - Do you know anything about the people participating in this forum?

One aspect of this project should involve thinking about the ways this topic was discussed in Project #1 (academic space) and how it is discussed in Project #2 (public, non-academic space). This assignment will be completed in two parts. The first part will be a traditional written component (3-4 pages) and the second part will take the form of a multimodal (physical or digital) project that will be used in a brief (3-5 minutes) presentation of your results to the class. The second part of this project is up to you: create a Piktochart, a collage, a video, a drawing, a poem, etc.

Project #3: Communication in an Outside Space – 100 points

This assignment is similar to Project #2, but now you have the opportunity to participate in a conversation taking place in a public forum. You will be examining and analyzing a topic related to your field of study OR a topic in queer theory (related to gender, sexuality studies, a queering of the traditional, etc.) in a public forum (Reddit, Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, etc.) and will get involved with the conversation taking place (by posting, commenting, Tweeting, etc.). The project will take the form of a written component (4-5 pages) that will explain the topic/forum (ex. queer theory on Twitter) and answer/discuss the following:

- How did you enter the conversation?
- How did you contribute to the conversation?
- How did others in the forum interact with you?
- What responses did you get?

Feel free to include screenshots of the forum/conversation to illustrate your discussion, but these images should not be counted as part of the overall page requirement.

Project #4: Assembling an Identity Kit – 100 points

This reflective project will address Gee's notion of identity kits. Queer theory allows for new ways of being in the world, and this project gives you the opportunity to be critical of your own ways of being and how those ways of being have been constructed and assembled.

- Your disciplinary self is assembled by discourses – what relationship does this have to writing?
- How do discourses inform/use us and shift across contexts?
- How can we think about rhetoric and writing through the lens of queer theory?
- What readings have you done outside of class that can inform this project?
- What scholars/readings resonate with you?

This project will be informed by the interview you performed and readings from the semester inside and outside of class. You can think of it as an inventory or an articulation of your learning (a “theory” of your learning) this semester. This project will take the form of a visual map that illustrates your identity kit and a written reflective piece (4-5 pages) that explains your map and tells me how to “read” it. Work toward answering this question: What is it like to be a member of your discipline?

Project #5: Reading Journal – 100 points

You will be expected to maintain a weekly reading journal (physical or digital) where you will take notes and jot down your thoughts and ideas on the readings. There should be a new entry each week, and the goal is for you to use your journal as a springboard for in-class discussion and to help you keep track of reading questions, important/interesting concepts, and ideas for course projects. The reading journal will be turned in in its entirety at the end of the semester.

In addition to completing the reading journal, part of your overall grade with this project is to complete a reading facilitation with a group during the Project #3 unit. You will choose a group and sign up for a day to facilitate. You and your group will choose a reading (or a multimodal project) related to queer theory, composition, identity, academic communities, etc. and will open up conversation at the beginning of class by discussing the reading and how it relates to the course. The reading can be a selection from the *Writing about Writing* textbook that we haven’t read yet for class or can be any outside source (it doesn’t necessarily have to be “scholarly,” but your group needs to make a case for why that piece was chosen and how it helps further the goals of the course). Your group should bring/electronically disperse a handout with some questions to guide our in-class discussion (this can be multimodal, as well) and you should reflect a bit on this group activity in your reading journal. This activity is a way to “flip” or queer the classroom and give students the opportunity to take ownership of their learning in the course and provide them with moments to teach their classmates and instructor (the learners become the teachers). This part of Project #5 will be graded holistically and, as stated previously, will be a part of your overall Project #5 grade.