CRITICAL THINKING AND WRITING
CYBERCULTURE INTERFACES

Instructor: Stephanie Tripp
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Objectives

An interface communicates between two or more distinctive systems or organisms. Just as a computer's operating system serves as an interface between machine language and human users, college writing provides the interface between individual students and the larger academic community. "Critical Thinking and Writing" teaches students how to use this interface effectively. The goal of this course is not to instruct and evaluate students on "good" writing in general but to help them recognize and produce good *academic writing*.

This section of ENGL 151 will focus on how to read, analyze, research, organize, and write scholarly essays. It also aims to sharpen skills in critical thinking, formal argument, persuasive rhetoric, and problem-solving. In tandem with these objectives, students will explore the myriad interfaces between humans, animals, and machines that make up what is popularly known as "cyberculture."

Required Texts

A Writer's Reference, 5th ed., by Diana Hacker

Reading assignments posted on Web CT

Course Requirements

Expository Essay (4-6 pages): 15%
Visual Culture Analysis 1(2-3 pages): 8%
Visual Culture Analysis 2 (3-5 pages): 10%
Argumentative Essay (4-6 pages): 15%
Bibliography (at least 20 sources): 2%
Annotated Bibliography (at least 8 sources): 5%
Research Paper (8-10 pages): 25%
Daily Assignments: 5%
Drafts and Peer Review: 5%
Class Participation: 10%

Grading

All requirements will be graded on an "A" to "F" scale and weighted as outlined above.

Policies

☐ You are allowed three absences during the semester, no questions asked. For each absence after that, your final grade will be reduced one increment (from an "A" to a "B+" for example). A few absences due to illness or a family crisis will be excused if documented to my satisfaction. Students participating at school-sponsored events will be excused with proper documentation. Prolonged absences--even if documented--will not be excused, however. Students who are absent from a class always will be held responsible for any reading or writing assignments (either in-class or out-of-class) for that day. It is your responsibility to keep up with your work, either by contacting classmates or by referring to your syllabus. Any out-of-class assignments will be considered late if they are turned in after the due date, even if you have an excused absence. If you know you are going to be absent, arrange for a friend or classmate to turn in your assignment *on the due date*, or else talk to me about turning in your paper *before the due date*.

☐ I consider habitual lateness to class to be extremely inconsiderate and will lower your class-participation grade if you straggle in more than three times during the semester.

☐ The Rhodes English Department requires you to complete all major assignments to receive credit for a course. If you do not turn in an assignment, you risk failing the course.

☐ Unless I specifically designate an assignment as a group project, all work must be individual. Plagiarism, collusion, and multiple submissions are not acceptable. If I find out you are passing off someone else's work (in full or in part) as your own, relying on someone else's help, or receiving credit in other courses for projects I assign, you risk failing the course. You are responsible for knowing and following the Rhodes Honor Code and the policies of the Department of English (attached).

☐ You are expected to show respect for diverse opinions during class discussion and in papers. You also are expected to participate in class discussion, e-mail, and other exchanges in a responsible manner. You should grant others the same courtesy when they express their

opinions that you would expect from them when you express your own.

☐ You are responsible for making backup copies of all assignments you turn in and for keeping them until the end of the semester.

☐ Unless I specifically state otherwise, all assignments must be turned in as printed copies. E-mail submissions are not acceptable.

☐ I plan to review your projects thoroughly for errors in spelling, grammar, and style. I consider spelling errors in assignments you work on at home to be a sign of inexcusable laziness and will penalize you heavily for misspelled words. I also will penalize you harshly if you repeat grammatical errors that I already have called to your attention. If you are having trouble understanding your errors, please talk to me and we will develop a strategy for improvement. Refer to *A Writer's Reference* for guidance on matters of style, grammar, and punctuation. For additional help and feedback, visit the Rhodes Writing Center at 315 Palmer Hall.

Schedule

WR = A Writer's Reference

Week 1

Jan. 13: Course introduction

Week 2

Jan. 18: Richard Thieme, "Stalking the UFO Meme" (WebCT); "More About Memes" (WebCT)

Jan. 20: Monty Neill, "Computers, Thinking, and Schools in the 'New World Economic Order'" (Web CT); in-class writing exercise

Week 3

Jan. 25: Introduction to the library; meet in front of Burrow library

Jan. 27: Evaluating, citing, and integrating sources, *WR* 310-20; 334-40

Week 4

Feb. 1: Test on handling sources and recognizing plagiarism

Feb. 3: Draft of Expository Essay due; Nicholas Mirzoeff, excerpts from *An Introduction to Visual Culture* (WebCT) and J. David Bolter and Diane Gromala, introduction to *Windows and Mirrors* (WebCT)

Week 5

Feb. 8: Peer review workshop; bring *WR*

Feb. 10: Expository essay due

Week 6

Feb. 15: J. David Bolter and Richard Grusin, introduction to *Remediation* (WebCT)

Feb. 17: Visual Culture Analysis 1 due; view and discuss *Code Rush*

Week 7

Feb. 22: Scott McCloud, excerpts from *Understanding Comics* (WebCT)

Feb. 24: Discussion and workshop on organization: literate logic vs. image logic; "Writing Paragraphs," *WR* 233

Week 8

Mar. 1: Group comics presentations

Mar. 3: Visual Culture Analysis 2 due; Introduction to Argument and Logical Fallacies; *WR* 46-5

Week 9

March 7-11: Spring Break

Week 10

Mar. 15: Test on argument and logical fallacies

Mar. 17: Draft of Argumentative Essay due; view video TBA

Week 11

Mar. 22: Introduction to scholarly research; *WR* 298-309

Week 12

Mar. 29: Argumentative Essay due; meet at Burrow Library for research workshop

Mar. 31: Scott D.N. Cook, "Technological Revolutions and the Gutenberg Myth" (WebCT)

Week 13

Apr. 5: Bibliography due; view and discuss "Kill Switch"

Apr. 7: Sherry Turkle, "Identity in the Age of the Internet"

Week 14

Apr. 12: Annotated bibliography due; Julian Dibbell, "A Rape in Cyberspace" (WebCT)

Apr. 14: Writing workshop on Research Paper

Week 15

Apr. 19: Research Paper draft due; view and discuss *Avatars Offline*

Apr. 21: Peer review workshop; bring *WR*; course evaluations

Week 16

Apr. 26: Course wrap-up and paper consultations

Apr. 28: Research paper due