

English 207
**Entering the Conversation: Discovering Field-Specific
 Discourses through Writing**

Fall 2007/MWF 8:30-9:20/East 115

:: Contact Information ::

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:: Course Overview ::

English 207 is meant to serve as a writing-intensive course which builds on skills learned in English 112 to help you communicate more effectively as a scholar and citizen. Similar to 112 in its focus on writing, the projects in 207 help you to see that writing is a process, rather than something that can be quickly dashed off a couple of hours before it is due. Each project will emphasize the recursive nature of writing, which will help you to see that the different aspects of the process (revision, prewriting, drafting) occur in any order, and are not defined by a specific step-by-step method. Time will also be reserved for writing workshops, as writing is not created in a vacuum: it is a social experience, and a writer needs peer and teacher feedback to revise and succeed.

This semester, the course is focused on analyzing discourse communities. As we will discuss in class, “discourse” does not just refer to characteristic language, but also how that language is used in context. This kind of analysis can give you insight on the values and history of that particular community. Your main project this semester will be to analyze the discourse of your chosen career field, and go on to enter that discourse as a participant, producing a scholarly work that will contribute to that community. It sounds big, I know; hopefully as we go on this semester you'll get a better idea of what this project entails and how to go about creating it.

:: Required Texts and Materials ::

1. Laib, Nevin K. *Rhetoric and Style: Strategies for Advanced Writers*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996.

2. Troyka, Lynn Quitman, and Douglas Hesse, eds. *The Simon and Schuster Handbook for Writers*. 8th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007.

NOTE: If you'd like to save money, all you really need is any handbook, not necessarily the most recent edition of this one. I also recommend the *Scott, Foresman Handbook for Writers*.

3. Access to a computer for: Word (or equivalent word-processing program), PowerPoint, the internet
4. At least one file-storage device (USB drive, zip disk, CD-RW, floppy disk) as a backup for your computer's hard drive
5. A (free) account on Blogger, to be able to participate in our class blog
6. Access to our class wiki: <http://207writers.pbwiki.com>
7. Access to our BlackBoard site (through MyBGSU), to access course readings and to get our wiki password
8. A notebook, for brainstorming and note-taking in class
9. A CD-R (or -RW) to use as your digital portfolio

:: Course Assignments ::

Essays/Projects

You will complete 7 essays/projects this semester, of varying lengths and requirements. A quick summary of each follows, with further details to come:

- (1) **Narrative: A Right to My Own Language** (2-3 pages): A personal narrative essay concerning your unique language. 20 points. Due Date: 9/10
- (2) **Personal Discourse Analysis—Group Project** (8-10 PowerPoint slides): An analysis of the discourse of a chosen community that you belong to (such as IM/chat, Facebook, Soccer Club, BGSU student, MTV, etc). Groups of 2-3 students. 25 points. Due Date: 9/28
- (3) **Expository Research Essay + Annotated Bibliography** (essay, 3-5 pages; bibliography, 8-10 sources): This is a summary overview of the discourse of your chosen career field. This research will help you as you do the next two projects. The essay summarizes the research you've found, and the Annotated Bibliography discusses each book/article specifically. 40 points. Due Date: 10/22
- (4) **Wikipedia Contribution** (length varies; should be the effort equivalent * of 3-4 pages): Choose a current entry on <http://www.wikipedia.org> to expand or revise, or write a new entry. This contribution should be something in your chosen career field, preferably something that you've found in your research for your final project. 30 points. Due Date: 11/7

* "effort equivalent" refers to the amount of work, not precise page length, necessary for the project. The length is entirely dependent on the type of project/subject undertaken. For the Wikipedia project, I'm not looking for 3-4 pages of text added to a wiki entry (that would be a very long entry), but the effort that goes into writing that much (the research behind it, the conciseness, the comprehensiveness) is what I am focusing on. You know how much work a 3-4 page essay takes; do this same amount of research, but end up with a more concise document (as is fitting with Wikipedia discourse).

- (5) **Entering the Conversation: Final Project** (length varies; effort equivalent of 6-8 pages): Using what you have learned about the discourse of your chosen career field, create a project/paper that joins in that discourse and contributes to that community. This can be an argument paper, a business analysis, a musical performance, a teaching unit plan, a videotaped news report, a newspaper article...the list goes on. Choose the medium best suited to your field, and work from there. At the least, this should be academic and grounded in the research you have done before. We'll talk individually about possible ideas for your project. 60 points. Due Date: 12/3
- (6) **Final Project Presentation** (format varies, approx. 10 minutes long): Present your final project to the class, using the format best suited to your chosen field. It could be a video, a PowerPoint, a website, a wiki, a live demonstration, a performance, etc. 25 points. Due Date: 11/28-12/7
- (7) **Course Portfolio**: This is a collection of your 3 strongest out of the 5 main projects this semester (#1-5), burned on a CD, along with a 1-2 page reflective essay discussing your progress as a writer and your reasoning for choosing the three projects you did. 30 points. Due Date: 12/10 by 5pm

Class Blog

What is a blog? Short for weblog (web + log), it is an online journal that an individual or a team (our class!) can add posts and comments to. Search <http://www.blogger.com> for examples of blogs. To facilitate discussion in class and promote reflection outside of class, I will assign writing prompts to respond to on our class blog (<http://207incyberspace.blogspot.com/>) throughout the semester. This will be the main part of your homework grade, as well as part of your participation grade, this semester. 20 points. Due Date: Throughout the semester, according to the syllabus.

Final Exam

In place of having a final exam, you will submit a portfolio of your three strongest projects, burned on a CD. See #8 under "Essays/Projects" above for more info.

:: Course Policies ::

Attendance/Participation

As with any useful course, attendance is necessary to keep up with the class. Especially considering that this class will move quickly, it is essential to attend every class to be able to get the most use out of the course. With that said, attendance is mandatory and I will give points each day for it.

Of course, emergencies happen, and I understand if you cannot make a class. However, as with any job, you would need to contact me as soon as you know that you will not be able to attend that day. There are no excused/unexcused absences, so if you miss a class, you miss those points as well. If you would like to make up those points, you can by making an appointment with the Writing Center to look at your draft, or by making a conference with me. 40 points.

Readings on BlackBoard

Many of our readings will come from PDF documents that have been posted to BlackBoard. Check the syllabus for updates. You may save these documents in digital format and read them on the computer, or you may print them out. I'll be in the lab 15 minutes before class on Fridays so you can have some time to print out the next week's readings.

Submitting Drafts and Final Projects

To encourage process writing, I want you to turn in a draft-in-progress of each essay/project you'll do in here. This draft will not be graded for quality or completeness, but on the general amount of effort put forth at this point in the unit. All drafts need to be handed in digitally, in an attachment to an email. Final drafts, depending on their format, should be printed out if at all possible. More details will be given for each specific assignment.

Techno-glitches

In the case of technology, believe Murphy's Law: anything that can go wrong, will. This is not intended to be pessimistic about technology, but be aware that anything can go wrong/delete itself/spontaneously combust the night before your project is due. So be prepared: make backups during and after every drafting session, saving your work not only on your hard drive but also on an external device. We will have PowerPoint presentations in class this semester, so I recommend bringing handouts in case your file won't open.

(Note: if you have MS Works, be sure to save your document as a Rich Text Format—.rtf—so it can be opened in any word processing program. Also, if you have Windows Vista, test your document or PowerPoint out on a University computer before presenting—documents saved on Vista may not open on XP.

Checking Email/Casual Surfing

These computers are temptations, I know. You find yourself zoning out in class and might decide to make time go faster by IM-ing a friend or checking your email. This is absolutely not allowed and is actually being very rude towards me. I will be in the lab at least 15 minutes before class, and for about 1-2 minutes at the start of class I will let you have your time to log in and quickly check your email. Otherwise, I should not ever see an email/Facebook/MySpace page open during class.

Food in the Lab

A BGSU labs rule of no food or drink while in the lab applies to this class as well.

Use of iPods, cell phones, Walkmans, etc.

You can have these in class, but they need to stay in your bag—and turned off or to vibrate—at all times.

Conferences

In my experience, writers generally make greater improvements in their writing if they've received feedback from outside sources. It's difficult to revise a paper if

you're the only one reading it, so I am requiring **one out-of-class conference** with me this semester to talk about your current project. You can sign up for this at any point in the semester, or stop by during my office hours.

Workshops

At several points in the semester, we will devote class time to writer's workshop. During these classes, you will present your draft-in-progress to other peers, and receive constructive feedback. This helps you in a few ways—one, you receive feedback on your writing, and two, you get a chance to see what your peers are doing with the same project, which may give you ideas for revision as well. Remember: constructive feedback only, not harsh criticism!

Revision Policy

In keeping with the belief that writing is a continual process of improvement and revision, you will be able to revise projects #2, 3, or 5 for a higher grade. Revisions will be due one week after receiving the final grade. Ask me for details.

Late Assignments

Always pay attention to the due dates listed on your syllabus. I expect all assignments by the beginning of class on the date they are due. If an emergency arises, let me know and I may extend the due date for you, depending on circumstances. Otherwise, any late work will lose 5 points each day it is late.

Lost Essays

Remember to keep a backup of each of your essays/projects. It is your responsibility to keep these documents, in case you choose them to go in your portfolio at the end of the semester. Incomplete portfolios will receive a zero. A helpful storage space online is MyFiles (<http://myfiles.bgsu.edu>). Log in using your BGNNet username and password, and upload and store files (up to 1 GB) to the secure server. Check it out at the URL above or ask me for details.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism, which is defined as the unacknowledged use of other's work for academic gain, is illegal and not tolerated in this course. Cite all sources carefully. Ask me if you have questions about how to correctly use a source. Otherwise, any paper using plagiarized sources or text will receive a zero and may be subject to disciplinary action by the University.

:: A Final Word ::

I hope to make this class a place where you can work to improve your writing. Though many students are uncomfortable with writing, understanding how to go through the writing process will help you achieve your writing goals. To assist you in this endeavor, I encourage you to take advantage of the resources around you and keep in touch with me as we go through the semester.

Remember that we are all here to help each other become successful writers, and by working together this goal can be accomplished. If you have any questions about these Achievement Requirements or other class matters, please feel free to talk to me. I look forward to working with you and helping you enter your field's discourse community. Let's have a great semester!