

Professor Bill Wolff

WRITING, RESEARCH, AND TECHNOLOGY, Fall 2006, 1501.301, 40853

Syllabus

Course Location: Bozarth Hall 27

Office Location: Education Hall 3075

Contact: wolffw@rowan.edu

Course Web Site: <http://users.rowan.edu/~wolffw/courses/wrt/wrt-fall-06/index.html>
certain features of WebCT will also be used

Course Hours: M 6:30pm – 9:00pm

Office Hours: W 9 – 10, 1 – 3, or by appt.

Writing Arts Office Phone: 856-256-4029

Course Description

In this course we will look at what Jay David Bolter calls *writing spaces*—those online and in-print areas where texts are written, read, and manipulated. We will consider how the latest technologies are blurring the distinction between writer and reader, author and subject, and text and image. Indeed, much of our time will be spent thinking about the language of images and how one reads images on the page and on the screen. Ultimately our discussions will ask us to question what, in our technologized and visual world, *writing* is, and how images have been and are being used as evidence to both support and supplant it.

Although the course will involve a substantial reading component, our primary focus will be on your writing. We will have three primary writing projects, each of which will ask us to explore writing in a different medium and with different rhetorical goals. Most reading assignments will be accompanied by a prompt which will ask you to respond in an online forum, thereby beginning discussion of the text prior to class and extending in-class discussions outside of the walls of the classroom. Other assignments may ask you to engage in online chat, and still others will ask you to discuss photographs that you have taken. Each of the larger assignments will have rough and final drafts. The rough drafts will be critiqued by your classmates.

Many of the images we will be looking at are upsetting—because of their subject matter and because of the way they have been used in print and online media to exploit, categorize, and define. As a result, it will be especially important for us to realize that different people respond to images in different ways, to respect the various reactions, and try to understand why they happen. Indeed, as Luc Sante writes at the end of his essay, “Evidence,” “As we look [at these pictures] the clocks have all stopped, the air is going out of the world, the great glass bell is descending on the circumference. There is no place for us outside this frame, nothing to breathe, nowhere to stand. We cannot be the viewer of such a scene. We must have forgotten: We are the subject.”

UNIT I. TECHNOLOGY AND REMEDIATION

In this unit we will be considering how, as Bolter describes it, “our culture is . . . redefining the visual and conceptual space of writing” (12). We will begin thinking about the *technologies of writing*: blogs, chat, text messaging, video blogs, podcasts, and so forth. You will write a hypertextual essay in which you

analyze a technology of your choosing in terms of Bolter's arguments on remediation, spatiality, and change.

UNIT II. EVIDENCE AND VISUAL RHETORIC

We are inundated with images: TV news and sports shows with multiple windows, YouTube and iFilm videos, IM avatars, video games, photographs, and so forth. What are these images doing? What are they evidence of? How does the context impact how we read them and how they read us? You will write an essay in which you discuss a series of images and what they are giving evidence to.

UNIT III. A RESEARCH PROJECT IN MULTIPLE PARTS

This unit will take up the second half of the semester. In it we will explore the intimate relationship between texts and images. We will consider how to best present together images and text so as to create what Edward Tufte calls *Beautiful Evidence*. We will begin by reading Bertolt Brecht's epic play *Galileo* and will discuss the relationship between technology, politics, religion, and society. We will then move on to Edward Tufte's complex, beautiful, and engaging book. Tufte argues that "making an evidence presentation is a moral act as well as an intellectual activity. To maintain standards of quality, relevance, and integrity for evidence, consumers of presentations should insist that presenters be held intellectually and ethically responsible for what they show and tell" (9). We will attempt to do just that by completing a multi-media research project in which Tufte's, Bolter's, and Sante's ideas are fully incorporated.

Required Texts

Bolter, Jay David. *Writing Space: Computers, Hypertext, and the Remediation of Print*. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2001.

Brecht, Bertolt. *Galileo*. New York: Grove P, 1947; 1966.

Sante, Luc. *Evidence: NYPD Crime Scene Photographs: 1914-1918*. New York : Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006.

Tufte, Edward. *Beautiful Evidence*. Cheshire, CT: Graphics P, 2006.

Various photocopies and online readings.

Texts are available at the bookstore, Shelf 123.

Required Materials

Computer with Internet access

Microsoft Word (not Word Perfect)

Digital Camera (disposable or owned, though not a camera phone)

Other materials as needed

Course Strands

Rhetoric

Students will develop their ability to look critically at the way text and images are represented in various media, and will gain the tools necessarily to discuss what they observe in rhetorical terms.

Research

Students will develop their ability to conduct research in both the library and on the Internet. They will learn the importance of in-depth research that uses a variety of sources.

Critical Thinking, Writing, and Reading

Students will develop their ability to analyze events in the media and in the texts they read. Students will learn to write academic expository texts in which they use sources—both scholarly and primary—to support and further their own ideas on a subject.

Technology

Students develop their ability to read web pages rhetorically, which allows students to consider not only what gets said, but also how it gets said. They will also learn how to use various tools, which can help them develop their abilities in the other course objectives

Collaboration

Students will develop the ability to work collaboratively in activities that range from online discussion postings to peer reviews to in-class discussion.

Attendance

Much of your time in class will be spent in activities, not in lectures. Therefore, it is more than usually important that you come to class faithfully and that you participate in the activities planned. If genuine disaster should befall you and you must miss a class, please check with other students and the course web site to find out what you have missed.

After FOUR absences for *any reason* you will fail the course. After ONE absence your final grade will drop one full grade for every absence. For example, if a student has 2 absences, they will receive no higher than a B in the course; 3 absences no higher than C; 4 absences no higher than a D. A student is considered late if they arrive after the sign-up sheet has gone around the room; lateness equals .5 absences.

Office Hours

Office hours are designed for you, giving you a more private environment in which we may talk about your work, your performance in class, etc. If you are unable to see me during my office hours, do not hesitate to make an appointment to see me at a different time. We will have at least one required conference during the second half of the semester.

Students with Disabilities

Your academic success is important. If you have a documented disability that may have an impact upon your work in this class, please contact me. Students must provide documentation of their disability to the Academic Success Center in order to receive

official University services and accommodations. The Academic Success Center can be reached at 856.256.4234. The Center is located on the 3rd Floor of Savitz Hall. The staff is available to answer questions regarding accommodations or assist you in your pursuit of accommodations. We look forward to working with you to meet your learning goals.

Grading

Grades in this course are determined on the basis of a *Learning Record*, which accompanies a portfolio of work presented both at the midterm and at end of term. These portfolios present a selection of your work, both formal and informal, plus ongoing observations about your learning, plus an analysis of your work development across five dimensions of learning: confidence and independence, knowledge and understanding, skills and strategies, use of prior and emerging experience, and reflectiveness. This development centers on the major strands of work in the course: rhetoric and composition, research, technology, critical thinking, and collaboration.

Late coursework will be factored into your final grade in the following way: for every 3 late assignments, your final grade will be lowered by one full letter grade.