
English 281: Intermediate Expository Writing, UW Summer B 2006

Taking up Genre

MTWTh 8:40-10:40, MGH 082/082A

INSTRUCTOR: Melanie Kill

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OFFICE: Padelford B-433

OFFICE HOURS: MT 10:45-11:45

COURSE WEBSITE: courses.washington.edu/webrhet/engl281

"Genres are not just forms. Genres are forms of life, ways of being. They are frames for social action. They are environments for learning. They are locations within which meaning is constructed. Genres shape the thoughts we form and the communications by which we interact. Genres are the familiar places we go to create intelligible communicative action with each other and the guideposts we use to explore the unfamiliar."

—Charles Bazerman

OVERVIEW

Invention is a major topic in classical rhetoric, but one that is sometimes passed over in contemporary composition classrooms. In this class we will be paying attention to the work that comes before writing in order to make our writing as effective as possible. While there is no general formula or set of rules for good writing across the innumerable writing tasks involved in everyday life, good writers become expert at perceiving the constraints and choices imposed and offered in various writing situations. For this reason, this class will focus on developing your genre awareness, which genre theorist Amy Devitt describes as "a critical consciousness of both rhetorical purposes and ideological effects of generic forms."

Although the term *genre* is often associated with formulaic writing, in this course we will follow rhetorical genre theorists use of the term to mean typified social action rather than conventional formula or means of classification. We will be focused on learning a meta-awareness of genre rather than the specific linguistic features of a limited range of genres. This class is not intended to teach you grammar or other basic skills of composition, which I will assume you already have. In this course we will develop our skills in writing effective texts by reading, writing, revising, and discussing texts to explore such questions as: How do texts become actions? How and why do textual conventions develop? How can we most effectively negotiate between individual purposes and textually-enabled purposes?

GOALS

The primary goal of this class will be for students to **develop awareness of the strategies that successful writers use in different writing contexts**. By the end of the term you will be expected to demonstrate such awareness by producing a portfolio of writing that

- employs style, tone, conventions, and variations appropriate to the demands of a range of genres and situations
- shows the ability to write for different audiences and contexts, both within and outside the university classroom
- shows a clear understanding of its audience, and addresses and strategically pitches various aspects of the writing (content, structure, evidence, appeals, tone, sentence structure, and word choice) to that audience
- demonstrates substantial and successful revision, responsiveness to substantive issues raised by the instructor and peers, and careful editing and proofreading
- articulates and assesses the effects of his or her writing choices.

COURSE STRUCTURE

We will meet four times a week for 120-minute class periods with access to both a classroom equipped with computers for each student and a traditional classroom. In-class activities will require your active engagement in workshops, class discussions, collaborative projects, etc.

GRADING

Information about assessment criteria will be provided with individual assignments.

- Preparation & Participation: 30%
- Term project / Final portfolio: 70%

ASSIGNMENT OVERVIEW

The following is intended to give you an idea of the assignments we'll be working on this quarter—detailed information about each assignment's requirements will be given in class and available in written form on the course website.

THE GENRE PROJECT

The main project of this course will be to produce a genre guide designed to teach people to approach a particular genre as more than the sum of its standard features. You will elucidate its standard features, purposes, context, related genres, etc. and also illustrate possible variations.

↻ Weekly Steps

The project will be built out of many smaller tasks broken into four parts:

- Week 1: Class Analysis of Online Guides
- Week 2: Small Group Genre Analysis
- Week 3: Individual Genre Standard and Variation Experiment
- Week 4: Small Group Production of Genre Guide and Individual Reflection Essay

↻ Final Portfolio

The bulk of your grade for this course will be based on a final portfolio for which you will select assignments to revise, reflect on, and present for evaluation. Specifics TBA.

COURSE POLICY OVERVIEW

ACCOMMODATIONS

- ☛ If you have a physical or learning disability that requires accommodations, please let me know at the beginning of the quarter so that we can make proper arrangements. Even if you are not sure that your disability will influence your performance in this class, it might be a good idea to let me know in advance so that we can work together to troubleshoot any challenges that may arise.

DISABLED STUDENT SERVICES

448 Schmitz Hall

206-543-8924

http://www.washington.edu/students/gencat/front/Disabled_Student.html

GETTING HELP & INFORMATION

☛ Course Listserv

The course listserv (engl281a_su06@u.washington.edu) will be available as a way to communicate questions, ideas, etc. to your classmates outside of class meetings. (If you want to contact me, please email me directly at mckill@u.washington.edu.)

☛ Course Website

The course website includes information about the course and relevant resources. Take a look at <http://courses.washington.edu/webrhet/engl281/>.

☛ In-Class Collaboration

During class meetings, please be willing to ask and answer questions of classmates. This is a collaborative work environment—please share your skills, knowledge, and ideas.

☛ Office Hours

You should always feel free to stop by to talk with me during my office hours. I will be in Padelford B-433 on Mondays and Tuesdays from 10:45-11:45. If you want to discuss a specific piece of writing, be sure to have any relevant materials with you.

CLASS INVOLVEMENT & ETIQUETTE

☛ Attendance

Because your participation is crucial to both your success in this class and the overall success of the course, your attendance is required at all class meetings. If you know in advance you will miss a class, inform me as soon as possible—while there generally isn't a way to make up in-class activities, I'll be happy to discuss individual assignments with you in advance so that you can submit them before the deadline.

Please make every effort to be on time to class meetings.

☛ Preparation

Refer to the online schedule as often as necessary to keep yourself organized and on track. Readings and homework assignments will be necessary prerequisites for productive in-class participation.

☛ Timely Completion of Assignments

As this is a greatly compacted term, the pace must be brisk. In addition to a brisk pace, we will be doing a lot of collaborative work that will require coordinated efforts. For these two reasons, falling behind really isn't an option if you want to be successful in this course. Advance notice of due

dates for all assignments and opportunities to work on many assignments during class meetings should allow you to avoid late submissions of work. If an unusual situation arises that might keep you from completing something on time, speak with me as soon as possible.

Assignments turned in late will receive partial credit or no credit at all depending on their relevance at the point submitted. Plan to finish assignments early enough so that a minor setback won't leave you empty-handed on the due date.

➔ LAN Rules

- The computer classrooms are available only to students currently enrolled in computer-integrated courses.
- Absolutely no food or drink is allowed in the LAN classrooms. Please keep your work area tidy. Recycling containers and trash cans are located at the front of both computer classrooms.
- Printing is restricted to CIC course essays, peer reviews, homework and handouts. Students may not print work for other courses, online readings, or other lengthy documents.
- Do not sit on the desktops that connect pod workstations. While sturdy, they are not designed to support human weight.
- Accessible stations are located in the front center pod. Disabled students have priority for these stations. The desktops on the accessible stations should only be adjusted to accommodate wheelchairs or other equipment.
- Use of both LAN classrooms is limited to currently installed software. You may not install or use any of your own software on the network, nor may you download software or games from the Web.
- The network cannot be accessed via modem.
- Do not manipulate any of the hardware. Unplugging cables can cause the system to crash and people to lose files. If you are having a problem with your station, consult your teacher or the technical support staff.
- Do not turn off the computers or screens unless told to do so by your instructor or by a technical support person. Do not touch the monitor screen directly with your hands or fingers.
- Under no condition should any person alter the icons on the desktop. This includes creating additional shortcuts.
- As a matter of courtesy, always log off after you have finished working.
- Copyright law prohibits you from duplicating software in the English Department LAN for your own use.