WRA 195H – Writing: Major Topics in American Thought – Summer 2015

Credits: 4
Prerequisite: None
Delivery: Hybrid (Five face-to-face meetings and additional online assignments and meetings via D2L/Zoom; students need access to a computer and the Internet.)
Date/Time: Wednesdays* 10:20-2:10, July 6, 8, 13, 15, August 10, 12‡
*Students need to bring a lunch to eat during break. ‡8/12 class is optional

Textbook Info: Palmquist, Joining the Conversation

Course Justification
This hybrid section of WRA 195H engages dual enrollment and Honors College students in a conversation regarding their identity as writers. Specifically, it helps them to identify and implement writing strategies appropriate for participation in a variety of communities, including academia. This course serves as a bridge between high school and college coursework for incoming Honors freshmen and as a transferable, challenging experience for high school students dual enrolled at Michigan State.

Course Description
Imagine the world you want to live in. What can you as a writer do to make that world a reality? This course asks you to examine the power of readers and writers and the stories they share. This course asks you to persuade, to inform, to learn, to change. During this semester, we will consider how the ways we learn and communicate can shape our decisions and actions. We will also consider the rhetoric of contemporary American writers in order to theorize how literacy has been tied to statements of belief and calls to action in a variety of cultural communities within the United States.

This course will provide a variety of opportunities for inquiry, including:
- What is the relationship between literacy, rhetoric, belief, and action (both for the individual and the community)?
- How do literacy practices inform our everyday lives, especially our opinions and decisions?
- How can we recognize the types of literacies we observe in unique communities? And how might literacy skills move between communities?
- How does rhetoric work within communities?
- What ethics inform our learning and our writing?
Course Assignments
We will complete two major projects and an online journal during the course of this semester, all of which will be collected in a final online portfolio. These projects will combine practice in the rhetorical processes of invention, arrangement, style, delivery, and revision. They will allow you to strengthen your writing, reading, research, and reflection skills and strategies. More specifically, these projects will allow you to acquire and support the analytical thinking, rhetorical awareness, and integrated reasoning expected for participation within the scholarly community. These projects will also encourage you to consider yourself as an agent of change, capable of observing and contributing to community conversations that matter.

Online journal: You will write blog entries responding to course readings and discussions, as well as your own experiences during the learning process. Your classmates will comment on your blog; you will comment on theirs. These journals are meant to help you practice summary, analysis, and reflection. They’re also meant to serve as a document that tracks your learning during the course.

Project One: You will identify and analyze an object that carries controversial meaning within a community that you belong to. You will research the power of the object and the ideas that inform its meaning, using interviews and scholarly articles as well as surveys and field observations. Eventually, you will write a thesis-driven paper and a short presentation that make an argument about the community and its beliefs/ideas/ethics using the object as a focal point. Your audience for this paper/presentation is your classmates.

Project Two: You will remix your first project, using the knowledge you gained from your research to create a persuasive piece meant to change the ideas/actions of the community you’ve researched. In a medium that you feel best suits your message, you will argue for change in regard to a specific issue within that community.

Final Online Portfolio: You will bring together your two projects as part of your blog, providing a framing narrative that reflects on your own experience this semester and your own beliefs/ideas as a writer and learner.