WRIT 2311-01
Writing in the Digital Age

Fall 2017 :: JBWS 163 :: T/R 2:00-3:15 pm

Dr. Don Unger

✉ **dunger1@stedwards.edu**

☎ **(512) 448-8563**

**Sorin Hall, room 118
Mon 12:30-1:30 pm
Wed 3:30-4:30 pm**

Goals

This course introduces you to the study of media artifacts, analysis, and production through the frame of digital writing. In exploring digital writing, you will gain an ability to understand, criticize, choose, and apply different media to match different messages. Ultimately, this course demonstrates how digital media is changing (and being changed by) the forms of writing present in rhetorical studies, professional writing, creative writing, and journalism.

Means

This course takes a project-based approach to learning about media and producing media objects such as digital essays, podcasts, social media, video, websites, and mobile apps. Although the course will ask students to work with a variety of technologies and tools, the primary aim of assignments and in-class activities will be to experiment with available means of production to tell stories that are personally and culturally relevant.

Outcomes

By the end of the semester, you should be able to:

Articulate how contemporary writing technologies shape cultures and communities

Identify ways in which digital writing can be seen, heard, and watched differently

Use various writing technologies to shape messages for a different audiences

Design and compose individually and collaboratively

Create, organize, label, and store digital files

Produce polished digital work applicable to any Writing specialization

Modules & Grading

Modules

I have divided the course into seven modules. The first module, "Defining Digital Rhetoric & Multimodal Composing," introduces you to core concepts that guide our work throughout the semester. In it, you will use Tumblr to analyze and discuss course readings.

Each subsequent module builds off the previous one.

In module 2, "Analyzing a Community Organization's Online Presence," you will rhetorically analyze the websites and social-media accounts of not-for-profit organizations in Austin.

In module 3, "Working with Community Partners," you will address the dynamics of designing media for and with a local client. You will return to your tumblogs to document your work.

In module 4, "Managing & Designing Online Content," you will work in teams to develop a YouTube channel strategy for our community partner. Additionally, you will craft pitches for tutorial and informative videos, which you will collect into a team proposal.

In module 5, "Working with Video," you will create the videos described in your proposal.

In module 6, "Implementing Usability Testing," you will design, carry out, and report on user testing of your videos.

In the final module, "Designing Your Online Presence," you will create a prototype for a personal website and reflect on the aims of your website and social-media presence.

All-in-all, I've designed the course to try to balance critical reading and analysis with hands-on learning in order to prepare you for later courses in the Writing & Rhetoric major. Additionally, the experience working with a community organization provides you with valuable experience that you may use to obtain an internship.

Grading

Alongside instructions and examples, I will include rubrics in the assignment sheet distributed at the outset of each module.

Table 1 shows how each module is weighted.

Module	Points
1. Defining Digital Rhetoric & Multimodal Composing	50
2. Analyzing a Community Organization's Online Presence	100
3. Working with Community Partners	50
4. Managing & Designing Online Content	100
5. Working with Video	200
6. Implementing Usability Testing	100
7. Designing Your Online Presence	200
Total	**800**

Table 1. Module point values.

Each of your module grades can be translated into a percentage out of 100 with a corresponding letter grade listed in Table 2. Canvas will translate the score for us.

Final letter grades will be determined using the scale illustrated by Table 2. To ensure fairness, all numbers are absolute, and will not be rounded up or down at any stage. For example, a B- will be inclusive of all scores of 80.000 through 83.999.

A+	4.0	100—97
A	4.0	96—94
A-	3.67	93—90
B+	3.33	89—87
B	3.0	86—84
B-	2.67	83—80
C+	2.33	79—77
C	2.0	76—70
D	1.0	69—60
F	0.0	59—0

Table 2. Letter grades, GPA, and percentage equivalents.

Textbooks & Materials

Course readings come from a few different sources, including chapters from textbooks, articles from scholarly journals and professional websites, and written and video tutorials. For online readings, links are included in the course calendar. For other readings, PDFs are posted to our course Canvas site. You are NOT required to purchase a textbook. I would advise you to save your money for software subscriptions or snacks if you need to come to campus to use the university computers if you need specific software or hardware to complete an assignment.

Additional Materials

Note- or sketchbook for in-class writing/designing, brainstorming, etc.

Box, Tumblr, and WordPress accounts
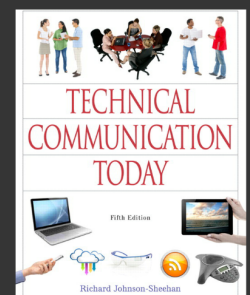
Course Policies

Attendance

You are expected to attend every meeting of the classes for which you are enrolled. I do not differentiate between excused and unexcused absences. I also know that life happens, so here is the attendance policy for all my courses:

1. You may miss a maximum of one week of class without penalty and with no questions asked. However, you still must turn in your work on time and keep up with the course. Because our class meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays only, this means you may miss two (2) class meetings without penalty.

2. Each absence after this one week maximum will lower your final course grade by half a letter grade, regardless of how well you otherwise perform. If you miss four (4) or more class meetings, I reserve the right (but do not take on the obligation) to drop you from the course with a grade of "WA." If you remain on the roster after the drop deadline and "disappear," you will likely earn a grade of "F."

ProTip: The tl:dr Version

1. Absent is absent: there is no difference in excused or unexcused.

2. In-class assignments or activities, including quizzes, cannot be made up.

3. If you "disappear" (stop attending) but do not officially drop the course, you will likely earn a WA or an F.

4. If you have a legitimate reason to leave early or arrive late, please talk to me in advance.

Late Work

I deduct 10 points for each day your projects are late unless you make arrangements with me prior to the due date. Problems can arise, but the key to their successful resolution is communication. Keep me informed; avoid simply not turning in projects or assignments.

Participation

You will complete much of your work for this course in small groups, and I expect you to fulfill your fair share of group work and interact courteously with your peers at all times. Most of our class sessions will be conducted in discussion/workshop format, and many of these workshops cannot be "re-created" outside of class, so regular attendance and active participation are essential to your success. Active participation may also include successful completion of reading quizzes, which will be used to assess your preparedness for a class meeting.

I recommend that you save absences for when you are sick or have an emergency. If you find that an unavoidable problem prevents you from attending class, please discuss the problem with me as soon as possible. If you plan to be absent for a religious or holy day, please plan with me in advance.

ProTip: How to Deal with an Absence

1. Email/upload any work due that day in class.

2. Email a classmate for notes & changes to assignments so you are prepared the next day.

3. Check the syllabus and course website, and complete the work assigned in class

Communicating with Me & Office Hours

The best way to contact me is by email. Please email me whenever you have questions. I also will email you regularly with reminders, instructions, and late breaking information. Therefore, a requirement of this class is that you check your SEU email & the course site daily, especially the day before and morning of class. Also, I am happy to meet with you by appointment if you cannot make it to office hours. Email me about setting up an appointment.

If you have an emergency, email me.

Learning Software vs. Learning How to Learn Software

Experience tells me that the most frustrating part of this course is going to be our use of software to complete the major projects. Depending on your major, you may have little interest in learning about writing online, CSS, or Adobe products. I understand this: however, software can allow us to communicate in ways that we simply can't in older media. There is a benefit to working with, rather than against, technology. But, technology changes. Rapidly. Our focus in this class is not on you all becoming expert users of specific software. I want you to become learners experienced in learning how to learn software. Why? Because when you get into a professional setting, you're likely going to be asked to use software that is unfamiliar and foreign. I want you to have your own methods for dealing with this experience.

What does that mean for this class?
To help you learn how to work with the different kinds of software we'll be using this semester, I have arranged for Instructional Technology to come into our class to offer tailored workshops for our major projects. We're going to start with the "human assets" we have on campus, and let the experts from OIT guide us through some basic concepts.

When you ask me a question, my first question will most likely be, "Did you Google it?" I am not doing this to deflect your question. I will ask what steps you took to learn something because experts aren't always going to be available (and there will be times when you don't want someone to know what you don't know). So, I'll be asking you to use all those free, online resources to help you find answers because googling just might help you land a job one day. How much you learn and how quickly will be determined by you and what you hope to get out of this class. Just know that your grade will always be determined by how well you work with the principles and concepts we are discussing in class, not how well you use the software.

Challenges & Accomdations

If you have a confirmed medical, psychiatric, or learning disability that I need to accommodate in teaching you, please see me right away. I want to help you succeed, so please come see during office hours or make an appointment, preferably during the first week of classes. You will need to prove your disability by submitting certain documents to Student Disability Services in Moody Hall 155. Please note that I cannot accommodate any disability without a "504 letter," nor can I accommodate disabilities retroactively. If you do have a 504 letter to submit, my preference would be for you to come by during my office hours. This will give you and I some privacy, and it will allow me to make a copy of your letter for my files.

Please also remember that a 504 letter entitles you to reasonable accommodations, not to an easier course. You should read the reverse side of the 504 letter for information about your duties and responsibilities. I will ask you to sign the reverse side of the letter.

In addition, if you are under a great deal of stress or you just want someone to talk to confidentially, see the staff in the Health & Counseling Center (Lady Bird Johnson Hall, Suite 100). They can help you develop strategies for personal success and coping with challenges.

Academic Counseling and Exploration (ACE), located in Moody Hall 155, also offers services to help students develop and use effective skills for successful academic performance, including low-cost tutoring for most subjects.

Note: This syllabus is subject to change. Students will be notified on the course website and/or by email of changes made to the policies or syllabus.

Academic Integrity

The Student Handbook states, "St. Edward's University expects academic honesty from all members of the community, and it is our policy that academic integrity be fostered to the highest degree possible. Consequently, all work submitted for grading in a course must be created as a result of your own thought and effort. Representing work as your own when it is not a result of such thought and effort is a violation of our code of academic integrity. Whenever it is established that academic dishonesty has occurred, the course instructor shall impose a penalty upon the offending individual(s). It is recognized that some offenses are more egregious than others and that, therefore, a range of penalties should be available. Whenever possible, it would also be important to try to determine the intent of the offender, since the error could be a result of careless work rather than an intent to deceive. The maximum penalty for a first offense is failure in the course, and if that penalty is imposed, the student does not have the option of withdrawing from the course. In cases of mitigating circumstance, the instructor has the option of assigning a lesser penalty."

The St. Edward's University Undergraduate Bulletin and the Student Handbook state that a student who is dishonest in any work may receive the maximum penalty of an F for that course. SEU does not allow students to withdraw from a course where an F in the course for academic dishonesty has been imposed. Students caught committing academic dishonesty in this course will be subject to the full range of penalties as described in the bulletin and handbook.

At St. Edward's, plagiarism includes turning in as your own work any drafts, papers, journals, or homework that incorporates any ideas or actual writing done by others (or from the internet) without acknowledging the source you used. The availability of documents and information on the internet has made it increasingly tempting to plagiarize, so please maintain a rigorous sense of academic honesty.

Smartphones, Tablets & Computers

Smartphones are unavoidable, but please respect the classroom. If I observe you texting or answering the phone, then I will ask you to leave class. This results in an absence. Please treat the classroom as you would any other space where you are expected to act professionally. There will be some days during the semester where you might need to use your smartphone or other mobile device to look something up. If it pertains to class, that's fine. In general, show up to class on time, be polite, stay on task, and use digital technology smartly and professionally.

Generally, we will not have long-winded lectures in the course where you need to take copious notes, but if we do and you want to take notes, I ask that you stay on task when using technology during class (whether pen and paper, laptop, tablet, etc.).

University Non-Discrimination Policy

Title IX makes it clear that violence, harassment, and discrimination based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources, both on and off campus, at http://think.stedwards.edu/titleix/.

As a faculty member, I am also required by our university to report incidents of sexual misconduct and thus cannot guarantee confidentiality. I must provide our Title IX coordinator with relevant details such as the names of those involved in the incident. Please know that you can seek confidential resources at the Health & Counseling Center in Johnson Hall, 512-448-8538. To make a formal report, you can contact the Dean of Students Office in Main Building, Suite 108, 512-448-8408, or go to http://think.stedwards.edu/titleix/filing-complaint. You can also make a police report to the St. Edward's University Police in the Woodward Office Building (WOB), Room 114, 512-448-8444.

WRIT 2311 Writing in the Digital Age
Fall 2017 Calendar

Module	Week	Date	Class	Homework
1. Defining Digital Rhetoric & Multimodal Composing	**1**	8.29	Course Introduction	Read & Blog: Wardle & Downs' "Rhetoric: How Meaning is Constructed" (PDF) Read Scaglione's "Blogging Tips: How to Find the Sweet Spot between Personal and Professional Communication" https://blog.getresponse.com/blogging-tips-find-sweet-spot-personal-professional-communication.html
		8.31	Blog Tutorial What is Rhetoric?	Read & Blog: Miller's "The Coming Apocalypse" (PDF)
	2	9.5	How is Rhetoric Changing?	Read & Blog: Hodgson & Barnett's "What is Digital about Digital Rhetoric? Perspectives and Definitions of Digital Rhetoric" http://enculturation.net/what-is-rhetorical-about-digital-rhetoric
		9.7	What is Digital Rhetoric?	Read & Blog: Arola, Sheppard & Ball's "What are Multimodal Projects?" (PDF)
2. Analyzing a Community Organization's Online Presence	**3**	9.12	What is Multimodal Composing?	**Module 1 blogs due 9.14**
		9.14	Blog Roll	Read & Blog: Nemer's "From Digital Divide to Digital Inclusion and Beyond: A Positional Review" http://ci-journal.net/index.php/ciej/article/view/1030/1131
	4	9.19	Digital Divide v Digital Inclusion	Read & Blog: City of Austin Digital Inclusion Relevancy & Advocacy Report (PDF) Read & Blog: City of Austin Digital Inclusion District 3 Report (PDF)
		9.21	Digital Inclusion in Austin	Read & Blog: Spencer's "The Potential of the Internet for Non-Profit Organizations" http://www.ojphi.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/976/897 Read & Blog: Arola, Sheppard & Ball's "Analyzing Multimodal Projects" (PDF)
3. Working with Community Partners	**5**	9.26	Analyzing Community Organization's Online Presence	**Module 2 blogs and rhetorical analysis due 9.28**
		9.28	Blog Roll	Read & Blog: The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement's *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future* (PDF, pp. 1-15)
	6	10.3	A Crucible Moment	Read & Blog: Grabill's "On Being Useful: Rhetoric & the Work of Engagement" (PDF)
		10.5	On Being Useful	Read & Blog: Klein, Lunsford & Chiarello's "Embracing the Messy Business of Learning: Serving Multiple Stakeholders in a Technical Communication Internship" (PDF) **Module 3 blogs due 10.10**
4. Managing & Designing Online Content	**7**	10.10	Blog Roll 3	Read & Blog: Usability.gov's "Content Strategy Basics" https://www.usability.gov/what-and-why/content-strategy.html Read & Blog: Kissane's "A Checklist for Content Work" https://alistapart.com/article/a-checklist-for-content-work

Managing & Designing Online Content (Cont'd)	**7** (Cont'd)	10.12	Module 4-6 Intro & Team Building	Read & Blog: Goltz's "A Closer Look At Personas: What They Are And How They Work" https://www.smashingmagazine.com/2014/08/a-closer-look-at-personas-part-1/ Read & Blog: Goltz's "A Closer Look At Personas: A Guide To Developing The Right Ones" https://www.smashingmagazine.com/2014/08/a-closer-look-at-personas-part-2/
	8	10.17	Analyzing Austin Free Net's YouTube Channel Strategy	**Module 4 production team proposal due 10.26**
		10.19	**Conference on Community Writing; No class!**	
5. Working with Video	**9**	10.24	Module 5 Intro	Read & Blog: Sheehan's "Instructions & Documentation" (PDF)
		10.26	iMovie Tutorial	Read & Blog: Video tutorial readings tbd
	10	10.31	Screen Capture Tutorial	Work on videos
		11.2	Sound Recording & Editing Tutorial	**"Hands on" videos due 11.7; "Big Picture" videos due 11.14**
6. Implementing Usability Testing	**11**	11.7	What is Usability?	Read & Blog: Usability.gov's "What is Usability?" https://www.usability.gov/how-to-and-tools/methods/usability-testing.html Read & Blog: Usability.gov's "Planning a Usability Test" https://www.usability.gov/how-to-and-tools/methods/planning-usability-testing.html
		11.9	Planning a Usability Test	Read & Blog: Usability.gov's "Recruiting Usability Test Participants" https://www.usability.gov/how-to-and-tools/methods/recruiting-usability-test-participants.html Read & Blog: Usability.gov's "Running a Usability Test" https://www.usability.gov/how-to-and-tools/methods/running-usability-tests.html Read & Blog: Usability.gov's "Reporting Usability Test Results" https://www.usability.gov/how-to-and-tools/methods/reporting-usability-test-results.html
	12	11.14	Running & Reporting a Usability Test	Work on usability test reports
		11.16	Usability Testing Your Videos	**Usability test reports due 11.28**
7. Designing Your Online Presence	**13**	11.21	Working with Web Design WYSIWYGs	Read & Blog: Pearson's "All the World Wide Web's a Stage: The Performance of Identity in Online Social Networks" http://journals.uic.edu/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/2162/2127
		11.23	**Thanksgiving Break; No class!**	
	14	11.28	Performing Identity Online	Read & Blog: Ramsdell's "Storytelling, Narration & the 'Who I Am' Story" (PDF) Read & Blog: McMahon & Watson's "Story Telling: Crafting Identities" (PDF)

Desinging Your Online Presence (Cont'd)	14	11.30	Story Telling & Your Online Presence	**Website mock-ups due 12.5**
	15	12.5	Usability Testing Your Websites	Work on website prototypes
		12.7	Class Recap	**Website prototypes due 12.12**
Final Projects			**Final Websites with Reflection Due by 11:59 pm; No final exam!**	