

Seminar in Composition Studies Section 01

ENGL 259

Fall 2022 4 Unit(s) 08/19/2022 to 12/06/2022 Modified 08/18/2022

Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Tom Moriarty
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Office Hours: By appointment on the Zoom
Class Days/Time: Mondays 7:00-9:45PM
Classroom: On the Zoom

Course Description and Requisites

Study of current approaches to composition.

Prerequisite: Classified standing or instructor consent.

Letter Graded

* Classroom Protocols

Students are welcome to disagree with one another during class discussions; however, all our dialogue must be conducted with respect for each individual's opinions and work, and all discussions must be rated PG-13.

Course Goals

English 259 is a graduate seminar in Composition Theory. The course objectives are:

- To analyze and evaluate competing descriptions of the writing process.
- To recognize and evaluate the range of approaches to teaching composition.
- To examine assumptions underlying current theory and practice in writing instruction.
- To explore assumptions and implications of composition and rhetorical research.
- To identify key problems and issues surrounding current research in composition and rhetoric.

The main questions guiding our reading and discussions this semester, and some of the fundamental questions motivating research in this field, are:

- How do people write?
- How do people learn how to write?
- How should we teach writing?
- What are the consequences of teaching writing one way versus another?
- What are the consequences of writing and texts in the world? In other words, what do texts “do” in the world? Why are they important?

And by the end of the semester, you will develop tentative answers of your own to these and many other questions.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

The following statement has been adopted by the Department of English for inclusion in all syllabi: In English Department Courses, instructors will comment on and grade the quality of student writing as well as the quality of ideas being conveyed. All student writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs. The Department of English reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined in the SJSU Catalog ("The Grading System").

Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance:

- A = excellent;
- B = above average;
- C = average;
- D = below average;
- F = failure.

Within any of the letter grade ranges (e.g. B+/B/B-), the assignment of a +(plus) or -(minus) grade will reflect stronger (+) or weaker (-) completion of the goals of the assignment.

Program Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the MA English program, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate an appropriate level of expertise in literary history, literary theory, and rhetoric.
2. Demonstrate high-level proficiency in literary research and in the synthesis of research
3. Demonstrate critical and analytical skills in the interpretation and evaluation of literary texts.
4. Demonstrate a command of written academic English, including the abilities to
 - a. organize and present material in a cogent fashion,
 - b. formulate and defend original arguments,
 - c. employ effectively the language of their discipline and
 - d. write under time constraints.
5. Demonstrate a reading knowledge of at least one foreign language.

Upon successful completion of the MFA in Creative Writing, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate a high level of ability to propose and complete a publishable, full-length work of literature in a primary genre concentration (fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, or scriptwriting).
2. Demonstrate high level of proficiency to write works of literature in a secondary genre concentration (fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, or scriptwriting).
3. Demonstrate an appropriate level of knowledge of literary history, literary theory, and craft and theory of creative writing.
4. Demonstrate critical and analytical skills in the evaluation and interpretation of literary texts.
5. Demonstrate a command of written academic English, including the abilities to:
 - a) organize and present material in a cogent fashion;
 - b) formulate and defend original arguments;
 - c) employ effectively the language of their discipline;
 - d) write under time constraints.

Department Information:

Department Name: English and Comparative Literature

Department Office: FO 102

Department Website: www.sjsu.edu/english (<https://www.sjsu.edu/english>)

Department email: english@sjsu.edu (<mailto:english@sjsu.edu>)

Department phone number: 408-924-4425

Course Materials

Adler-Kassner, Linda and Elizabeth Wardle, Eds. *Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts of Writing Studies (Classroom Edition)*. Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 2016.

Tate, Gary, Amy Rupiper, Kurt Schick. *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies. 2nd Edition*. New York: Oxford, 2014.

Coxwell-Teague, Deborah and Ronald F. Lunsford. *First-Year Composition: From Theory to Practice*. Anderson, South Carolina: Parlor Press, 2014.

Course Requirements and Assignments

This class has a variety of graded assignments for your learning enjoyment.

Group Discussion Leaders

Each of you will have a couple of opportunities to serve as a discussion leader, which will require you to:

- Provide the class with handouts that include a detailed summary of the day's readings (all of them).
- Come to class with at least five discussion questions per reading and one synthesizing question that groups all of the readings together.

You will help lead the discussion in small teams and your job is to set the tone for the readings and the discussion. Your questions will be used in addition to the questions provided by the professor. Please work together on your handouts and your discussion questions and plan to lead the discussion as a group – please don't simply break up the work and have one person talk about one reading and another person talk about the other. Your job, in a lot of ways, is to be the core of that day's conversation. So talk with each other and with us.

Group Research Project and Presentation

You will join small group in the first part of the semester to empirically research two very important questions:

- How do people write?
- How do people learn how to write?

You will collect data on these questions and present your findings in class.

Exams

You will take 2 exams which will consist of identification and explanation of key concepts, figures, and movements in Composition.

Seminar Paper

Finally, you will have the opportunity to write a long, researched seminar paper. The paper can take many forms, and we will discuss the possibilities as the semester goes along. In general, seminar papers for this class tend to fall into one of the following broad categories:

- A proposal for a first-year writing course, fully fleshed out in terms of readings and assignments, as well as a thorough theoretical discussion and argument for why this would be a good approach to teaching such a course. Kinda like a chapter from the third book we are reading this semester.
- A researched argument that addresses one or more of the more theoretical discussions in the fields of composition and rhetoric.

Previous papers have included:

- Arguing your pedagogical position and best approaches to teaching writing in a more theoretical way than you might in the option above.
- Exploring a pedagogical theory or approach that you find compelling, (or even problematic).
- Predicting future trends in Composition based on its history.
- Researching the history of Composition.
- "Mapping" or exploring fully a particular key word or theory in composition and rhetoric.
- Theorizing about the relationship among technology, rhetoric, and the teaching of writing.
- Exploring the "divide" (or what I like to call the relationship) between rhetoric and poetic.

If you have ideas/topics that you would like to explore, please see me, and we will work out an assignment that fits both your interests and the goals and expectations of the course.

Any way you slice it, all papers must be between 12 and 15 pages long and include composition research consisting of at least 10 sources (and at least half of your sources must be different sources from the assigned course readings).

Short Weekly Response Papers

Respond to the readings for the week. That means don't just summarize them – grapple with the ideas presented in them and think about how they respond to or challenge (or don't) some of the fundamental questions that motivate inquiry and research in composition theory. Also, from time to time, talk about your sense of the field and where your thinking is trending in relation to the field's concerns. Each response should be 250-300 words long.

Participation

Participation is an important part of the work of this seminar. You are expected to be prepared for class each week, which means doing all the reading, even if you are not presenting that day. You are also expected to fully participate in our discussions, which means sharing your own ideas and listening to and responding to the ideas of your classmates.

✓ Grading Information

Grades

Weekly Responses: 10%

Leading Discussion: 10%

Group Project and Presentation: 10%

Exam 1: 20%

Exam 2: 20%

Seminar Participation: 10%

Final Seminar Paper: 20% (failure to attend and participate in workshops will deduct up to 10% from your final grade)

University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on [Syllabus Information web page](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>). Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.