



SDNY WRTG/GEOG 3349
Writing for Environmental Advocacy
CAPA SYDNEY PROGRAM
Semester 2020

Faculty: Barbara Edelman
Contact: edelman@pitt.edu
Office hours: By appointment
Class times: tba

Course Description

This course focuses on writing in response to the natural environment, primarily as a tool to raise awareness of environmental challenges and to advocate for ways to meet those challenges. We'll read a variety of voices and styles of advocacy writing, always with a strong focus on the craft of language: How does the writing reach its target and accomplish its goal? What makes the writing persuasive?

You'll practice several modes of advocacy writing, via several shorter assignments, and your writing will be a central text of the course; that is, we will investigate and critique student writing in much the same we do the assigned published pieces. You'll devote much of the second half of the semester to researching and writing a first-person article and presentation focusing on a specific environmental problem and advocating for a potential solution/s.

Course Aims

The Public and Professional Writing major allows students to undertake rigorous intellectual work that will deepen their engagement with writing as a form of social action and professional exchange that has consequences in the world. Students in the major can expect to:

1. address critical questions in public and professional writing;
2. learn how to use the forms and genres of particular professions or fields;

3. learn how to compose effectively on behalf of an organization or campaign;
4. learn how to create engaging documents and carry out inquiry projects for a particular audience;
5. compose using appropriate modalities and technology;
6. compose with awareness of textual forms and conventions;
7. conduct responsible and ethical research;
8. explore the history and politics of writing in specific contexts;
9. engage with public debates over language, globalization, education, and writing; and
10. compose as a creative and disciplined form of critical inquiry.

In this course you will hone your skills of analysis and critical thinking, expressed in both writing and speech, and will learn to compose effectively in a variety of modes to engage with specific audiences.

Class methodology

This course blends classroom-based learning, (lecture, student presentations, debate and discussion), with experiential learning through field trips and field research. Class participation involves critical engagement with set readings through group presentations, discussion and debate. Students are encouraged to read further on the topics listed for each week.

Field Component(s)

CAPA provides the unique opportunity to learn about the city through direct, guided experience. Participation in the field activity for this course is required. You will actively explore the Global City you are currently living in. Guidance on each of these components will be offered in class. Students are strongly encouraged to participate in co-curricular *My Global Cities* activities.

Assessment & Grading

Task	Weighting
1. Class Participation including student-led discussions	20%
2. Blog posts	15%
3. First drafts and revisions of formal writing pieces	35%
4. Final project	30%

DESCRIPTOR	ALPHA	NUMERIC	GPA	REQUIREMENT/EXPECTATION
Outstanding (High Distinction)	A	93+	4.0	Maximum grade: In addition to description for grade "A-", the student shows detailed understanding of materials about which he or she can show independent analytical ability. This means the ability to question an issue from different perspectives and evaluate responses in an objective manner.
Excellent (Distinction)	A-	90 - 92	3.7	Student shows understanding of literature beyond the textbook/class hand-outs/class notes, and the work shows a high level of independent thought, presents informed and insightful discussion and demonstrates a well-developed capacity for evaluation.
Very good (High Credit)	B+	87 - 89	3.3	Shows evidence of a capacity to generalise from the taught content, or the material in literature, or from class lectures in an informed manner. Also, the work demonstrates a capacity to integrate personal reflection into the discussion and an appreciation of a range of different perspectives.
Good (Credit)	B	83 - 86	3.0	The work is well organised and contains coherent or logical argumentation and presentation.
Good (Credit)	B-	80 - 82	2.7	Student shows understanding of literature beyond the textbook and/or notes, and, there is evidence of additional reading.
Average (Good Pass)	C+	77-79	2.3	The work demonstrates a capacity to integrate research into the discussion and a critical appreciation of a range of theoretical perspectives. Also, the work demonstrates a clear understanding of the question and its theoretical implications and demonstrates evidence of additional reading.
Adequate (Pass)	C	73 - 76	2.0	Shows clear understanding and some insight into the material in the textbook and notes, but not beyond. A deficiency in understanding the material may be compensated by evidence of independent thought and effort related to the subject matter.
Below Average (Borderline Pass)	C-	70-72	1.7	Shows some understanding of the material in the textbook and notes. A deficiency in any of the above may be compensated by evidence of independent thought related to the subject matter.
Inadequate (Borderline Fail)	D+	67 - 69	1.3	Fails to show a clear understanding or much insight into the material in the textbook and notes
Poor (Fail)	D	60 - 66	0.7 - 1.0	Besides the above for D+, student has not shown interest or engagement in the class work or study.

Course Materials

Required Texts:

- *Writing to Change the World* by Mary Pipher.
- Handouts, paper or posted in CANVAS.
- Online newspaper access

Additional Recommended Texts & Resources:

- **Style Manual:** I recommend that you own a style handbook. I suggest something portable, and I can recommend *A Pocket Style Manual* by Diana Hacker & Nancy Sommers (Bedford/St. Martins); however, a recent edition of any reputable writer's handbook will do.
- **Online Style Manual:** As a digital alternative, I recommend owl.english.purdue.edu
- Access to a good dictionary

Weekly Schedule

Seminar	Topic	Activity/Assessment
1	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Intros, Course Description; in-class writing2. Discuss: "Beyond Hope" by Derrick Jensen, from the <i>Orion</i> website. (handout)3. Discuss "This. Here. Now. The climate catastrophe" by John Cook, from Best Australian Essays 2014. (handout or posting)	Revised in-class writing
2	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Discuss: Chapter 2 from Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere "Contested Meanings: A Brief History" (handout/posting)2. Discuss: "Am I Blue?" by Alice Walker (handout/posting)	Blot post 1-- response paper to Walker
3	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Discuss: Op-ed assignment and examples2. Discuss: Rachel A Akeny, "GM Modified Crops: to ban or not to ban? That's not the question", <i>The Conversation</i>, 23 August 2019, https://theconversation.com/gm-crops-to-ban-or-not-to-ban-thats-not-the-question-1222023. Discuss excerpt from <i>The Weather Makers</i> by Tim Flannery	Blog post 2--reflection on your relationship to the natural world
4	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Discuss "The ecomodernist gloss" segment from <i>Defiant Earth</i> by Clive Hamilton (handout)	Op-ed via CANVAS (formal)

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Discuss Eliza Griswold chapter from <i>Amity & Prosperity</i> 3. Film tba 	
5	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Workshop Op-eds 2. Look at press release guidelines/examples 3. Discuss “Preaching to the Choir” by Rebecca Solnit from <i>Harpers</i>, 11/11/2017 (handout) 	Blog post 3-response to Solnit
6	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Workshop Op-eds 2. Discuss Chapter 7 from <i>The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History</i> by Elizabeth Kolbert 	Press release via CANVAS (formal)
7	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Workshop press releases 2. Discuss Mary Pipher, <i>Writing to Change the World</i> through p. 132 	Op-ed revision
8	<p>Field class: details TBC</p> <p>Either tour of Australian Museum or Sydney Botanic Gardens</p>	
9	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discuss: Interview assignment 2. Discuss Mary Pipher through page 242 3. Discuss: David Bowman, “Aboriginal Fire Management: part of the solution to destructive bushfires”, 23 February 2016, <i>The Conversation</i>, https://theconversation.com/aboriginal-fire-management-part-of-the-solution-to-destructive-bushfires-55032 	Newsletter event report on field class (formal)
10	<p>Field class: details tbc</p>	Interview write-up (formal) via CANVAS
11	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discuss Final project guidelines 2. Discuss “Chronicles of Ice” by Gretel Ehrlich 3. Discuss annotated bibliography assignment 	Final project proposal (1 paragraph)
12	<p>Final week of classes will be devoted to student final presentations</p>	Final project annotated bibliography

		Revision: press release or event report (Optional) Class presentations
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Attendance, Participation & Student Responsibilities

Attendance

CAPA has a mandatory attendance policy. Attendance is taken at the beginning of every class.

The first time a student has an unexcused absence for a class, his/her grade will not be impacted. The second time a student has an unexcused absence in that class, it will result in a 3 percent reduction of the final grade (for example: an A- [92] will become an B+ [89]). The student will be placed on academic probation at this time. Three unexcused absences per class will result in failure of the course. A pattern of three absences in more than one course will result in dismissal from the workshop.

Excused Absences

Absences are only excused for medical reasons, for a family emergency or for a religious holiday. To request an excused absence, students must contact jmiller@capa.org ahead of time and provide evidence (e.g. a doctor's note) of the reason for his/her absence, otherwise the absence will not be excused. Even if the student knows the absence will not be excused, the student should still contact CAPA to inform CAPA they will not be in class. In addition to contacting jmiller@capa.org it is the responsibility of the student to contact his/her instructor and make up any missed assignments.

Class Participation

Participation is a vital part of your grade: students are expected to participate orally in seminars and in online forums and discussions in a critical and evaluative manner; to interact with the faculty and fellow students with respect and tolerance; and to actively engage in discussion. Derogatory or inflammatory comments about the cultures, perspectives or attitudes of others in the class will not be tolerated.

Academic Integrity

The faculty expects from you, the student, a high level of responsibility and academic honesty. Because the value of an academic course depends upon the absolute integrity of the work done by the student, it is imperative that a student demonstrates a high standard of individual honor in his or her scholastic work and class behavior. Plagiarism and cheating will result in dismissal from the program. See the Handbook of CAPA Academic Policies for more information and resources on plagiarism.

Use of electronic equipment in class

All devices such as laptops, I-pods, I-pads, netbooks, notebooks and tablets, smartphones, cell phones, etc. are NOT allowed unless you have express permission from the faculty or you have been instructed to do so. If you require an accommodation to use any type of electronic equipment, inform the Director of Academic Affairs or the Resident Director at the beginning of Term.

Use of Electronic Translators

In Language courses students are NOT allowed to use electronic translators for writing texts in the target language: those submitting compositions and texts of whatever kind translated in such a fashion will receive a final F grade for the course.

Late Submission

Late submission of papers due, projects, journal entries, pieces of homework and portfolios is only permitted with prior approval. A request must be made to the relevant Faculty member no later than two days prior to the due date. Late submission without prior approval will result in a full alpha grade penalty. In either case, work cannot be submitted after feedback has been provided to the rest of the class on the relevant assessment or one week after the due date whichever comes first, after which point a grade of F will be given for the assessment.

Behavior during Examinations

During examinations, you must do your own work. Unless specifically instructed by the lecturer or instructor, talking during an exam is not permitted, nor may you compare papers, copy from others, or collaborate in any way. Any failure to abide by examination rules will result in failure of the exam and may lead to failure of the course and disciplinary action.