Introduction to
Rhetoric, Composition, & Literacy Studies

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<th>Course</th>
<th>Instructor</th>
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<tr>
<td>English 6320</td>
<td>Randall W. Monty, PhD</td>
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<td>Section 01I &amp; 02I</td>
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<td>ELABS 185</td>
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<td>M 7:20-9:50pm</td>
<td>Fall 2017 office hours &amp; availability:</td>
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<td>Blackboard</td>
<td>- Edinburg - MTF by appointment, W 1:45-3:15pm, R 1:00-3:00pm</td>
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<td>rclrgv.pbworks.com</td>
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WELCOME!

Throughout this semester, we will investigate some of the foundational and influential scholarship of the discipline of Rhetoric and Composition, with an equal-time focus on the related field of Literacy Studies. We will explore the historical trajectories of these terms, as well as what they mean when situated in contemporary contexts.

The topics addressed in this course were selected to give students a solid foundation on which to scaffold their developing intellectual and professional selves. Therefore, through this course, I will invite you to more closely consider the benefits, expectations, and obligations of what it means to be a graduate student within the discipline of Rhetoric and Composition, and more specifically, at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. As part of this learning process, you will have the opportunity to meet and interact with the RCLS faculty of our program, who will visit to talk about their interests, your interests, and (hopefully) the course topics.

Whether your scholarly goals involve mastery of a specific disciplinary focus, supplementing your current professional situation, or even if you’re entering into Rhetoric and Composition for the first time, the readings, discussions, and assignments you will encounter throughout this course should help you to move closer towards your goal(s). As a graduate student, meeting these objectives will largely – and increasingly
– be your own responsibility, but rest assured that I am here to help usher you through that process. I don’t plan to give you too many direct answers to your questions, but instead I hope to help figure out how to come up with your own answers – and your own questions.

Cheers,

[Signature]

OVERVIEW

PREPARING YOURSELF TO WORK
You may have noticed the letter “R” next to the course section number on your schedule. That is not the MPAA rating for this course, rather that is meant to indicate that this is a “reduced seat” class. For those of you unfamiliar with this type of class, reduced seat means that class meetings and the delivery of course content are to be between 50-80% “hybird” or online. What that means for us, is that we will have a lot of ways to play with how and when we meet online, as a whole group, in small groups, and individually. Check the tentative course calendar (below) for expected meeting dates.

Online: Be prepared to substantially participate in online discussions via the Blackboard discussion board. Each week, you will be assigned a series of readings (or videos, audio, etc.), and each week you will be expected to discuss them. See the “Participation & Discussion” assignment description below for more info.

Whole group: Be on time for the start of each class meeting, and bring your course readings and anything you need to do your writing work to class every day. If we start an activity and you don’t have the necessary materials or walk in late, you won’t be able to constructively contribute to the work, and you may not receive credit for that portion of that assignment. You should expect to meet in whole group once every other week, on average.

Small group: Periodically throughout the semester, you and your disciplinary peers (that is, the other students on the same degree track as you) will be required to meet with me and a representative faculty member from your discipline. These meetings may take place during scheduled class time, or they may take place at another time that meets all of our schedules.
Individual: Twice during the semester, you will be required to meet with your instructor (ahem, me) to discuss your work for this class and plans for the future. The first wave of meetings will take place during the first month of class, and the second meetings will take place before the last month. These meetings will be work-oriented, which in this case means that we should expect to meet for 30-45 minutes, with a goal of getting a lot of planning and discussion work done.

ACCESSIBILITY
This class is designed with the goal of being accessible for all students. If you have a documented condition or ability that may make it difficult for you to carry out the work as we have outlined and/or you need special accommodations or assistance because of the disability, please contact immediately the Disability Services Office (DSO), University Center Rm. 322. Appropriate arrangements and accommodations can be made. Verification of disability and processing for special services, such as note takers, extended time, separate accommodations for testing, is required and will be determined by DSO. Consult DSO Coordinator at (956) 316-7005. Additionally, I am willing to work with you to help make this class meet your needs, so long as you feel comfortable in this regard.

SUPPORT SERVICES
This is a writing intensive course, and writing is a collaborative process - even if you'll be individually assessed on your writing. Fortunately, the UTRGV Writing Center offers tutoring, instruction, and support for all things writing based. Best off, it’s free (or, more accurately, you’ve already paid for it). It can be found in STAC 3.119 (Edinburg) and UBLB 3.206 (Brownsville). In addition to face-to-face consultations, the Writing Center offers synchronous Skype consultations and asynchronous email feedback. Contact the Writing Center at wc@utrgv.edu for more info.

For those aspects of your life that cause stress or pain, UTRGV offers counseling services for all of its students. Balancing work, personal life, and school can be difficult, at times, so seek support as it's needed. You can reach the UTRGV Counseling service at counseling@utrgv.edu.

DISCIPLINARY WRITING
Through in-class and online discussions, we will draw from a variety of topics, themes, concepts, and theories from your previous English undergraduate courses. Importantly, this course is based on praxis, the intersection of theory and practice. This concept will lead us as we critically analyze and produce professional documents, primarily through in-class discussion and exercises derived from simulations or “cases” provided by the textbook and other reading materials.

WRITING, REVISION, FEEDBACK
It shouldn’t come as a surprise to find out that successfully navigating this class will involve a lot of writing on your part. Upper division courses are like that. Through composing in a variety of modes, that you will be able to articulate your ideas to a wide range of audiences. Our writing will also serve an epistemological function – writing isn’t just how to show what you’ve learned, but it is the exacting process through which you create meaning. In other words, you learn by writing.

One of my main goals when I teach is to help students develop a sense that writing is a work of process. That is, impactful writing begins well before you type your first word of a given composition, and it continues until well after you’ve typed your last. To help make your writing the best that it can be, you should expect to meet with me and your peers, individually and in small group, at various points during the semester. While I will not assign grades to each stage of the writing process, you will be required to rethink and revise parts or all of every piece of writing based on the feedback you get. As you work on your drafts, you will need to keep track of the feedback you receive, as well as the revision and editing changes you make, with each successive draft. In doing so, you will create a track record of your work that spans the entire course and semester.

In spite of our better efforts, it can be difficult to estimate your course grade throughout the semester. If you’d like to have an idea of where you stand after you’ve completed a substantial amount of writing and revision, please make an appointment to meet me outside of class, and I will review your work with you and give you a better sense of where you are, grade-wise. It will be entirely your responsibility to set up a meeting if you’re curious or concerned, and it’s important that you not wait until the last week or so to start asking about grades. At that point, it will likely be too late for you to do what needs to be done to significantly raise your overall course grade.

**INDIVIDUAL TOPICS**

In order to complete the various tasks and assignment for this course, you will focus on one of the following individual topics during the course of this semester: your current major area of study, your anticipated professional field, your current work or volunteer field, or your anticipated major area of graduate study. This will result in each student in the class having a slightly different focus. However, this individual differentiation will allow the whole group to maintain a focus on the writing, revision, and feedback aspects of the class.

**COURSE READINGS, DISCUSSIONS**

This is an upper-division course, and as such, you will be expected to read and respond to a considerable amount of scholarship and popular media, and then to contribute to in-class and online discussions related to these readings. Simply scanning over an assigned reading will not be sufficient, rather, you will be expected to peruse each reading thoroughly and carefully, take copious notes, and prepare yourself to talk about, question, and respond to what you have read.
All assigned readings for this course (except one) will be free and easy to access via the course Blackboard. Each assigned reading must be completed by the Monday of the week indicated, with online discussions taking place throughout the week. If at some point you are asked to assign a supplemental reading to the class, you should be sure to prioritize accessibility along with disciplinary usefulness.

TECHNOLOGICAL ACCESS, RESOURCES

In order to participate in this class, you will need:

- UTRGV e-mail account and ID. These will be needed for email correspondence, access to the course Blackboard, access to the OneDrive cloud, and to conduct secondary research through the UTRGV Library.
- Computer and internet access for in-class work. If you have a laptop, tablet, or smartphone, please bring it with you to class.
- Social Media. Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Google, Skype
- Internet access from home. Or, at the very least, a plan for how you can access and use the internet when not on campus.
- Software, such as PDF X-Change Viewer, Adobe Acrobat, or some other program that will allow you to view (and ideally, take notes on) PDFs.
  - Some sort of digital image manipulation software, such as Photoshop, GIMP, or Paint.NET, would be useful, too.
  - Check the bookstore for software, receive student discounts.
- You may want some sort of means to save your electronic work, such as a reliable pin drive, or an account with a web-based cloud service (such as Google Drive, Dropbox, etc.).

ASSIGNMENT SEQUENCE

Your written work is a reflection of your capabilities and efforts, and written assignments will comprises the majority of your final grade. You are therefore expected to produce high-quality, sophisticated documents. Neatness, visual appeal, and mechanical and grammatical correctness are important, although they do not alone guarantee a well-made document (or a desirable grade). Your written documents should have contextually-appropriate margins, spacing, pagination, and formatting. Similarly, your productions in electronic and other media should be well-designed and end-user compatible. In short: take pride in your writing, and aim to produce professional quality work.

Assignment descriptions and rubrics, including those collaboratively composed by the students themselves, will be available on the course Blackboard. All assignments are due by posting online to the appropriate assignment module of discussion thread by 11:30pm of the due date (see course calendar).
Participation & Discussion (300 points – 30% of your final grade)

Students are expected to attend all class meetings and to participate in all discussions and workshops. The class discussions will help you understand the course content and improve your writing. Class workshop days will incorporate guided discussions of a sample student project (sometimes yours, sometimes one written by a classmate). As you should expect of a graduate course, you need to be in class on time, with the readings prepared and your work completed.

This class is scheduled to meet as a whole group on Monday evenings throughout the semester, but a more accurate way of understanding the class would be think of it as a continuous hybrid course. In other words, students will be expected to participate in the class throughout the week, through a variety of spaces. For some whole group meetings, the instructor will lead class from Edinburg, and for other meetings, they will be in Brownsville. If you cannot attend the whole group meeting in person, it is your responsibility to join the rest of the class to Skype or Google Hangout into the class meeting. In addition, this It is vital that students consistently check in and participate via the course wiki. Participation via Twitter will be handled on a case-by-case basis for extra (or make-up) credit. In addition, students will occasionally be required to meet on hybrid days to participate in library research, technology workshops, presentations, individual and small group consultations, or other activities.

Rhetorical Responses (100 – 10%)

In addition to the whole group discussions (which will take place either online or in class), you will compose a brief (1-2 pages) response to the assigned readings. Through these responses, you should seek to synthesize the content of the readings and develop a single argument of what rhetoric, composition, and literacy studies can be understood as impacting each other. You don’t have a ton of space to make your argument, so your response should privilege conciseness and accuracy.

You will need to complete 10 rhetorical responses throughout the semester (your choice), submitted by the end of week. Supplemental readings assigned for guest faculty do not need to be incorporated into Rhetorical Responses.

Academic Journal Analysis & Presentation (200 – 20%)

Students will select one academic journal from (or closely connected to) the discipline of Rhetoric & Composition and analyze it for its rhetorical and discursive functions, creating a sort of “biographical sketch” of the publication and its stakeholders. Students will then present their findings to the whole group, and post abstract summaries on the course wiki and via other social media spaces. The
collective data will serve as a resource for all students as they conduct their secondary research for their Scholarly Book Review and Professionalization projects.

**Scholarly Book Review (200 – 20%)**

Remember that “except one” caveat mentioned in the "Course Readings" section? (It’s up there. Go take a look. I can wait.) For that book, you will select a recently published book that relates to your individual topic or area of specialization. In order to demonstrate your understanding of the book, including how it fits into larger disciplinary conversations, you will compose a scholarly book review essay according to the parameters of one of the scholarly journals reviewed by you or your peers. Part of this assignment includes submitting the book review for publication, although your score will not be determined on whether or not your proposal is accepted.

**Graduate Student Professionalization Project (200 – 20%)**

This one will be wide open, depending upon you. This assignment could take the form of an early thesis proposal, portfolio plan, course design, or some other project that will help you prepare for your future graduate and/or professional work. What I’m most interested in seeing is how you can take the content of this course and modify, transform, or remix it into something that will be directly applicable to your professional goals.

**GUIDELINES**

**ASSESSMENT**

**Scoring**

You may have noticed that the possible points for the assignments and activities listed in the section above add up to more than 100 points. In fact, there will be a total of 1000 possible points available to you over the course of this semester, and this move has more meaning than simply adding a zero. What this change does is provides me with a better way to organize and track student data, while providing you with a greater assurance that you will be assessed and credited for each task you are asked to complete. Additionally, this system helps ensure that individual assignments are valued to be commensurate with the work required to complete them. In other words, assignments that require more time and effort are worth more points.

In order to ensure that you receive proper credit for your day-to-day efforts in this course, I will periodically evaluate everything else you do for class (reading responses, workshops, in-class writings, blog posts & comments, homework, etc.), and assign scores based on participation.
This will allow me a chance to let you know how you’re doing in different areas and how you can improve throughout the semester. At the end the semester, there will be a total number of possible points. Your specific grade will be determined by what percentage of the total points you have accumulated:

1000-900 total points; 90-100% of total possible points = A
899-800 total points; 80-89% of total possible points = B
799-700 total points; 70-79% of total possible points = C
699-600 total points; 60-69% of total possible points = D
599-0 total points; 0-59% of total possible points = F

Formatting
In order to ease the peer review and submission processes, please use a font and text size that will make it easier for your readers to print and respond to your work. Additionally, when submitting drafts to your instructor, please save and submit your rough drafts in one of the following formats: DOC/DOCX, RTF, or shared via Google Docs.

Submitted final drafts should be saved as PDF, JPEG, or some other final and universal format.

When you save your drafts, use the following naming convention: UTRGV username (your email address before the @ sign), short name for the assignment, due date
For example: randall.monty01 Instructions 03.17.16

You will earn individual scores and a cumulative grade based on your work. Quantity, while important, is no substitute for quality. In other words, simply completing an assignment will not guarantee a certain result – you must produce work befitting an upper-division student.

A note on grades...
Meeting course and assignment requirements will result in the student earning an average grade for this course, as in “C” or “B,” not “A.” Likewise, coming to and participating in every class meeting, and submitting every assignment on time, are not acts that earn extra credit; those are expected by you enrolling in this course. A higher grade of “A” will be based on the distinctive quality, development, and reflective nature of your work, as well as your ability to guide a piece of writing through the various stages of a writing process and your willingness to peer review and explore new readings, genres, and techniques.

POLICIES & RESOURCES
ATTENDANCE
Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes and may be dropped from the course for excessive absences. UTRGV’s attendance policy excuses students from attending class if they are participating in officially sponsored university activities, such as athletics; for observance of religious holy days; or for military service. Students should contact the instructor in advance of the excused absence and arrange to make up missed work or examinations.

If a student is absent for any combination of more than three (3) whole group class days, hybrid assignments, or group or individual meetings, they will have difficulty passing the course or earning a high final grade. If these absences occur prior to the university’s stated drop date, the student may be dropped from the class.

LATE WORK
Late work makes life hard for all of us (you, me, your peers, the program, the department, the institution, the local flora and fauna, etc.), so you should expect and prepare to turn in all assignments by their due dates. Assignments submitted after their due dates may not be accepted. If you know of an upcoming absence, make arrangements to complete and turn in your work early. The hybrid nature of this course allows for some flexibility with regards to participating in class, even when a student is not physically present, but persistent tardiness will only inhibit learning.

SCHOLASTIC INTEGRITY
As members of a community dedicated to Honesty, Integrity and Respect, students are reminded that those who engage in scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and expulsion from the University. Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: cheating, plagiarism (including self-plagiarism), and collusion; submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person; taking an examination for another person; any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student; or the attempt to commit such acts. Since scholastic dishonesty harms the individual, all students and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced (Board of Regents Rules and Regulations and UTRGV Academic Integrity Guidelines). All scholastic dishonesty incidents will be reported to the Dean of Students. If you have questions about whether your use of other sources (such as books, websites, friends, writing center tutors) is fair or not, please ask before turning in the work that you have a question about.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
Students with a documented disability (physical, psychological, learning, or other disability which affects academic performance) who would like to receive academic accommodations should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) as soon as possible to schedule an appointment to initiate services. Accommodations can be arranged through
SAS at any time, but are not retroactive. Students who suffer a broken bone, severe injury or undergo surgery during the semester are eligible for temporary services. Brownsville Campus: Student Accessibility Services is located in Cortez Hall Room 129 and can be contacted by phone at (956) 882-7374 (Voice) or via email at ability@utrgv.edu. Edinburg Campus: Student Accessibility Services is located in 108 University Center and can be contacted by phone at (956) 665-7005 (Voice), (956) 665-3840 (Fax), or via email at ability@utrgv.edu.

**MANDATORY COURSE EVALUATION PERIOD**

Students are required to complete an ONLINE evaluation of this course, accessed through your UTRGV account (http://my.utrgv.edu); you will be contacted through email with further instructions. Students who complete their evaluations will have priority access to their grades. Online evaluations will be available:

- Fall 2017 Module 1 Oct. 5 – Oct. 11
- Fall 2017 Module 2 Nov. 29 – Dec. 5
- Fall 2017 (full semester) Nov. 15 – Dec. 6

**SEXUAL HARASSMENT, DISCRIMINATION, AND VIOLENCE**

In accordance with UT System regulations, your instructor is a "Responsible Employee" for reporting purposes under Title IX regulations and so must report any instance, occurring during a student’s time in college, of sexual assault, stalking, dating violence, domestic violence, or sexual harassment about which she/he becomes aware during this course through writing, discussion, or personal disclosure. More information can be found at www.utrgv.edu/equity, including confidential resources available on campus. The faculty and staff of UTRGV actively strive to provide a learning, working, and living environment that promotes personal integrity, civility, and mutual respect that is free from sexual misconduct and discrimination.