

WRIT 494

Senior Seminar: Writing Research and Publication

Course Syllabus – Spring 2019

Wilson 1-124, 9:25-10:40 TR

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Course e-presence: D2L

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Course Description and Learning Objectives

“Senior Seminar.” “Capstone.” “Research Seminar.” Whatever you like to call it, it’s the place where you Put It All Together (*it all* being whatever you’ve been learning along the way), where you demonstrate your ability to Write Big Things (*big* being more about import than size), where we make sure you have the tools and habits to make your way in the world as A Writer (where we build assurance that once you have your degree you will only be working at coffee shops, movie theaters, or Home Depot if you *want* to), and where you create a professional online Portfolio that markets you as a writer and demonstrates what your years in the major have let you learn and produce. Also we’re going to hang out and generally act like writers and readers of each other’s work.

Three main project threads shape the course. First, we’ll be exploring the course booklist, which is focused on epistemologies of sorts important to writers: textual, experiential, linguistic, and inferential. These readings will both expand your thinking as a writer and connect to the second and third threads in the course. The second is a major semester-length contributive research project of your choosing. Our third thread I will refer to simply as “professional practice.” This line of work will include creating application materials (for work or for further schooling) and developing your online portfolio.

Taken together, your work on these threads should convince you and me that you’ve done your work in this major, and it has done its work in you. Put in terms of learning outcomes, my goals for the course are these:

- Demonstrate your ability to create, manage, and develop an extended writing project through habits and practices known by professional writers to be productive and sustainable.
- Launch a credible professional portfolio in an online space.
- Build your confidence in your ability and strategies for obtaining work and projects as a writer.
- Reflect on, and thereby develop a relatable narrative of, what you learned as a Writing major.

Course Texts

- Joseph Harris, [*Rewriting: How to Do Things with Texts*](#), 2nd ed., 2017. ISBN: 9781607326861.
- Candace Spigelman, [*Personally Speaking: Experience as Evidence in Academic Discourse*](#), 2004. ISBN: 978-0809325900.
- George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, [*Metaphors We Live By*](#), 2003. ISBN: 9780226468013.
- Cathy O’Neil, [*Weapons of Math Destruction*](#), 2017. ISBN: 9780553418835.
- PDFs on D2L Readings page (in Content).

Coursework

- Engagement in class discussions, workshops, and readings 15% (credit)
- Writing Group Response Blog 15% (credit)
- Collaborative Book Review 10% (letter)
- Application Package
including Position Analysis, Letter, and Resume (or equivalents) 15% (letter)
- Semester Research Project
including Proposal/Bib, Literature Review, and teacher and final drafts 25% (letter)
- Online Portfolio
including Storyboard/TOC, Network map, Reflective writing, and Site 20% (credit)
100%

Evaluation and Grading

Credit Grades are full credit, no credit, partial credit, and extra credit. Credit grades are given for work which is, simply, either done well to a reasonable standard, or not, per guidelines given for applicable assignments. Extra credit acknowledges work which rises well above the typical standard the majority of the class achieves.

Letter Grades are reserved for finalized writing. I'll judge writing quality by these traits:

- Design that matches intended genre and/or assignment guidelines
- Reader awareness and appropriateness of document for user needs, values, and expectations
- Clarity of arguments and strength of support for them
- Source use appropriate to genre/assignment and writer's needs
- Careful stylistic crafting of writing and document design
- Editing and proofreading

A writing shows little or no weakness in any of these traits.

B writing shows some weakness in some traits.

C writing shows some weakness in most traits, or great weakness in some.

D writing shows some weakness in all traits, or great weakness in most.

F writing shows great weakness in all traits.

Writing letter grade → equivalent percentage of project credit earned

A+	100%	B+	88%	C+	78%	D+	68%	F	50-0%
A	95	B	85	C	75	D	65		
A-	92	B-	82	C-	72	D-	62		

Collaborative Projects

On collaborative projects (i.e. response blog and book review), your credit depends in part on your contribution *as rated by the professor and your teammates*. You will be required to account for your specific contributions to collaborative projects. Students who fail to contribute will have their credit for the project distributed among the other teammates as extra credit.

Course Policies

- **Attendance is required.** Excessive tardiness or partial attendance count as absences. **More than 4 absences limits your course grade to a maximum of C.**
- **Submit major assignments** by emailing a **Word docx file** to doug.downs@montana.edu. **Filenames must include your first name and a short assignment title**, e.g., *Jim - Profile.docx*. PDFs and Pages files will not be accepted. *Google docs cannot be shared with my montana.edu address and should be downloaded as Word files rather than shared with me directly.*
- **Your work in this class is always public.** Don't submit writing you can't let us all read.

- **Collaboration is highly encouraged**—real writers write with readers.
- I decide whether to accept **late work** case-by-case. Do not assume yes or no; check with me. (When other students will be significantly disadvantaged by your extra time, there will be a credit penalty.)
- If your **work becomes lost or missing**, you must provide another copy no matter whose fault it is.
- Writing that was or will be submitted for other assignments in other courses will not usually be accepted here too. You may work on the same problems, but **not double-dip** the writing itself.
- **Plagiarism:** You are responsible for acknowledging source material in your writing. Cheating—whether by claiming others' work as your own (fraud) or by fabricating material—will result in a course grade of F and a report to the Dean of Students.
- **ADA and Accessibility:** If because of a documented physical or psychological disability you are unable to meet the requirements outlined in this syllabus or assignment sheets, apprise me immediately. Disabled Student Services (x2824, 155 SUB) will assist you in documenting a disability and coordinating any resulting accommodations.
- **I reserve final discretion in adjusting grades to account for unanticipated circumstances.**
- **I may use copies of your work**, anonymously, as samples in future classes or for research.
- **Your continued enrollment in this course constitutes your acceptance of this syllabus and its policies.**

Semester Schedule

Date	Subjects of the Day	Readings Due	Assignments Due
1			
Jan. 10	Course intro		
2			
Jan. 15	Launch research / Proposal	Harris chs Intro, 1, 2	
Jan. 17	Source search methods		Create Response Blog / first round
3			
Jan. 22	Reading discussion	Harris chs 3-4	Blog
Jan. 24	Workshop proposal Guest speaker (tentative)		Draft proposal
4			
Jan. 29	Launch App Pack	Harris chs 5-6	Proposal DUE Mon. 1/28 by 8 p.m.
Jan. 31	Position search Rhetorical analysis		Blog
5			
Feb. 5	Creating Letters and Resumes		Position Analysis DUE by class
Feb. 7	Reading discussion Job docs	Spiegelman ch 1	Blog
6			
Feb. 12	Workshop / Job docs		Draft resume or CV
Feb. 14	Workshop Reading discussion	Spiegelman ch 2	Draft cover letter or personal statement
Blog (Friday 5 p.m.)			
7			
Feb. 19	Reading discussion Launch Book Review	Brodkey (D2L)	App Pack DUE Mon 2/18 by 8 p.m.
Feb. 21	Reading discussion	Spiegelman ch 3	Blog
8			
Feb. 26	Guest speaker (tentative) Reading discussion	Spiegelman ch 4	Blog
Feb. 28	Workshop / Book Review Launch Literature Review		Draft book review
Book Review DUE Fri. 3/1, end of day			
9			
Mar. 5	Guest speaker (tentative) Reading discussion	L&J chs 1-10 (pp 1-51)	Blog
Mar. 7	Workshop / Lit review		Draft review of literature
10			
Mar. 12	NO CLASS – Prof. Conf.	L&J chs 11-17 (pp 52-105)	Blog
Mar. 14	NO CLASS – Prof. Conf.		Lit Review DUE Fri. 3/15, end of day

Mar. 18 ----- SPRING BREAK!!! ----- Mar. 22

11

Mar. 26	Reading discussion	L&J ch 18-22 (pp 106-155)	Blog
Mar. 28	Workshop / reader draft Guest speaker (tentative)		Reader draft (partial)

12

Apr. 2	Workshop / reader draft Reading discussion	L&J ch 23-30 (pp 156-237)	Reader draft (partial) Blog
Apr. 4	Workshop / reader draft Guest speaker (tentative)		Reader draft (partial)

Teacher Draft DUE Fri. 4/5 end of day

13

Apr. 9	Launch Portfolio Reading discussion	Lanham (D2L) O'Neil chs 1-2 (pp 1-50)	Blog
Apr. 11	NO CLASS: Prof. Conf.		Storyboard + TOC / Site nav DUE by end of 4/11 (email pics)

14

Apr. 16	Network map Reading discussion	O'Neil chs 3-7 (pp 51-140)	
Apr. 18	Reading discussion Writing public reflection	Yancey (D2L)	Blog

15

Apr. 23	Workshop / Website Reading discussion	O'Neil chs 8-Afterword (pp 141-240)	Site Build Blog
Apr. 25	Workshop / Website Course wrap		Site Build

FINALS WEEK: Final Research Project and Online Portfolio DUE 6 p.m. Weds., May 1

Assignment Guides

Writing Group Response Blog

Write posts on readings and ongoing class discussion for your writing group's blog. Every four weeks, you're responsible for one "lead" post and three response posts.

Rationale

As usual in English-Writing classes, we'd like a way for you to discuss readings through written response and reflection—ideally a way that lets several students converse with each other in writing, but that doesn't overwhelm you with continual writing on reading. The approach this class will use is one blog per four-student writing group, with one lead post and three shorter responses to (comments on) that post each week. This will ensure that everyone writes only 3-4 lead posts during the semester, and that there is high interaction within a writing group. Finally, blogs should be understood as examples of Spiegelman's "personal academic writing," enacting various moves Harris highlights in *Rewriting*.

Guidelines

- **Lead Posts** should address the week's reading and, as appropriate, preceding class discussion. Occasionally I will prompt specific focuses, but often the focus of the lead post will be up to the writer or the group. Lead posts should be at least 500 words (but need not be much longer), and should take advantage of the affordances of the blogging modality/genre with regard to images/videos/sound, color, hyperlinks, voice, etc. The lead post is meant to initiate a conversation in the writing group that following responses will take up and extend. Think of it as a starter: it may pose questions it doesn't answer itself, seek opinions from others in the writing group, or assay particular paths of thought that responders may take up or "complete" as they wish.
- **Responses** should address issues raised in the lead post and, if the writer desires, introduce new focuses as they relate to the lead post. Responses should be around 250-300 words, and *may* take advantage of blogging affordances but are not expected/required to. Responses should be posted *as comments on the lead post*, rather than as new posts themselves. (Which may influence what composing affordances are available, depending on your blogging platform.) Responses 3 and 4 each week should understand themselves not only as in conversation with the lead post, but with preceding responses to it as well. Responses (though leads too) should try to consciously implement various of Harris's moves—coming to terms, forwarding, countering, remixing, etc.
- **Rotation of lead posts** should be established by your writing group at the beginning of the semester and emailed to me. The group should decide which member will make the first week's lead post, who will make the second week's lead, etc. There should be no need to set an order of responders each week. We are scheduled for fourteen posts, meaning that two group members will do an "extra" lead post, for which they will receive some extra credit. Take this into consideration in establishing your initial rotation.
- **Deadline** for the lead post is *by class time* on the due-date shown unless otherwise noted. Responses are then due *within the following 24 hours*, and ideally by the end of the day of the due-date shown.

To earn full credit for each lead post or response, follow the guidelines above. Lead posters *please* be aware that the rest of your group's success any given week *relies on you*. Have your post made by the time the group agrees to and give your group good material to work with. This is where professionalism matters and is enacted, just as will be required of you in later professional settings where others depend on your timely intellectual production.

Semester Research Project Overview

Create a 20-25 page (DS) (or multi-modal equivalent) scholarly or community-engaged researched text or product that combines your learning in the major and a firsthand inquiry-based experience to develop new knowledge for, or make some contribution to, the field of Writing Studies or another specified readership.

Rationale

As a Core RH (Research-Humanities) course, we are mandated to conduct a major researched-writing project. But beyond the mandate, it is simply essential that Writing majors practice managing a sustained, semester-length, writing project, flowing it amidst other significant tasks and projects, leading to the production of new knowledge related to your field of study. This is what we've been leading you toward for three years in the major.

Order of Operations

- We'll begin working on proposals for the project in the second week of class. By the fourth week, you will have settled on and formally proposed your project via the Research Proposal/Bibliography (described below), which will define an open research question related to your field of study as well as suggest methods for the firsthand research experience that will also inform the project. Your project should aim to produce 20-25 polished pages of writing. (Nominally. There will be flexibility around the page requirement depending on the nature of your project, its modality/ies, etc.)
- During weeks 5-12, you'll work on the project while we also work on other class reading and projects; it will be your responsibility to flow the time to follow through on your plans for both reviewing existing research and creating your firsthand inquiry experience.
- By the end of week 10, you'll produce a Review of Literature (described below) which will offer the foundation and jumping-off point for your project. (Usually the LR comprises about a third of the text of the overall project, in the final version.)
- By the end of week 12, you'll produce a full Teacher Draft of your piece to submit to me (after workshopping on several class days) for ungraded feedback to guide further development.
- Based on my feedback, you'll revise to a final version of your project to be submitted during Finals Week. In addition, you will be responsible for publicly presenting your work in ways we'll determine as a class later in the semester. Your final project will receive a letter grade based on the general rubric on syllabus page 2, your stated goals for the piece, its readership/intended use, and the quality of your semester's work and its result.

Project Options, Parameters, and Restrictions

Initially, you'll need to choose between two paths (or find a blend of them) for your project:

1. **First Option:** Your project could be **purely / traditionally academic: taking up some problem in Writing Studies (or related areas including rhetoric, discourse, linguistics, literacy, etc.) and saying something needing saying to the field which studies it.** See, for example, every [Young Scholars in Writing](#) article ever published, written by people just like you. (Click to [Issues](#) and just look through some titles and abstracts to see kinds of problems and questions undergrad scholarship works on.) Note that while the most familiar form of this project would be a traditional essay or article, I'll invite and encourage multi-modal compositions suitable for [digital presentation](#), submission to [online journals](#) dedicated to [undergraduate research](#), or other online publication you might suggest. Think a scale/scope for this project of 20-25 pages, or a multimodal equivalent.
2. **Second Option:** Your project could be **community-engaged research that identifies an issue or problem in a specific, usually local, community or organization which can be addressed through application of Writing Studies knowledge / perspective and inquiry** (for example, what we know about rhetoric, literacy, discourse, communication, persuasion, or design) **and creates texts that address it.** Examples would be designing a voter-registration drive for a voting advocacy organization, designing a fundraising campaign for a local nonprofit, bringing a policy proposal to the City Council or ASMSU,

creating an installation or exhibit at a museum or gallery on some element of history or art related to your studies, or in some other way deploying the particular communicative and persuasive powers of your field to solve a community problem.

Your project may be collaborative with one or more other members of the class if you wish (with suitable adjustments to scale to account for multiple workers on the project).

In an ideal world, your subject of inquiry would be something you've studied and worked on in a previous class in your major—your 494 project would expand, dig deeper, and take on new terrain within that area, leveraging from what you've previously learned and moving on to further problems or questions. So, first, consider any past work you've done in your WRIT, ENGL, or LIT courses on subjects you'd like to take back up, and take much further than you had a chance to before. (You will usually not be able to draw from a project you're already doing in another current class; using the "previous platform" approach requires that the other course's work already have been completed in a previous semester.) **But if, in considering, you find nothing that you want to take further, or, if you have a burning desire to strike a new, particular path on this project, and work on a problem new and interesting to you, that's okay, you're welcome to do so.** This would be especially true, for example, if you'd like to combine subjects or expertise from a second major or minor field with your Writing Studies expertise. Again, you're strongly encouraged to bring it if you got it.

One way or another, your projects will share these features:

- They'll be *question- or problem-oriented* rather than topic- or issue-oriented. (That is, you'll begin from an open question specific to a field of study, or a statement of a specific problem, rather than from a general topic or a broad argument on a social issue.)
- They'll be *inquiry-driven*, meaning that you'll use methods of scholarly research to ask and address questions or problems whose answers are not yet known.
- They'll join an *ongoing conversation* on your question or problem, which you'll demonstrate through review of existing conversation. Expect to create a roughly 20-25-source (substantially scholarly) bibliography for this project, ultimately.
- They'll have *stakeholders* outside our classroom, and your work will have material consequences for those stakeholders.
- They'll be publicly *showcased* or demonstrated in a polished way by the end of the semester.

A couple don'ts and no's:

- *You may not strike off on a subject that's interesting to you but which is not related to your major field.* "How To Cure Depression In Ten Easy Steps"? Not unless you're a psychology minor too and part of the cure is writing. "Why U.S. Immigration Policy Is Hopelessly Screwed"? When did this become a Poli-Sci or Sociology class. Etc., etc.
- *You may not simply revise an existing project/paper.* As encouraged above, it's great to work in an area you've already studied and *explore a new question stemming from that*, but you're not invited to only improve or deepen an existing project. It must cover substantive new ground your prior project didn't.

Proposal / Bibliography (Research Project)

Write a formal proposal for your semester research project that states your research question, demonstrates the source of your interest in it, explains the question/project as addressing an open problem in (or related to) your field of study, offers a method and plan/timeline for your own first-hand inquiry experience on the question, and provides a preliminary bibliography demonstrating how your proposal addresses a gap or niche in the field's existing work.

Rationale

Major projects require clear initial vision to ensure their meaningfulness, validity, and feasibility: Does what you want to do matter to anyone else / will it make an impact? Does what you want to do actually fulfill the assignment and stand to actually address the problem you're taking up? And can you actually do what you want to in the time that you have and with the resources available to you? Proposals ensure there are good answers to these questions before you fully invest in the project. No significant professional writing project happens without a proposal, no matter the realm / scene of work (corporate, nonprofit, government, civic, etc.) This is a genre you should become fluent in as you graduate.

Description and Instructions

Your proposal will be a 2-4 page (DS) Word document that includes sections on the issues described above:

- Your research question, stated *as a question* (that is, ending with a question mark)
- Explanation of the source of your personal interest in this question
- Explanation of *why* it's an open question / problem
- Explanation of method for creating a firsthand inquiry experience that will help you address the question
- Preliminary bibliography that shows how existing research creates a gap or niche which your question addresses.
- Timeline showing project milestones and major tasks.

Explanation of open problem is the main task for any research proposal. I'll recommend that you orient yours in opposition to a status quo: "The way things work right now / are assumed to be is X. However, that gives you Y problem, which the field has not worked on. My research investigates Z approach instead." This is a reliable structure for demonstrating the "niche" or *gap* which the field has not yet addressed but your research will.

Methods of inquiry will vary by the project. If your project is *theoretical*, arguing for example for a given reading of a given text, or developing a systematic explanation for some phenomena, your methods are essentially reading and thinking. If your project is an *empirical* study of some phenomena, your methods are likely to include interviews, surveys, ethnographic observation, discourse analysis, archival research, or other textual analysis. If you're working on a *community-engaged* project, your methods will likely include some form of problem- or needs-analysis to ascertain the true nature of the problem you're working to address and probable best solutions for it. I will work with you individually during the proposal stage to develop a reasonable methodology for your study as well as find language to describe that methodology.

Your *preliminary bibliography* should be at least 5 sources including at least 3 scholarly or professional sources (but ideally most will be). While you don't need to create separate annotations for each source, your discussion of your bibliography should summarize your sources and explain what they contribute to existing research and how they demonstrate that what *you* propose to research has not yet been taken up.

Submission and Evaluation

Submit your proposal to me as a Word docx attached to an email. I'll credit-grade the proposal; it will earn full credit if it follows the above guidelines for what must be included in the proposal, and winds up making sense. Proposals which substantially fail to include required elements will earn partial credit for the roughly 5 percent of the course grade that the proposal comprises.

Literature Review (Research Project)

Draft the portion of your research project that reviews existing literature on (or related to) your research question in order to explain the state-of-the-art knowledge on your area of inquiry.

Rationale

All research projects require review of existing research in order to establish *context* for the researcher's own work: how does it fit within, and contribute to, the existing conversation on the research question and related subjects? By drafting a stand-alone review of literature (LR), you get a head-start on drafting your overall research project, and establish early on (before drafting the rest) how the existing conversation should shape your own work.

Description and Instructions

The LR is a 5-10 page (DS) prose text (in this standalone form it will act a lot like an essay) that summarizes existing research on your question *as a conversation*, that is, framing sources as if they are speaking to and with one another. Obviously the greatest challenges of the LR are understanding what each source is doing and then *arranging* them in such a fashion as to *narrate / demonstrate the conversation*. Your project should ultimately reference 20-25 sources, and the LR should include the bulk of these. By the time you're drafting your LR, the vast majority of your source research (locating and reading sources) should be completed.

Submission and Evaluation

Submit your LR as a Word docx attached to an email. In the email, also provide a brief informal progress report on your research project, referring to the timeline in your proposal and noting which aspects of your project are complete, which remain to be done, and how well you've been able to maintain your schedule of tasks.

I'll credit-grade the LR (and the progress report) giving full credit unless the LR proves to represent inadequate review of existing literature.

Application Package

Locate a work or school position of a sort you are seriously considering as a next step, analyze the position announcement, and craft requisite documents (resume and cover letter, or personal statement and CV) suitable for applying for the position.

Rationale

Professional writers need to be ready to apply for opportunities with little notice, in their sleep, with one hand tied behind their back. Further, professionals of all stripes must keep updated the presentational documents that show their qualifications and professional timeline. And “know thyself” genres such as cover-letters and personal statements are quite simply the hardest genre on the planet to write. So we’ll spend some time in the class preparing and polishing these pieces.

Order of Operations

The Application Package happens between weeks 4 and 7 of the course. You’ll begin by selecting a position announcement / job ad / academic program description of interest to you and writing a rhetorical analysis of the position and its application requirements. You’ll then craft the set of application documents the position requires, typically either a resume and cover letter or a personal statement and C.V. We’ll workshop these extensively in class and I’ll grade the final versions you submit in February. (At the end of the course, you’ll return to your resume / CV to revise it for inclusion in your professional Portfolio.)

Position Analysis

We’ll work in class on how to “translate” what a job ad, position announcement, or program description calls for from applicants into a statement of the rhetorical needs, values, and expectations of the writers. You’ll write a brief (1-page) analysis of those needs/values/expectations for the position you’re interested in, and how they will inform your choices in designing your application documents, and send it to me in the body of an email (not a separate Word doc).

Resume and Cover Letter (for jobs and other professional positions)

OR

C.V. and Personal Statement (for graduate or professional school)

Usually the position announcement you’re writing for will specify which documents the position requires for applications, and you’ll follow those instructions. In some cases, an announcement will be less clear, and you and I will decide on which set you’re best to do. In every case, you’ll do both some version of a letter of application and some version of a professional experience list, even if the position announcement doesn’t require both. (Some graduate programs require only a personal statement and not a C.V.; you’ll do both.) We’ll spend extensive class time focusing on each of these four document types, attending especially to best principles and strategies for designing each.

Collaborative Book Review

With two other writers, develop a 3-5 page (DS) review of a book you've encountered in one of your writing classes at MSU that has strongly impacted your education. Your readership is your classmates, who will benefit from knowing of this book and its value.

Rationale

Two functions of the Senior Seminar / Capstone class are *reflection* and *integration*: thinking through your learning of the last years, and pulling together elements of it that perhaps you haven't considered in the big picture before. This project asks you to recall a particularly impactful book you encountered in one of your Writing classes and to review it from the perspective of what you learned from it. You'll do so, though, in the company of two other writers who similarly value the book, so this will also be further experience in collaborative professional writing. A third reason we take up this project is to further practice principles offered by Harris, in *Rewriting*, for working with and making meaning of other texts—particularly, naturally, the “coming to terms” and “forwarding” moves—and by Spiegelman, on the value of “personal academic writing,” which is what this piece will be. Finally, writing for the specific readership of your classmates means that your co-learners who haven't encountered your book will be able to add to their own knowledge of the field, which is how professional readers use reviews as well: to know that a given kind of work has been done, and to decide whether it sounds valuable enough to invest their own time in.

Description and Instructions

Scholarly or professional book reviews perform several functions simultaneously:

- Most obviously, they summarize a book's argument—what it *says*;
- Less obviously, they explain how the book fits into other scholarship on similar subjects, using this comparison / explanation of the “conversational” nature of the book to say more about what the book *means* in light of existing scholarship;
- Ultimately, they analyze the fit of the book in the overall context of its field in order to make an argument for what the book *does*.

Your review, while working on these tasks, should speak specifically to the value *you* found in the book as a learner in a Writing major. It should, in other words, speak from the positionality in which you encountered the book, and the uses to which you've put it. You should, yes, talk about what the book means and does by connecting it to other work in the field that you're aware of, but your awareness is limited and this is not a research project. Spend more time writing about *your experiences with the book*—for readers like yourselves, this is the most important context and one of the best ways you can talk about what the book means and does.

The actual review will likely read like a mid-length essay. In the 3-5 pages you're given, be sure that you

- Characterize the book (what kind of book is it?) and summarize its argument / line of thinking (each chapter should get at least brief description)
- Relate your experiences with the book and *what was meaningful about it to you, and why*
- Make a specific statement about what the book attempts, accomplishes, or does (what function it performs) with respect to building knowledge for the field and building your knowledge of it.

We'll select books and writing groups by listing, as a class, memorable books from your classes *that no more than 2/3s of the class has read* (so, no *Understanding Comics*), and assigning teams of three who similarly value the book. More than one group will be able to write on a given book if that seems necessary.

Submission and Evaluation

After workshopping drafts of your review in class, the team will email their final version to me as a Word docx. I'll letter-grade the review on the basis of the general rubric in the syllabus (p. 2) and the principles offered above, particularly valuing reviews that are personal, interesting, and give a clear sense of the book and its value.

Professional Online Portfolio

Create a web-based portfolio of your writing work that showcases the range of genres you're proficient in and special projects you've undertaken as a writer, and markets your writing abilities and knowledge as you emerge from the writing major.

Rationale

This portfolio serves a dual purpose of learning reflection at the end of your major, and creating a public face or brand for you as a writer as you leave college and enter the professional world.

Act the First: There are a lot of ways to get a job as a writer, but they all have one thing in common: *Somebody's going to ask to see something you've written.* Which means that *you need a way to show it.* Enter the internet: with readymade sites that can store and display documents on pages of your own creation (we'll start with WordPress or Adobe Spark) for more-or-less free, you can easily archive your work online, display it and share it professionally, and comment and reflect on it. You can, in other words, market it, and develop a brand for yourself.

Act the Second: *What can you do with a B.A. in English? The answer hinges on what you are aware of learning as you earned your degree.* If you believe you learned no useful "job skills," you are likely to accept that your place in life is behind the counter in a coffee shop or video store. If on the other hand you can *articulate the value of your degree and the learning experiences which let you earn it*—to others, sure, but mostly *to yourself*—then you will have the confidence to apply for work you're "not qualified for." And get it. Because you know more than you probably think you do, and you're prepared to tell others what that is. *The reflective elements of a portfolio let you articulate what you've learned and what you know,* and link those claims to evidence in the portfolio that demonstrates that learning.

Order of Operations

So you're going to launch your portfolio (or further develop it if you already have). First with a *storyboard* that includes a *table of contents*, so that you can lay out what sections or pages your portfolio will have and what works you plan to include in it. Second with *designing* the portfolio to *reflect your identity* (and marketing of yourself as a professional writer) and *be usable* by the kinds of readers who will find themselves exploring it—a readership you've evaluated with the creation of a *network map* designed to help you think concretely about who your professional network includes. Third with *workshopping* to test the value and appeal of the pieces with readers, and develop revision feedback that will help you polish each piece. And fourth by *writing the reflection* that explains your education, the pieces in the portfolio, how they came to be, and their value. We'll workshop each element of this, you will make it live at the end of the course (at least long enough for me to evaluate it), and I will grade it for credit: partial for crap, full for competent, extra for portfolios that make it look like you had brilliant teachers. ☺ At a minimum, your portfolio website will need three separate pages plus your revised resume.

We'll take up the portfolio project in week 13, and I will review whatever version you've sent me the link to by the specified deadline during finals week.