

WRIT 201: Intermediate College Writing—Humor and Rhetoric

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- ★ Office Hours: T/R 11:00 am–12:00 pm or by appointment (via Zoom)
- ★ Classroom: University Hall 210
- ★ Meeting Day/Time: T/R 9:30 am – 10:50 am
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Course Description

At it's most basic, writing is a way for humans to convey meaning to one another, and humor is one of the competent writer's most effective tools. This semester, we will analyze the relationship between humor, rhetoric, and style in a variety of different mediums. Our goal is to examine what makes an effective piece of writing and further develop the tools to write coherently, lyrically, and persuasively. Our class will span centuries and technologies, as we explore films, essays, stand-up comedy, television, poetry, sketch, covering everything from Shakespeare and Twain to Patricia Lockwood, Dave Chappelle, and *The Simpsons*.

We'll laugh, we'll cry, we'll forget each other's names because we're all wearing facemasks. See you from six feet away.

University Learning Outcomes for Intermediate Writing

- Use writing to learn and synthesize new concepts
- Formulate and express opinions and ideas in writing
- Compose written documents that are appropriate for a given audience or purpose
- Revise written work based on constructive feedback
- Find, evaluate, and use information effectively
- Begin to use discipline-specific writing conventions
- Demonstrate appropriate English language usage

Course Readings and Films

Readings: Selected chapters from *College Writing II: Rhetoric and American Cultures*; Shakespeare—*A Midsummer Night's Dream*; other readings available on Moodle.

Films: *The Disaster Artist*; *The Last Laugh* (2017); *Killing Them Softly* (Dave Chappelle); *Nathan For You*; *Finding Frances*; *The Room*; *Sorry to Bother You*

Assignment Due Dates

All assignments are due **one minute before the beginning of class** on the date listed in the syllabus, unless otherwise noted. You may not complete homework assignments during class time.

Major Assignments

Expect to complete two major writing assignments and one major assignment revision over the course of this class, in addition to other informal writing in and out of class. I will give you a detailed assignment sheet as we begin each of these major assignments.

- **Major Assignment #1:** *Rhetorical Analysis*: analyze the use of humor, language, and rhetorical appeals in a written text or film, arguing whether or not these appeals are persuasive for the piece's intended audience. Students may choose to compare and contrast the use of humor and rhetoric in multiple texts or films.
- **Major Assignment #2:** For the second major assignment, students may choose from the prompts below or design their own essay prompt, subject to instructor approval.
 - *Rhetorical Analysis*: same as above
 - *Persuasive Research Essay*: identify a controversial topic, formulate a research question, and then do extensive research on this topic. Using that research, they write an essay that attempts to persuade a skeptical or resistant audience using the rhetorical strategies studied during the semester.
 - *Persuasive Personal Essay*: address a controversial topic using the rhetorical and humorous strategies studied during the semester to persuade the audience through the lens of a significant personal experience.

Both assignments will be between **seven and nine pages, totaling sixteen written pages** per student between the two assignments. Students must complete all major assignments and revisions to pass the class.

All assignments must be submitted in Times New Roman 12-point font, double-spaced, and with one inch margins.

Common Policies and Procedures

General Class Expectations

You will be expected to:

- attend all class meetings and conferences (see attendance policy, below)
- arrive to class on time and prepared
- thoroughly read all assigned texts
- provide evidence of that close reading in discussion, journal entries, freewriting, major assignments, reading quizzes*, etc.
- participate actively and constructively in class discussions
- participate in in-class writing exercises
- participate in peer workshops and group work
- compose and submit out-of-class writing assignments
- conduct various types of research
- draft and revise essays of various lengths and purposes
- submit all work on time (on the hour and day it is due; see Late Policy)

**Quizzes will be given if a majority of the class is not keeping up with the readings. A quiz will count toward your participation grade.*

Grading

I encourage you to talk with me at any time to better understand my comments or to discuss your overall progress and success in the class.

- ★ **Participation: 35%** (Attendance, being on time for class, in-class participation, contributions to peer workshop and small group work, chapter check-ins, freewriting assignments, presentations, etc.)
- ★ **Journals: 10%** (full credit only for completing all ten; submit nine and get a zero)
- ★ **Major Assignment 1: 15%** (pre-revision)
- ★ **Major Assignment 2: 15%** (pre-revision)
- ★ **Major Assignment Revision: 25%**

**You must earn a C- in this class to be awarded credit

You must turn in your portfolio and complete **all major assignments by their deadlines in order to receive credit for this course.

Grading Policy

Students enrolled in WRIT 201 are graded by the traditional letter grade A, B, C, D, F or are given NC for no credit. The NC grade does not affect grade point average. It is reserved for students who have worked unusually hard, attended class regularly and completed all assignments but whose skills are not at a passing level at the end of the semester.

Class Attendance/Absence Policy

Students who are registered for a course but do not attend the first two class meetings may be required to drop the course. This rule allows for early identification of class vacancies to permit other students to add classes. Students not allowed to remain must complete a drop form or drop the course through CyberBear to avoid receiving a failing grade.

Students who know they will be absent should contact me in advance.

If you miss a class, YOU are responsible for finding out about work missed in class or any additional homework. Do not expect me to email you.

Students are expected to attend all class meetings and complete all assignments for courses in which they are enrolled. I may excuse brief and occasional absences for reasons of illness, injury, family emergency, religious observance, cultural or ceremonial events, or participation in a University sponsored activity. (University sponsored activities include for example, field trips, ASUM service, music or drama performances, and intercollegiate athletics.) I will excuse absences for reasons of military service or mandatory public service; please provide appropriate documentation (see below).

Cultural or ceremonial leave allows excused absences for cultural, religious, and ceremonial purposes to meet the student's customs and traditions or to participate in related activities. To receive an authorized absence for a cultural, religious or ceremonial event the student or their advisor (proxy) must submit a formal written request to the instructor. This must include a brief description (with inclusive dates) of the cultural event or ceremony and the importance of the student's attendance or participation. Authorization for the absence is subject to approval by the instructor. Appeals may be made to the Chair, Dean or Provost. The excused absence or leave may not exceed five academic calendar days (not including weekends or holidays). Students remain responsible for completion or make-up of assignments as defined in the syllabus, at the discretion of the instructor.

Students in the National Guard or Reserves are permitted excused absences due to military training. Students must submit their military training schedule to their instructor at the **beginning of the semester**. Students must also make arrangements with the instructor to make up course work for absences due to military service.

Reasonable Program Modifications

Students with disabilities may request reasonable modifications by contacting me. The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction for students with disabilities in collaboration with instructors and Disability Services for Students, which is located in Lommasson Center 154. The University does not permit fundamental alterations of academic standards or retroactive modifications.

T/R Classes

More than two absences from a T/R class will compromise your grade. 5 or more absences from a T/R class will result in a failing grade. Here's the breakdown.

3rd absence: final grade drops one letter grade (for example, A drops to B)

4th absence: final grade drops two letter grades (for example, A drops to C)

5th absence: final grade is an F

Here's the reasoning behind the attendance policy. Without attending class, you cannot perform your role as a student involved in learning, planning, inventing, drafting; discussing reading and writing; learning and practicing rhetorical moves and concepts; or collaborating with your instructor and classmates. Remember, however, that's why a few absences are allowed; please reserve those for emergencies.

I reserve the right to adjust the policy in cases of significant, documented illness or emergency. Please note that instances of poor time management on your part do not constitute extenuating circumstances. If you must miss class, you are responsible for obtaining any handouts or assignments for the class from a classmate. Make sure you talk with me in advance if you are worried about meeting a deadline or missing a class.

Participation

Participation includes coming to class prepared and on time, taking part in class discussions, asking questions, contributing your knowledge and insights in whatever form is appropriate, and striving to make all your contributions excellent. It also includes doing the required reading and writing for each class. Lateness will hurt your grade because it is an unnecessary interruption and because latecomers are likely to miss valuable information. Please see *Participation Grade Descriptors* for more information.

Late Policy

- ★ Homework assignments *will not be accepted late*. Emailing assignments is only acceptable if illness causes you to miss class; students who miss class due to illness must still bring in a written copy the day they return (this is the only exception to the lateness policy—I will accept a homework assignment the next class if I received an emailed version from a sick student by class time on the day it was due).
- ★ Major assignments submitted late will not receive revision comments from me; tardiness will

- cause you to miss out on important feedback, which often impacts your final revision grade.
- ★ Major assignments submitted late will be impacted in the episode-based portfolio grade. Late essays and/or the annotated bibliography will be **docked one letter grade per day** unless you get my approval for an extension **before** the due date.
 - ★ If you are absent the day a major assignment is due you must contact me to discuss the situation—you are not automatically given an extension until the next class period.
 - ★ You are always welcome to complete assignments early if you will be missing class.

Academic Conduct

You must abide by the rules for academic conduct described in the Student Conduct Code. If you have any questions about when and how to avoid academic dishonesty, particularly plagiarism, please review the Conduct Code and talk with your instructor. Academic honesty is highly valued in the University community and acts of plagiarism will not be tolerated.

Composition Program Plagiarism Policy for WRIT 201

According to the University of Montana Student Conduct Code, plagiarism is “representing another person's words, ideas, data, or materials as one’s own.” The Composition program recognizes that plagiarism is a serious academic offense, but also understands that some misuse of information can occur in the process of learning information literacy skills. Therefore, if student writing appears to have been plagiarized, in full or in part, intentionally or unintentionally, or due to poor citation, the following will procedure will take place:

- The student will be made aware of areas in the text that are not properly integrated or cited.
- The student will receive no credit on the paper; it is up to him/her to prove that he/she turned in original work.
- The student will be asked to provide the teacher with copies of the research she/he used in writing the paper.
- The student and teacher will meet to discuss research integration.
- If the student cannot provide documentation of her/his research, further disciplinary action will be taken.

In the case that the student is unable to provide evidence of his/her original work or in the case that the teacher has evidence that the student has repeatedly plagiarized his/her work, the teacher will consult with the Director of Composition for direction with further disciplinary action.

In the case of blatant or egregious offenses, or in the case of repeated plagiarism, the Director of Composition will work with the Dean of Students to determine further disciplinary action.

Students should review the Student Conduct Code so that they understand their rights in academic disciplinary situations. The Student Conduct Code can be found here:

http://www.umt.edu/vpsa/policies/student_conduct.php

Short Assignments

You will receive comments from me, but no grade on informal writing submissions. Short assignments play an important part in your overall participation grade.

Journals

Over the course of the semester, you will complete ten journals designed to allow you to reflect on humor, rhetoric, the writing process, and more. Each journal should be 1-2 pages double-spaced. Journals are graded only by participation and completion; students must complete all ten journals to receive credit. Complete ten journals and receive 100 percent; complete nine journals and receive a zero.

Major Assignment Grade Descriptors for WRIT 201

A Superior portfolios will demonstrate initiative and rhetorical sophistication that go beyond the requirements. A portfolio at this level is composed of well-edited texts representing different writing situations and genres that consistently show a clear, connected sense of audience, purpose and development. The writer is able to analyze his or her own writing, reflect on it, and revise accordingly. The portfolio takes risks that work.

B Strong portfolios meet their rhetorical goals in terms of purpose, genre, and writing situation without need for further major revisions of purpose, evidence, audience, or style/ mechanics. The writer is able to reflect on his or her own writing and make some choices about revision. The writer takes risks, although they may not all be successful.

C Consistent portfolios meet the basic requirements, yet the writing would benefit from further revisions of purpose, evidence, audience, or writing style/mechanics (or some combination) and a stronger understanding of rhetorical decision-making involved in different writing situations and genres. The writer composes across tasks at varying levels of success with some superficial revision. The writer has taken some risks in writing and exhibits some style.

D Weak portfolios do not fully meet the basic evaluative standards. Most texts are brief and underdeveloped. These texts show a composing process that is not yet elaborated or reflective of rhetorical understanding related to composing in different genres and for a range of writing situations. Texts generally require extensive revisions to purpose, development, audience, and/ or style and mechanics.

F Unacceptable portfolios exhibit pervasive problems with purpose, development, audience, or style/ mechanics that interfere with meaning and readers' understanding. Unacceptable portfolios are often incomplete. A portfolio will also earn an F if it does not represent the writer's original work.

Participation Grade Descriptors for WRIT 201

A Superior participation shows initiative and excellence in written and verbal work. The student helps to create more effective discussions and workshops through his/her verbal, electronic, and written contributions. Reading and writing assignments are always completed on time and with attention to detail. In workshop or conferences, suggestions to group members are tactful, thorough, specific, and often provide other student writers with a new perspective or insight.

B Strong participation demonstrates active engagement in written and verbal work. The student plays an active role in the classroom but does not always add new insight to the discussion at hand. Reading and writing assignments are always completed on time and with attention to detail. In workshop or conferences, suggestions to group members are tactful, specific, and helpful.

C Satisfactory participation demonstrates consistent, satisfactory written and verbal work. Overall, the student is prepared for class, completes assigned readings and writings, and contributes to small group workshops and large class discussions. Reading and writing assignments are completed on time. In workshop

or conferences, suggestions to group members are tactful and prompt, but could benefit from more attentive reading and/or specific detail when giving comments.

D Weak participation demonstrates inconsistent written and verbal work. The student may be late to class, unprepared for class, and may contribute infrequently or unproductively to classroom discussions or small group workshops. Reading and writing assignments are not turned in or are insufficient. In workshops or conferences, suggestions to group members may be missing, disrespectful, or far too brief and general to be of help.

F Unacceptable participation shows ineffectual written and verbal work. The student may be excessively late to class, regularly unprepared, and not able to contribute to classroom discussions or small group workshops. This student may be disruptive in class. Reading and writing assignments are regularly not turned in or are insufficient. In workshops or conferences, the student has a pattern of missing, being completely unprepared, or being disruptive.

University-wide Program-level Writing Assessment

This course requires an electronic submission (via Submittable) of an assignment stripped of your personal information to be used for educational research and assessment of the university's writing program. Your paper will be stored in a database. A random selection of papers will be assessed by a group of faculty and staff using a rubric developed from the following Writing Learning Outcomes:

- Compose written documents that are appropriate for a given audience or purpose
- Formulate and express opinions and ideas in writing
- Use writing to learn and synthesize new concepts
- Revise written work based on constructive feedback
- Find, evaluate, and use information effectively
- Begin to use discipline-specific writing conventions (largely style conventions like APA or MLA)
- Demonstrate appropriate English language usage

This assessment in no way affects either your course grade or your progression at the university. [Here's the rubric](#) that will be used to score the papers.

Covid-19 Safety Information

- Mask use is required within the classroom
- Each student is provided with a cleaning kit. Students must clean their personal work space when they arrive for class and before they leave the classroom
- Classrooms may have one-way entrances / exits to minimize crowding
- Students should be discouraged from congregating outside the classroom before and after class
- Specific seating arrangements will be used to ensure social distancing and support contact tracing efforts
- Class attendance will be recorded to support contact tracing efforts
- Drinking liquids and eating food is discouraged within the classroom (which requires mask removal)

- Stay home if you feel sick and/or if exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms
- If you are sick or displaying symptoms, please contact the Curry Health Center at (406) 243-4330
- Up-to-Date COVID-19 Information from the University of Montana · UM Coronavirus Website: <https://www.umt.edu/coronavirus> · UM COVID-19 Fall 2020 website: <https://www.umt.edu/coronavirus/fall2020.php>
- Students are strongly encouraged to remain vigilant outside the classroom in mitigating the spread of COVID-19

Covid-19 Learning Accommodations

Due to the unique situation in which we find ourselves this semester, a number of changes to normal class procedures will be necessary:

- Office hours and conferences will be remote via Zoom or telephone. I will be available during my office hours to begin a Zoom chat. If possible, please let me know beforehand if you wish to digitally attend my office hours.
- While all effort should be made to attend class in person, **DO NOT COME TO CLASS IF YOU ARE ILL.** When in doubt, stay home or go to Curry Health Center. If you stay home out of an abundance of caution, but would still like to participate in class, I will make every effort to make Zoom attendance available. Such instances will not count as an absence for the course attendance policy.
- To prevent the spread of Covid-19, all assignments will be collected digitally via Moodle. Commenting, when applicable, will occur via Moodle or email.

Course Schedule and Assignments

All assignments and readings are subject to change as the semester develops. Please regularly check Moodle and your university email for the most up to date information.

Week 1

8/20 (R)

Welcome and Introductions

Week 2

8/25 (T)

Reading Due: Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy—"Philosophy of Humor"; Twain—"How to Tell a Story" and "The Wounded Soldier"

8/27 (R)

Reading Due: CW Chapter 2—Responding Rhetorically; Wallace—"Consider the Lobster"

Writing Due: Journal #1

Week 3

9/1 (T)

Reading Due: CW Chapter 3—Writing Rhetorically; Barthelme—"The School"; Saunders—"Rise, Baby, Rise"

9/3 (R)

Reading Due: *Sorry to Bother You*; Saunders—"The Braindead Megaphone"

Writing Due: Journal #2

Week 4

9/8 (T)

Reading Due: Shklovsky—"Art as Technique"; Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah—"Friday Black"

9/10 (R)

Reading Due: Lockwood—"Insane after coronavirus?" and "The Rape Joke"

Writing Due: Journal #3

Week 5

9/15 (T)

Reading Due: *Killing Them Softly*

9/17 (R)

Reading Due: Pink—Excerpt from *Rontel*

Writing Due: Journal #4

Week 6

9/22 (T)

Writing Due: **Major Assignment 1 Draft**

9/24 (R)

NO CLASS—INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCES

Week 7

9/29 (T)

Reading Due: CW Chapter 6—Persuading Rhetorically; Swift—"A Modest Proposal"

Writing Due: **Major Assignment 1**

10/1 (R)

Reading Due: Wells—"As Not Seen on TV"; Koul—"Guy Fieri is the Last Unproblematic Food Person"

Writing Due: Journal #5

Week 8

10/6 (T)

Reading Due: Crosley—"Why Women Apologize and Should Stop"; Tolentino—"Athleisure, Barre and Kale: the Tyranny of the Ideal Woman"

10/8 (R)

Reading Due: Ephron—"My Cookbook Crushes"; *The Simpsons*—"Lisa the Vegetarian"

Writing Due: Journal #6

Week 9

10/13 (T)

Reading Due:

10/15 (R)

Reading Due: *Nathan For You: Finding Frances*; Shakespeare—*A Midsummer's Night Dream*

Writing Due: Journal #7

Week 10

10/20 (T)

Writing Due: **Major Assignment 2 Draft**

10/22 (R)

NO CLASS—INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCES

Week 11

10/27 (T)

Reading Due: *Russian Doll* Episodes 1 and 2; Lithub—"12 Contemporary Writers on How They Revise"

Writing Due: **Major Assignment 2**

10/29 (R)

Reading Due: *The Last Laugh*; Lux—"The Sentence is a Lonely Place"

Writing Due: Journal #9

Week 12

11/3 (T)

NO CLASS—ELECTION DAY! GO VOTE!

11/5 (R)

Reading Due: *The Room*; *The Disaster Artist* (Optional)

Week 13

11/10 (T)

Reading Due: Sedaris—"The Santaland Diaries"

11/12 (R)

NO CLASS—INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCES

Week 14

11/17 (T) **LAST DAY OF CLASS**

Reading Due: YouTube Compilation

Writing Due: Journal #10

Week 15

12/23 (M) **FINALS WEEK—MAJOR ASSIGNMENT REVISION DUE BY MIDNIGHT**