**Democracy depends on shared truths — and to share truth you must be able to speak, write, communicate truth**

**Course Overview**

**Critical Reading and Writing** is a space where students can reconsider writing apart from previous schooling and work and place it within the context of inquiry-based higher education (from Downs 2013).

CRW is not about HOW to write. We will learn some procedures, but this is not a class in “how to write at the college level.” I will not be giving you templates for “how to write a research paper.” We will instead be learning *how to study our own writing* and we will *use writing as a way to think about our own writing.*

This class is about the *act of writing* - -the nature of writing and the processes involved. So we won’t do a “this is how you write a research paper” so much as we will *watch ourselves* as we ask questions and try to solve problems through writing. I will be showing you terms and concepts that will allow you to identify and name what you know. Because it is only after you name what you already know, that you can name what you don’t *yet* know – that is how humans learn.

**In this course we will:**

* Examine and reflect on your prior knowledge about writing (and critical reading)
* Expand on this prior knowledge in light of new experiences and knowledge offered in this class
* Get transferable knowledge of and about writing so you can adapt it to any new context

**What you will get out of this class:**

* You will understand the nature of writing and your own experiences with writing differently at the end of this class than at the beginning.
* You will increase your ability to read into different rhetorical situations and make conscious choices in your writing for those situations. (need to define “rhetorical situation”)
* You will know what questions to ask when you enter a new rhetorical situation – you will be able to adjust your approach to successfully meet that situation.
* You will be a more self-aware writer.
* You will build your ability to collaborate in a community of writers and readers.
* You will start to feel more comfortable taking risks in new writing situations.
* You will increase your control of situation-appropriate conventions of writing
* You will expand your research literacy

**End goal** is *learning how* you *learn to write* vs the “right way” to write

Early knowledge of writing is often built on incomplete and inaccurate ideas about writing (Meyer and Land 2006)– misconceptions and misguided expectations of how writing ought to work and go.

The learning in this kind of course will occur mostly at the *end or when the course is over*. Time is required to build critical mass against ineffectual prior knowledge and reflect on new explanations

Need to realize you are novice writers that will write your way into expertise – you must allow new knowledge to seep in.

**WEEK 1 COURSE OVERVIEW and DSP**

**UNIT ONE: Toward a Theory of Writing**

In the first part of this class, you will look back at your reading and writing (literacy) experiences so far in your life. We will talk about what you *think* you know about writing. We will read and talk about writing, and you will come up with your own theory of what writing is, right now, for you. That is, you will develop your own conception of what writing is and what your future expectations are for how writing is supposed to work for you. This will help you as you move through your other writing classes.

**UNIT TWO: Critical Inquiry Project**

In the second part of the class, we will work on using written communication to enact change. This will involve planning a community literacy project. I will share assignment details with you at a later date.

**Grammar:**

There will not be explicit grammar “lessons” in class. Instead, you will have the option to work on grammar on your own. There will be several readings that will be color coded to focus your attention on a single grammar topic. This will be linked to an online “explainer” that explains that area of grammar in some depth. Later, when the instructor gives feedback, your text will be color coded so that you can see your use/misuse of that grammar feature. You will be able to go back and revise your work, using what you have learned about that grammar topic.

**Grading:**

You will have many smaller assignments, quizzes, and responses. You will have only 2 larger/longer pieces of writing: the Individual Theory of Writing and the Critical Inquiry.

While you will get feedback on most of the writing that you do, you will not get grades on the assignments. In order to pass the class, however, every one of them must be turned in by the due dates indicated. If any material is missing, you will not pass the course. You will be filling out a worksheet every Thursday on which you will give yourself a grade for the past week. I will also be grading you. Those two grades, will be averaged every week. All the weekly grades will be added to determine your final grade in the course. There will be **two Tests**, one at about mid-term and one at the final exam. They will not be graded, but are intended to reinforce the learning that has taken place.

**UNIT ONE: Inventory of Prior Knowledge ( Weeks 2-)**

Every writer has a set of knowledges and beliefs about writing that make up their personal theory of writing, or what the “game” of writing is about. This mental model is developed by our brains through education, experience, observation, and cultural narratives. Few of us every fully articulate our theory, but we all live by it.

The more you can name your past experiences and definitions of writing, and the more accurate your predictions are about what your future experiences might look like, the stronger your writing will be and the more useful your mental model about writing will be for you.

**Some Basic Truths:**

* Your theory of writing began with your first literary experiences.
* You make predictions about all of your future writing experiences based on this prior knowledge.
* After you learn some new things about what writing is, you might need to go back and examine and redefine your beliefs.

**5 Quizzes**

**5 Readings**

**5 Responses**

**Small Assignments:**

* Prior Knowledge Inventory
* Video About your Writing Space
* Individual Literacy Narrative
* Interviews about Shared Prior Knowledge (Basic Truths Questions)
* Responses to Larger Cultural Narratives about Writing

**Large Assignments:**

* Individual Theory of Writing (Small Assignments)
* Collaborative Theory of Writing
* Group Grading
* Test #1

What are some of the beliefs you have about writing – what has been your experience up to now? How much of your experience has been linked to your language and your identity? What are your expectations of yourself as a writer going forward?

Any readings about author’s beliefs about themselves as writers? Or other definitions of what writing is?

**UNIT TWO: Inquiry Project (Weeks 11-15 )**

We will be trying to apply what we have learned about our own literacy to the larger community. The problem you will be asked to solve is to do research, write a proposal for, and create web content for a start up literacy program in the Rochester community.

**10 Readings**

**10 Responses**

**Extended Inquiry Paper**