

1121 UNIT DESCRIPTIONS (DRAFT)

While 1101 and 1121 are somewhat similar in that they focus on genre awareness, metacognitive awareness and discourse community with the main goal of transfer of writing skills, there are some differences between the two courses. Let us put it this way: the courses rhyme, but 1101 asks students to look inward and examine who they are as a writer and 1121 is more focused on asking students to look outward-- who are they as public writers? With this in mind, while it is not a requirement, many instructors assign at least one group or community-based writing project in 1121.

While it is not a requirement, we suggest a brief, community-building mini-unit (perhaps a week or so long) before getting into the “heavy lifting” of units 1-3, as these are longer, more research-heavy assignments. This might be a short narrative assignment in which the student reflects on their own discourse community, on their own name, on their own speech acts, on their own education-- whatever the instructor sees fit.

Unit 1. Discourse Community Project

According to James Paul Gee, “Discourses are ways of being in the world; they are forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities as well as gestures, glances, body positions, and clothes.” As such, membership in a “discourse community” is membership in a group that shares more or less the same ways of saying (or writing), doing, being, valuing and believing. And within these communities, certain forms of art, certain styles of dress, certain ways of speaking, and certain genres of communication carry more sway than others. This unit seeks to examine that sway.

In this unit, we ask that students begin to examine how genres function to reach specific discourse communities, whether they be discourse communities of which the student is a part or not. The student will then produce a finished piece of writing—perhaps a document fit for the discourse community in question, perhaps a rhetorical analysis of a document or documents, perhaps another type of project entirely—one way or the other, the student should emerge with a better understanding of how language functions to designate membership in the community they are investigating. They may also investigate whether the artifacts produced by a discourse community relate to societal issues or engage in conversation with other discourses.

Unit 2. Inquiry-Based Research

The purpose of this inquiry-based research is to spark and deepen student curiosity. In this unit, students will further their research skills, using evidence to make an argument or explore a topic, question, or issue. Students will be expected to use the library's resources and will also have the possibility of conducting interviews or other observation based research. Research will require that students use best attribution practices including gathering, and evaluating of multiple sources, both primary and secondary sources. Students will be asked to synthesize a variety of ideas and sources while they pursue their research goals and questions. The scope and focus of research projects can vary, and can emerge from discourse community projects, genre exploration projects, or other topics that students wish to investigate. Research assignments can be individual projects or group projects.

Unit 3: Repurposing-- with Persuasion!

Traci Gardner notes that multimodal composition is as old as composition itself: from illuminated manuscripts with their combination of drawings and text to the modern first-year writing essay with its prescribed MLA format, “it’s impossible to write a text that engages only one mode. Take a traditional essay, printed out and stapled in the upper left corner. That text includes the linguistic, spatial, and visual modes of communication at a minimum. This makes multimodal composition an easy idea; what can be challenging is learning how different modes (visual, audio, gestural, spatial, linguistic) and different genres work together rhetorically to create a persuasive argument.

For this unit, students will examine what multimodal composition entails and create persuasive multimodal texts that argue a position either explicitly or implicitly. Instructors can ask students to reframe the work they did in one of their previous projects-- an in so doing, should think about who might be most interested in the information they uncovered (audience, context), what they want that audience to do with the information (purpose, goal), and how best to get that information to them in a persuasive way (genre, mode). Projects can include photo essays, video essays, podcasts, Prezi, a curated collection of manipulatable artifacts, musical compositions, comics, graphic novels, or other things subject to instructor approval.

Along with the multimodal piece itself, students should write a metacognitive reflective essay explaining their process, their initial goals, and how well they feel they were able to reach those goals.

UNIT ONE: PORTRAIT OF A WORD

In Essay One, you will write a portrait of a word that is important to you, your community and the language of that particular community. This should be a word that many of your readers are somewhat unfamiliar with, not a word like “family” or “love,” but an *insider* word, one that includes some people and excludes others. This word might be in a different language, or it may be a slang word

We’ll see some examples of this with Junot Diaz’ “Fuku,” and Ta-Nehesi Coates’ “In Defense of a Loaded Word.” These writers take different tactics to look at words that are important to them and try and express the importance of those words to potential outsiders. Coates writes in a formal, more academic way (for the New York Times,) Diaz writes in a foul-mouthed Dominican Spanglish slang (for his own novel.) **You are free to write in any way that feels natural to you and that you think best expresses the importance and meaning of the word you choose. You may write in what you consider your own slang, if you like. You may write in formal English, if you like. *Either way, (even if you wrote formally,) you should be able to explain why you’ve chosen the language you have. Why is this language the best tool for the job?***

You will also need to do research for this essay, which we will discuss as this unit goes along. As you read, pay attention to the ways these writers use up their space with personal information as well as with research. I think the research will be fun

for you. In the student example we'll look at, the writer does a lot of research, looking at the history of a curse word and its uses in different cultures. Coates looks at the NFL's attempt to ban a word and references news stories, while never losing sight of the ways the word functions in his own life. Diaz takes a word that many Americans won't know and talks about how it is important to them—and also does a LOT of research. He goes into a huge amount of historical detail about various fukus in history and makes us feel like there might be a fuku coming for us. This research isn't just a random way to prove to their teachers they spent an hour on Google, it's a way for them to draw the reader in and teach them something!

Important details:

At least 1000 words.

Must show evidence of research (we'll discuss this.)

Must cite properly and have a **proper MLA** bibliography.

You can write with whatever diction (style of language) you choose, but it must be the best language for the job. It also must be at least partially in English. That is, you may write in Spanglish if you want, but I am not able to read a whole paper in Urdu. (Some Urdu is great, though!) Take note of the way Diaz goes in between Spanish and English, though he is writing for an English-speaking audience.

This is different from the papers we have done so far. I'm not asking you to quote from Diaz or Coates in your final essay—you are just using them as examples of ways you could go with this type of assignment. I do expect you to read both articles closely—as a writer. What are they doing in their writing that you want to do—or that you don't want to do?

Papers **MUST BE TURNED IN ON TIME**. Papers will be marked down 1/3 a letter grade for each day they are late (an A- to a B+, for example) for the first three days. After that, they will be marked down a full letter grade each day they are late. This means that if I don't have the paper after 6 days, you will get an F on this paper and will not have the opportunity to revise it. **While I grade with portfolio grading, this does NOT include points taken away for lateness.** Each major take home paper is approx 20% of your grade, so if you get an F from not turning your paper in, you will lose 20% of your final grade in this class. That said, **all papers must STILL BE COMPLETED to pass the class.**

One exception to the above late policy: you may talk to me **WELL BEFORE** the paper is due if you are having trouble and need an extension, and I will consider it. "Talk to me" means "come to office hours." It does **NOT** mean that you send me an email the night before the paper is due and give me some weird excuse. **If you have not heard back from me, you have not talked to me.**

One final note: What do I mean by “community?” This can be any group of people that has a language (or slang, or jargon) or set of customs of their own. Any group of people with an inside group and people outside that inner circle. Your community might be Ecuadorians, people from a certain neighborhood in the Bronx, nursing students, football players, etc... “American Society” is not what I’m talking about here. That’s just too big (and has too many languages and customs) to narrow it down.

UNIT ONE: Pop Culture and Social Responsibility

So, you’ve watched “Formation,” read a few articles and music reviews of it (and Lemonade as a whole), and performed what we call “a rhetorical analysis” of it—that is, you’ve investigated a bit about what Beyoncé is doing, how she is doing it, and why she is doing it.

NOW WHAT?

First: Pick a popular culture artifact of your own choosing—this could be another video, or an excerpt from a movie or TV show, or a movie, or a comic book. But whatever it is, it needs to deal with some social issue. This should be something that really speaks to you and that you want to spend some time with. Please notice that we spent a lot of time talking about Lemonade, but we only really closely studied “Formation.” That’s simply because we could not watch all of Lemonade closely enough without a year to do it and without a book to write about it. So keep this in mind! If you want to write about a novel, that’s great—but you’ll need to pick a chapter (or excerpt) to study. If you want to study your favorite TV show, you’ll have to pick your favorite 10 minutes or so to REALLY study closely. That doesn’t mean you can’t refer to the rest in passing. But I’m asking you to read something or watch something a few times.

Next: You will answer—in-depth, at least 100 words each—the rhetorical analysis questions about the artifact you have chosen. (Due March 7. These questions will be posted on the website.) You will type these up and post them as a blog post on your portfolio. Turning this in thoroughly, thoughtfully and on-time is worth 20% of your grade!

PLEASE NOTE: YOUR ON-TIME RHETORICAL ANALYSIS QUESTIONNAIRE IS WORTH 20% OF YOUR GRADE FOR THIS UNIT (ZERO POINTS FOR LATE QUESTIONNAIRES)

I WILL NOT ACCEPT FINAL PROJECTS WITHOUT THE COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE!

The Article

This is a paper of at least 1100 words about your artifact that you will post on Open Lab. This may be an academic article, or a music (or book or movie) review, or any other genre of article that seems appropriate to writing about your artifact. You may also do a video essay, but if you do so, you will need to submit a script to me. The script can be less formal than a finished essay, but it will still need to be 1100 words. Whatever option you choose, you should:

1. Include at least two outside sources
2. Find a “mentor article,” as we’ve discussed in class. By this I mean, you will find a published article (about something else) that you admire that you would like to emulate in a publication that you would like to be published in. This way, you can turn to the article for help in writing—what are they doing that you would like to do? You do not have to copy the style of writing—but you can turn to it for tips in tone, structure and so on.
3. Include some of the work you did on your rhetorical analysis worksheet—you did good thinking about your artifact there!! So don’t let it go to waste.

So What Will I be Graded On?

1. Your rhetorical analysis questions being answered thoroughly, thoughtfully, and ON TIME!
2. The strength and clarity of your “so what?” Remember, you are talking about important social issues. “This is America” being a wild video is not interesting enough to write about for 1100 words. What is Gambino trying to say— and WHO CARES???? Remember to frame yourself in conversation with others (your outside sources) who have written about the same artifact.
3. Your own rhetorical awareness. Who is YOUR audience—and what are you doing to reach them—with tone, with subject, with images (if appropriate to your genre)?