WRTG 3020: Writing About Education and Public Policy

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Consultation Hours:
Tu 12:30-2 & Th 1:30-2
and by email

COURSE PURPOSE AND GOALS:
In this course, we will investigate some of the many arguments that arise over the relationship between education and society, with a particular emphasis on the impact of privatization on the public education system. We will also consider what makes an argument credible and how to use language, logic and evidence in a manner that is ethically and socially responsible.

In the process of working on several short assignments and two long papers, we will explore questions such as: What happens to the nature of education, and of academic research, when they are funded by corporations and private interests instead of public tax dollars? How has the increasing use of the business model impacted both grade school and higher education? And to what extent does the marketplace of ideas promote a truly informed citizenry, given that the profit motive does not always favor the truth?

As a result of taking this course, you will:
  • deepen your understanding of your own values and assumptions regarding the relationship between education and society
  • better understand perspectives that differ from your own
  • improve your ability to communicate your perspective to readers who may not share it and to appeal to common ground rather than confrontation
  • strengthen your ability to read critically and question the information and opinions you come across
  • make use of a variety of resources for participating in public debate

OBJECTIVES:
In this course, you will learn to:
  • Investigate an Issue in Education
  • Enter the Conversation
  • Compose a First Draft
  • Solicit and Provide Useful Feedback
  • Revise
  • Edit and Proofread

(full details on course web site)

MUTUAL EXPECTATIONS
What you can expect from me:
  • to act in the role of coach, mentor or guide, rather than provider of knowledge, by creating an environment that encourages active participation in learning rather than passive reception of information
  • to use my training and expertise in critical thinking and argumentative writing to guide you towards making stronger, more well reasoned arguments and using language ethically and responsibly, regardless of your perspective
  • to acknowledge my own biases as they are relevant, but to remain committed to
the principles of academic inquiry, which require that I keep an open mind to all ideas and give them a fair hearing, rather than dismissing those ideas that simply don't conform to my politics
• to challenge you to test your assumptions, probe your ideas more fully, defend your assertions, question your evidence and consider the implications of your line of reasoning, often in the role of "devil's advocate"
• to evaluate your work according to standards that are politically neutral, but that reflect a strong commitment to high quality thinking and writing

What I expect from you:

• to be an active participant in your own learning and to take the initiative to find out what you need to know, by cultivating the habit of intellectual curiosity
• to be an independent thinker and researcher as befits your level of education
• to abide by the principles of academic inquiry, and to approach new ideas with an open mind and an honest desire to find the best answer, rather than simply lining up behind a particular ideology
• to practice the principles of ethical and social responsibility in your thinking and writing by acknowledging when your ideas are motivated by a political agenda or belief system and by not consciously using language or evidence to manipulate readers
• to accept criticism of your thinking and writing as being motivated by a sincere desire to help you improve your skills, regardless of your perspective, and to not assume that criticism reflects disagreement with your beliefs or dislike of you personally
• to discuss your questions and concerns about the course with me in person or by email, in the spirit of open communication

Course Web Site:  http://spot.colorado.edu/~agoodloe/education/

Please access the course web site as soon as possible and look through the links. To locate assignments for each class day, click on the Calendar link. This course will also make use of a WebCT site to give you access to a Bulletin Board system to use for posting response papers and other materials. Please use your Identkey login and password to access the WebCT site, and please contact ITS at 735-HELP if you have any trouble using the site.

REQUIRED TEXTS
The following texts can be found at the University Bookstore, or at lower prices online (try CampusBooks.com).


COURSE OUTLINE

UNIT 1: Academic Inquiry
- Research Review (10%)
- Web Site Review (10%)
- Argument Paper (30%)
  Investigate an education issue in the role of a student researcher and build a classical argument that analyzes and supports a response to a specific question currently under debate.

UNIT 2: Civic Participation
- Opinion/Editorial (20%)
  Investigate popular opinion on a specific education issue and build an argument that attempts to influence the debate, in the form of an opinion/editorial.

UNIT 3: Managing Credibility: Strategic Revision
- Peer Response Papers (10%)
- Portfolio Documents (10%)
  You will learn a wide range of revision strategies which you can apply to all the documents you will include in your final portfolio.

Reflective Essay: Perspectives on Education (10%)

COURSE POLICIES

General Info: Prerequisite: junior standing. Restricted to arts and sciences juniors and seniors. Same as NRLN/UWRP 3020. Approved for arts and sciences core curriculum: written communication. Enrollment strictly limited to 18 students per section.

Internet: You will be required to access the web site on a regular basis, and to use email and a WebCT Bulletin Board to submit regular assignments, drafts and final versions of your papers. I will use the email address found in your Campus Directory listing, so please check this account regularly or arrange to have mail forwarded from it to your regular account.

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory. This course requires that you arrive to class on time, turn in assignments on time, and are prepared to participate in the day's activities. You are granted three "sick leave/vacation" days over the course of the semester, so use them wisely. Missing more than three classes may impact your final course grade. If you must miss more than three but fewer than eight classes due to documented medical or family emergencies, please let me know and provide necessary documentation. Missing more than eight classes is grounds for course failure, regardless of the reasons for the absences (see "Minimum Requirements" below). Note: it is your responsibility to keep track of the number of your absences.
If you miss class, please contact a classmate to find out if you missed any important details, and also check the course calendar for assignments. Please do not ask me for a review of the class session, as it is extraordinarily difficult to summarize what happens during a draft workshop or discussion. If you know in advance that you will be absent on certain dates, you may let me know by email, in order to make workshop scheduling for those days easier. However, your absences will still count.

**Participation:** A workshop setting depends on the full participation of every class member in order to be useful and effective. You are expected to participate in class activities by providing written and oral feedback on peer writing, and by asking questions and contributing ideas during class discussion. You are also expected to remain in the classroom for the full hour and fifteen minutes that the class meets, unless an emergency arises. Please do not schedule appointments or meetings during class time.

While in class, please show respect to your classmates and to me by using language that would be appropriate in a professional setting, and by refraining from using insults or a hostile tone. Students whose language or behavior is disruptive to the class may be asked to leave the room and may be reported to the Dean. See "Classroom Behavior" below.

**Minimum Requirements:** The minimum requirements for passing this course are: (1) you must turn in all papers, both in draft form for the workshop and in final form when due; and (2) you must not miss more than eight classes for any reason. Failure to meet these criteria will result in a final grade of F. If the reasons for absence are due to family or medical emergencies, you may be eligible for a final grade of IW instead of F, as long as you are able to complete the course within a reasonable time period. You must specifically request this option.

**Portfolio Grading/Revisions:** Each of your papers will be developed and workshopped in class and you may also submit them to me privately for comments and/or a provisional grade, but I will not determine a final grade until you submit fully revised and edited versions of each document in a portfolio on the last day of class. You will also include documents in your portfolio which reflect on the strategies you used to develop each paper and on the process of revision. More details about the portfolio grading method will be discussed in class. Because you will be revising your work throughout the semester, the portfolio will contain your best effort. Therefore, the portfolio grade is final.

**Late Work:** The final portfolio is due on the last day of class, with no exceptions. Daily assignments are due by 10am on Tuesdays and Thursdays, as indicated on the Course Calendar. Three late assignments (defined as being turned in after their due date but before the next assignment due date) will count as one missing assignment. Chronic lateness with assignments may result in a final grade of F for the relevant portions of the course.

**Writing Lab:** The PWR (Program for Writing and Rhetoric) offers a Writing Lab for students who would like one-on-one assistance in developing and organizing their ideas. Please see the Writing Lab web site for more information.
Classroom Behavior: Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Students who fail to adhere to behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Faculty have the professional responsibility to treat students with understanding, dignity and respect, to guide classroom discussion and to set reasonable limits on the manner in which students express opinions. See policies at: http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html OR http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code

Disability Statement: If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit a letter to me from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact: 303-492-8671, Willard 322, or http://www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices

Religious Observances: Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, you are allowed to miss three classes without penalty and should plan in advance for days you may need off for religious observation. See policy details at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html

Academic Honesty: All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-725-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Additional information on the Honor Code can be found at: http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html OR http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcodedefinitions/

Sexual Harassment: The University of Colorado Policy on Sexual Harassment applies to all students, staff and faculty. Sexual harassment is unwelcome sexual attention. It can involve intimidation, threats, coercion, or promises or create an environment that is hostile or offensive. Harassment may occur between members of the same or opposite gender and between any combination of members in the campus community: students, faculty, staff, and administrators. Harassment can occur anywhere on campus, including the classroom, the workplace, or a residence hall. Any student, staff or faculty member who believes s/he has been sexually harassed should contact the Office of Sexual Harassment (OSH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. Information about the OSH and the campus resources available to assist individuals who believe they have been sexually harassed can be obtained at: http://www.colorado.edu/sexualharassment/