WRTG 3020: Writing About Alternative Perspectives on Gender, Sexuality and Relationships -- Fall 2006

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Consultation Hours:
TR 2:20-3:20 and by appt. or email

COURSE PURPOSE/TOPIC
This course will provide you with the opportunity to further develop your skills at inquiring into an issue, studying all sides of the debate, and taking and defending a specific position on the issue. You will learn how to evaluate and use different types of evidence and other persuasive appeals and how to craft an argument so that it meets the needs and concerns of a specific target audience. You will also learn more advanced strategies for conducting effective research and incorporating it into your writing, as appropriate to your level of education. We will also review strategies for effective editing and for providing useful feedback on each others' work.

Our topic for this course is alternative perspectives on gender, sexuality and relationships. Through selected readings and class discussions, we will investigate issues such as the limits of a binary gender system, who gets to define terms such as "lesbian," "gay" or "queer," whether transsexual women should be allowed in women-only space, the relationship between gender stereotypes and homophobia, the social value of having more than one relationship model to choose from, and so on. The topics we discuss in class will be driven in large part by your own interests and areas of expertise. You will be encouraged to engage with these and related issues on a personal level, to the extent that you feel comfortable, and also on an academic level, drawing on a variety of sources to help you develop both a theoretical and practical understanding of what's at stake.

Given the highly sensitive nature of our topic, I want to make it clear that a foundational principle for this course is that our work this semester must show respect to those people whose lives or identities we discuss, whether they are in class with us, in society with us or represented in movies or fiction. You will be encouraged to analyze and engage with a controversy that has arisen within the topic you've chosen but you must do so as one who is sympathetic to the lives you are writing about, not as one who is harshly judgmental or condemnatory. Paper topics need not follow any particular "party line" but may not move in the direction of restricting or denying other people's human rights or dehumanizing them. Your claims must be supported using appeals to evidence and reasoning that are academically valid.

Content Policy: Some of the material you are exposed to in this course, through readings and student writing, might be troubling or offensive to you or more sexually explicit than you are comfortable with. For example, a reading might describe certain aspects of a sex reassignment surgery, a film or story might contain explicit sex scenes, or a student might decide to write about a controversy within the sexual subculture such as the BDSM community. When possible, I will do my best to alert you to material that might make you uncomfortable, but it is not my responsibility to "police" course content given that we are all adults and you have a choice of which upper division writing course to take. If you think that this
course might cover material that you will find difficult, please consider choosing another topic.

Privacy Policy: While you are certainly encouraged to discuss your own identity and experiences with the class, at no time will you be required to do so. If members of the class do share personal information, I ask that others in the class respect the privacy of their classmates and refrain from sharing their personal information with those who are not in our class. Please also keep in mind that the topic a student picks to explore for his or her course project may have no bearing on his or her own identity or behavior, so be careful not to make assumptions.

COURSE FORMAT
For the first few weeks of class, we will focus on exploring alternative perspectives on gender, sexuality and relationships through readings and discussion. I have already selected some of these readings, and I will select others in response to the interests and knowledge level of the class. Please keep in mind that this is a writing skills course, not a content-based course, so the main purpose of our readings and discussion will be to help you narrow down a topic to focus on for your writing projects. Your first two papers will give you the opportunity to inquire more deeply into a specific controversy within your topic, and the final project will require you to develop a researched argument about your topic that would be persuasive to a specific target audience.

COURSE OUTLINE (tentative)
Unit 1: Inquiry (15%)
Unit 2: Research Proposal (25%)
Unit 3: Researched Argument (35%)
Homework/In-Class Assignments/Workshops (20%)
Editing Quizzes (5%)

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; 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

REQUIRED TEXTS
The following text is available at the University Bookstore:


Internet Access: You will be required to check and use your email account on a regular basis and to regularly access WebCT and other web sites. When I send a message to the whole class, I will use an automated feature that distributes email to the account that the university has on file for you, so please check that account regularly. To access the web site for this course, you may follow the link within WebCT or go directly to: http://spot.colorado.edu/~agoodloe

COURSE POLICIES
Catalog 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.

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, and missing more than six certainly will impact it. If you must miss more than three but fewer than six classes due to documented medical or family emergencies, please let me know and provide necessary documentation. Missing more than six 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 (if applicable). 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, at least once in draft form for the workshop and in final form when due; and (2) you must not miss more than six 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 should consult an advisor in your home department to determine what your options are.

**Revisions:** Each of your papers will be developed and workshopped in class, and you may also submit them to me privately for comments, so you will have numerous opportunities to revise and improve your work. Therefore, the paper you turn in as a final version should represent your best work, as the grade you receive on it will be final.

**Late Homework:** In most cases homework is due before your class begins but in some cases I will ask you to submit the work by 1pm on the day of class so that I have time to read posts and make handouts if necessary. You may still receive partial credit for work submitted after the deadline, provided the work is submitted within 24 hours of the deadline. Work submitted more than 48 hours after the deadline will not count, although you may still show it to me if you'd like (particularly if the work is part of a draft in progress). Missing more than three assignments or being chronically late with assignments will reduce your participation grade, and may also impact your final grade.

**Late Papers:** Papers turned in after the due date/time but within 48 hours of the deadline will be accepted, but the grade will be reduced by one full letter grade. Papers submitted more than 48 hours after the deadline will receive an F but must still be submitted in order to pass the class (see "Minimum Requirements" above). If you need an extension on a paper, please request one by email at least 24 hours in advance; I will reply by email with your new due date.

**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. The lab is open to students of all levels of education and ability and you can choose a tutor who specializes in the specific area you want help in. Please see the Writing Lab web site for more information: http://www.colorado.edu/pwr/writingcenter.html

**Classroom Behavior:** Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Students who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Faculty have the professional responsibility to treat all students with understanding, dignity and respect, to guide
classroom discussion and to set reasonable limits on the manner in which they and their students express opinions. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. See policies at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html and at 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; 303-7252273). 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/honorcode/

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/

For information on a wide range of other University of Colorado policies, please see: http://www.colorado.edu/policies