WRTG 3020: TOPICS IN WRITING  
*Oral History in the Academy*  

*Spring Semester 2009*  

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**Required Texts:**

[A college-level textbook that focuses on analytical and argumentative writing strategies, recursive thinking and revision processes, research, style, and mechanics of documentation.]

CU Bookstore custom-published packet for WRTG 3020, sections 040, 047 “Oral History.” [A collection of excerpts from scholarly sources pertaining to oral history as an academic discourse, debated issues, and related topics.]

We will refer on an ongoing basis to academic writing materials on a nationally recognized rhetoric and composition website:  
[http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/)

A good, college-level dictionary of your choice.

Other readings and course materials will be provided in the form of handouts or by email attachment. [Essentials tools include: a PC with MS-Word (or similar), VPN installed for off-campus, on-line library research, Internet, Email, access to a printer, and a flash drive for storage of homework and paper drafts.]

Centrally important, copies of student drafts in hard copies or (when required) in e-mail doc. attachments.

**Brief Course Description:**

Welcome to WRTG 3020: Oral History in the Academy! This course is a rhetorically informed extension of WRTG 1150 (or 1250), First Year Writing and Rhetoric. Designed for upper division majors in the College of Arts & Sciences, it hones rhetorical awareness and writing skills in the context of student engagement with a range of discourses (print, visual, and auditory) in the academic disciplines that incorporate (or challenge the use of) oral history as a valid form of evidence.

WRTG 2
We’ll be building an understanding of issues raised by academics concerning the merit of oral traditions in a broad sense that includes: tape recordings and transcriptions, photographic or video documentation of living people and actual events, historically-based literary genres (poetry, short stories, novels), folklore/mythology, and the visual arts, such as photography, video documentation, and rock art (i.e., pictographs and petroglyphs created by indigenous peoples). Taught as a writing workshop emphasizing critical reading, critical thinking, and revision skills, the course focuses on relevant academic discourses (Anthropology, Classics, Folklore/Literature, Ethnic/Multi-cultural Studies, History, and Sociology) engaged in scholarly research, mainly in print form, but also enhanced by multiple modalities of evidence.

CCHE Criteria

As the following pages of our syllabus for WRTG 3020: Oral History in the Academy make clear, this course addresses the key criteria for an upper-division core course as specified by the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE), as well as by the Program for Writing and Rhetoric (PWR) approved WRTG 3020 Curricular Goals:

Rhetorical Knowledge. The course takes a rhetorical perspective on academic research, reading, and writing activities that target real-life audiences in relevant academic disciplines or in the civic sphere. In the process, we will explore academic writing as an occasion informed by conversations (mainly taking place in scholarly journals) among academics involving the use of actual oral histories (broadly defined) as a valid form of evidence in academic discourse. Key rhetorical texts that will guide our discussions include Writing Analytically. A variety of texts to be analyzed rhetorically are collected in our WRTG 3020: Oral History course packet. Both texts are available in the UMC Bookstore and the bookstore on “the Hill.” For guidelines on writing in the academic genres, we may also refer to the substantive materials on three nationally recognized web sites: The Purdue University OWL (on-line writing lab), the Colorado State Writing Center, and the Colorado State University WAC Clearinghouse.

Writing Process. The course offers learning opportunities aimed at understanding writing from the audience or reader perspective by focusing on the peer review of work in progress. Through this approach, you’ll discover how revision is central to writing as an academic discursive activity. You will also have opportunities to integrate various technologies (e.g., Internet search engines, electronic discipline-specific databases, RefWorks, PowerPoint) into your academic research project, and to develop advanced information literacy skills pertinent to your research area.

Conventions. The documents you will write for this course will call upon the key genres of academic communication (summary, rhetorical analysis, research proposal, annotated bibliography, and research argument), culminating in a fully conceptualized academic research argumentative essay. In the process, you will learn about genre conventions appropriate to your disciplinary focus and/or to your academic or civic audience. (The Instructor and/or the Class will serve only indirectly as audiences for your writing.) You will also learn about how to draw on specialized vocabularies in ways that still make your work accessible to secondary audiences and
about the role of textual features and document design (e.g., bold-face heading sections) as persuasive tools.

*Effective application.* All of the assignments in the course are geared to real-world audiences—including members of your chosen discipline or civic organization for your major course research project. In the process, you will become familiar with writing in a disciplinary or specialized rhetorical situation, even as you make your work accessible to secondary audiences in other related fields.

**Course Overview and Objectives**

The course is intended for juniors and seniors in humanities-related degree programs in the College of Arts & Sciences, but may be of special interest to History, Law or Ethics, Literature or Folklore, and Social Science (Anthropology or Sociology) majors who plan to go on to graduate school or to work in a for-profit, non-profit, or government organization. The course draws on broad rhetorical principles for cogent writing and speaking, and applies them to concrete research projects, for an academic or civic audience, to help you meet the demands of communicating in your field and in the work environment of organizations.

As in any writing endeavor, effective academic and professional communication grows out of sound, incisive critical thinking. For the academic writer, such thinking must be grounded in an understanding of not only the immediate rhetorical situation as it is driven by the academic discipline and the issues they raise in scholarly works, but also the real-world contexts that shape these concerns. As writers analyze issues within the interplay of these contexts, they learn to exercise their abilities and responsibilities as individuals within the discipline, and more broadly as citizens within a community.

This course is based on a number of “first principles” that help to define and orient our work together. Ours is a course that:

- Uses print, visual, and auditory texts published in scholarly (peer-reviewed) journals or in comparable sources, as an occasion for learning about and applying rhetorical principles and strategies.
- Applies knowledge acquired in the course about oral history related issues to construct a persuasive research argumentative essay, thus familiarizing you with disciplinary debates and academic essay/article design.
- Familiarizes you with various writing genres and issues in oral history.
- Attends to critical thinking skills and rhetorical principles that you can transfer or adapt from one writing task to the next, and from discipline to discipline.
- Encourages a sustained focus on revision and design review to hone the analytic and argumentative edge that many forms of academic and civic communication require.
- Focuses on multiple dimensions of communication: written and oral; informal, formal, and interpersonal.
- Enables you to work collaboratively on communication issues (peer response, collaborative editing).

WRTG 4
- Respects and challenges students by seeing you as an intellectual resource and part of the course design—in terms of your own writing and speaking, your disciplinary interests, and your role as readers and writers.

With its emphasis on the interface between oral history as an academic discourse (communication) and nexus for debated issues, this course will involve both problem posing and problem solving grounded in academic disciplinary concerns. You will learn how to discover, evaluate, and define disciplinary concerns/issues in ways that can help you develop a set of essay design requirements and then a fuller argumentative essay design, one that you can adopt and adapt to other academic essay writing course situations. You will NOT be conducting oral history interviews as a source of evidence for your writing; instead, you will be seeking to understand how academics view and often integrate oral history as a source of valid evidence in their own research projects. You will be analyzing the issues surrounding the use of oral histories (oral, aural, or visual), the rhetorical contexts that gave rise to these discussions, as well as the tools and technologies that affect the use of oral history as a form of communication.

Whereas other writing courses might ask you to “write about X,” this course will ask you to draw on writing and speaking “to do X.” Writing and speaking tasks function not as isolated assignments but as interlocking activities in a recursive design process—one that connects user needs and problem posing with rhetorical problem solving and issue framing. Throughout, the course will make use of different kinds of written and oral communication activities (rhetorical analysis presentations, research proposal, annotated bibliography, group collaboration and reader responses, and oral presentation), not as empty forms or isolated tasks, but as part of an ongoing process of inquiry and research that is oriented to the needs and exigencies of the audience/reader/scholar. This course thus connects matters of genre in academic writing (discourse) to intellectual, rhetorical, and social activity.

Overview of Course Assignments

The course will focus on three principal modes of discourse written for an academic audience: synthesis, analysis, and argument. To approach these types of discourse, you will write both informal and formal writing assignments. Throughout the course, informal writing assignments help build a conceptual and a rhetorical understanding of the course readings, identify debated issues raised by relevant discourse communities, and help you generate your own questions and ideas about issues raised in those readings. To these ends, you will write Rhetorical Analyses of homework readings for class discussion. All homework informal writing will be kept in a Writer’s Portfolio, which will be collected on the last day of class.

The first formal writing assignment (submitted for a grade), the Analysis Paper--akin to the take home Essay Exam genre with which you are already familiar--will involve engagement with multiple readings in the Course Packet in the process of formulating a stance and rhetorical strategies supported by evidence contained in these texts. After this assignment, designed to build foundational knowledge on oral history issues, you will devise your own Oral History research project based upon course guidelines. This project will involve a sequence of formal writing assignments, beginning with a Proposal and Annotated Bibliography and culminating with an 8-10 page Argumentative Research paper.

WRTG 5
Spelling and grammatical errors should be corrected by the final draft of all papers. Refer to *Writing Analytically* (WA) to review grammar rules and feel free to ask me for clarification concerning grammar and sentence expression concerns. I will be happy to answer any grammar-related questions you may have in or outside of class, suggest where to find grammar and sentence expression information in WA, and/or refer you to PWR Writing Center tutors. See the PWR web site for the list of tutors.

In the interest of supporting arguments that target a scholarly audience, we will use an array of technologies (e-mail and document attachment features, Internet search engines, and on-line discipline specific databases) to narrow one’s topic, to locate valid scholarly sources, to share documents, and to present ideas multi-modally. Workshopping student papers will be a central part of this course; you will be asked to act as a reader/respondent for fellow students’ formal writing assignments, as well as to accept constructive criticism from them. Be prepared not only to write in and out of class, but also to revise. While background knowledge in history, anthropology, or sociology may be beneficial, it is not a prerequisite.

You will be keeping a Writer's Portfolio (a 3-hole pocket folder, NOT a binder) for homework critical reading and writing assignments, for workshoped drafts and major reviewers' letters, and for a short, take home reflective essay at the end of the semester. I will give you a checklist of materials to be included in your portfolio and will collect it intermittently throughout the semester for spot checking; you will submit the completed Portfolio the last day of class.

**Attendance and Participation.**

As writers, we rely on each other as fellow writers and readers. For this reason, regular attendance and active participation throughout the semester are crucial to this seminar/writing workshop. Students who are absent are expected to ask classmates for the information and assignments they missed. Students who miss more than two classes (a week of class) can expect their final grade to be lowered by one fraction of a letter grade (i.e., A to A-) for each absence after the second. Even when excused, more than five absences can result in an IW, IF, or F for the course. Please, note this attendance policy. You have, in essence, two “freebies.” Horde them and use them wisely: anticipate that you may feel under the weather one day, or that you may fall madly in love, or that you may need to recover from falling madly in love. Class starts at the announced time; tardiness is not acceptable (two late arrivals count as one absence). If you anticipate logistical delays due to distance between classes, please inform me in the first week of class so that we can keep a seat close to the door for you to quietly slip into.

Ours is a collaborative classroom. A regular and required assignment is that you circulate, retrieve, and read students’ documents to be discussed in advance of the class. You must come to class ready to comment on the work of your colleagues and to share in their inquiry. In our “workshops” (as elsewhere in life), respectful and constructive criticism is the most effective and appreciated. In the interest of professionalism, all assignments done outside of class must be typed, double-spaced, stapled, paginated, and handed in on time for full credit; hand-written papers will not be accepted.

WRTG 6

Your papers should have your name, the date, the course and section number, and the assignment and draft number.
You will, on occasion, be expected to provide xerox copies or e-mail doc. attachments of drafts (save as a MS Word doc. or rtf, NOT docx or Word 2007) to the other members of the class for discussion; see the syllabus for scheduled copies of drafts due. Always bring a few extra hard copies when e-mailing in case someone didn’t get your attachment. It is crucial that you attend class on the day that your work is discussed (workshopped). Drafts are required for full class participation credit, but ungraded. Late final drafts will not be accepted, unless granted an extension prior to the due date.

Although I am an animal lover, I ask that you not bring any pets to class as they prove to be a distraction. In the interest of staying focused on the tasks-at-hand, please, turn off and stow all personal electronic devices before class begins; this includes laptops since any note taking that may be necessary can be done by hand.

GRADES

Over half of your grade (70%) will be based on formal writing Final Drafts: the Analysis paper (15%), the Proposal/Annotated Bibliography (20%), Research Argument (35%). In addition, you will give a ten minute oral presentation and submit a Writer's Portfolio (10%), containing informal writing/homework, paper drafts, and the final take home reflective essay. Oral and written participation in class discussions, library seminar activities, quizzes (5%) and peer response groups will account for the remaining 20% of your course grade.

Grading Scale for Papers:
A  excellent in form and content--insightful; clear, eloquent style, no mechanical errors.
B  a good, interesting paper with some minor flaws, but no major ones.
C  adequate, reasonably competent; a mixture of strengths and weaknesses.
D  poor in content—lacking careful thought, in form, or mechanics—generally slipshod.
F  incoherent, seriously flawed or difficult to understand, OR not turned in when due.

Grading Scale for Participation:
A  always prepared for class; participates without being called on; response to other students’ papers show insight, close reading; comments clear, succinct, and helpful.
B  generally prepared for class; occasionally participates without being called on; response to other student papers demonstrates mastery of the course goals; comments generally clear and helpful.
C  sometimes prepared for class; only participates when called on; mastery of the course goals generally evident, but response to other student papers, although somewhat helpful, demonstrate a less than thorough rhetorical awareness or reading of the paper.
D  inadequately prepared or never participates unless called on; response to other student papers demonstrates a superficial or inaccurate reading, at best; comments demonstrate a failure to master the course goals.
F  disruptive to class (talking inappropriately, continual tardiness, etc.); unprepared when called on; unable or unwilling to participate in class discussions.

WRTG 7

Student with disabilities: I encourage students with specific physical, psychiatric, or learning disabilities to discuss appropriate accommodations with me after class or during my office hours.
You will need to provide documentation of your disability to the Disability Services Office in Willard 322 (303-492-8671).

**Plagiarism:** Submitting another student's work as your own or failing to properly credit another writer's words or ideas will result in an automatic "F" for the course and possible, broader disciplinary action on the part of the university, such as a permanent letter in your file. See CU’s Honor Code at [www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode](http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode). This is not to say that you can't seek or follow the verbal advice of a fellow student, but you must write the papers yourself. Seek guidance from Writing Center tutors; guidance from friends may be misleading or ill-advised.

**Religious Holidays:** Students who are absent for an official religious event or holiday (one time only in most cases) will receive an excused (no penalty) absence above the allotted two for the course.

**Student Classroom Behavior:** Students are responsible for creating and respecting a positive learning environment in the classroom, one without personal harassment or discrimination in words or actions. See [http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html](http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html). Disrespect in words or actions will not be tolerated. Appropriate ways of expressing complaints regarding the class include: seeing me after class (if time allows), during office hours or at a scheduled appointment, or in a written mid-term anonymous course evaluation.
Week One

*Rhetorical Focus: Defining and Situating Oral History in Academic Context*

M 1/12 Course Introduction: learning objectives. Overview of course assignments and their relation to your undergraduate and post-graduate careers. Student introductions.

HW(1): read NYT article, “Recalling Mission . . .” (handout); go to Google Image: key word “Migrant Mother” (Dorothea Lange, photographer), print b/w photo and bring to next class.

W 1/14 Class activity: discuss the NYT article on historical context of Dorothea Lange photo. In-class annotation/close reading of the photo.

HW(1): Read NYT article (handout) and bring “Migrant Mother” b/w photo to class. Also, read for today: *Writing Analytically*, pp. 37-52 on observing, analyzing, and interpreting an image and go to Purdue University OWL web site on “Rhetorical Situation” at http://owlenglish.purdue.edu/media/ppt/2006101115407_625.ppt.

HW(2): (a) Chinook Search of books on oral history topics (due today); (b) print out and annotate your observations on the “Migrant Mother” photo.

Reading for this week: NYTimes article and *Writing Analytically*, pp. 37-52 on observing, analyzing, and interpreting an image.

Week Two

*Rhetorical Focus: Oral History Trends in Historical Context*

M 1/19 Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday—no class.

W 1/21 Class activity: discuss historical trends of Oral History projects since 1940s in America, with focus on Federal Writers Project of Depression Era (1930s) and “Migrant Mother” photo. Discuss doing rhetorical analysis of upcoming readings.

HW(2): (a) Chinook Search of books on oral history topics (due today); (b) bring one copy of your one page analysis/interpretation of “Migrant Mother” to class.

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Week Three

Rhetorical Focus: Rhetorical Analysis of Oral History Readings

M 1/26 Class activity: discuss/do rhetorical analysis of J. Vansina reading. Listen to and discuss in historical context: Studs Terkel tape recordings from the Depression Era Federal Writers Project.

HW(3): write a one page rhetorical analysis of Jan Vansina, “Oral Tradition as Process.” (handout with guided questions)
[All homework should be typed, double-spaced in 12 font size.]

Reading for this class: “Oral Tradition as Process,” pp.3-32 (packet pp. 21-37)

W 1/28 Class activity: rhetorical analysis of J. Vansina reading with focus on his claim and evidence, audience, and purpose.


Week Four

Rhetorical Focus: Identifying a Issues and Frames in Native American Oral Tradition

M 2/2 Class activity: discuss the issue of historical truth and evidence in Oral History and writing an analysis of sources.

HW(5): be prepared to take a 10 min. quiz on one HW question related to Mason, Jemison, and Vansina's views on historical evidence (assignment handout).

Reading for this class: R. Mason, “On History,” pp. 22-44 (packet 80-93); “Who Owns the Past?” pp. 57-63 (packet pp. 107-111); and Writing Analytically, pp. 53-72 on reading strategies.

W 2/4 Class activity: discuss the issue of memory and cultural truth in Oral History and writing a synthesis of Mason and Vansina on memory and cultural truth. Discuss Analysis paper assignment handout (draft due 2/11).

HW(6): be prepared to take a 10 min. quiz on one HW question related to Mason, Jemison, and Vansina's views on memory and cultural truth (assignment handout). Continued on p.3.
Week Five

*Rhetorical Focus: From Summary to Analysis—Modeling Through Guided Instruction*

**M 2/9**  
Class activity: discuss Analysis Paper assignment (due 2/23), analytical thesis, linking claim to evidence in the readings.

**W 2/11**  
Class activity: whole class analysis of an oral history piece (handout), crafting an analytical thesis and integrating readings as evidence.

Reading for this week: *Writing Analytically*, pp. 75-94 on thesis, linking claims and evidence.

Week Six

*Rhetorical Focus: Drafting and Responding to the Analysis Paper*

**M 2/16**  
Analysis paper draft due to be workshopped in small groups (to be assigned).

**HW(7):** send copy of the Analysis Paper draft to your group members and Dr. M by email attachment.

**W 2/18**  
Discuss Proposal and Annotated Bibliography assignment. (workshop Proposal draft due 3/2; final draft due 3/30). View “Documenting the Face of America” (PBS video).

**HW(8):** complete preliminary research on feasible oral history topics (handout).

Reading for this week: *Writing Analytically*, pp. 75-94 on thesis, linking claims and evidence.

Week Seven

*Rhetorical Focus: Advanced research strategies to find and evaluate scholarly sources*

**M 2/23**  
**Analysis Paper due.** Research in various Internet and electronic databases (Academic Search Premier). Class meets in KTCH 117a computer lab.

**W 2/25**  
Research in various Disciplinary (Find Articles and More) databases Class meets in KTCH 117a computer lab.

Reading for this week: *Writing Analytically*, pp. 163-182 on finding and citing sources.

Week Eight
Rhetorical Focus: Writing Research Proposal and Annotated Bibliography


Reading for this week: handout on research proposal and on annotated bibliography (from LBB, pp. 422-24). Williams and Colomb, “Two Metaphors for Learning and the Novice Writer” reading and guided questions (handout).

Week Nine

Rhetorical Focus: Forming Analytical Categories from Issues at Hand (1)

M 3/9 Discuss Williams and Colomb, “Two Metaphors for Learning and the Novice Writer” (handout) with guided questions. Focuses on key concepts and strategies for thinking and reading sources analytically. Short quiz on reading.

HW(9): write answers to “Two Metaphors for Learning and the Novice Writer” guided questions (handout).

Reading for this class: “Two Metaphors for Learning and the Novice Writer” (handout on 3/2).

W 3/11 Class activity: small group workshop of Research Proposal draft. Circulate and read drafts for your group and Dr. M 24 hrs. in advance of class.

HW(10): send Research Proposal draft to your group and Dr. M by email on 3/10.

Week Ten

Rhetorical Focus: Forming Analytical Categories from Issues at Hand (2)

M 3/16 Class activity: small group workshop of Annotated Bibliography draft (two sources). Circulate and read drafts for your group and Dr. M 24 hrs. in advance of class.

HW(11): send short Annot. Bib. draft to your group and Dr. M by email on 3/17.

W 3/18 Class activity: Matrix game and Lit Matrix handout to sort sources by issues at hand for individual research projects. Discuss document design by boldface headings.

HW(12): complete Lit Matrix (email attachment).
**Week Eleven**  
SPRING BREAK (NO CLASSES)

**Unit Three: Drafting and Responding to the Research Argument Essay**

**Week Twelve**

*Rhetoric Focus: Writing Process for the Research Argument Draft*

**M 3/30**  

**W 4/1**  
Class activity: drafting introductory paragraphs of Research Argument for whole class and small work peer response groups. Bring copies (no. TBA) of intro. paragraph(s) for whole class for next class on 4/6.

Reading for this week: *Writing Analytically*, pp. 137-160; 191-199 on writing the researched paper and introductions; student WRTG 3020 prize essays. On-line, [www.colorado.edu/pwr/occasions](http://www.colorado.edu/pwr/occasions).

**Week Thirteen**

*Rhetoric Focus: Responding Collaboratively to the Research Argument Initial Drafts*

**M 4/6**  
Class activity: peer response groups for introductory paragraphs. Discuss (“The 5” rhetorical considerations: audience, purpose, evidence, reasoning, and communication strategy).

**HW(13)** bring introductory paragraph(s) (no. of copies TBA) to this class.

**W 4/8**  
Class activity: peer response groups for selected body section. Discuss argumentative stance and strategy, proper use of sources (plagiarism), analysis as rebuttal.

**HW(14)**: bring a body section (no. of copies TBA) to this class.

Reading for this week: *Writing Analytically*, pp. 200-205 on conclusions; pp. 211-223 on forms and formats.

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**Week Fourteen**

[You’ll be assigned the role of major reviewer for your peer conferences over the next three classes. All writers must observe the 24 HOUR RULE and all major reviewers will submit two copies of their letter to their assigned writer and to Dr. M in hard copy in class on the day of the review. No e-copies accepted; late letters receive partial credit.]
Rhetorical Focus: Responding Collaboratively to the Research Argument Full Drafts

M 4/13  Class activity: peer response groups for selected full drafts, major and minor reviewers assigned. Major reviewers make two copies of their letters (due in class).

W 4/15  Class activity: peer response groups for selected full drafts, major and minor reviewers assigned. Major reviewers make two copies of their letters (due in class).

HW(15) this week: finish full draft for peer response groups for your assigned meeting in next two weeks. Major reviewers 2 letters due in class.

Week Fifteen

Rhetorical Focus: Responding Collaboratively to the Research Argument Full Drafts

M 4/20  Class activity: peer response groups for selected full drafts, major and minor reviewers assigned. Major reviewers make two copies of their letters (to be turned in in class).

HW(16): finish full draft for peer response groups for your assigned peer conference. Major reviewers 2 letters due in class.

W 4/22  Class activity: revision strategies for style and clarity.


Reading for this week: Writing Analytically, pp. 225-258 on style (words and sentences)–key for revision!

Week Sixteen

Rhetorical Focus: Reflective Writing and Oral Presentations

M 4/27  Argumentative Research Essay due. FCQ administered.
Class activity: oral presentations of Argumentative stance, appeals, and strategies used in your Argumentative Research Essay.

W 4/29. Writer’s Portfolio due. (It serves as a partial Final Exam.)
Class activity: finish any remaining oral presentations and collect Writer’s Portfolios. LAST CLASS. NO FORMAL FINAL EXAM.