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COURSE DESCRIPTION: Welcome. This course uses the New York Times as its primary text. The Times has been a widely-read and well-respected source for national and international news for more than 160 years, and it provides many interesting topics to discuss, write about, and research. We will compare the content and rhetorical elements and you will compose your own versions of various types of writing that appear in the Times: news stories, articles, editorials, letters to the editor, op-ed pieces, and reviews. Some of the questions and ideas that we will address are: What is the news? What are the Times’ goals and how well does it achieve them? How does it compare to other news sources? Does the Times strive for and achieve political and social neutrality? What are the main differences between various types of news writing? What genres of news writing intend to make an argument and which intend to be impartial, and how well are such objectives achieved? Which rhetorical elements are most effective in which situation? These are some of the questions that we will consider as you draft, workshop, revise, and edit your writing assignments.

Designed for Juniors and Seniors in the College of Arts and Sciences, Topics in Writing strives to improve students’ writing and critical thinking skills. Through sustained inquiry into a selected topic or issue, students will practice advanced forms of academic writing. The course emphasizes analysis, criticism, argument, and rhetorical knowledge, while also placing a premium on substantive, thoughtful revision.

COURSE MATERIALS: Please purchase a digital or print subscription to the Times and bring your laptop and/or digital device to class every day (unless otherwise noted). We will read and discuss the Sunday Times every week and you are expected keep up with the Times daily (please note that online access is free with a print subscription). To purchase a subscription go to: NYTimes.com/CollegeDiscount. Additional assigned readings will be emailed to you or are listed in the course schedule.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: This course subscribes to PWR goals (http://www.colorado.edu/ArtsSciences/PWR/) and meets the CCHE criteria for the general education requirement in communication for advanced writing courses (CO3) in the following ways:

Rhetorical Knowledge: This course undertakes a rhetorical examination of the New York Times newspaper. We will analyze the rhetoric of news writing/reporting, argument/op-ed composition, investigative reporting, reviews, letters to the editor, and visual media. You will also be asked to switch between very different genres of composition and do so in a way that is rhetorical. We will also study texts relating to editing, argument, audience awareness and other rhetorical elements.

Writing Process: In this course you will learn to evaluate sources for accuracy, relevance, credibility, reliability and bias. Through the process of critical reading, writing and revision, you will learn to critique your own work as well as the work of your classmates as you draft and revise your writing assignments.

Writing Conventions: In this class you will extend your mastery of writing conventions, including structure and grammar. You will also become comfortable using genre conventions and vocabulary appropriate to your audience, purpose and medium.

Content Knowledge: By reading and writing about the Times on a daily basis you will gain a better understanding of important national and international current events and issues in journalism.

MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING:

ATTENDANCE (10%) & CLASS PARTICIPATION (10%): The seminar style of this class demands your active involvement. You have a responsibility to me, yourself and your classmates to show up for class on time, prepared, with your course work, and with your cell phones off (NO TEXTING). Noticeable and
unexcused lateness as well as failure to be prepared for class will likely be counted as an absence. You are allowed 4 absences before your attendance & class participation grades drop to 0%. In other words, if you have more than 4 absences your final course grade will not be higher than a B-. If you have more than 6 absences you risk failing the course. If you are seriously ill or another emergency prevents you from attending class, email me ASAP. Students who miss two classes during the drop/add period may be administratively dropped from the course.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS (10 WAs total, 250-750 words each, 40%): You are expected to read several articles of different types in the NYT every week (even on days we don’t meet for class). Sometimes I will assign specific articles or types of articles and other times I will simply expect that you are up-to-date on current stories. Writing assignments related to the readings include short summaries, responses and analyses. Sometimes you will work on them in class and other times they will be assigned as homework. Also sometimes they will be completed individually and other times they will be completed as group projects and class presentations. Please date and type all writing assignments. In addition to reading and responding to NYT articles, we will also read articles and essays about topics related to news reporting, editorial writing or other related topics. We will discuss these in class, and relate them to articles from the NYT, both in writing and discussion. We will analyze the different kinds of writing found in the NYT. We will compare both the content and rhetorical elements of news articles, investigative articles, editorials, reviews, and other genres that exist in the NYT. We will read and compare a few articles about the same (or closely related) topic but written in different genres in the NYT as well as compare Times articles with other news sources about a similar topic.

Op-Ed (15%): For your Op-Ed assignment, you will follow the Times’ guidelines for writing an op-ed piece and create your own argument about a topic of your choice. You may write for any subsection of “The Opinion Pages,” but the piece must be 600-750 words. Your editorial should adhere to the purpose, style and appearance of a NYT opinion piece. Most importantly, the topic should be timely, well argued, and clearly written (more guidelines TBA).

Final Reflection (5%): Near the end of the course you will write a short reflection on the writing you’ve done throughout this class. Your reflective essay will analyze your weekly writing assignments and your Op-Ed piece. What was difficult for you? What did you enjoy? What kind of revisions did you make? How has the writing for this class been different than the type of writing you usually do? How has your thinking about writing changed? How has it affected your engagement with the news? How has reading the NYT every day changed your view of the world? How has it affected your interest in the news and events in the world? What have you learned? These are just some of the questions to consider and reflect on. Take your time and reflect thoughtfully on your progress as a writer, reader and thinker. The reflection should be engaging and detailed—and 500-750 words.

Workshops & Conferences (20%): On the days designated as workshop, you will provide constructive criticism of your classmates’ work. Peer critique and draft preparation is extremely important, and both will count towards your final grade. Also, you will conference with me after Fall Break in order to discuss your progress and receive constructive criticism to help you with further revision (more guidelines TBA).

University Policies and Procedures

Respectful Classroom Behavior: Students and faculty are responsible for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Students who fail to adhere to behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Faculty has 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. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender variance, and nationalities.

The University of Colorado at Boulder’s policies on Discrimination and Harassment, Sexual Harassment, and Amorous Relationships apply to all students, staff and faculty. Any student, staff or faculty member
who believes s/he has been the subject of discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. Go to http://www.colorado.edu/odh for more information about the ODH.

Plagiarism and the Honor Code: This course is designed to help you avoid plagiarism. However, plagiarism is an extremely serious offense that can result in failing an individual assignment or failing the course. Plagiarism includes not only copying or paraphrasing from a published source or using Internet materials without appropriate acknowledgment, but also presenting another student’s work as your own. If you have questions about how to properly acknowledge a source, please consult with me. 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 and non-academic sanctions (including university probation, suspension, or expulsion). More information is available at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html.

Computer access: You may use your laptop in class as long as you ONLY use it for-course related purposes. Also, email access is integral to this course. I use email frequently for updates, clarification about assignments and schedule, and to address any questions or concerns you may have. Please check your University of Colorado email at least once a day.

Writing Center: If you want additional help with your writing, go to the Writing Center (view its website for information on location, hours and services: http://www.colorado.edu/pwr.writingcenter.html). Make an appointment well in advance.

English as a Second Language: If you speak English as a second language you should contact me during the first couple weeks of the semester so that I can better assist you in the course, advise you about special ESL courses, and/or refer you to appropriate services on campus.

Disabilities Assistance: If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit a letter to me from Disability Services in a timely manner. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities (www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices).

WRTG 3020 Fall 2012 Course Schedule (Subject to Change)

Week 1  M 8/27 & W 8/29
Intro to course & “Page One” documentary. WA 1 due.

Week 2  W 9/5
Discuss the NYT & additional readings. WA 2 due.

Week 3  M 9/10 & W 9/12
Analyze the rhetoric of the convention speeches & their media coverage (NYT & other sources). WA 3 due.
Week 4  M 9/17 & W 9/19
Analyze the “top news stories” & their media coverage (NYT & other sources).
WA 4 due.

Week 5  M 9/24 & W 9/26
Class presentations on your chosen topic of interest (NYT coverage & other sources).
WA 5 due.

Week 6  M 10/1 & W 10/3
Analyze the “top news stories” & their media coverage (NYT & other sources).  
Workshop writing assignments 3-6 (due to me on M 10/8).

Week 7  M 10/8 & W 10/10
Analyze the rhetoric of the Presidential Debates & their media coverage (NYT & other sources).
WA 7 due.

Week 8  M 10/15 & W 10/17
Analyze the rhetoric of the Presidential Debates & their media coverage (NYT & other sources).
WA 8 due.

Week 9  M 10/22 & W 10/24
Analyze the rhetoric of the Presidential Debates & their media coverage (NYT & other sources).
WA 9 due.

Week 10 M 10/29 & W 10/31
Analyze the “top news stories” & their media coverage (NYT & other sources).
Workshop writing assignments 7-9.

Week 11 M 11/5 & W 11/7
Analyze the “top news stories” & their media coverage (NYT & other sources).  
Discuss & work on Op-Ed assignment (WA 10).

Week 12 M 11/12 & W 11/14
Class presentations on your Op-Ed topic (NYT & other sources). WAs 7-10 due.

Week 13 FALL BREAK

Week 14 M 11/26 - F 11/30
CONFERENCES (Draft of Op-Ed due)

Week 15 M 12/3 & W 12/5
Discuss the NYT & workshop/revise Op-Ed.

Week 16
M 12/10  FINAL WORKSHOP (Op-Ed & final reflection).
W 12/12  FINAL PORTFOLIO DUE (WAs 1-10, Op-Ed, final reflection).

NO FINAL EXAM! HAPPY WINTER BREAK!