WRTG 3020: Rhetorics of Sustainability: Industrial and Local Food Systems (service-learning)

Dr. Veronica House
Email: Veronica.House@colorado.edu
Office Location: ENVD 1B78 (in basement of Environmental Design Building)
Office Phone: (only during office hours) 303-735-4774
Office Hours: MW 1:15-2:45 by appointment

Course Description: As a class, we are going to study the rhetoric surrounding the food movement in the United States and relate it to current issues of sustainability and access in Boulder County. To do so, we will consider the rise of agribusiness, large-scale monoculture, and factory farms, counter-movements such as the organic and local movements, and social issues such as food security and food justice. We will consider who has access to what kinds of food, the socio-economic consequences of our current food system, the role of government subsidies, and how organic, beyond-organic, and local food movements have responded to the current food climate.

For the service-learning portion of the course, we will work as a class with the Living GREEN Network, a non-profit whose clients include Boulder’s local farming community and restaurants that serve products from local farms. They have asked for our help in assessing the relationship between local farms and the restaurant community with the end goal of mapping their relationship and establishing the basis for creating a local food verification system. The challenge is to identify how to create a verification system that is legitimate, relevant, and best suited for the local community. In order to do so, we must understand our current food culture and then begin to change the culture of food in ways that are aligned with core values underpinning sustainability. You will learn how to conduct field research and collect data through interviews with farmers and restaurants to assess what farms, restaurants, and consumers consider to be “local food.” Your collection of data will lead to the development of the metrics and criteria for a local food verification system, validating the relationship between local farms and those restaurants that claim to serve products from local farms.

Assignments will include a comparative rhetorical analysis, an inquiry paper, a community discourse analysis, a community-based research project, an oral presentation to Living GREEN Network representatives, and a multimodal final project. Our course readings, discussions, writing assignments, and service-learning community work will center on the intersection of food, sustainability, and rhetoric. We will read Eric Schlosser’s *Fast Food Nation* and excerpts from Michael Pollan, Barbara Kingsolver, and others. We also will analyze documentaries about the local food initiatives springing up around the country.

What is Service-Learning?
Service-learning is a form of experiential education that integrates academic work and educationally meaningful community-based work that is appropriate to the course’s learning goals with reflections on the connection between the two to enhance academic learning, to teach civic literacies, and to meet community-defined needs.

Course Goals: WRTG 3020 is a course in argumentation that will enhance your understanding of academic and community-based genres and give you practice in producing them. The course will combine discussions, writing workshops, individual conferences, and community-based learning
opportunities. Although the course is based on the topic of food and sustainability, this is a rhetoric and writing course, and the readings, assignments, and writing workshops will help you to engage with rhetorical situations beyond the limits of the classroom, to read and think critically, and to participate in multi-sided arguments through appropriate language and research. We will focus on the communication strategies and genres that drive the food movement in particular, and academic and community writing in general, as you shape your writing and speaking so that your point is compelling, persuasive, supported with evidence, and audience-specific. You will learn how to:

- identify, evaluate, construct, and organize effective arguments about food-related issues
- distinguish description and summary from analysis and argument
- read and think critically
- recognize that writing is dialogic, addresses a particular audience, and anticipates the thinking, the questions, and the possible objections of readers
- understand writing as an ongoing process that requires multiple drafts and various strategies for developing, revising, and editing texts
- produce a clean, grammatically correct, and efficient writing style

The service-learning portion of the course enhances the traditional learning objectives listed above in that you will learn how to:

- balance theory and research with analysis of lived, local experience
- assess rhetorical circumstances in the public sphere and intervene appropriately through writing and civic action
- create purpose-driven documents for audiences beyond the classroom

Peer Review Writing Workshops
You will not only be writing and revising multiple drafts of your own writing, but you will also participate in peer writing workshops in which you will receive and give criticism on papers. Through your participation in these workshops, you will broaden your intended audience, learn to anticipate reader feedback as a vital part of the writing process, and use reader suggestions with an understanding of the continuous process of improving your writing skills. You will also learn to strengthen your own writing by reading others’ work. As peer-reviewers, you will have rough and final drafts from your partners’ previous papers with each new draft so that you can watch for patterns of problems and address possibilities for revision.

If your draft is not workshopped, or if you are absent the day your draft is scheduled to be workshopped, you will lose 10% off of your final paper grade for each peer review day, unless I have agreed to work with you on a draft of the paper in an individual conference.

Materials and Texts: For this course you will need:
- *Fast Food Nation*
- Daily access to your university email
- A folder in which you will submit all papers.

Coursework: You will be graded on the following:
- Comparative Rhetorical Analysis (20%)
- Discussion Leader and Inquiry Paper (10%)
- Community Discourse Analysis (20%)
- Community-Based Research Project (20%)
- Final Project (15%)
- Oral Presentation (5%)
- Attendance, participation, daily preparation (10%)
Grades: Your **final semester grade** will be based on the above calculations. Please note that if you consistently fail to fulfill any of the coursework assignments, you may fail the course. Do not throw away any drafts, notes, papers or research materials you produce during the semester, until you receive a final grade for the course.

Attendance: I expect you to be punctual, to attend class daily, and to participate in all in-class editing, revising, and discussion sessions. **If you have more than five absences, you will fail the course.** Absence due to illness is not excused under CU policy. Two late arrivals or early departures count as one absence. Even if you are present, failure to be prepared for class may also be counted as an absence and will affect your participation grade. For your attendance grade, two absences is a B, three a C, four a D, five an F. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to contact me promptly to send you the assignments you missed. You must contact a classmate for notes.

Participation is based on how much and how well you contribute to discussions compared with your classmates.

Cell phones and computers: Cell phones must be put on silent and put away during class, and texting is not allowed. **You will lose one percentage point from your final semester grade for every time you text in class.** No computers are allowed in class unless specified by me. Transcribe your notes onto a computer OUTSIDE of class.

Format of Final Papers: Peer-reviewed drafts and final drafts of all out-of-class papers must be typewritten and printed out. Double space your papers and use 1-inch margins and 12-point font. All final papers should be stapled, paginated, and submitted in a folder with all drafts.

Late Assignments and Drafts: Papers, drafts, and other out-of-class assignments will be turned in at the time they are due. **Late final drafts turned in one day (24 hr. period) late will receive a loss of a full letter grade, a class day late will be a loss of two letter grades.** Therefore, it is always better to email the assignment as soon as possible and then bring a printed copy to the next class. **No work will be accepted more than one class day late.** No in-class work or quizzes can be made up. If you cannot attend class on the date an assignment is due, arrange to have a classmate or friend drop it off during scheduled class time.

Conferences: At any point in the semester, you are welcome to schedule a conference to discuss any aspect of your work. If you have signed up for a conference and find that you are unable to keep the appointment, please notify me as soon as possible by e-mail. The conference schedule can be very tight, and another student might be able to use the time if you have to postpone an appointment.

Scholastic Honesty and Plagiarism: Turning in work that is not your own, or any other form of scholastic dishonesty, will result in a major course penalty. If any part of a paper up to two sentences is plagiarized, you will receive a zero on the paper with no possibility for a rewrite. If any more than two sentences is plagiarized, you will fail the course and the incident will be reported to the Honors Council. 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, academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. I will report all incidents of academic misconduct to the Honor Code Council. Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or
expulsion). Additional information may be found at [http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html](http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html) and [http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/](http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/).

**Writing Center:** If you want additional help with your writing, the Writing Center (Norlin Writing Commons on first floor) is a great place to go to brainstorm ideas, improve your thesis or essay organization, or work on writing skills. You need to make an appointment in advance (they suggest more than a week ahead). They fill up fast! Check the Writing Center website for information on hours and services: [http://www.colorado.edu/pwr/writingcenter.html](http://www.colorado.edu/pwr/writingcenter.html)

**Disabilities:** If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me a letter from Disability Services in the first two weeks of class so that your needs may be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact: 303-492-8671, Willard 322, or [www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices](http://www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices).

**Religious holidays:** Campus policy requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled assignments or required attendance: [http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html](http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html).

**Sexual harassment:** CU’s Policy on Sexual Harassment applies to students, staff, and faculty. If you believe that you have been sexually harassed, contact the Office of Sexual Harassment: 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs: 303-492-5550. More information is available at: [http://www.colorado.edu/sexualharassment/](http://www.colorado.edu/sexualharassment/).

***Offered through the Program for Writing and Rhetoric, WRTG 3020 is designed to fulfill curricular requirements established by the University of Colorado at Boulder and the Colorado Commission on Higher Education.***

**University of Colorado at Boulder Core Requirement**
WRTG 3020 fulfills the core upper-division writing requirement for students in Arts and Sciences. The course is approved for the Arts and Sciences core curriculum: written communication, and builds on the skills practiced through the first year writing core requirement by applying an advanced understanding of rhetorical concepts to communication within specialized fields. You will become familiar with vocabulary specific to the fields of Rhetoric and Composition and Food Studies as you formulate your own arguments that allow you to enter scholarly and cultural debates.

**The Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE)**
WRTG 3020 also meets CCHE criteria for an Advanced Writing Course (GT-CO3) in the Colorado system of higher education:

**Rhetorical Knowledge:** Rhetoric is the art of persuasion or of shaping words and images to move a particular audience to a particular purpose. You will learn how to construct purpose-driven documents written for **particular audiences and exigencies**. You will learn how to use appropriate form and structure and how your understanding of effective use of genre can shape the reception of your writing. In terms of the community-based work for this course, you will study what kinds of rhetoric and writing drive civic change in communities.

**Writing Processes:** Writing—including the writing involved in speaking—is an ongoing process that requires multiple drafts as well as a range of strategies for developing, revising, and editing texts. ***Workshops and conferences provide opportunities to develop skills in giving constructive feedback as well as incorporating feedback into the development of your own work.***
Research in Norlin Library exposes you to specialized sources that connect you to the issues, language, and modes of analysis relevant to food studies and other community issues that you will be researching.

Repeated examination of evidence and reasoning in the development of your research project will give you practice in evaluating sources for accuracy, relevance, credibility, reliability, and bias.

Writing Conventions: The sequence of assignments will give you practice in analyzing and developing arguments about food and your relationship with it. You will learn about form, interpreting and using the language of rhetorical analysis, and designing writing to meet the expectations of specialized readers. You will also become aware of mechanical elements of your own writing that you need to work on, including syntax, grammar, and punctuation.

Content Knowledge: The range of assignments as well as exposure to the work of your peers will heighten your awareness of the relationship between the specialized content of our course (food and sustainability) and various audiences, particularly those engaged in the food movement. This awareness will translate into facility in adapting content and communication strategies to the expertise, needs, and expectations of various types of audiences.

DAILY SCHEDULE & ASSIGNMENTS

UNIT ONE: The Industrial Food System
Rhetorical Analysis

M 13: Introduction to rhetoric, go over syllabus, define sustainable and unsustainable, explain service-learning component, introduce rhetorical appeals
Read Fast Food Nation, Introduction – bring book to next class

W 15: Meet Matthew King, President of Living GREEN Network
Discuss FFN
Read FFN Chs. Five-Seven; handout “Rhetorical Analysis”

W 22: Introduce “monoculture” and watch excerpt of The Botany of Desire
Do a rhetorical analysis of FFN and the film clip in class to discuss written and visual arguments
Assign Comparative Rhetorical Analysis Paper
Read FFN Chs. Eight-Nine

M 27: Group presentations
Hand out Revision Checklist and sample papers; Lessons in Writing: How to structure paragraphs around arguments
Read Michael Pollan “Power Steer” handout; Write rough draft of paper

W 29: watch Fresh or another documentary about food
Read “Critical Reflection Fundamentals: The Standards of Critical Thinking” handout; do major revision of paper according to CTS

M February 3: Finish Fresh
Guest lecture with Jordan Winkler, Technical Director of Living GREEN Network
“Climate Change and Food Security”
Revise draft and bring TWO copies to next class

W 5: Peer review of papers
Make all necessary revisions and edits to paper

UNIT TWO: From Global to Local
Discussion Leaders and Community Discourse Analysis Paper

M 10: Comparative Rhetorical Analysis due in class with drafts
Discussion of paper ideas; assign reading discussion leaders/Inquiry Paper and Community Discourse Analysis
Read: Pollan’s “Our Decrepit Food Factories” handout, Wendell Berry excerpt from “Agricultural Solutions to Agricultural Problems”
Begin finding sources for Discourse Analysis

W 12: Discuss Definitional Arguments and definitions of “sustainability”
Go back to your original definitions: How have they changed or deepened
The industrial rhetoric (how do they frame their arguments?)
Monsanto’s, DuPont’s, and Syngenta’s marketing campaigns on their websites
Read Michael Brownlee’s “The Local Food and Farming Revolution” handout; Read Barbara Kingsolver’s “Called Home”; Pollan’s “No Bar Code” handout
Finish finding sources for Discourse Analysis

M 17: Discussion of reading with guest Taber Ward
Read Barbara Kingsolver’s “You Can’t Run Away on Harvest Day” handout and excerpt of Michael Pollan’s The Omnivore’s Dilemma pp. 315-333 handout
Write Community Discourse Analysis draft

Unit Three: Community-Based Research and Writing Projects

W 19: Visit with Matthew King and Jordan Winkler – Assign Research Projects
Restaurant interviews

M 24: restaurant interviews
Final paper revisions
List of all farms and locations due to Matt and Jordan via email by TOMORROW, Tuesday the 25th

W 26: FINAL Community Discourse Analysis Paper Due in class
Upload restaurant interviews before next class

M March 3: Jordan visits with list of farms – assign farms
Begin farm interviews
W 6: farm interviews

M 10: farm interviews
W 12: farm interviews

M 17: farm interviews

W 19: interviews due - discussion with Jordan, Matt, and Taber (I won't be there)

Finish submission of all interviews by break

SPRING BREAK

M 31: Assign multimodal project - form groups / create storyboard

W April 2: visit from Tim Riggs

M 7: work on projects

W 9: work on projects

M 14: work on projects

W 16: work on projects

M 21: work on projects - assign oral presentation

W 23: (possible) farm tour / work on projects

M 28: work on projects

W 30: FINAL CLASS: Turn in final projects / Oral Presentation to Living GREEN Network staff and board members and other community constituents