GWS/WRT 307x: Writing Feminist Culture

J-TERM 2019 SYLLABUS

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Class Meets Face-to-Face: January 2, 3, 8, 9, 10, 15, 16, and 17
Class Time: 11am-2pm, except January 17 when we’ll meet in Cranston from 6-9pm for drag show field trip
Meeting Location: Roosevelt 320
Course Website with daily schedule (https://pirateswrite.wordpress.com/)

WRITING FEMINIST CULTURE: WHAT IT IS AND WHAT IT CAN DO FOR YOU

The first thing to know about this course is that it is unique among writing courses at URI—or anywhere, for that matter. Rather than writing papers about feminism and feminist culture, you will create practical real-world documents that take a stand against gender discrimination, marginalization, and inequality. The aim is social action through writing to compose a more diverse and equitable world. This course will help you develop diverse and intersectional understandings of feminism. You will analyze how writing has shaped local and national feminist organizations, institutions, and movements such as Rupaul’s Drag Race, the Women’s Center at URI, The Vagina Monologues, Gorilla Girls, and Craftivism. Course projects provide opportunities to practice what you’ve learned by writing a group of documents that (re)produce your unique understandings of feminist culture.

Great things about the course:

• Freedom to choose your own feminist subjects (within broad themes)
• No textbook (a bargain!)
• Producing documents that might be good writing samples for potential employers and advocacy organizations
• A chance to improve your writing and visual communication skills
• Local field research trips
• A chance to meet and learn from local feminists who are using writing and rhetoric to change the world

COURSE OUTCOMES

• Increasing your awareness of and ability to analyze genres that shape feminist culture
• Producing a variety of real-world feminist texts geared toward different audiences
• Choosing the best mode of communication for a given audience, purpose, and context/place
• Creating persuasive texts that help you achieve feminist goals
• Designing effective visual documents for diverse audiences
• Reflecting on your emergent understandings of feminism, feminist culture, the relationship between genres and culture, and your own writing and learning processes

GRADING
Your grade in this class will be based on your writing process, your final products, and your active participation with the other writers in this class. You must complete all major projects to pass the course.

• Participation and Short Writing Activities 20%
• Participation in peer workshops 10%
• Major projects 60%
  • Culture of Feminist Consumption Field Research 10%
  • Bundle One (final draft with post write) 20%
  • Culture of Feminist Production Field Research 10%
  • Bundle Two (final draft with post write) 20%
• Final Course Reflection 10%
COURSE PROJECTS: BUNDLES
A bundle is a collection of written (digital and analogue/ verbal and visual) practical, real-world documents. I don’t assign a paper; you produce a group of documents around a theme—we call this group of documents a “bundle.” You will produce two bundles in the course—one for each theme. The themes are “consumption” and “performance.” You will come up with an idea for each bundle (such as “Hollywood Cares” a new television game show where female celebrities answer questions about sexual harassment in the workplace) and create a series of different documents related to the idea. All the documents in the bundle will relate to that topic and to each other and will advance your unique perspective on feminist culture. Each bundle will consist of five documents; three of these documents must also include visual components—these visuals can vary from the design of the page, images inserted into documents, drawings, maps, and so on. You will receive guidance on visual rhetoric and design, and the visual elements should have a shared identity and look like they belong together.

All documents in your bundle must be created by you. You can incorporate images from other sources into your documents, but you must be very careful to credit the source, including the artist or photographer and where the image was published. All design must be original—you may not download a fully designed document from the Internet to use as your own. Technology Practice To create the bundle documents, you will need to use digital writing tools and technologies that may be unfamiliar to you. Make sure to reserve time for intensive, out-of-class experimentation with digital composing software. Take advantage of the WRT Production Lab in Roosevelt which has up-to-date computers and Adobe composing software. Each bundle will be assessed on content (audience and purpose), format (genre and effective use of modes), and the relationship between texts.

FIELDWORK: RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS
In order to produce documents for your bundles, you will spend time conducting field analyses, in order to orient yourselves to your topics.
Solid, credible research—including field research—is an extremely important part of this course—so plan accordingly. Field Research questionnaires are two of the “major” projects in the course. Prior to your bundle, you will submit a field research questionnaire covering the following:

**What you already know.** You should begin by recording recollections, personal experience, examples in popular culture, common knowledge, folklore, stories you’ve heard, and so on. The audience. It is vitally important to figure out the audience your project.

**Who would be interested in your bundle subject matter?** You will be very specific here—what kinds of people are interested in this product/service, what do they have in common (age, interests, values, geographic location, and so on)?

**What you have learned from reading.** Reading comprises much of a writer’s process. Your reading should include a wide variety of sources—not just websites! —including personal/popular, professional, academic, and functional texts. This effort will be complemented by class readings, but you must also read a significant number of texts that apply to your specific topic. Field Research Questionnaires must include some sources from the URI library (or equivalent) databases, such as Academic Search Complete and JSTOR. What you have learned from talking. Having conversations with people—including in-class interviews with feminist guests—is integral to field analysis. You must conduct one (formal or informal) interview per bundle.

**What you have learned from visiting.** To learn more about your themes, you will go (as a class and individually) to feminist organizations, exhibits, productions, etc. that are relevant to your topic. You will be required to fill out a field research questionnaire for each project, the results of which should be integrated into your field research report. You cannot do this
“field trip” from memory—you must experience something new so that the information is fresh on your mind.

**ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION**
If you notify the instructor in advance, absences or non-participation for religious holidays, athletic participation, or other university-sanctioned events are excused. Other absences or non-participation (for illness, accident, or personal tragedy) may be instructor-approved; however, it is the student’s responsibility to contact the instructor—via email or a phone message—to explain the absence within 12 hours of the “missed class” or missed deadline, or to provide documentation. Absences that are not university-sanctioned or instructor-approved will mean a loss of points or a deduction to the final grade. The equivalent of three days of “absences”—including non-participation and/or missed deadlines—will mean an “F” for the course. This will be at the instructor’s discretion in consultation with the department chair. Students who miss instruction, information, reviews, discussions, or practice are responsible for 1) explaining the absence and/or verifying its necessity 2) getting the assignments from a classmate or the instructor 3) if the instructor agrees, making up the missed work.

**DEADLINES AND LATE WORK**
Unless special arrangements have been made IN ADVANCE with me, penalties will be applied to late projects. For the major projects (field research and bundles), late projects will lose one full grade. Projects more than one week late will receive a failing grade, and you must still complete the project. Once again, you must complete all major projects in order to pass the course.

**SPECIAL NEEDS**
Any student with a documented disability is welcome to contact me early in the semester so that reasonable accommodations may be worked out to support your success in this writing course. Please also contact Disability Services for Students, Office of Student Life, 330 Memorial Union, 874-2098.
ACADEMIC HONESTY
It is assumed that each of you will work to the best of your ability. Learning is often a collaborative process; we can only learn when we work through the thoughts and words of others, and find ways to inhabit those thoughts ourselves. For this reason, I strongly encourage you to work together and learn from one another. Cheating, however, is a different story, and you should be mindful of the line between collaboration and stealing. You can always seek help from others, but ultimately you must do your own work. In all of your classes, it will be assumed that you understand plagiarism and its consequences. Please consult the URI Student Handbook about academic honesty and related issues. The penalty for plagiarism can be a zero for the assignment and a report to your academic dean, and possibly failure in the course; in addition, the charge of academic dishonesty will go on your record in the Office of Student Life.

FIELDWORK AND TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENT
This is a 4 credit hour course which includes both fieldwork and technology learning. You are required you to engage in sustained observation and participation at a field site (a place where a group of people meets regularly with a common purpose) of your choice where feminist work is happening. In addition, this course requires you to spend time outside of class engaging in intensive open-ended experimentation with digital writing tools and technologies to produce practical, real-world feminist texts.