

# Eng 6420.01: Composition Theories

## Course Objectives, Policies, and Syllabus

**Instructor:** Joel Overall  
**Email:** joel.overall@belmont.edu  
**Office:** AYRS 3041  
**Office Hours:** MWF 10-12, T 4-6  
**When:** T 6-8:30  
**Where:** AYRS 2141

### Books:

Glenn, Cheryl and Melissa A. Goldthwaite. *The St. Martin's Guide to Teaching Writing*. 7th ed., Bedford/St. Martin's, 2013.

Murphy, James J., ed. *A Short History of Writing Instruction: From Ancient Greece to Modern United States*. 3rd ed., Routledge, 2020.

Tate, Gary, Amy Rupiper, and Kurt Schick. *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies*. Oxford UP, 2001.

### Guiding Questions:

- What is the history of rhetoric and composition within the larger disciplinary history of English studies?
- What is the history of writing instruction in Western civilization?
- What are the major movements in composition of the past century?
- What is the relationship between theory, research, and the practice of composition?
- How is rhetoric and composition changing and how should it change?



### What this course is about:

Teaching writing is exhilarating; it's also one of the most challenging subjects to teach. Period. In an effort to introduce students at the graduate level to teaching Composition, this class provides a basic overview of composition theories: audience analysis, writing process theory, writing to learn theory, discourse theory, invention in the rhetorical tradition. Our goals will be multiple, but in general, we will explore the discipline of Composition, devise a teaching philosophy, observe First-Year Writing courses in action, and develop a teaching portfolio in an effort to prepare graduate students for the possibility of teaching First-Year Writing at the college level.

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### **What you'll be expected to do:**

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#### **Attend and Participate:**

As this is a seminar, participants will be expected to read extensively, attend regularly, and contribute to the direction of the course. In-class participation is simply expected. Come to meetings prepared having completed the readings and read the responses of your classmates with questions and ideas for discussion. It should go without saying that in a grad course more than one absence may adversely affect your final grade. It is important that you come to class every day and are involved in class discussions and activities. I will abide by the Belmont University policy that states that 3 weeks worth of absences (3 absences excluding Provost excused absences) results in failure of the course.

#### **Office Meetings:**

At least twice this semester, I'll expect visits from you to discuss your progress in the class. The first of these meetings should be in the first half of the semester (before Spring Break) so that we can discuss your interests and goals for the class. The second should be early in the latter half of the semester when we can consult on the project(s) you are developing. In addition to these required visits, you are of course welcome to meet with me at any point in the semester. These meetings can be scheduled and held via Zoom if you prefer.

#### **Weekly Blog Posts | 30% | :**

Your discoveries in, responses to, and/or questions about the readings will serve as the springboard for class discussion. In these posts, you will write 500-700 words or more of your reactions to the week's readings. Generally, the postings should demonstrate understanding of the major arguments in the assigned reading and provide

critical response to one or more of those arguments. You should also comment on 2-3 of your classmates' posts, all of which you should read as well. We will be using the BlackBoard blog tool, and you should post your blog entry on Sundays by 8pm. These are informal and ungraded although you get credit for doing all of them. You will have the opportunity to skip two blog posts of the eleven weeks that blogs are assigned and still receive full credit.

#### **Conference Proposal and Paper | 40% | :**

Since an aim of this course is to prepare you to contribute to your field through a professional academic conference proposal and presentation, you will identify a conference and put together an individual or panel proposal. The proposal should meet the guidelines of the conference to which you are proposing. We can discuss this project individually in one of our office meetings or as a group if you are putting together a panel. The conference paper, then, should be between 6-8 pages, and a 15-minute presentation will be read aloud in class. In addition, your presentation should use slideware (PowerPoint or Keynote) to provide a visual aid.

#### **Teaching Portfolio: Teaching Philosophy, Class Observation Reflection, and Ideal Course Design | 30% | :**

Within your field and interests, what would be the ideal writing course? This project will demonstrate an application of your teaching philosophy and the best theories of composition to the design of a course of your choosing (i.e. academic, creative, professional, person, traditional or new media, intro or advanced, undergraduate or graduate). In addition to an observation of a FYW class, components of the portfolio will include your teaching philosophy, a reflection on a FYW class observation, a syllabus with outcomes, sample writing assignment, in class activity, and explanatory annotations.

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### Grade Chart:

94 ^	A
90-93	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
80-82	B-
77-79	C+
73-76	C
70-72	C-
65-69	D
64 or below	F

### Course Policies

#### Late Work:

Major projects turned in late will be penalized 10% per day, including weekends. Homework will not be accepted late.

#### Classroom Atmosphere:

I envision our classroom as a place where all of us can share our ideas, thoughts, and questions without fear of being made fun of or embarrassed. Our classroom interaction will be based on respect for all of the writers and readers we encounter this semester.

#### The Writing Center:

The Belmont University Writing Center exists for students, faculty, and staff--all members of the Belmont community. They offer free 30-minute sessions for anyone seeking advice or help with writing. To schedule an appointment: come in, call 460.6855, or email writ-

ing.center@belmont.edu

<http://www.belmont.edu/learning-centers/writing/>

### Academic Integrity:

"Honor Code: The following is the Student Honor Pledge that guides academic behavior:

"A Bruin does not lie, cheat, or steal, and does not tolerate those acts."

### ADA:

In compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, Belmont University will provide reasonable accommodation of all medically documented disabilities. If you have a disability and would like the university to provide reasonable accommodations for the disability during this course, please notify the Office of the Dean of Students located in the Beaman Student Life Center (460-6407) as soon as possible.

### Course Evaluations:

At the end of our course, you will be expected to participate in course evaluations.

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### Calendar

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**T 1/17** Introduction to the Course

**Readings:**

- Fulkerson, "Four Philosophies of Composition"
- Berlin, "Contemporary Composition: The Major Pedagogical Theories"

**T 1/24** Ancient Greek, Roman, and Late-Antiquity Writing Pedagogies

**Readings:** *A Short History of Writing Instruction* (1-128)

**T 1/31** Later Middle Ages, Renaissance, and 18th/19th Century Britain Writing Pedagogies

**Readings:** *A Short History of Writing Instruction* (129-243)

**T 2/7** 19th American and School and College English Writing Pedagogies

**Readings:** *A Short History of Writing Instruction* (244-325)

**T 2/14** Process Pedagogy and Expressivism

**Readings:** *Guide to Composition Pedagogies*  
Expressive (111-127)  
Process (212-231)

- Murray, "Teach Writing as a Process Not Product"
- Elbow, "Closing My Eyes as I Speak"

**T 2/21** Rhetorical Pedagogy and Audience

**Readings:** *Guide to Composition Pedagogies*  
Rhetoric and Argumentation (248-265)

- Lunsford and Ede, "Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked: The Role of Audience in Composition Theory and Pedagogy"
- Crowley, "Composition is Not Rhetoric"

**T 2/28** Critical and Culture Studies Pedagogies

**Readings:** *Guide to Composition Pedagogies*  
Critical (77-93)  
Cultural Studies (94-110)

- Hairston, "Diversity, Ideology, and Teaching Writing"
- Bartholomae, "Inventing the University"
- Bartholomae, "Writing with Teachers: A Conversation with Peter Elbow"

**T 3/7** **Spring Break (no class)**

**T 3/14** Feminism and Multiliteracies

**Readings:** *Guide to Composition Pedagogies*  
Feminist (128-145)

- Royster, "When the First Voice You Hear is Not Your Own"
- Matsuda, "The Myth of Linguistic Homogeneity in U.S. College Composition"
- Horner, Lu, Royster, Trimbur, "Opinion: Language Difference in Writing: Toward a Translingual Approach"

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**T 3/21** Plagiarism, Grammar, and Basic Writing

**Readings:**

- Halasek, "Review: Theorizing Plagiarism in the University"
- Hartwell, "Grammar, Grammars, and the Teaching of Grammar"
- Rose, "The Language of Exclusion: Writing Instruction at the University"

**T 3/28** New Media and Writing Instruction

**Readings:** *Guide to Composition Pedagogies*

New Media (177-193)

- Selfe, "Toward New Media Texts: Taking Up the Challenges of Visual Literacy"
- Wysocki, "awaywithwords: On the Possibilities in Unavailable Designs"

**T 4/4** Summing Up

**Readings:**

- Fulkerson, "Summary and Critique: Composition at the turn of the Twenty-First Century"
- Dickson, Mejia, Zorn, Harkin, and Fulkerson, "Responses to Richard Fulkerson, Composition at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century"
- Kopelson, "Sp(l)itting Images; or, Back to the Future of (Rhetoric and?) Composition"

**T 4/11** Looking Forward

**Readings chosen by class from Composition Journals from the past 2 years**

**T 4/18** Conference Papers Due

**T 4/25**

**Teaching Portfolio Workshop (rough draft due)**

Final Reflections

**T 5/2**

**Teaching Portfolio Due @ 7pm  
(presentations)**