

First Year Writing: University Issues
FYW 150.23 – Fall 2022
M-W-F 9:05-10:00 am
Belanich Engineering Center 321

Professor: Kyle Hetrick
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Office Hours: Monday-Wednesday-Friday 10:30-11:45 am
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Textbooks: Martin Ford – *Rise of the Robots*
Greg Lukianoff and Johnathan Haidt – *The Coddling of the American Mind*
Cailin O’Connor and James Owen Weatherall – *The Misinformation Age*

We will also be reading shorter essays, editorials, news stories, etc. on a daily class basis that I’ll link to on our Blackboard page.

Course Description: First-Year Writing fulfills the core curriculum requirement for lower-division Written Communication. Develops skills in reading and critical analysis of multiple discourses. Develops writing within multiple discourses, and the transfer of those writing skills to multiple disciplines and occasions. Students practice the entire process of writing, from initial conception, through drafts, to revision and editing. Students are encouraged to use the Writing Center, staffed by trained peer-tutors. Must be taken in first year.

Class Description: This section of FYW 150 was created to engage students with some of the controversies that are being debated at and about universities and colleges, as well as society as a whole. There is a sense that higher education is at the cusp of a wave of change that not only is undoubtedly different from your parents’ experiences if they went to college, but quite possibly that of any older siblings that you might have. The last two years have only accelerated the changes that were starting to blossom in the years prior (most of our readings were written in the past five years with some of those being from the last twelve months). There are many issues that we could have debated regarding college - - what is the value of a college education? should the SAT be used as a determinant for college admissions? is grade inflation a serious collegiate problem? should vaccinations be mandatory for campus attendance? should colleges enforce affirmative consent policies on campus? should students be able to opt out of assignments? what should be done about critical race theory? why are fewer males going to college? - - but we will tackle four: the college mental health crisis, freedom of speech and cancel culture, technology and artificial intelligence’s effect on the future of jobs, and misinformation and the contested believability of facts. This theme of university issues will be how our class will critically think and compose academic essays and informal discussions while meeting the general standards for this course. Ultimately, FYW 150 will give you skills to write better essays in all of your academic classes by going over rhetorical theory, strategies for increased persuasiveness, standards of academic English, and technical skills to best present your critical thinking.

Learning Outcomes: By the end of this course, it is expected that students will be able to:

- 1) write in ways appropriate to the audiences and occasions of each assignment;
- 2) write effectively in or about multiple discourses by distinguishing among and responding to rhetorical contexts;
- 3) apply relevant and compelling content, based on strong understandings of assigned subjects, in order to write effectively across multiple types of discourse;
- 4) use credible sources to develop ideas and arguments that are effective within assigned disciplines and discourses;
- 5) cite sources accurately according to conventions of the topic and discipline;
- 6) write clearly and fluently, with few errors in syntax and grammar.

Assignments/Evaluation

- 1) Reaction Papers:** Over the course of the semester, you will be required to write three reaction papers. These are less formal assignments which have no specific prompts; you can write about them in any way you wish. With that being said, there should be a controlling idea, and the essay needs to showcase critical thinking about that text and the larger subject in which the reading is connected. They are due at the beginning of class on the day that we are discussing that particular text for class. Each reaction paper needs to come from a separate section of the course (meaning, for example, you cannot write two reaction papers from the cancel culture readings), and you must write a reaction paper for whichever section you are not writing a formal essay for. Reaction papers should be two-to-three pages long.
- 2) Class Participation:** For your overall grade to be deemed “A” material, you must be an active participant in the discussions that we will have about the books and essays that we will read over the course of the semester. The amount of discussion time will vary from class period to class period, but some time will be spent in discussion with every work we engage with. At the halfway mark of the semester, I will give you what your participation grade would be at that point in the semester, so you can accurately gauge how much more participation you should be doing in class to get the grade that you desire.
- 3) Formal Essays:** These essays will have specific prompts that will be put on Blackboard approximately two weeks before the paper is due. These essays will be approximately three-to-five pages long and will be graded as compared to a rubric that will be discussed early on in the semester. Generally speaking, students are graded on the depth of critical thinking skills, the persuasiveness of the student’s argument, the use of effective rhetorical strategies, and the demonstration of quality technical writing skills. Students will write three formal essays during the semester out of four possible assignments; the student will get to decide which assignments he or she will compose. The first three papers are due in class on their individual due dates; the final paper can be submitted online. Late papers lose ten points for every class period in which they are late.

Grade Distribution

Essays (3): 20% apiece
Reaction Papers (3): 20% in total
Participation: 20%

The Readings

This is the preliminary plan for readings during the semester. I’ll try to stick to this schedule, but of course events may make for minor tweaks to the schedule; any changes will be mentioned in class and on Blackboard. The way you should interpret this schedule is that you should have already read the listed reading on the day that the chapter or essay is linked to. The slashes note the different days, i.e. Tuesday and Thursday.

Aug 31/Sep 2: introduction to syllabus / Onion – “Did Helen Keller Really ‘Do All That’?”

Sep 7-9: O’Connor & Weatherall – *The Misinformation Age* (Introduction) / Cummins – “Shocking Levels of Ignorance”

Sep 12-14-16: O’Connor & Weatherall – *The Misinformation Age* (Chapter One) / Tavernise – “Vaccine Skepticism Was Viewed as A Knowledge Problem” + Lee – “The Utter Familiarity of Even the Strangest Vaccine Conspiracy Theory”

Sep 19-21-23: Rutherford – “What the Origins of the ‘1 in 5’ Statistic Teaches Us about Sexual Assault Policy” + Berenson – “1 in 5: Debating the Most Controversial Sexual Assault Statistic” /

Victor – “Your Loved Ones, and Eerie Tom Cruise Videos, Reanimate Unease with Deepfakes”

Sep 26-28-30: first paper due / Lukianoff and Haidt – *The Coddling of the American Mind* (Chapter 1) / Suk Gersen – “The Trouble With Teaching Rape Law”

Oct 3-5-7: Lukianoff and Haidt – *The Coddling of the American Mind* (Chapter 3) / Lukianoff and Haidt – *The Coddling of the American Mind* (Chapter 5) / Suk Gersen – “The Complicated Case of the Pennsylvania Cheerleader”

Oct 10-12-14: Weil – “Teenage Justice” / Ronson – “How One Stupid Tweet Blew Up Justine Sacco’s Life” / Levin – “A Racial Slur, a Viral Video, and a Reckoning”

Oct 17-19-21: Hill – “Our Digital Pasts Weren’t Supposed to Be Weaponized Like This” / Charity – “We Don’t Live on Campus. We Live on the Internet”

Oct 24-26-28: Thompson – “Why American Teens Are So Sad” / Hensley-Clancy – “Reeling from Suicides, College Athletes Press NCAA”

Oct 31/Nov 2-4: Coppola – *The Virgin Suicides*

Nov 7-9-11: McMurtrie – “A ‘Stunning’ Level of Student Disconnection” / Malesic – “My College Students Are Not Okay” / Paul – “Colleges Want Freshmen to Use Mental Health Apps”

Nov 14-16-18: Semuels – “Millions of Americans Have Lost Jobs in the Pandemic – and Robots and AI Are Replacing Them Faster Than Ever” / Beauchamp – “Why Book Banning is Back”

Nov 21: multiple writers – “Does One Word Change *Huckleberry Finn*?”

Nov 28-30/Dec 1: Ford – *Rise of the Robots* (chapter 2) / Ford – *Rise of the Robots* (chapter 4)

Dec 5-7-9: Thompson – “A World Without Work” / Walsh – “The Coming Disruption”

The Papers

Paper #1: Monday, September 26 (on misinformation and fact crisis)

Paper #2: Friday, October 21 (on freedom of speech and cancel culture)

Paper #3: Monday, November 14 (on student’s mental health)

Paper #4: Wednesday, December 14 (on the future of jobs)