

Core Courses 2013-2014

Introduction to Academic Writing

Alison Walker Stromdahl

Title: Well-Crafted Life Lessons: Tales, Nursery Rhymes, and Proverbs

Description: Freindrich Von Shiller argues, "Deeper meaning resides in the fairy tales told to me in my childhood than in the truth that is taught by life." Over the course of our lives, we are continually taught lessons in the form of norms, traditions, regulations, and rituals. Often, we are taught these lessons through entertaining, alluring, and fanciful tales, nursery rhymes, and proverbs: "The 3 Little Pigs," "Hansel and Gretel," "Humpty Dumpty," "Mary Had a Little Lamb," "A Spoon Full of Sugar Makes the Medicine Go Down," "Be Careful What You Wish For." While these deceptively simplistic forms of writing are great fun to read, listen to, and recite, they are, in fact, an intricate layering of rhetorical, literary, and social devices that both seek to reflect and manipulate history, culture, time, gender, race, sex, and socio-economic factors. Through our investigation and interrogation of these texts, we will come to a better understanding of these consciously crafted works, works written by individuals attempting to permeate the minds and influence the lives of audiences through the careful unfolding of lessons.

LeAnne Laux-Bachand

Title: Creating Impact after the Impact: Writing in Response to National Disasters

Description: How do people respond in writing, image, and sound to major events such as 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, or the recent Boston bombings? What makes something an "event" that seems to call for a response, and what kinds of texts do people create soon after it happens compared with years later? As we grapple with these and other questions, we'll look at a variety of texts, from essays and television episodes to songs and commercials, and we'll build our academic reading and writing abilities as we respond to such events ourselves.

Alison Cardinal

Title: Are Words Mightier than Swords?: Examining Power and Persuasion

Description: In this writing course, we will learn how to write academic arguments by analyzing pivotal moments where speeches changed the course of history and analyze what made those speeches so effective in that historical moment. We will also examine how certain people groups have been silenced or undervalued because their use of language runs counter to those in power. We will write about these important moments in language and also make our own attempts to change the world with words.

Caitlin Carle

Title: 'I'm Batman': Intersections of Pop Culture and Identity

Description: As consumers of popular culture, most of us are guilty of defending our favorite TV shows long after they've been cancelled, arguing about the likability of a hero in a film, or even debating the merit of trash TV. In an era where you can take Facebook quizzes to determine which super hero or Sex and the City character you most resemble, it is important to question why our relationship with such cultural texts matters. This course will interrogate the relationship between popular culture, representations of identity, and its consumers. We will examine texts ranging from YouTube memes to award-winning television shows in order to question how and why these texts create meaning for viewers. By writing about texts that we may not easily consider "academic," we will practice skills of interpretation and reflection in order to ask "Why do these texts matter to us?"

Nicole Blair

Title: Change the World: The Hero in the 21st Century

Description: In this course, students will study the academic side of the hero cycle (mythology), and then apply those principles to volunteering in the Tacoma community. Along with writing on particular topics related to this theme, they will do research about the issue of volunteerism and civic responsibility in conjunction with the particular project they pick, such as working with the Tacoma Rescue Mission. The goal of the class is to put the academics into action, so that students will understand that what they learn can be applied in the real world.

Andrea Modarres

Title: Life Writing and Identity: Language and the Creation of the Self

Description: The genre of “life writing” has long included biography, autobiography, and memoir – written by notable characters in history, such as Benjamin Franklin, to more recent popular figures, such as politicians and entertainers. But the definition of life writing has expanded in recent decades, and now includes journals, letters, oral testimony and eyewitness accounts, while at the same time, a move toward public self-reflection is increasingly visible online, where countless individuals share the details of their daily lives on their blogs and garner followers on Twitter. In this course, we will examine life writing in specific contexts, from literacy narratives to accounts of empowerment through language, asking what kinds of issues and challenges lend themselves to this kind of writing. We will study both written and graphic texts, in hard copy and online, in order to explore how writers construct particular identities, analyzing their methods and attempting to understand the popularity of life writing within specific social, cultural, and historical frameworks.

Introduction to Science

Erik McDonald

Title: Where the water meets the road: Examining the environmental impacts of urbanization on aquatic ecosystems.

Description: How do your actions impact the aquatic organisms living in Puget Sound? As the human population continues to climb, more and more people are migrating to urban areas. This in turn imposes greater stresses on adjacent water bodies and other natural resources. This class seeks to explore the growing urban centers around the world and their associated environmental impacts on neighboring aquatic ecosystems. We will also address practices that promote sustainable living in urban areas.

Julie Masura

Title: Oceans Full of Trash

Description: We will be exploring the North Pacific Garbage Patch, noted to be the size of Texas! This course will include reviewing various types of communications and applying scientific concepts to question the validity of claims made by researchers from around the world.

Alan Fowler

Title: Computer Science Principles

Description: The increasing use of computing in many forms is changing our world in interesting and exciting ways. This course demystifies the central ideas of computing and computer science and engages students in creative problem solving activities. The course also examines social and ethical issues inherent in computing.

Vanessa Hunt

Title: Plankton to Porpoises: Organisms of the Puget Sound Waters

Description: In this course, we will focus on the life in our local coastal waters, examining both groups of organisms that have been extensively studied, and those where little is known. We will ask who, where, why, and how as we focus on observation and the generation of meaningful questions in science. As we generate questions through our own observation practice, we will hone our research skills by finding existing answers in the research literature, and evaluating these answers.

George Mobus

Title: Systems Thinking and the Sustainable Community

Description: What does it mean to have a sustainable community? The term 'sustainable' is often invoked to suggest that some particular practice or economic condition will last indefinitely into the future. It is used by environmentalists to describe a state of nature in which, for example, species of plants and animals will be able to thrive in harmony with human economic activities. Unfortunately the term is much overused, and very poorly defined in most of these instances. In this course we will take a critical look at the concept of sustainability from the perspective of qualitative* systems science. A prime example of the application of systems thinking to sustainable living conditions is Permaculture (permanent culture). A permaculture community design starts with the notion of treating the community as an ecological system embedded in a larger system – the rest of the environment. We will explore the ways in which the general principles of systems science are applied to a permaculture community in order to achieve true sustainability. Along the way the student will learn how to use these principles to think about many different kinds of systems in the world.

* Some simple algebra will be required, however.

Cheryl Greengrove

Title: Global Climate Change - What is climate and why do we care?

Description: The main goal of this course is to help us understand the processes that govern climate, what causes it to change, and why it matters. We will engage in the climate debate by reading texts that focus on various aspects of climate change-past, present, and future. This course will use hands-on activities, research, lectures, movies, reading, writing, and peer review to advance students' understanding of global climate change.

Linda Dawson

Title: Breaking Earth's Hold: Understanding Flight and Space Travel

Description: This course will explore topics for both flight and space travel. The basics of airplane design will be explored. The focus will then move from flying in air to flying in space. Physical concepts such as gravity and the earth's rotation will be studied in order to propose ways of leaving the earth's atmosphere. The basics of rocket design will be explored. Water rockets will be built and launched. The components of the Space Shuttle and its mission will also be explored. A visit to the Museum of Flight is planned.

Introduction to Social Science

Linda Ishem

Title: Communities and the Common Good

Description: We live in an era of giving back, pay it forward, and random acts of kindness. Contrast that to growing income inequity, rampant individualism, greed and excess. Communities and the common good is an experiential social science course designed to examine our rights, role and responsibilities as members of the various social groups to which we belong. Based on interdisciplinary assumptions, theories, and methods of the social sciences, this course will address multiple definitions and configurations of the “individual,” “community,” “civic engagement,” and “the common good.” The course will explore tensions between individualism and communalism; individual rights and social responsibilities; and special interests in relation to the common good.

Jeff Cohen

Title: The Good, the True, and the Beautiful

Description: In this course we will explore grand questions regarding the relationship between science and spirituality. We will explore what we know, how we know it, and what it means for our ability to live fully, in the present. Come see how our interior and exterior lives speak to one another in ways that open space for greater compassion and understanding and a deeper sense of who we are.

Rich Knuth

Title: Leadership in Theory and in Practice

Description: Theories of effective leadership behavior abound: adaptive leadership, authentic leadership, cultural leadership, servant leadership, and transformational leadership, to name just a few. Together we will examine the critical elements of these theories and apply them to current and historical leaders such as Abraham Lincoln, Mahatma Gandhi, Dolores Huerta, Margaret Thatcher, Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, Aung San Suu Kyi, Angela Merkel, Pope Francis I and more. We will examine such questions as are leaders made or born? Are leaders a product of their times or do they shape their times? Finally, we will examine how we can apply these theories in our daily lives within the social and work groups to which we belong.

Rich Furman

Title: The autoethnographic self: Understanding the social world through narrative reflections

Description: In this course, we explore the social world through autoethnography. Autoethnography is the process of systematically exploring "the self" as a means of investigating culture and various social phenomenon. Students in this class learn to examine the relationship between personal insights and the creation of knowledge, and the paradoxes of objectivity and subjectivity. Students will also explore the relationship between memoir, personal essays, and autoethnographies. Students will work throughout the term on their own autoethnographies and read those of others.

Shannon Tyman

Title: What's on Your Plate? Food Politics & the Alternative Food Movement

Description: From seed to supermarket, cultivation to consumption, the food system is a complex network of multinational corporations, taste preferences, nutrition information, transportation imbroglios, and cross-border ecologies. In this course we will examine the politics of the global food system and the social movements that have arisen in response to corporate, industrial agriculture. We will learn about different approaches to envisioning and developing alternative food systems as well as to identify concrete examples of political and practical strategies for change. Students will gain an understanding of food security, food justice, food democracy, and food sovereignty and leave with conceptual resources to help them assess their own community's food system and participate in informed activism.

Jeff Begun

Title: Is Making Green Green? The Economy and the Environment

Description: Most countries in the world have enjoyed a great deal of economic growth since World War II, with some countries transitioning from poverty to prosperity in just a few decades. Although life expectancy, consumption of goods of services, and educational levels have all increased in most parts of the world, there has also been a large impact on the environment during the development process. In this class we'll examine the environmental impact of all of this growth and we'll try to answer the all-important question – does economic development help or hurt the environment?

Tanya Velasquez

Title: Facts and Fictions: What does it means to be First Peoples and First Generation?

Description: This course exposes the pervasive myths about Native Americans in popular media, and U.S. society at large. We will ask how and why common notions about "Indians" are maintained by social structures that shape our perceptions and influence policies, which can negatively impact the lives of Native Americans but not without resistance. Therefore, we will also examine contemporary examples of community activism and legal advocacy regarding Northwest treaty rights and sovereignty. Additionally we learn about individual expressions of agency and empowerment – everything from personal stories about Native American identity found in film and literature to what it means to be the first in the family to pursue a college degree. Finally, we will compare these experiences to our own lives using basic concepts from the social sciences. You will participate in service learning events and field trips to enhance your understanding of this complex and important subject.

Alice Payne

Title: Doing Time Together: A Perspective on Prison Life

Description: Let's listen to the voices of those inside our prison walls as we examine the lives of two incarcerated individuals, one male and one female. Both are sentenced to life without parole. Both bring meaning to their families and friends. Both influence others who live with them inside as well as those who enter and leave their world on a daily basis. Together our hearts and minds will be impacted by what we discover.

Cynthia Howson

Title: Trafficking, corruption, informality and crime: Investigating the illicit global economy

Description: Illicit and illegal flows of goods, services, information, money and even people, cross national borders every day, representing a critical and understudied dimension of the global economy. This course introduces students to the sources of regulation, networks and incentives that drive illicit transactions. Case studies will include smuggled goods, from music and cheese to credit card numbers and human organs, as well as illicit services such as money laundering and counterfeiting. As they investigate the opportunities and challenges these issues present for global governance and economic development, students will gain insight into the contributions and methods of different social science disciplines.

Emily Ignacio

Title: From the Harlem Renaissance to Hip Hop: Examining the Interrelationship between Politics, Economics & Art in the U.S.

Description: In this class, we will examine political and economic changes from the 1920s to the present from both a sociological and literary perspective. The class will explore the effects of various political and economic changes on diverse communities primarily within the United States, particularly the connected experiences between people living in the United States and the rest of the world. For instance we will study the move from manufacturing

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towards globalization, how these economic policies impacted migration between and immigration into urban centers, as well as, the creation and proliferation of predominantly white suburbs.

Michael Brown

Title: Cowboys and Cowgirls vs. Stereotypes

Description: This course looks at representations of the American West. We will watch movies depicting the West and the women and men who made its history. We will examine whether the stereotypes of the people who played a role in the “taming” of the West – whites, Indians, African Americans, Hispanics, and Asians – were accurate either in their time or ours.

Shalini Jain

Title: Introduction to Social Science: Business and Society

Description: Designed to facilitate a better understanding of the complex relationship between private enterprise and society at large. The course emphasis is on management of social responsibility and ethics.

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Introduction to Humanities

Michael Berry

Title: Music in Everyday Life

Description: In today's society, music has become ubiquitous. Because music is readily available and transportable, many people take music and musical experiences for granted; however, people use music in various ways that are crucial to our being in the world. Through readings from the scholarly literature, discussion, and self-reflection, this class will attempt to shed light on how music structures our lives and influences our behavior. Simultaneously, we will consider how our daily lives shape our understanding of music. We will consider topics such as workout music, elevator music and Muzak, music in retail establishments, iPod culture, music as therapy and torture, and general music listening habits. A semester-long journal project will provide students with an opportunity to study their own individual listening habits.

Kim Davenport

Title: Listening Outside the Box: Concert Music in the 21st Century

Description: With only ten weeks to explore the world of "classical music", we will immerse ourselves in a multitude of listening experiences, to include live concert attendance and in-class performances by local musicians. Building on this foundation, we will explore the impact of today's global society on this musical tradition: to what extent have new technologies, increased communication and the ensuing democratization of music impacted the ways in which we relate to "concert music"? Does this music still have relevance in our lives? How have other cultures embraced this tradition, and how has the music of other cultures influenced composition and performance in this genre?

Augustus Machine

Title: Zombies, Demons, and Ghosts?: Latin American Literature of the Fantastic

Description: This course will be an exploration of the Latin American literary genre known as "Literatura Fantastica", or the Literature of the Fantastic, which is comprised of works in which both the characters and readers are left doubting the nature of reality.

Ed Chamberlain

Title: Family Secrets & Traditions in Literature

Description: In this course, students will consider books and pop culture that reveal the secrets and traditions of families. We will discuss why a secret love (or hidden past) causes family strife by looking at examples from England, the Caribbean and the United States. Students will be asked to study how the private lives of famous families often fascinate readers; for instance, we will explore the ways that magazines, such as People Magazine, talk about superstars and their families.

Shannon Tyman

Title: Mona Lisa Goes Green: Exploring the Intersection of Art & Ecology

Description: Experimentation is at the heart of science so it comes as no surprise that there is a rich intersection between art and ecology. In this course we will investigate this exciting relationship. We will look at the natural world through the eyes of artists, scientists, and artist-scientists. We will ask ourselves: how do science and art approach the natural world differently? Throughout the course we will expand the traditional natural science definition of ecology. A significant portion of the course will be spent sharing the work of artists responding to ecological concerns such as climate change, loss of wildlife habitat, and industrial pollution. Is artistic work about nature useful as a means to educate? Does it also help us "solve" environmental problems? As a class we will consider the role of art in today's ecological crises.

Ingrid Walker

Title: The King of Pop: Reading Michael Jackson

Description: Michael Jackson was one of the most recognized and celebrated global icons and entertainers in the world. This course explores why by examining his work and its popular culture context: Jackson the boy and the man; his artistic and cultural influences and his impact and legacy; and the corresponding affect his unique celebrity seems to have had on him. As we pose questions through a cultural studies framework, we'll explore aspects of Jackson's identity, artistry, and influence. The course employs Jackson as a springboard to consider broader cultural issues of blackness and whiteness, gender, performing and personae, artistic agency, the power dynamics of the music industry in the 1970's-present, the rise of music video, celebrity, and that white, sequined glove, among many things. Using critical reading and research skills, we'll create focused analyses of Jackson's work and his cultural context. If that's not enough: there's a rumor that there may be a Thriller flash mob for extra credit. This class is an introduction to the Humanities, the study of the human condition. We'll explore aspects of the human experience through our examination of video, music, and lyrics, dance, cultural history, etc. By the end, you'll be conversant in some of the social issues typical of the late 20th and 21st century arts and culture in America and how they resonated across the world.

Mark Pendas

Title: The City in Popular Culture

Description: How we think about cities shapes how we plan, build, and live in cities. But where do our thoughts about cities come from? In many cases they come from our own lived experiences, our daily interactions with the different people, practices, and spaces of the city itself. But mostly our perceptions of urban environments—especially those environments that we do not routinely experience first hand—are shaped by or derived from the various ways that cities are represented in popular culture (film, television, literature, art, music, etc.) and in the news media. Through such representations we learn what different urban places are like, or might be like, or could become; we formulate opinions about “good” places and “bad” places; we make decisions about the places we should visit or avoid, remember or forget; and, perhaps most importantly, we draw conclusions about the people, the lives, and the circumstances both of the places where we live and of the places we may never see.

Joanne Clarke Dillman

Title: From Maus to Mayhem: Introduction to Visual Culture

Description: This course will examine visual culture by surveying a number of sites across the visual field. These will include subcultural sites like graphic novels, emergent internet zones like the DIY arenas of Pinterest, YouTube, and Facebook, and more dominant cultural forms like film and television, which will ground our theorizing and discovery. Also, as much as visual culture is about looking at objects, it is also about the alignment of sight with knowledge and knowledge with power, so we will foreground our thinking about looking in the course as well. Students will develop visual critical skills, close reading/analytical skills, and writing skills.

Merna Hecht

Title: Voice and Visibility: Changing Worlds with the Arts

Description: In this course we will consider the ways in which outspoken, out of the box artists and writers have created projects that have taken a stand against injustice. We will arrive at an understanding of how visual and literary arts projects created by contemporary artists of all ages have had a positive impact on diverse communities around the globe. How we speak out and express ourselves through art and poetry in order to bring voice to those who are often voiceless be it through poetry slams, graffiti and street art, or storytelling will be part of our creative class projects and inquiry.