

# Critical Research: strategies, practices, and conventions of researched writing

WRT 205, sec. U801 Summer 2021 Online

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## Course Description

Writing and Organizational Cultures will examine relationships between people and institutions and will explore questions like—How are organizational cultures formed? How do organizational cultures impact those who are members as well as those who are outsiders? How do genres reflect and shape the cultures and work of organizations? How do organizations enact inclusion/exclusion? What markers signify an organization's culture? Whose voices and values are represented (or not) in organizations? How does change happen? Students in this course will read deeply into narratives and analyses of the culture of a workplace or organization and research current issues in organizational culture, designing a variety of texts to explore and highlight these issues for various stakeholders.

## What is Critical Research?

Research, we all know, is a life skill, not simply an academic practice. We do research all the time. We do research to make purchasing decisions and course selections. We do research to plan internships and graduate school applications. We do research to gather details about potential employers and workplaces. Research drives our information-rich culture.

However, research requires more than just information gathering. Our effective use of research depends on our ability to filter and evaluate information and ideas, to put them in meaningful contexts, and to *forward* that material by putting it to work for our own purposes. Thus, research is wrapped up with rhetorical analysis. When we talk about “critical research,” this is what we mean. And in the context of our course, this is what it will look like:

- **Research Writing as Situated Process**  
Students will recognize and act upon the ways methods, processes, and contexts shape research and writing.
- **Researching and Evaluating Sources Rhetorically**  
Students will develop reading strategies for invention, rhetorical engagement with sources, and critical dialogue.
- **Research Writing Within and Across Genres**  
Students will recognize the role genre plays in determining research forms and practices.
- **Reflecting on Ethical and Rhetorical Choices**  
Students will analyze and reflect on how rhetoric and issues of ethics (e.g., respect for and representation of research, engagement across differences of perspective, etc.) affect research across a range of situations within and beyond the classroom.

Research, then, is more about process and purpose than it is about product. There just isn't a single *product* that we could look at and say “that's research.” Instead, research is a set of actions and choices. In WRT 205, we will develop habits, skills, and strategies that you will be able to use when you confront various research problems, and we will test those methods as we develop and pursue research questions related to organizational culture.

Research is formalized  
curiosity.  
It is poking and prying  
with a purpose.

—  
ZORA NEALE HURSTON

## Required Materials

Most course readings will be available as PDFs and web links on Blackboard. I encourage you to print out and annotate these readings—we'll look at a couple of different methods/tools for that. The only book you will need to purchase is *They Say/I Say: the moves that matter in academic writing*, either the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> edition.

Because we are a fully online section, all work will be submitted through Blackboard and SU's Expressions blog site. For this reason, reliable technology access will be crucial.

## Your responsibilities as a learner

Your learning depends upon your active participation in the course. To succeed in WRT 205 you will need to be an engaged learner. That means that you will

- be present—in an online environment, this means logging in at least 3-4 times weekly
- be responsive—just as you will depend upon quick responses (within 24 hours) from me, so will I expect you to get back to me promptly if I reach out to you
- listen and talk (or really, read and type ☺), ask questions and answer them, and expect to learn from everybody in our section

Your effective participation in our virtual space depends upon your continued engagement with the material on your own time. That means that you will

- read actively, annotating the reading to make it work for you
- complete all writing assignments in a thorough and timely way
- ask and answer questions
- take responsibility for your own learning—for meeting deadlines, for seeking out help when you need it, and for cultivating your own interest in the work of the course

## How you will be evaluated

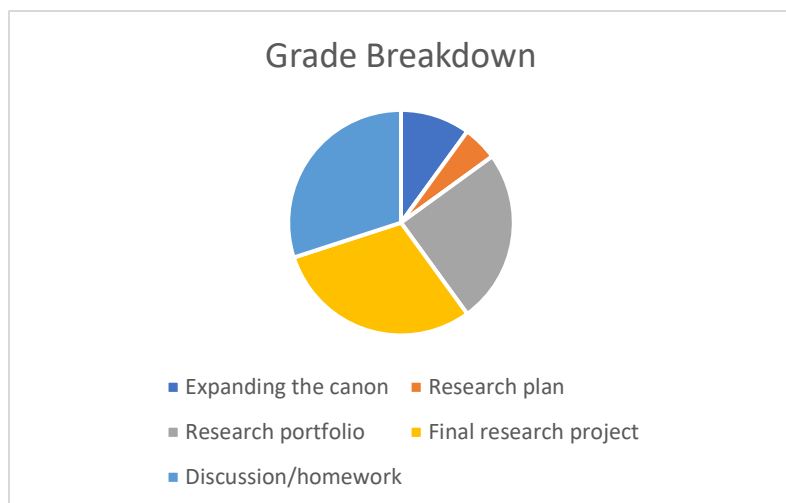
Writing well starts with reading well. Close reading helps us to identify and appreciate the tactics of other skilled writers, and it gives us new ideas to respond to. WRT 205 is a reading- and writing-intensive course, and you can expect to complete both kinds of work each week.

You will devote time, thought, and energy to a variety of informal and formal reading and writing practices. During the course, you will annotate readings, keep a record of ideas and responses, take notes, contribute to our class blog, experiment with different genres, and engage in a variety of invention, drafting, and revision techniques.

All activities in this course are important and will have an impact on your development and success as a writer (and, of course, on your final grade). Your grade will be determined as follows:

### Grade Breakdown

Discussions and homework:	30%
Expanding the canon:	10%
Research plan	5%
Research portfolio:	25%
Final research project:	30%



## Course Policies

### Attendance and participation

***Here's the way this policy usually reads:*** If you must checkout for any period of time, you are responsible for the work assigned or missed. Please realize, however, that your performance, your work, and your final course grade will be affected by recurring absences. Failure to participate in three weeks of class will result in a failing grade for the course.

***Here's the real deal:*** We're living in rather uncertain times, in which pandemic-related challenges sometimes derail our best intentions. **So the reality of attendance and participation in this online course is this:** I ask that you abide by the deadlines indicated on the schedule of assignments as best you can. If your individual circumstances interfere with your ability to meet those deadlines, please communicate that with me, so that we can discuss your options. I hope that you and your family are well and that life in your corner of the world can proceed without too much interruption, but I recognize that all of those variables are not in your control. Please stay in touch with me, so that we can successfully steer through this course.

### Academic honesty

The academic community requires ethical behavior from all of its participants. For writers, this means that the work we claim as ours must truly be ours. At the same time, we are not always expected to come up with new ideas all on our own; we often build our thinking on the ideas of others. We are expected, however, to credit others for their contributions and to clearly indicate the boundaries of our own thinking. In cases where academic dishonesty is detected (the fraudulent submission of another's work, in whole or part, as your own), you may be subject to a failing grade for the project or for the course, and in the worst case, to academic probation or expulsion. For a more detailed description of the guidelines for adhering to academic honesty in the College of Arts and Sciences, go to: <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>

Plagiarism is a serious offense. It can be quite complicated, too, so please know that there is no such thing as a stupid question on this subject; if you're not sure how to handle an issue related to sources, *please ask!* We will also be talking about issues related to authorship and ethics throughout the semester.

### Special needs and situations

If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu>, located in Room 309 of 804 University Avenue, or call (315) 443-4498 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. ODS is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will issue students with documented disabilities Accommodation Authorization Letters, as appropriate. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact ODS as soon as possible.

Syracuse University and I are committed to your success and to supporting Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This means that in general no individual who is otherwise qualified shall be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity, solely by reason of having a disability. You are also welcome to contact me privately to discuss your academic needs although I cannot arrange for disability-related accommodations on your behalf.

University bureaucracy aside, all of us learn differently and benefit from having access to multiple modes of communication and interaction. If there are things that I can do to better facilitate your learning, let's talk about those ideas.

## Student Writing

All texts written in this course are generally public. You may be asked to share them with a peer, the class, or with me during collaborative activities. You will also be asked to consider signing a consent form requesting the use of your writing for professional development, teacher training, and classroom instruction within the Syracuse University Dept. of Writing Studies, Rhetoric, and Composition, should I wish to share any of your writing beyond our course.

## Technology use

Computers are part of our writing culture, particularly in the workplace. No writing class can ignore the process and effect of computerized environments. All work for this class will be produced electronically on computers. You must make sure that your documents are cross-platform compatible—in other words, you must be able to save your work in formats that everyone can read (including .doc, .rtf, and .pdf file types). Please note that Blackboard (where you will submit most of your major assignments) does not effectively process Pages files; be sure to save any documents you submit to our assignment dropboxes in .pdf format.

Email will be our primary mode of contact outside of class. Plan to check your .syr email account daily (or have it forwarded to an email that you do check regularly). Any correspondence from me will go to your .syr account. We will also make extensive use of Blackboard and SU's Expressions blog site—as repositories for course documents, as tools for collaboration and submission of assignments, as portals to other relevant electronic resources, and as places to further our discussions and build our community. You will need to log-in regularly.

While computers save us great amounts of time and energy, they are also susceptible to crashing and freezing (and occasionally self-destructing). Save your work frequently; always make backup copies or email it to yourself; and plan your projects with extra time allowed for those inevitable glitches. "My computer ate my homework" will not be an acceptable excuse for late work. You should save all your work until the end of the term; you will need to refer back to previous texts periodically.

## Late work

Deadlines exist for real reasons and are a fact of life in both the university and the professional world. In order to learn effectively, it is essential that you stay on track with assigned reading and writing tasks and that you meet the designated deadlines. Failure to do so in this course will have consequences, just as it does in the world beyond the university. If you know that you will not be able to complete an assignment on time, please do your best to contact me BEFORE the deadline to discuss alternate arrangements. In the absence of an advance agreement with me, late assignments will be penalized 10%.