

Dr. Bill Wolff
WRITING, RESEARCH, AND TECHNOLOGY, Spring 2008

Syllabus

Course Location: Education Hall 2108

Office Location: Education Hall 3075

Contact: wolffw@rowan.edu

Course Web Sites: <http://williamwolff.org/courses/wrt-spring-2008/>
<http://blackboard.rowan.edu>

Course Hours: W 6:30pm – 9:00pm

Office Hours: T 2:30 – 4:00

W 3:30 – 5:00 or by appt.

Office Phone: 856-256-5221

Course Description

In this course we will look at what Jay David Bolter calls *writing spaces*—those online and in-print areas where texts are written, read, and manipulated. We will consider how the latest technologies are blurring the distinction between writer and reader, author and subject, and text and image. Indeed, much of our time will be spent thinking about the language of images and how one reads images on the page and on the screen. Ultimately our discussions will ask us to question what, in our technologized and visual world, *writing* is, and how images have been and are being used as evidence to both support and supplant it.

Although the course will involve a substantial reading component, our primary focus will be on your writing. We will have three primary writing assignments each of which will ask us to explore writing in a different medium and with different rhetorical goals. We will be writing theory-driven academic texts. Most reading assignments will be accompanied by a prompt which will ask you to respond in an online forum, thereby beginning discussion of the text prior to class and extending in-class discussions outside of the walls of the classroom. Other assignments may ask you to engage in online chat, and still others to critique multimedia presentations. Each of the larger assignments will have rough and final drafts. The rough drafts will be critiqued by your classmates.

Many of the images we will be looking at are upsetting—because of their subject matter and because of the way certain technologies have been used in print and online media to exploit, categorize, and define. Yet, those very same technologies—especially in our internet-mediated environment—allow individuals access to information previously locked away. As a result, it will be especially important for us to realize that different people respond to images in different ways, to respect the various reactions, and try to understand why they happen. Indeed, as Luc Sante writes at the end of his essay, “Evidence,” “As we look [at these pictures] the clocks have all stopped, the air is going out of the world, the great glass bell is descending on the circumference. There is no place for us outside this frame, nothing to breathe, nowhere to stand. We cannot be the viewer of such a scene. We must have forgotten: We are the subject.”

Unit I. Technology and Remediation

In this unit we will be considering how, as Bolter describes it, “our culture is . . . redefining the visual and conceptual space of writing” (12). We will begin thinking about the *technologies of writing*: blogs, chat, text messaging, video blogs, podcasts, and so forth. You will write an essay

in which you analyze the online version and the print version of the same text in terms of Bolter's arguments on remediation, spatiality, and change.

Unit II. Evidence and Visual Rhetoric

We are inundated with images: TV news and sports shows with multiple windows, YouTube and iFilm videos, IM avatars, video games, photographs, and so forth. What are these images doing? What are they evidence of? How does the context impact how we read them and how they read us? You will write an essay in which you discuss a series of images and what they are giving evidence to.

Unit III. A Final Project in Multiple Parts

This unit will take up the second half of the semester. In it we will explore the intimate relationship between texts and images. We will consider how to best present together images and text so as to create what Edward Tufte calls *Beautiful Evidence* in his complex, beautiful, and engaging book. Tufte argues that "making an evidence presentation is a moral act as well as an intellectual activity. To maintain standards of quality, relevance, and integrity for evidence, consumers of presentations should insist that presenters be held intellectually and ethically responsible for what they show and tell" (9). We will attempt to do just that by completing a multimodal essay in which Tufte's, Bolter's, and/or Sante's ideas are fully incorporated.

Required Texts

Bolter, J.D. (2001). *Writing Space: Computers, Hypertext, and the Remediation of Print*. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Sante, L. (2006). *Evidence: NYPD Crime Scene Photographs: 1914-1918*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

(Note: This title is very hard to get. Do not wait for the bookstore to get it. You can buy used copies online from bn.com or amazon.com. There are also several copies available on reserve in the library.)

Tufte, E. (2006). *Beautiful Evidence*. Cheshire, CT: Graphics P, 2006.

- Various photocopies, online readings, and other materials as need
- Computer with Internet access
- Microsoft Word or any of many online alternatives (papers must be turned in in .doc or .rtf; no other formats will be accepted)—see http://www.readwriteweb.com/archives/web_20_backpack_web_apps_for_students.php
- Rowan email address

Office Hours

Office hours are designed for you, giving you a more private environment in which we may talk about your work, your performance in class, etc. If you are unable to see me during my office hours, do not hesitate to make an appointment to see me at a different time.

Contacting Each Other

There will be times during the semester when I will need to contact the class and you will need to contact me. I will contact you via your Rowan email account, so please be sure that you are checking it regularly and/or forwarding it to the email service you use most regularly. I am in my

office only during office hours and the brief times before and after class. As a result, calling me in my office will not get you an immediate response.

I strongly suggest you contact me via email, which I check all day long. Email, however, tends to be seen as an informal medium. This, however, should not always be the case. All emails that I send to you will have a meaningful subject line and a proper salutation (“Hi Class,” or “Hi Jane,” etc.). The first sentence will notify you of the purpose of the email, and then will get to the heart of the matter. It will end with a formal closing (“Thanks, BW”). I expect the same from any email you send. Any email that does not will immediately be deleted and not responded to.

Students with Disabilities

Your academic success is important. If you have a documented disability that may have an impact upon your work in this class, please contact me. Students must provide documentation of their disability to the Academic Success Center in order to receive official University services and accommodations. The Academic Success Center can be reached at 856.256.4234. The Center is located on the 3rd Floor of Savitz Hall. The staff is available to answer questions regarding accommodations or assist you in your pursuit of accommodations. We look forward to working with you to meet your learning goals.

Attendance

Much of your time in class will be spent in activities, not in lectures. Therefore, it is more than usually important that you come to class faithfully and that you participate in the activities planned. If genuine disaster should befall you and you must miss a class, please check with other students and the course web site to find out what you have missed.

After FOUR absences *for any reason* you will fail the course. After TWO absences your final grade will drop one full grade for every absence. For example, if a student has 3 absences, they will receive no higher than a B in the course; 4 absences no higher than C; 5 absences no higher than a D. A student is considered late if they arrive after the sign-up sheet has gone around the room; lateness equals .5 absences. Missing a required conference counts as an absence.

Grading

Grades in this course are determined on the basis of a *Learning Record*, which accompanies a portfolio of work presented both at the midterm and at end of term. These portfolios present a selection of your work, formal and informal, plus ongoing observations about your learning, plus an analysis of your work development across five dimensions of learning: confidence and independence, knowledge and understanding, skills and strategies, use of prior and emerging experience, and reflectiveness. This development centers on the major strands of work in the course:

Rhetoric: Students will develop their ability to look critically at the way text and images are represented in various media, and will gain the tools necessarily to discuss what they observe in rhetorical terms.

Research: This course will consider research in terms of its definition “to reconsider or to look at anew” and not in terms of conducting library or internet research. By placing texts in conversation with one another students will develop an ability to re-consider an author’s ideas.

Critical Thinking, Writing, and Reading: Students will develop their ability to analyze events in the media and in the texts they read and then filter that information in terms of the theories and other texts being read. Students will learn to write academic expository texts in which they use sources—both scholarly and primary—to support and further their own ideas on a subject.

Technology: Students learn how to use various online tools and technology-related skills which can help them develop their abilities in the other course objectives.

Collaboration: Students will develop the ability to work collaboratively in activities that range from online discussion postings to peer reviews to in-class discussion.

For every missing non-online posting assignment, your grade will be lowered by one full letter grade. For every 2 missing online postings your grade will be lowered by one full letter grade. For every 3 late assignments, your final grade will be lowered by one full letter grade. It is better to complete an assignment late then to not complete it at all.

Grading Criteria

- A, A-** Represents outstanding participation in all course activities; all assigned work completed, with very high quality in all work produced for the course. Evidence of significant development across the five dimensions of learning. The Learning Record at this level demonstrates activity that goes significantly beyond the required course work in one or more course strands.
- B+, B, B-** Represents excellent participation in all course activities; all assigned work completed, with consistently high quality in course work. Evidence of marked development across the five dimensions of learning.
- C+, C, C-** Represents good participation in all course activities; all assigned work completed, with generally good quality overall in course work. Evidence of some development across the five dimensions of learning.
- D+, D, D-** Represents uneven participation in course activities; some gaps in assigned work completed, with inconsistent quality in course work. Evidence of development across the five dimensions of learning is partial or unclear.
- F** Represents minimal participation in course activities; serious gaps in assigned work completed, or very low quality in course work. Evidence of development is not available.
- IN** Work for the course is incomplete and the instructor will allow the student additional time to complete it. The amount of time allowed is at the discretion of the instructor.