

Professor Bill Wolff
Technologies and the Future of Writing, Spring 2009
a module in Introduction to Writing Arts

Course Info

Course Location: Education Hall ###

Office Location: Education Hall 3075

Contact: wolffw@rowan.edu

Course Web Sites: <http://williamwolff.org/courses/tfw-spring-2009/>

Course Hours: T/H 4:45pm – 6:00pm

Office Hours: T/H 2:30 – 4:00

Office Phone: 856-256-5221

Module Overview

In this module we will be considering the relationships among technology, writing, and the construction of virtual spaces. The main project will be to create our own online information ecologies. Bonnie A. Nardi and Vicki L. O’Day (1999) “define an information ecology to be a system of people, practices, values, and technologies in a particular local environment. In information ecologies, the spotlight is not on technology, but on human activities that are served by technology” (p. 49). Our own personal online information ecologies will be comprised of four interrelated, symbiotic spaces:

- personal portfolio on Blackboard;
- an evolving Netvibes ecosystem (<http://www.netvibes.com>);
- an evolving Diigo (<http://www.diigo.com>) social bookmarking space; and
- a collaborative professional blog using Wordpress (<http://www.wordpress.com>).

Specifics for each portion of the information ecology will be described in greater detail on a separate assignment page. Students will also write a short (1 - 2) page paper that discusses their information ecology in some way (details to come soon).

Module Units

The module will be broken into four, one-week units:

Writing Spaces

In this section we will consider what Jay David Bolter calls writing spaces—online and in-print areas where texts are written, read, and manipulated. We will look at how new media technologies are changing the way people write, compose, and think about both. Our readings will focus on the genre of blogging. We will begin to compose collaborative educational/professional/personal blogs using Wordpress.com—a free, open source blog host.

Origins

This section provides a theoretical and historical framework for the module as we will consider definitions of technology and the origins of the Internet. Readings will challenge us to rethink our perceptions of technology and the relationship between technology and literacy. Students

Ownership and Identities

In this section we will look at how identities are constructed in electronic spaces and how electronic spaces are forcing us to rethink questions of ownership. Readings will center on open source computing, copyright in digital environments, and identity formation in digital environments. We will learn how to use two powerful, fun open source applications, Diigo and Netvibes. The social networking that is a primary characteristic of Web 2.0 is going to transform how we write (individually and collaboratively) as well as how we store and process vast amounts of information. We will think about the nature of tagging and folksonomies

The Future of Writing

This last section will ask us to speculate as to where writing and composing is headed in the near and distant future. Readings will focus on the literacy of comics and video games, and we will consider what it means to compose in the age of YouTube. Students will learn how to connect to their personal portfolios in Blackboard, and will think about how to organize their education as a Writing Arts major at Rowan.

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. If you do not know your Rowan email address, you can find it at <http://www.rowan.edu/toolbox/email/#students>.

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.

Grading

Final grades for the module will be based on the following percentages:

Information Ecology—100 points

- Portfolio (10pts)
 - Organizational Quality, or how well you set up your portfolio
- Blog (30pts)
 - Repetition, or how often you posted and if over a series of days;
 - Variety, or the variety in the types of posts;
 - Identity, or how closely it aligned with the identity discussion in your paper
- Netvibes (30pts)
 - Variety, or a variety of different kinds of widgets;

- Total, if you had the required at least 20 widgets and 3 tabs;
- Identity, or how closely it aligned with the identity discussion in your paper
- Diigo (30pts)
 - Tag Quality, or the quality of the tags you composed for each of your bookmarks;
 - Folksonomy Quality, or how well the tags create a vocabulary for your identity and interests
 - Identity, how closely it aligned with the identity discussion in your paper

Late work will result in a 3 point reduction from the appropriate project area. Tardiness is equal to .5 of an absence; you are late if you arrive at class after the sign-up sheet has made its way around the room. The grades you receive at the end of the module will correspond to the letter grades on the overall course syllabus.