

WRITING RIVERS

English 245: Seminar in the Major

Dr. Caroline Gottschalk Druschke
Tuesdays/Thursdays 1-2:15pm, Van Vleck B231
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<http://seacomm.weebly.com/engl245.html>



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WELCOME TO CLASS!

Welcome to English 245: Seminar in the Major, "Writing Rivers." This small, interactive seminar offers a chance for you to get to know more about the major, about each other, about Wisconsin's waterways, and maybe even about yourselves. Through reading, writing, viewing, and doing, you'll become more familiar with rhetorical studies and with freshwater resources in Wisconsin. As we move from literary analysis to rhetorical analysis to community engagement this semester, my hope is that you'll find yourself equipped and inspired to take action about water-related issues you feel passionate about.

WHAT HAVE WE AGREED TO?

As the university catalog describes: "This small seminar, taught by a faculty member, will offer students close instruction in the principles and practices of informed, engaged, critical reading and writing. While the texts and topics vary, each seminar will reinforce fundamental skills taught across the English major, strengthening students' capacities to write and speak powerfully and to build convincing, original, well-organized arguments that persuade audiences of their significance. Students will meet with the professor in individual writing conferences and will write at least 30 pages, including drafts and informal assignments spread throughout the semester." As you'll see below, we'll basically stick with that plan.

WHAT WILL WE DO?

- Read. Write. Talk. Go places. See things. Watch a film. Write more. Engage people. Write even more!
- Learn about rhetoric, writing, advocacy, watershed science, and each other.
- Create timely, compelling arguments about texts, films, water, and life.
- Complete two major writing projects and several smaller ones.
- Take river-related action in our on- and off-campus communities.

WHAT ARE WE HOPING TO LEARN?

Folks in higher education—especially in composition and rhetoric—LOVE what we refer to as “learning outcomes.” As well we should! Learning outcomes remind teachers of what we ought to be teaching, set expectations for students about what they can anticipate learning, and allow all of us to reflect back at the end of the semester to see if we’ve actually accomplished what we set out to do. Our learning outcomes this semester integrate some of my own hopes for the class with the Department of English learning outcomes and the Wisconsin Experience Core Concepts and Expectations.

This semester, students will:

- Learn about rhetorical studies, rivers, and dams.
- Engage with Wisconsin’s aquatic ecosystems and their humans.
- Create original, coherent, and compelling arguments in text and in life that push beyond summary to analysis and independent and critical thinking.
- Apply the tools of rhetoric to embrace risks, solve problems, and take action in the public sphere.
- Partner with others to address timely problems and create positive community change.
- Consider the role of environmental advocacy in the English major and the role of English in advocacy.
- Give a shit about something! And act on that passion.

WHAT DOES CGD EXPECT OF US THIS SEMESTER? (a.k.a. assignments and grades)

25% | Engagement

Our class meets 25 times. Students will receive 1 pt. for each meeting, provided they attend* and fully participate in class, are able to discuss all assigned readings, and complete all formal and informal writing assignments and presentations. (*Students will be excused for religious holidays and official university events.)

5% | Midterm Action Project Pitch

In week eight, students will pitch their ideas for their end-of-semester Action Project (see below) and reflect on their early progress on the project and in the course. Students who write a thoughtful, polished, full-length, grammatically appropriate pitch will receive full credit.

25% | Writing Project 1 (WP1), Rhetorical Critique of *DamNation* (6 pgs.)

Participate in a Writing Fellow meeting and complete two paper drafts and a reflective cover letter.

45% | Action Project + Writing Project 2 (WP2), Critique of Applied Environmental Rhetoric (10 pgs.)

Complete a student-designed community-based action project, participate in a Writing Fellow meeting and complete two paper drafts and a reflective cover letter.

Grading Scale | A 93 / AB 88 / B 83 / BC 78 / C 70 / D 60 / F

WAIT... WHAT IS A WRITING FELLOW?

You folks have hit the writing jackpot this semester! We are super lucky to have the chance to work with two Writing Fellows, Kendall Oehler and Tori Tiso, who have received specialized training to work with other undergraduate students on their writing. For both WP1 and WP2, students will first submit a draft to our Writing Fellows, then meet in one-on-one conferences with a Writing Fellow to receive substantive feedback, and then revise the project to submit for a grade to Dr. Druschke. The process of working with our Writing Fellows is absolutely essential to our course, and students should see Kendall and Tori as experts they are. You are lucky to work with them!

WHY COULDN'T WE FIND BOOKS FOR OUR CLASS IN THE BOOKSTORE?

The honest answer is that I really, really, really, really, REALLY don't want undergrads to buy textbooks if I can avoid it. Education is expensive enough, and requiring students to buy a bunch of costly texts if they're not entirely necessary doesn't help to ensure that all students—regardless of income—can fully engage in the course. All course readings are available on our course website: <http://seacomm.weebly.com/engl245.html>. Read them, annotate them, and bring them to class on a laptop or tablet or in print ready to discuss.

WHAT CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION?

If you have a disability that could impact your work in this class, please contact me at the beginning of the semester so that reasonable accommodations may be worked out to support your success in this course. You should also contact the McBurney Disability Resource Center at 702 W. Johnson Street, Suite 2104 / 608-263-2741 (voice) / 608-225-7956 (text) for additional support and resources. Email: mcburney@studentlife.wisc.edu

WHAT CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT RESPECT AND INCLUSION IN OUR CLASSROOM?

Dr. Druschke ("she"/"her") is committed to fostering a shared classroom community that is sensitive to the very different experiences and realities of our students, and that views our various forms of diversity as our greatest resources: differences of immigration status, gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, culture, religion, and language, among others. I expect students to be relentlessly kind in their criticisms and open to learning from the perspectives of others. I am committed to using your preferred name and pronouns. Rather than calling roll on the first day, I invite students to introduce themselves with their preferred names. If your preferred name or pronouns change during the semester, I invite you to let me know and we can develop a plan to share this information with others in a way that is safe for you. I want all of my students to know that I welcome you, and I hope to connect you to whatever campus resources you need (the LGBT Campus Center, the Multicultural Student Center, the Writing Center, the Black Cultural Center, etc.).

HOW IS UW-MADISON DEALING WITH THE REPEAL OF DACA?

Chancellor Rebecca M. Blank released a statement on September 5, 2017 opposing President Trump's decision to repeal the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program and reiterating the university's position:

- UW-Madison will not provide information on immigration status of its students, faculty or staff unless required to do so under force of law.
- The UW–Madison Police Department (UWPD) will not participate in immigration enforcement actions conducted by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers (ICE). Our resources are limited and such enforcement is not part of UWPD's mission, duties or philosophy. UWPD will only participate in immigration-related investigations if an individual has committed serious crimes which impact the campus.
- U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers must use appropriate legal processes if they are on campus and wish to contact individual students about enforcement-related issues. For example, they generally cannot enter an on-campus private residence without a proper warrant.

Students may wish to contact the Multicultural Student Center (MSC), International Student Services (ISS) or International Faculty and Staff Services (IFSS) for support and resources. Again: I welcome ALL of you.

ONE FINAL NOTE FROM CGD...

While I have been teaching about rhetoric, writing, and water resources for well over a decade, you have the distinct honor of being my first ever (!!) class at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. That means I'll remember you forever, so let's have fun together, learn together, and work together to do truly unforgettable work!

BRIEF WRITING PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS WITH DUE DATES

WRITING PROJECT ONE (WP1)

RHETORICAL CRITIQUE OF DAMNATION FILM

25% of course grade

Writing Fellow Draft Due: Tuesday, October 10

Writing Fellow Conferences: Tuesday, October 17 through Friday, October 20

Final Draft Due: Tuesday, October 24

This argumentative paper will build from our class screening of the feature length documentary *DamNation* and our growing rhetorical vocabulary to sustain an evidence-based argument about some aspect of the film. This project is a chance to practice “rhetorical analysis” rather than explicitly “literary analysis.” It is meant to focus on the explicit and implicit arguments contained in the film, the strategies used to persuade viewers of these arguments, the success of its arguments for who you see as its intended audiences, and your assessment of the voices that are privileged and silenced in the film and the consequences of that silencing.

WRITING PROJECT TWO (WP2)

ACTION PROJECT + RHETORICAL CRITIQUE OF APPLIED ENVIRONMENTAL RHETORIC

45% of course grade

Start Thinking: Tuesday, September 26

Find Inspiration: Thursday, October 12

Pitch Your Idea: Thursday, October 26

Meet with Dr. Druschke: Tuesday, November 7 and Thursday, November 9

Act!: Thursday, November 9 – Thursday, November 30

Submit Writing Fellow Draft: Thursday, November 30

Present about Action Project: Tuesday, December 5 and Thursday, December 7

Meet with Writing Fellow: Thursday, December 7 through Wednesday, December 13

Submit Final Draft: Monday, December 18 via email

In lieu of a final exam, the culmination of this class is an action project and subsequent argumentative paper. This final action project is your chance to “give a shit about something”: to find some way to engage in an activity you care about related to water that moves an audience to share your passion. The point here is not for you to satisfy Dr. Druschke with your action, but, instead, to find something that YOU can be passionate about, to take action on that passion, and to justify your choice. Your action should be consequential for an identified target audience and build from interdisciplinary perspectives. This action can be taken individually or in a group, but each student will write an individual final paper after the action is complete. For your final paper, your job is to take a position related to the value—or lack thereof!—of doing this sort of applied, engaged work for rhetorical studies, English studies more broadly, or environmental activism. You should use your action project experience as evidence for an argument of your choosing. You might suggest, for instance, that a rhetorical approach enlivens environmental activism and public engagement (and offer details from the literature and from your experience about how and why), or claim that your action project experience deepened or complicated your understanding of the rhetorical theory we covered in the class (and explain how), or argue that this kind of action has no place in English studies. My hope is that the action project experience is valuable to you, but I’m not going to dictate what conclusions you come to about the value of that experience in the context of your major. This argumentative paper should use the tools of the course to critique your action project, and integrate that critique with the scholarly literature from the course to take a position about the role of engagement and action in English studies and of English studies in public engagement. You should see this project and paper as the capstone of your work this semester, showcasing what you’ve learned about your discipline, about watershed science, about activism, and about yourself.