

ENG 299 A: Digital Writing & Rhetoric

Scheduled: Monday 11:00-12:15 on Zoom and Wednesday 12:30 – 1:45 Hybrid in BUCM E251 and on Zoom

with Dr. Jeff Naftzinger

- email: naftzingerj@sacredheart.edu: I'll respond within 24 hours M-F, but maybe a little longer on the weekends.
- Online Drop-In Office Hours: 2-3 T, W, Th at <https://sacredheart-edu.zoom.us/my/naftzinger>
- Online Office Hours by appointment, just email me to set something up.

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Welcome to Digital Writing!

These days, most of our composing and consuming takes place on, in, and through digital technologies: we send texts, we scroll through Instagram, we play video games, we download apps, and on and on. Even though we're always in and on these digital spaces, we don't always consider the effects that these digital modes and media have on the ways we create and consume these texts. This course is designed to help you

examine how the ways consume and create information change based on the environment, audience, mode, and purpose of writing, and to help you better understand how to write in these digital environments.

To accomplish this, we'll learn some of the major concepts and theories of writing and rhetoric and apply them to the digital technologies you use and to the communities you're a part of. At the same time, you'll practice digital composing in order to illustrate and circulate what you're learning about these digital practices. Throughout this process, you'll think critically about your choices using your new understandings of writing.

In other words, by the end of the course, you will hopefully find that you are reading and creating digital texts differently; that you are much more informed about how others will read your digital texts; and that you bring a new level of intentionality to your own composing and editing practices in digital spaces.

To get this point, we'll engage in some critical questions:

- How do people communicate and interact with each other in digital environments and with digital technologies?
- What role does writing—alphabetic, visual, sonic, multimodal, etc.—play in these processes?
- What choices do writers and readers make about how they contribute to the building of communities in these digital environments?
- How do my writing choices—about circulation, audience, multimodality, etc.—contribute to these communities and communications?
- And in all of these cases, what role does the technology itself play in these answers?

Contacting Dr. Naftzinger

- **EMAIL:** naftzingerj@sacredheart.edu. Feel free to email me with any questions you have. I typically respond within 24 hours and during the hours of 9am and 5pm Monday through Friday, but it may take me longer over the weekends (I try not to do anything work-related on Saturdays and Sundays). Please take this response time into account when reaching out.
- **ZOOM:** I am available to chat (with video on or off) during office hours (TWTTh, 2-3) and by appointment throughout the week. You can either drop in during my office hours or schedule a time to meet with me. If you want to schedule something, just send me an email and we can find a time that works for both of us.

In-Person Attendance, Online Participation, and Course Workload

I don't feel comfortable requiring you all come into a classroom and making a choice between your grade and your—or your family's/friends'—health, so **in-person attendance this semester is optional and only online participation is required**. We will still have in-person activities and lessons once a week during our scheduled class time, and you are encouraged to sign-up and attend if you feel comfortable. But, if you would prefer, you can also complete the course without ever coming to our in-person classroom.

Regardless of your choice, you won't be totally on your own this semester. The first class day of the week will be an optional zoom session where we discuss the readings and go over the material for the week; the second class day of the week will be an optional in-person activity and/or work day where we'll apply some of the concepts of the week. You'll need to sign up to attend in-person, but I'll have Zoom set up too.

Instead of attendance, **you will be required to complete weekly participation assignments** (the amount you do per week will be determined by the grading contract you sign), and in-person attendance can count

towards that participation. A more complete explanation of the participation requirements can be found further down in the syllabus and on Blackboard.

The amount of online work in this class is on par with how much time you would have otherwise spent physically being in the classroom and doing homework during a normal in-person semester. You can expect to be spending roughly 3-4 hours a week on this class (give or take). An online class requires a lot of self-direction and motivation, and students who are new to online classes often struggle with staying on track. It might help to set a consistent time each week to sit down and focus solely on this class like you would during a normal semester. Establishing a routine will help you stay on top of everything and give you set times to work. Even if you're not coming to class, it might help to complete your work during our scheduled class times.

If, at any point during the semester, you find yourself falling behind, please reach out to me! I'm happy to work with you individually to get you caught up and help figure out how to help you finish out the semester successfully.

*****A Quick, but Important, Note about Mental Health*****

This is a strange semester during a strange time. I'm doing my best to help you learn about writing, while also, importantly, stay safe and healthy (both physically and mentally). The methods I'm using to administer this course are somewhat new to me, and I'm sure they're new to you too. Let's work together so we can both succeed: If things aren't working, please let me know. If things are working, let me know too. If you want more or less of something, tell me and—where possible—we can try to work together as a class to come up with a more agreeable way forward.

Whenever changes are made, I'll attempt to make sure that these changes don't negatively affect your workload and I'll try to ensure that you're able to provide feedback on proposed changes.

Digital Writing & Rhetoric Course Goals & Outcomes

Goals

1. Learn, read, and explore theories of composing and rhetorical principles that guide the composing and designing of texts for different digital media, environments, and purposes.
2. Use these theories to critically consume and analyze digital texts in a range of different media and genres.
3. Better understand the sociocultural dynamics of digital writing spaces.
4. Research the ways different communities and groups use digital technologies to communicate and organize.
5. Create digital texts that are effectively and thoughtfully composed for different media, genres, audiences, and purposes and with a range of different digital composing technologies.
6. Explore multiple techniques and technologies of/for revising and remediating both your own and other composers' texts.

Outcomes

- Gain experience reading and writing in/with multiple **genres, modes, and technologies**.
- Develop the ability to read and evaluate digital writing and spaces/technologies and to **identify the rhetorical strategies at work in these texts/spaces/technologies**.
- Learn how to **write appropriately according to the rhetorical situation**, and utilize the style, evidence, structure, and technology according to your understanding of that situation.
- Develop the ability to **shape your discourse, modes, and media to your audiences, purposes, and genres**.

- Develop the ability to **think critically** about your own digital writing process and assess your writing based on the concepts of the course

Class Requirements

Required Materials

- Access to a Computer to participate in our online sessions, and to compose and submit your assignments.
- Blackboard for PDFs, Assignment Sheets, and Submission Links.

Having a computer is especially important for this course and this semester because most of what we study and do will take place online. If you have limited access to technology or the internet, please talk to me ASAP so that we can figure something out.

If/when you come to an zoom and in-person session, please make sure you have access to the readings and make reference to them in your posts/discussions

Assignments

You will have 5 major assignments this semester and you'll also have somewhat informal participation activities/assignments due every week. Importantly, though, you will have a lot of choice about how you approach the major assignment, in terms of what you study and how you illustrate your findings. More detailed assignment sheets for all of these assignments (both major and participatory) will be available in Blackboard.

Assignment	Description	Purpose/Outcomes
Readings and Videos	Every week, you will have a couple of readings, videos, or podcasts to read/watch/listen to. These are designed to help you understand the major concepts, work towards the major outcomes of the course, and complete the major projects. As such, it is important that you spend time reading and thinking about the material.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to understand the concepts and outcomes of the course • to enhance your knowledge of writing
Discussion Boards & Critical Thinking Posts (~300 words minimum)	Every week, you will have 1 required discussion board post that connects to the readings and helps me understand your views on them (the first week, you'll have 2). For these posts, I'll give you some questions that you'll respond to in ~300 words. You can also ask questions and look for clarification about things you're still not sure about. Your classmates and I will help you answer those questions. Unless otherwise noted, DB posts are due at 11:59pm on Sunday.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to critically analyze assigned readings • to make personal connections to readings • to share our unique perspectives & experiences • to learn more by hearing about others' perspectives & experiences

	<p>These posts will help to “simulate” what would happen during a normal class session. These are required and do not count towards your weekly participation activities.</p>	
<p>Participation Activities</p>	<p>These are informal writing and discussion activities that you’ll post on our Blackboard page that can/will take the place of weekly in-person attendance. As part of the grading contract, you’ll choose the number of activities you do per week.</p> <p>A full list of your options for participation will be listed on Blackboard. These activities can be used for any week of class. Some weeks will have special participation ideas you can use.</p> <p>To be counted on time, participation activities for the week are due by Friday @ 11:59pm.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to critically analyze assigned readings ● to make personal connections to readings ● to make connections across readings ● to make meaning of your own texts ● to understand your thought processes ● to invent, expand, organize, & present ideas ● to share our unique perspectives & experiences ● to learn more by hearing about others’ perspectives & experiences
<p>Drafts & Workshops</p>	<p>For our major assignments, you’ll be required to write in drafts that you’ll build on and revise. As part of these drafts, you’ll be asked to engage in peer-review workshops with your peers (socially distanced, of course) and/or turn in some evidence of them in on Blackboard. You should send your drafts to your partners by Wednesday and send your feedback by Friday.</p> <p>These are required and do not count towards your weekly participation activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to better understand and practice the writing process ● to engage in both sides of the editing and revision process ● to learn to critique and help other writers ● to learn how to include, or ignore, revision advice
<p>Digital Literacy Narrative</p>	<p>This analysis project is designed to help you think about your relationship with digital technologies and writing. This can involve thinking about how you’ve used digital technologies over the course of your life, or a week, or a day. Or in one particular digital text or with one particular technology. You’ll illustrate/circulate your narrative using a digital technology you think</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To think critically about the technologies you write in/with. ● To think about the role these technologies play in your writing. ● To think critically about presenting your digital writing. ● To practice and reflect on digital writing

	works best for this purpose (e.g. a video, a podcast, a webpage, etc.)	
Digital Discourse Community Project (5 pages + reflection)	This project involves researching and reporting on a digital community or a community that uses digital technologies that interests you. This might be a forum, a group, a profession, etc. You'll study the digital practices of this community and then make a "report" for your peers using a technology of your choice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to understand how discourse communities use digital technologies. ● To understand how technologies shape, or are shaped by, these communities. ● To practice researching and analyzing digital writing. ● To think critically about presenting your digital writing. ● To practice and reflect on digital writing
Digital Redesign Project (~6 Pages)	This project involves using your critical digital composing skills to redesign a text. This might mean taking an "analog" text and making it digital. Or maybe it involves re-making a digital text for a new purpose, audience, or technology.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to put your understanding of key terms into practice ● to develop a composition using multiple modalities for composing. ● to consider the affordances of media and modes. ● To practice researching and analyzing digital writing. ● To think critically about presenting your digital writing. ● To practice and reflect on digital writing
Final Reflection (3 Pages)	A reflection synthesizing your digital writing knowledge & its connection to your writing practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to synthesize the knowledge you've made about writing in the course ● to consider how you will use this knowledge in other writing contexts. ● to further develop technological literacies ● to consider design in arranging your work for online audiences.
Digital "Portfolio"	At the end of the semester, you'll create either a digital portfolio or LinkedIn page to emphasize your skills as a digital writer and highlight certain aspects of your identity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To think about audiences, affordances, and purposes. ● To think about identity. ● To reflect on what you've learned.

Grading

Your grade for this course will be determined by a grading contract. Unlike a point system, which is based on the “quality” of your paper (which can be somewhat nebulously defined) a grading contract looks at your overall work and progress throughout a semester evaluating your participation, engagement, and commitment to creating and revising effective texts. In other words, your grade in this course will be based on the work, and effort, you put into it. **The assignments in this class are essentially pass/fail: if you meet the minimum requirements for the assignment (as laid out in the assignment sheet or in the assignment prompt), then you get credit for the assignment; if you do not meet the minimum requirements, then you do not get credit for the assignment. If you don’t meet the requirements, then you will have the opportunity to revise it for credit.**

Using a grading contract is designed to make grading more transparent, and it is designed to give both of us a more understandable way of assessing your work (and labor). Ideally, this method of grading allows you to focus more on what actually matters: engaging with the class, developing your ideas and understandings, learning about and practicing writing, and contributing to our classroom community. While you will not get a letter grade on your assignments, you will get a lot of feedback from me and you’ll get a P (pass) or P- (revise).

The grading contracts are posted on Blackboard, and there are options for earning a C, a B, and an A. Ultimately, it is up to you to determine how much labor you’re going to put into the course this semester. In other words, you determine what grade you want, and you must do the work to get that grade. In the beginning of the semester, I will ask you to choose the grade, and thus the labor requirements, you’d like to work towards; in the middle of the semester, I will ask you to review that choice and assess your progress.

I know this grading process may be unfamiliar to you, and I’m happy to answer any questions that you have or help you understand this process.

AMENDING A CONTRACT: If extenuating circumstances arise wherein you cannot meet one of the terms of the contract but feel you still have shown the labor, level of engagement, and produced the quality of the work necessary to earn your goal grade, please meet with me immediately to file for an individual amendment. This cannot be done the last week of class nor after grades have been entered. This should be done once you realize you have breached your contract.

Course Policies

Participation and Civility

Since we want to learn from each other, you should try to give thoughtful, reasoned responses in your discussion posts, peer workshops, and participation assignments. To help facilitate this, and to facilitate critical understandings between reading and composing, this course will have an emphasis on these discussions and workshops, and I expect you to participate in class by being actively engaged throughout the semester. To do so, please complete readings and watch the videos regularly and on time, participate in class discussions, and share your opinion about what we’re talking about. Your participation and sharing will primarily involve posting online, responding to your classmates’ posts, and finding ways to extend the discussions through participation assignments, which can, but doesn’t have to, involve coming to in-class activities and workshops.

While I want you to participate in class and share your perspectives with your classmates, I will tolerate neither disruptive language nor disruptive behavior. Disruptive language includes, but is not limited to, violent and/or belligerent and/or insulting remarks, including sexist, racist, homophobic or anti- ethnic slurs, bigotry, and disparaging commentary, either spoken or written (offensive slang is included in this category).

All of you have a right to your own opinions, but inflammatory language founded in ignorance or hate is unacceptable and will be dealt with immediately.

This classroom functions on the premise of respect and if you violate any part of the course civility and professionalism policy, I reserve the right you ask you to withdraw from the course or dock your grade if violations to this policy become excessive or oppressive.

Digital Technologies

In this class, computers are an integral part of the course, and you might be interacting with your laptops, tablets, etc. during our classes frequently. However, there is a difference between engaged, as in course-related, and disengaged computer usage, such as texting/emailing, using social media or unrelated sites, etc. Disengaged computer usage will result in a warning, but repeated instances will result in you being asked to leave the class and take an absence. (This primarily applies to an in person class session, but it might be important online too.)

Additionally, a reality of digital composition is that computers crash, files are lost, and platforms crash without automatically saving. As digital composers, you need to create precautions to ensure that when you experience technological problems, you have your files stored elsewhere (you might backup files on Google Drive or OneDrive, or keep a copy of your writing in a Word doc before you move it to networked spaces like Blackboard). When a catastrophe happens, please explain your situation to me before the due date has passed but do know extensions for this reason are unlikely.

Finally, you are **not** required to turn your camera on during live class sessions, so don't feel obligated to do so. While it is nice to connect a face to a name and see you, it is absolutely okay to have your camera turned off if that makes you more comfortable. Alternatively, if you have your camera on but need to turn it off temporarily, feel free to do so. You are the controller of your camera, choose to use it as you wish.

“Late Work” and Extensions

Unless a change is discussed in an announcement or email, all work—including drafts—should be submitted by the due date specified on the syllabus/Blackboard page. These deadlines are in the syllabus to make sure you're on track to finish on time, make sure you have time to get feedback from me, and make sure things aren't piling up too much.

That being said, if you think that you need an extension on an assignment, just ask me. My goal here is to help you learn about writing, but it's difficult for you to do that—and for me to help you do that—if you don't turn in an assignment. If you need more time, either because there are other things going on in your life or just because you're unhappy with the product at the point that it is due, just ask me for an extension and I will try to work with you to find a mutually agreeable outcome.

If you ask for an extension, then you need to provide an alternative due date. While I will always discuss the possibility of an extension with you, the discussion is not a guarantee that you will be granted one. I do not offer any makeup assignments or extra credit.

I understand that we are in the midst of a pandemic; that things in all of our lives are stressful, confusing, and far from normal; and that things around us—in and outside of school—are constantly changing. And I also understand that all of these things can affect what we're trying to accomplish here in class. I want you to learn about writing and to succeed in the class, but I also want you to be mentally and physically healthy, so please get in contact with me if I can help you do that. The earlier you reach out, the more time we'll have to make sure you can get back on track.

Course Resources

Office Hours

My main goal as an instructor is to help you learn about writing and become better writers. To that end, I will be in my “virtual office” on Zoom during my scheduled office hours (listed at the top of the syllabus), and I am also happy to make an appointment (through email) to meet with you outside of those times too. I want to make sure I can answer any questions you might have about the course, help you work through your ideas for assignments, and help you navigate the semester. If you’re having trouble with the technological aspects of our assignments, I am happy to try and help you work through that too.

I can also answer questions over email, though I may ask you to meet with me over Zoom depending on your questions. If you email during non-business hours, I may take a little longer to respond to you.

Accessibility and Accommodations

Sacred Heart University provides equal educational opportunities for all students regardless of disability status. Students requesting accommodations should contact the Office of Student Accessibility, (<https://www.sacredheart.edu/offices--departments-directory/student-success-center/office-of-student-accessibility/accommodations-process/>). Students must be registered with the Office of Student Accessibility and submit appropriate documentation to be granted accommodations. For further information about requesting accommodations, please contact Kathy Radziunas, Director of the Office of Student Accessibility, radziunask@sacredheart.edu, or Laurie Scinicariello, Assistant Director of the Office of Student Accessibility, scinicariello@sacredheart.edu.

Your success in this class is important to me. If you have a disability—apparent or non-apparent, documented or otherwise—and you anticipate or experience any barriers to learning related to the format, materials, or requirements of this course, please reach out to me so we can discuss potential options. All discussion will remain confidential. Together, we’ll develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. Though I encourage you to contact me as soon as possible, it is never too late to request accommodations (I know that bodies, ability, and circumstances can change throughout the semester, especially in times like these).

Academic Integrity

Please refer to the University’s policy on academic honesty in the Undergraduate Catalog ([Click here for academic integrity policy](#)). Understanding what plagiarism is and how it functions in different contexts is important, and we’ll discuss this in class; as such, different assignments will have different expectations for citations and references.

That being said, any violations with regard to plagiarism, cheating, work handed in that is not your own, work handed in for a previous or another course, and other infractions against this policy will result in a failing grade for the assignment for the first infraction and a failing grade for this course and an official report to the office of Dean Cautin for the second infraction.