**WRTG 4381: Special Topics in Writing: Discourse Analysis**

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**Undergraduate Bulletin Description of 4381 SPECIAL TOPICS IN WRITING**

An elective for majors and minors in Writing. In-depth investigation of a significant figure, group, historical period, genre, or issue in rhetoric or writing. Content varies. Course may be repeated for credit. Offered on demand. Lecture, discussion, research, writing. Prerequisite: senior status and writing major or minor.

Note: This course will count as an elective in the linguistics major or minor as well—we’ll just need to do a substitution.

**Required Text**

Bazerman, Charles and Paul Prior, Eds. (2004). *What writing does and how it does it: An introduction to analyzing texts and textual practices.* New York: Routledge.

**COURSE GOALS**

By the end of this course, students will

* Understand writing as a complex process of reading, writing, thinking, listening, discussing, observing and acting; in short, as a social process.
* Be able to explain a text’s production, representation, reception and distribution.
* Use quantitative and qualitative approaches to discourse analysis
* Analyze a text to explain what it does and how it does it rather than in terms of what it means in some extended piece of text.

##### COURSE POLICIES

**Disability**

The University of Central Arkansas does adhere to the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you feel you qualify for services and resources under this act, please call the Disabled Student Services at 450-3613 located at the Student Health Center, Suite 212.

### **Sexual Harassment/Consensual Relations**

Sexual harassment by any faculty or staff member or student is a violation of both law and University policy and will not be tolerated. Please read your Student Handbook for the policy, definition and procedures concerning sexual harassment. Also on the subject, consensual sexual relations between a faculty or staff member and a student are deemed “unwise” since this raises serious ethical concerns, especially when the faculty or staff person is in a position of authority over the student. In these cases, certain sanctions may result, including termination (see Policy Number 515).

### **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is using another person’s words or ideas as your own, and it will not be tolerated. Penalty for plagiarism is failure of the course.

### **Cell Phones**

Cell phones are disruptive and will not be tolerated. **Turn them off**. I expect that your cell phone will never be heard in my class unless you are expecting a call from your transplant surgeon informing you that your new heart/lung/liver/kidney is available.

### **Attendance**

If you miss more than six class meetings, you may be dropped from the course without notice. If you must miss a class, it is your responsibility to get the notes you missed or contact me about what you need to do. You do not need to give me any excuses whether your own (“I overslept I swear!”) or from a doctor/dentist/court officer for missing class.

### **Grades**

You have 8 writing assignments, a portfolio and one final project. The writing assignments will receive two grades: one for in class participation concerning the assignment and a second from me on the merits of the writing.

Written Analysis in class 10 points (80 total)

Written Analysis 15 points (120 total)

Portfolio 100 points

Final Project 100 points

Scale: A = 360-400 B = 320-359 C = 280-319 D = 250-279

**Late Assignments**

Your writing assignments are due in class where we will be doing group work. You cannot make up the in class points if you are absent. However, there will be a showing of the movie *The Linguists* on Monday evening November 23 for 10 extra points. If you have done all your in class work, you get 5 extra points. As for the other points, you can turn in one late written analysis as long as I get it within one week of the due date. The next late one will get 8 points and 0 after that. Your portfolio and the final will not be accepted late except under dire circumstances and will require some sort of official documentation (doctor’s note, police report, hospital bill).

**Why am I Here and What am I Going to be Doing?**

This is an elective course for Writing and Linguistics majors and minors, so I am assuming you are taking this course because it matches your interests. Discourse Analysis is really a broad umbrella term for many types and ways of analyzing discourse. Generally speaking, those from fields such as English studies, writing, rhetoric, philosophy, education and political science tend to look at texts more generally—taking texts as a whole. Linguistics, on the other hand, tends to analyze text at the sentence level, the grammatical level. The two approaches are not mutually exclusive and you will find that if you examine a text at both these levels, your conclusions will support each approach. In prepping for this class, I decided to go with the more general approach for most of the course despite the fact that most of you have taken Intro to Linguistics as well as upper division linguistics courses. I felt that the more general approach is more interesting, less painstaking if you will. As students new to this discipline, I felt that you would benefit by learning the methods of discourse analysis, both quantitative and qualitative, at a more general level than getting into counting tokens of passive voice or double negatives and trying to draw conclusions from that. Besides, until you are good at examining texts as a whole, getting to the nitty-gritty of grammatical implications is tough. I like to think that it’s the linguistic approach that supports the conclusions of the generalists—the truth is always in the grammar!

You are going to spend a lot of time analyzing texts—some that are given to you and others of your choosing. You will learn how to look beyond what a text *means* and to what a test *does* and *how* it represents meaning. This is the difference between your English literature classes and this one—and I do not recommend mixing the two up. Your professors will fail you because the two approaches are quite distinct. We will focus on these questions: 1) how do texts direct people’s attention to various objects and concerns? 2) How do various linguistic, rhetorical and graphic representations make possible the creation of meaning? 3) How do texts depend on other texts to influence people’s actions and beliefs? 4) How do people actually go about producing texts? 5) How do social systems depend on and promote particular kinds of text? Learning to ask these kinds of questions about the texts you encounter every day will influence the way you think and feel about the meaning of those texts. Discourse analysis will give you tools you need to live your life as an informed, educated citizen of your various communities and give you the confidence to act appropriately. Are these ridiculous claims? No, they are not. This is what an education is for—so that you can read what’s out there on, say the economy or health care or whether or not to build a dog park, etc. and make a truly informed decision on what to think and how to act knowing who is trying to persuade you, how and why. This may very well be the most important class you take in your entire life!

**Expectations**

Teaching is 50% of my job (the other 50% is research and service. If you want to know what that really means, I’ll be glad to tell you all about it). This semester, I teach 4 classes and have three preps (Phonology and Introduction to Linguistics in addition to Discourse Analysis) so just like you, I have other classes and other work commitments as well as family and friends and things I like to do outside of school and work. Even so, we should expect from each other an honest commitment to class, pride in our work and a pursuit of excellence since we all do want to be here and learn together.

1. **What I expect of you:**

I expect you to be on time, to read all course assignments, to complete all homework on time and turn in papers on the day assigned. I expect you to respect the other students in class by listening to their questions and comments and responding appropriately. We are going to be doing a lot of discussion in here, so please remember that your opinion is important but no more important than anyone else’s. If you are a bit more shy than others, please try to speak up. If you tend to want to comment on absolutely everything that is said, please refrain a bit and let a few others speak. I expect you to participate in normal classroom decorum. Oh yeah—I expect you to turn off your cell phones!

1. **What you can expect of me:**

You can expect from me that I will come to class prepared and on time, that I will lead your discussions in a fair and appropriate manner, that I will assign only meaningful work and grade it fairly, and that I will answer your questions in class or in my office, by meeting with you as needed and answering emails. You can expect that I will treat you courteously, that I will respect your rights and needs as a student and that I will try to make discourse analysis the most interesting class you have ever taken (or at least in the top 20%).