

WRTC 103: Critical Reading & Writing



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Sections: 0011, 0012
Location: Harrison Hall, 2245

WELCOME!

Welcome to Writing, Rhetoric, & Technical Communication (WRTC) 103: Critical Reading & Writing! I'm excited to work and learn with you throughout the semester. This syllabus contains important information you need for the course including learning outcomes, instructor office hours, and information on major class assignments.

CATALOG DESCRIPTION

Fosters reflective, critical reading, writing, and research in public discourse, culture, humanities, technology, and science. Challenges students to consider cross-disciplinary modes of inquiry through multiple genres with an attention to enlightened, global citizenship. Emphasizes revising for rhetorical effectiveness. WRTC 103 fulfills the General Education Cluster One writing requirement and is a prerequisite for all WRTC courses numbered 200 or above.

After completing coursework in writing, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate an awareness of rhetorical knowledge, which may include the ability to analyze and act on understandings of audiences, purposes and contexts in creating and comprehending texts;
- Employ critical thinking, which includes the ability, through reading, research and writing, to analyze a situation or text and make thoughtful decisions based on that analysis;
- Employ writing processes;
- Demonstrate an awareness of conventions, the formal and informal guidelines that define what is considered to be correct and appropriate in a variety of texts;
- Compose in multiple environments using traditional and digital communication tools.

COURSE THEME & INSTRUCTIONAL MODES

The theme for our course is **community**. Some questions we'll ask throughout the semester include: What is community? How can writing, reading, and research help us understand and work within communities? How can understanding argumentation and rhetoric enhance the way we interact with communities? This course draws on the theme of community to address these questions and others. We will use group work, readings, research, digital tools, and class discussions to explore this theme and work on your course projects.

Another major focus of this course is **rhetoric and argumentation**. Throughout the semester, we'll learn how to "look under the hood" of arguments to understand how they work. In doing so, you'll be better prepared to craft your own persuasive arguments within and beyond this course.

COURSE MATERIALS

You do not need to purchase a textbook for this course. All readings will be available on Canvas and/or the library databases. You do, however, need the following items:

Binder (print or electronic) for readings, assignments, and drafts. Please bring your binder to each class period.	Gmail account ; Google Drive/Docs
Reliable method for backing up and storing electronic files	Adobe Acrobat Reader
Daily access to JMU email & Canvas	Microsoft Word

INSTRUCTOR AVAILABILITY

I have office hours **Wednesdays & Fridays from 11:10-12:10**. If these times don't work for you, I can also talk with you on the phone or via the "chat" feature on Canvas. In addition to these hours, I typically check my email multiple times each day throughout the week, except on Friday evenings and Saturdays.

Outside of my office hours, the best way to reach me is via the **Ask It Basket** on Canvas. If you post a question to the "Ask it Basket," I will respond to you the next time I check into class, with the goal of responding to you within 48 hours. Please post general class questions (e.g., inquiries about

assignments) to the Ask It Basket and send personal inquiries (e.g., questions regarding grades) via email. All electronic correspondence should take place either through Canvas or your JMU email account.

ATTENDANCE

Six absences for any reason will be excused. University-sponsored absences, illness, religious observations, and planned absences will count toward your allotted class absences. For any absence beyond six, your final letter grade may be reduced by 1/3. More than 12 absences will result in course failure.

Roll will be taken during each class period. You will be counted absent if you:

- Arrive more than 15 minutes late
- Leave early, sleep, or do work for another class
- Disrupt class—e.g., chatting, generally disrupting the flow of class

I encourage you to use technology in class to help you learn course materials! ☺ However, if you're not using it for learning purposes (e.g., texting, typing, surfing the web), I may count you as absent without warning.

Once you are tardy 2 times, it will count as one class absence. You are tardy after class has begun. If you come in late, it is your responsibility to notify me or you may be marked as absent instead of tardy.

If you experience an extreme illness or extenuating circumstances that affect your ability to attend class, please get in touch with me ASAP so we can discuss ways to accommodate your needs. Note: If you suffer a prolonged illness that causes you to miss a significant amount of the semester (more than one week), you must contact the Dean of Students as soon as possible with details as to how long you think you'll be out. The dean of students will contact all of your professors for you. Their office can be reached at 540-568-6468. More information can be found [at this website](#).

COURSE CALENDAR

A tentative calendar of class activities, readings, and due dates will be posted on Canvas at the beginning of each unit. Additional readings or activities may be assigned in class.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Below are the major assignments you will complete for the course. All assignments must follow the guidelines in regards to length, content, and focus, be submitted in the designated file format, and to the appropriate location(s) to be considered for credit. To receive credit for reading quizzes/class participation, drafts, and peer reviews, you must be present in class with the required materials and fulfill the assignment guidelines.

Major Projects	
Major Projects	Points
Unit One: Argument Analysis Essay. This essay asks you to analyze and critique a text's claim or argument.	15
Unit Two: Crafting a Research Question. The purpose of this project is to identify an issue/topic related to our course theme and to develop a research question based on that topic.	10
Unit Three: Annotated Bibliography. This project asks you to conduct extensive research about your research question.	10
Unit Four: Multimodal Persuasive Essay & Presentation. For your final assignment, you'll build on your previous projects to craft a multimodal persuasive essay and presentation.	25
Supporting Projects	Points
Reading Quizzes/Class Participation	8
Drafts (5 points each)	20
Peer Reviews (3 points each)	12
Total	100

GRADE SCALE

Points	Grade
94-100	A
>94 to 90	A-
>90 to 87	B+
> 87 to 84	B
> 84 to 80	B-
> 80 to 77	C+
> 77 to 74	C
> 74 to 70	C-
> 70 to 67	D+
> 67 to 64	D
> 64 to 60	D-
> 60 to 0	F

Grade	Quality
A through A-	Exceptional
B+ through B-	Outstanding
C+ through C-	Competent
D+ through D-	Weak
Less than D-	Unsatisfactory

PROJECT HANDOUTS & FILE FORMATS

I will provide a handout and rubric for each major project specifying the general focus of the assignment, how many sources are required, etc. Many students use these materials as a checklist to ensure they have covered all aspects of the assignment.

Assignments should be submitted in a Microsoft Word or PDF format such as .doc, .docx, or .PDF. I do not accept or grade files in other formats such as .rtf, .wps, .odt, .pages, or .odf. Assignments posted in the wrong format are considered missing.

LATE WORK POLICY

Late work is not accepted unless there are extenuating circumstances. All coursework is due by the date/time indicated on the course calendar, unless otherwise noted. If you really get into a pickle (e.g., major illness, family crisis) and need an extension, please try to get in touch with me before your assignment is due, and we'll see if we can work something out.

FEEDBACK

My goal is to return assignments to you within 10 working days of submission, if not sooner. Most feedback will be posted to Canvas. (see below) If you have questions about my feedback or a grade, please email me to set up a time to meet and discuss your concerns.

CANVAS

I will post materials such as the calendar, project handouts, feedback, etc. on Canvas. In-class activities (e.g., draft workshops, mini-lectures) will not be posted online. I will also use Canvas to post grades/feedback and to share important class announcements.

EXTRA CREDIT

You can earn up to four extra credit points for visiting me in my office to talk about your writing and/or course progress. Each office visit is worth 2 points. We'll talk more about how this works in class. 😊

CONFERENCES

We will meet twice during the semester for a group conference. During our meeting, we will talk about your current writing project and revision possibilities. Our group conference will be like your in-class peer review sessions in that a small group of us will chat about writing and critical reading skills. **Please be aware that missing a conference counts as 3 absences or the equivalent of 1 week of class.** (Note that we do not meet for regular class sessions during conference weeks.) Conference meetings may not be made up.

WRITING CENTER

For free assistance with writing, visit the University Writing Center, located on the first floor of the Student Success Center, 738 S. Mason Street, MSC 1023. The Writing Center employs trained faculty consultants, graduate assistants, and peer tutors who help students with all types of writing. In particular, they can help you brainstorm and find a topic, develop rhetorical awareness, incorporate and document sources effectively, organize your paper, and develop revision strategies. For more information, make an appointment, or find writing resources, go to www.jmu.edu/uwc

DISABILITY STATEMENT

JMU abides by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act, which mandate reasonable accommodations be provided for students with documented disabilities. If you have a disability and may require some type of instructional and/or examination accommodations, please contact me early in the semester so that I can provide or facilitate provision of accommodations you may need.

If you have not already done so, you will need to register with the Office of Disability Services, the designated office on campus to provide services for students with disabilities. The office is located in the Student Success Center, Suite 1202, 738 S. Mason Street, MSC 1023. You may call 540-568-6705 for more information.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

Please refer to [JMU's policy on class cancellations](#) for information about University closings as well as JMU's main website and your local radio/television station. If class is cancelled due to inclement weather, you'll want to check Canvas for information regarding make-up work.

REGISTRATION & WITHDRAWALS

Students are responsible for registering for classes, keeping track of University deadlines and policies, and for verifying their class schedules on e-campus. Further information is available at [CAL Dean's website](#). You are responsible for the information available there, including information on how you might be dropped from the course if you do not attend the first two scheduled meetings. Please visit [the following website](#) for more information regarding drops and withdraws.

HONOR CODE

As a JMU student, you should adhere to the [JMU Honor Code](#) concerning academic dishonesty as well as abide by its precepts at all times.

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

In order to evaluate our first-year writing program, we will randomly select student texts from each section to use in evaluation. You may be asked to submit writing assignments for that assessment process. If your work is chosen, we will let you know and ask your permission to use your work in this way. This process will not affect your grade.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVATION ACCOMMODATIONS

All faculty are required to give reasonable and appropriate accommodations to students requesting them on grounds of religious observation. The faculty member determines what accommodations are appropriate for his/her course. Students should notify the faculty by no later than the end of the Drop-Add period the first week of the semester of potential scheduled absences and determine with the instructor if mutually acceptable alternative methods exist for completing the missed classroom time, lab or activity.

SYLLABUS CHANGES

Except for changes that substantially affect grading, this syllabus and course calendar are a guide for the course and subject to change with advance notice.