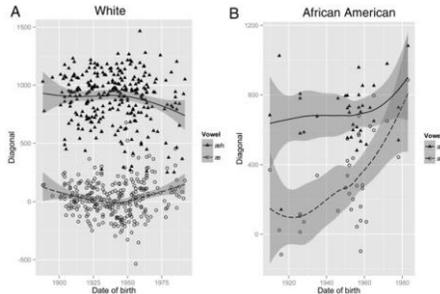


TYP 9a Spring 2018

Elementary Structures of the Academic Life: Critical Approaches to Evaluating Evidence, Research, and Knowledge Production



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Office Hours: Tuesdays 12:30-1:30 PM, Thursdays
11:00 AM-12:00 PM, and by appointment

Office Location: Brown Social Science Center, Room 322a

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Class Meeting Times: Tuesdays and Fridays 9:30-10:50 AM

Class Meeting Location: Goldsmith Mathematics Building, Room 226

Course Description:

In the second half of this two-semester course, students will continue to develop the fundamentals of college writing and argumentation. Core skills required for any kind of critical thinking at the university level will be practiced, with the primary goal of sharpening the ability to convey and organize ideas in expository writing. The implicit structures and rules underlying academic writing will be considered in depth, with a strong emphasis on practical criticism of cutting-edge research across the curriculum. Students will take part in the practice of independent research and become familiar with the institutional resources available to assist them in locating and evaluating information. Through the dual processes of synthesis and analysis, they will engage with existing scholarly literature in an area of interest to construct a logical and well-motivated written argument, presented in accordance with academic expectations for style and organization. An ongoing emphasis will be on the applicability of these rhetorical skills to other classes and non-academic settings.

Learning Goals:

Throughout the semester, students should strive to develop their ability to meet the following goals:

- Compose well-organized essays that proceed logically from one part to the next
- Address diverse views and counterarguments as they defend their own positions
- Adopt the formats and styles required to make their ideas legible for academic audiences
- Consider U.S. academic writing as its own culture, or set of related cultures, with social norms and implicit, deeply structured biases
- Locate and evaluate scholarly sources to build an original, research-based argument
- Synthesize data from multiple authors into a cohesive whole while sufficiently analyzing individual contributions in depth
- Master the conventions of MLA formatting and citation in order to meet expectations for undergraduate performance and offer proper attribution to other authors
- Mobilize rhetoric and academic writing in the service of positive social change
- Reflect on the foundations of academic inquiry shared across the university, as well as those features unique among different disciplines/majors

Course Requirements (or, How to Pass the Course):

Your commitments in this course involve activities both within and outside the classroom. The key to success involves keeping abreast of the requirements listed in each section here. If you are unclear about any of these activities or expectations, please get in touch with me as soon as possible.

Required Materials

The following books and materials are required for the course and should be acquired as soon as possible. Books are made available through the MKTYP office.

- Stephen King, *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*. New York: Scribner. 2010.
- Diana Hacker and Nancy Sommers, *A Pocket Style Manual: 2016 MLA Updates*. Seventh Edition. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's. 2015.
- Paper notebook and writing utensils (you are encouraged to take handwritten notes in every class, as cultivating this habit will help focus your mind and facilitate studying)
- Access to LATTE course site (provided through Brandeis login, computers available at the library and MKTYP lounge)

Class Preparation

The primary requirement, extending throughout the semester, is to prepare sufficiently for each class session. On Friday you will receive a finalized, updated schedule of the following week's reading materials and any written assignments due. Please read each article or excerpt *before* coming to class on the day listed. Since we are a small group, I am relying on each of you to come knowledgeable about the writing to be discussed and prepared with questions and uncertainties to pose to the rest of us.

Attendance and Participation

Attendance at all classes is expected as a basic requirement of the course. You cannot learn this material if you are not present in class, since most of what we will be covering will be brought out through discussion and many important points are not covered in the readings. Please arrive on-time having read the assigned materials and completed any written work due that day. Each student will begin with an A in attendance. After the first missed class, each subsequent absence will result in lowering your attendance grade by one-third of a letter (e.g., to an A-, then to a B+, etc.). However, I realize that unexpected things may come up during the semester (e.g., illness, family concerns, etc.) that may prevent you from being in class. Therefore, if you come to see me during office hours to talk about the course content that you missed, this reduction in your grade will be waived. Habitual absences will be addressed with the MKTYP director, Dr. Kathryn Bethea.

Furthermore, while attendance will play a crucial role in determining your grade, there is more to being "present" than simply showing up. Your mental presence at and participation in each class period is a crucial component of this course and your participation grade, which will be calculated separately from your attendance grade. You cannot earn an A for this component simply by showing up; you must earn it through consistent, careful, thoughtful, and eager engagement in class discussions. Careful preparation does not necessarily exclude taking risks; feel free to try new ideas without fear of being wrong. Your participation grade is a function not of correctness but of intellectual boldness and effort exerted. At the same time, I understand that outgoing conversation is not a style suited to all learners. Therefore, if you feel you are not able to participate rigorously during class, please let me know so that we can figure out an alternative mode of participation, whether through office hour visits or other activities.

Examination

There will be one in-class examination given during the course, approximately halfway through the semester. You will have the full class period to complete a series of short answer, essay, and brief editing questions on material introduced in the first part of the term. This activity is designed to prepare you for timed writing exercises you will encounter at the university. We will discuss strategies for composing strong responses in these settings. There is no final exam.

Assignments

Outside of class time, you will use the skills we have developed to try your hand at producing the kinds of argumentative writing we have been studying. There will only be two primary essays assigned: the lens essay and the research essay. While each of these papers ought to be relatively short in length, we will spend significant time editing each one to strengthen it to the best of your ability. A central tenet of academic writing is that editing is often more important and lengthy a process than initial composition; therefore, as you become university-level writers, you will need to gain familiarity with this extensive process. Given the lengthy time we will spend on each of these projects, I will expect them to be high-quality work, the best you are capable of producing; to help you reach these goals, you will have access to multiple lines of support, as described below.

For the first assignment, you will write another lens essay, the format of which was introduced last semester. This version, which will be six-to-seven double-spaced pages long, will follow a similar structure, requiring you to employ one text as a “lens” through which to better understand (and perhaps to challenge) a second text. For the second assignment, the research essay, you will extend the skills you developed in the lens analyses to synthesize multiple sources, some of which you will use as a lens. In a paper of at least ten double-spaced pages, you will craft a novel argument based on resources available through the Brandeis library. For each of these assignments, you will produce two rough drafts and a final draft; the first draft will be evaluated for its **argumentative content**, while the second round of edits and proofreading will focus on its **grammatical style** according to the standards of academic American English. More details about each of these essays will be announced in class and posted to LATTE.

In addition to these primary assignments, you will also be asked to submit four “mini-essays,” shorter papers of one-to-two double-spaced pages each. These essays will be evaluated less intensively than the main papers, and they are primarily intended to cultivate the habits of scholarly exploration in a more informal setting while preparing you for the longer papers. We will also have less formal, impromptu in-class writing assignments to be evaluated in a similar manner.

Extra Credit

If you would like to earn extra credit, you may attend an on-campus lecture and write a short reflection paper that (1) summarizes what you took to be the speaker’s most important points, (2) develops a point of criticism, in the spirit of constructive criticism we have developed in this course, and (3) connects the talk to or analyzes it through the lens of at least one source introduced in class. For each sufficiently engaged paper you write, you will receive an increase of one letter grade on one of your mini-essays. You may only choose to write about an event that is not assigned as part of regular course expectations (see below). One suggestion, although there are many more opportunities depending on your interests, is the many lectures hosted through the Brandeis Anthropology Research Seminar (BARS), held at the same time as our workshop but on alternate weeks. Check the anthropology department’s website, <http://www.brandeis.edu/departments/anthro/events/index.html>, for more details.

Workshop for Critical Inquiry and Education

Integrated into the structure of the course is the Brandeis Workshop for Critical Inquiry and Education (WCIE), an interdisciplinary and intergenerational collaboration designed to bring new and experienced scholars together to support one another in the development of cutting-edge research. You are invited to take an active role in criticizing and helping to produce quality writing, not only of your peers but of professional academics. As part of WCIE, four speakers will be invited to Brandeis over the course of the semester to share their unpublished works-in-progress—that is, “rough drafts” like the ones you are putting together for your assignments.

The week prior to these visits, you are expected to read a circulated draft in its entirety and come to class prepared to develop questions and points of constructive criticism for the guest. On four Friday afternoons (see schedule below) from 2:00-4:00 in Mandel Center G12, the workshop will welcome the speakers, who will offer a few introductory remarks. The majority of the time, though, will be spent discussing your questions and concerns with the drafts. Along with faculty and students outside the course, you will engage with the draft with the goal of improving it (and take note of how the suggestions could improve your own writing process). You are encouraged to pay special attention to how the MKTYP writing fellows, experienced scholars who have graduated from the program and will attend these sessions, prepare their comments and work together to sharpen the critical focus of the drafts.

Workload Expectation

Finally, these requirements for this four-credit-equivalent course are designed with the expectation that all students will spend an average of nine hours per week *outside* class meeting times reading assigned texts, preparing for discussions, and writing essays to be shared with the academic community. Success in this course, and in college more generally, requires the time commitment to complete these tasks without the external control of someone overseeing your daily progress. Although the specific activities that will take up your time may shift during the semester (e.g., from annotating articles to editing your own written work), you should expect to undertake the majority of course-related tasks outside class time.

Course Policies (or, Tips for Smooth Sailing):

In order to create the most effective learning environment possible and for the consideration of your fellow students, I ask that we all follow these simple guidelines while in class. One rule to keep in mind across all of them is that if you have concerns with anything in the course, please see me as soon as possible. Problems that build over the course of the semester become more difficult to address; it will be much easier to deal with them as early as possible. I am always available to find a solution that works best for you, regardless of what issues come up.

Electronics in Class

Please turn *off* all cell phones and other electronic communication devices when you enter class. This simple step is a common courtesy to fellow classmates and mitigates the temptation to check in continuously with electronics. If you must have your cell phone on (e.g., you are waiting for an important call or otherwise need use of your device), please let me know at the start of class. This course demands your full presence, undistracted by concerns outside the room. **Laptops should not be used except in cases of documented disability (see below in “Students with Disabilities”).** Although I may not directly address the use of personal electronics in class, you will find listed alongside your grades on LATTE a notation of any distracting uses of this technology, which will negatively impact your overall participation grade determined at the end of the semester.

Guidelines for Discourse

I would invite all of us to observe an atmosphere of respectful academic discourse. The university is built on the ideal of open discourse and debate concerning all topics, including potentially controversial themes on which many people (including me) have strong opinions. In higher education, extending into the public sphere, there has been increasing talk lately about “safe spaces,” a conversation that often conflates multiple meanings of the term and, consequently, leads to confusion and controversy. While you are by all means entitled to the greatest degree of *physical* safety we can provide in the classroom, there is no way to guarantee you will feel *intellectually* “safe” and comfortable at all times. In fact, the best learning and most innovative knowledge production often happens when people challenge their own cherished beliefs, even if it may be an emotionally difficult process. You are free to disagree with anyone and with any proposed ideas, regardless of how well accepted they seem.

Nevertheless, as a matter of general advice, I encourage you to try your best to debate respectfully and sympathetically, even when you disagree with your classmates or with me. We want to allow everyone to express his or her perspective in a safe yet academically critical setting. You may find it helpful to think of our job as to debate *ideas*, not other people. At the same time, never feel shy of asking questions about anything (terms, concepts, history, etc.) you do not know or are unsure of out of fear of being judged. Even if it seems like a silly question, chances are that other people have the same uncertainty.

Paper Format and Submission

The presentation of your written work is an important component of college writing that we will develop in this course. *All* written assignments (with the exception of in-class exercises and exams), even rough drafts, will be expected to conform to the following guidelines. These rules may seem arbitrary or complicated, but they will enhance the professionalism of your work. (We will discuss how to format each one in class.)

Papers must be typed and checked for spelling and grammatical mistakes to the best of your ability. Printed copies should be on white 8 ½-by-11-inch paper with **1-inch margins**, stapled in the upper left-hand corner, double-spaced, and in 12-point Times New Roman font. Electronic copies should be in Microsoft Word format (.docx or .doc). Even though Word automatically adds extra space after each paragraph, kindly remove these before submitting. Please also include your last name and the page number in the header of each page. All references to material not your own **MUST** be cited according to MLA format both in the text and at the end (i.e., a “Works Cited” list). Every submitted document should list at the top of the first page, in order, your name, your instructor’s name, the course number, the date you *finished* the draft, and a unique title. A sample of this format is available on LATTE.

The weekly schedule indicates how each draft ought to be submitted. Paper copies are required at the *beginning* of class, while electronic copies are **due to LATTE by 10:00 PM** the day *before* class. This extra time is helpful for me to be able to glance over your essays prior to our discussion, so please make sure you allow enough time to get your work in punctually. If for some reason you have difficulty submitting through LATTE, send it to me by email. (Assume I did *not* receive it if you do not get a simple email confirmation back from me.)

For each day (or portion thereof) that your paper is late, your grade will be reduced by one-third of a letter (e.g., from B+ to a B). This rule applies to both the rough drafts and the final version. *Please* remember to read through your entire draft at least once before printing it. If I do not think you have spent a reasonable amount of time on a draft, your lack of effort will be reflected in your grade. Extensions are

granted *automatically* for circumstances outside your control equal to the number of study days lost, **provided you let me know ahead of the due date.** If the new date falls outside our class meeting days but you need to submit a paper copy, you may (1) place it in my mailbox or (2) email it to me and submit a paper copy the next time we meet.

Academic Integrity

Every community is governed by rules—at turns explicit and written down but more often informal and learned intuitively—that channel individual behavior into forms taken by at least some members of the community to promote an ethical and just society. While these guidelines are at times contested or help contribute to inequalities, understanding their basis is a necessity in navigating social worlds—and to any efforts to reform them. However, learning a new set of ethical norms is not something that comes wholly from reading through lists of rules; as with the process children undertake to learn the “rights and wrongs” of their society, it happens through everyday practice, as family and acquaintances model proper behavior and rebuke transgressions.

Having been introduced to the basics of American academic norms in high school, you will likely be familiar with fundamental structures of ethical behavior expected in the college setting; nevertheless, college in general, and each institution and scholarly discipline in particular, has its own variations on permitted and proscribed activities. For this reason, one of the central learning goals of your first year at the university is to learn the stated and implicit expectations overseeing academic work at Brandeis specifically. You can find more information about the university’s policies on academic integrity and plagiarism at <http://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/sdc/ai>. Over the course of the year, we will be considering the university’s treatment of these issues in greater depth, but if you have questions about how they are applied in specific cases, feel free to ask in class or during office hours.

Grading

You will be evaluated based on the quality of your assignments, the degree of improvement throughout the semester, and the value of your participation in class. Each component of the course will be weighted as follows:

Lens Essay	20%
Research Essay	35%
Midterm Exam	10%
Mini-Essays and In-Class Assignments	15%
Attendance and Participation	20%

Your final grade will be calculated based on the average score of all these categories and will fall on the following scale, as defined by the university:

- A.....High Distinction (for exceptional work)
- A-
- B+
- B.....Distinction (for very good work)
- B-
- C+
- C.....Satisfactory (for acceptable work)
- C-
- D+
- D.....Passing, but Unsatisfactory (for poor work)
- D-
- E.....Failing Grade

Course Support (or, Where to Go for Help):

Across the Brandeis campus and within MKTYP, you will find countless people dedicated to helping you succeed in college. First-year students are often overwhelmed by a cacophony of messages in an unfamiliar and at times jarring environment; thus, the biggest problem is that it is often difficult to figure out how to connect with those willing to help. This section lists some of the offices and personnel on campus dedicated to providing specific kinds of help. If you are unsure where to go for assistance, always feel free to see me during office hours or connect with the MKTYP director.

Writing Fellows and Writing Tutor

Besides the instructor, there are several other people who are available to assist you with this course. The three MKTYP writing fellows are alumni of the program who are finishing their undergraduate degrees at Brandeis. Their role is to share expertise about academic life at Brandeis and how to engage with writing in a constructive way. You will see them at WCIE meetings, and they also hold regular office hours. For each of the two main assignments, you are expected to meet with one of the fellows to discuss your ideas and writing; however, feel free to visit them more frequently. More details and their contact information are available on LATTE.

We also have a graduate-student writing tutor assigned to the class. Additional perspectives on your writing will improve its quality, and you will get in the habit of sharing work with a broad academic audience, not just a single instructor. For that reason, in addition to meeting with a writing fellow, you must meet at least once with the tutor for each of the main assignments, although, again, you are encouraged to visit more frequently. The tutor's contact information and availability will be found on the LATTE site.

Writing Center

One of the best resources at Brandeis to improve your writing is the on-campus Writing Center, located in the Goldfarb Library, room 232 on the upper level. They offer free 45-minute sessions to help improve the organization, conciseness, and impact of your essays. (They will also work, to a lesser extent, on recurring grammatical concerns.) To register for a session, go to

<http://www.brandeis.edu/writingprogram/writingcenter/register.html>

or stop by during their evening drop-in hours starting at 6:00 PM (Monday through Thursday). If you make an appointment, please be sure to keep it, since they have had problems with some students not showing up in the past. Students who attend a full session will receive an automatic 24-hour extension on ONE of their drafts (either rough draft or final) for any of the written assignments. (Remember to ask for a sheet of paper confirming you were there!)

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately at the start of the semester.

Counseling Support

As suggested above, there is no way to guarantee you will not feel uncomfortable with the themes we encounter in and outside the classroom; however, we can provide as much support as possible for anyone who may feel distressed with any dimensions of the college experience. Please feel free to reach out to the Brandeis Counseling Center, located on the first floor of Mailman House, or their main website at <http://www.brandeis.edu/counseling/index.html>. They provide a host of free therapeutic services for all students, and their sessions are strictly confidential. You are also more than welcome to talk with me or the MKTYP director about any issues involving this course or any other concerns that arise over the course of the semester.

Course Outline:

This schedule is meant to serve as a guidepost for where our inquiry will head this semester and to provide some important dates and deadlines. However, due to the adaptive nature of the course, individual assigned readings (some of which have not yet been written) will change as we develop new ideas and explore new areas. Therefore, although we will follow the overall pattern set out below, concrete reading and assignment requirements will be distributed each Friday for the following week.

Part I: Academics as Culture

Week 1: January 12

What are the main goals of this course?

Week 2: January 16, January 19

Why is it useful to think of the academic world as “culture” rather than a universal “standard” of acceptability?

Mini-Essay #1 Due

Week 3: January 23, January 26

How does criticism operate in academic settings, and what are the boundaries of acceptable contestation or disagreement?

Mini-Essay #2 Due

Part II: The Politics of Language Criticism

Week 4: January 30, February 2

How does language matter?

Mini-Essay #3 Due

Week 5: February 6, February 9

Why is language such a potent site for contesting identity and reinforcing political stances?

Lens Essay Outline Due

Part III: The Social and Psychological Origins of Implicit Bias

Week 6: February 13, February 16

What causes group bias to be reproduced at the individual level?

WCIE Seminar #1: Jack Cao, social psychology, Harvard University

Lens Essay Draft #1 Due

Week 7: February 27, March 2

How do sociologists make claims about the interplay between internal emotional processes and cultural expression?

WCIE Seminar #2: Christina Simko, sociology, Williams College

Lens Essay Draft #2 Due

Week 8: March 6, March 9

What are some potential applications of the human sciences to addressing social injustice?

Midterm Examination

Part IV: Evaluating Information

Week 9: March 13, March 16

How can evidence be used to support an academic argument?

Lens Essay Final Draft Due

Week 10: March 20, March 23

Where do researchers find data to substantiate their claims?

Research Essay Proposal Due

Week 11: March 27 (no class on Friday)

Why do writers need to follow certain citation guidelines?

Research Essay Draft #1 Due

Week 12: April 10, April 13

What kinds of sources do historians have available to them to make their claims, and how can writers evaluate the reliability of their sources?

WCIE Seminar #3: Abigail Cooper, history, Brandeis University

Part V: Reflection

Week 13: April 17, April 20

What are some of the characteristics underlying disciplinary cultures?

Research Essay Draft #2 Due

Week 14: April 24, April 25

Why is attention to detail a valuable lens to be able to adopt?

WCIE Seminar #4: Anita Hannig, anthropology, Brandeis University

Research Essay Final Draft Due

Final Exam Week: May 1

What do you want to do with the techniques you learned in this course?

Mini-Essay #4 Due

*****NB: This schedule and syllabus are subject to change as we move through the semester.*****

*First page photo credit: William Labov, "The Role of African Americans in Philadelphia Sound Change,"
Language Variation and Change Vol. 26, 2014, page 9*