

# English 535

## Theories and Practices of Composition

### Spring 2008

Rooms: LA-2 205 and LAB 206

**Dr. Sarah J. Arroyo**      Email: [sarroyo@csulb.edu](mailto:sarroyo@csulb.edu) (best way to reach me)  
**Office: MHB 409**      Phone: (562) 985-8517  
**Office Hours: T TH 11 – noon and 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm (and by appointment)**

#### Course Description:

As an introduction to Composition theories and research, this course will address the histories, theories, and rhetorics of contemporary writing pedagogies. It is extremely important to recognize the connections between the theories or concepts of writing that we hold and our pedagogical practices. To enact pedagogies outside of any theoretical context often means that those practices are misguided. At the very least we run the risk of being unclear in our direction for the course or assignments and inconsistent in our modes of evaluation. We will study “hot topics” in the field and study scholarly exchanges regarding them. The course will also address the political, social, and institutional ramifications of Composition and Rhetoric and will prepare you for teaching Composition – particularly first-year-composition – at the college level. You will thus begin to situate yourself in the ongoing conversations occurring in the field, which will begin building who you will become as professionals in the discipline. No matter where you end up professionally, you will most likely be working with Composition theories in some capacity. Therefore, the goal of this course is not only to introduce you to pertinent theories, but also to examine carrying attitudes toward the teaching of writing, including your own.

#### Required Texts:

Bloom, Lynn Z., Donald Daiker, and Edward M. White. Composition Studies in the New Millennium: Rereading the Past, Rewriting the Future. Carbondale: SIUP, 2003.  
Smith, Allison, Trixie Smith, and Karen Wright, Eds. COMPbiblio: Leaders and Influences in Composition Theory and Practice. Southlake, TX: Fountainhead P, 2007.  
Taylor, Todd. Take 20: Teaching Writing. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2008. (DVD Format)

#### Optional Text:

Crowley, Sharon. Composition in the University: Historical and Polemical Essays. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 1998. (Available from Google Books for preview)

#### Articles (available through e-reserve; password: berlin):

Anderson, Virginia. “Confrontational Teaching and Rhetorical Practice.” College Composition and Communication 48.2 (1997): 197 – 214.  
Bartholomae, David. “Inventing the University.” Literacy: A Critical Sourcebook. Eds. Ellen Cushman, et al. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's P, 2001.  
Berlin, James. “Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class.” Cross-Talk in Comp Theory: A Reader. Ed. Victor Villenueva. Urbana: NCTE, 2003.  
Bauer, Dale M. “The Other ‘F’ Word: The Feminist in the Classroom.” College English 52 (1990): 385 – 96.  
Dickson, Alan Chidsey, Jaime Armin Mejia, Jeffrey Zorn, and Patricia Harkin. “Interchanges: Responses to Richard Fulkerson ‘Composition at the Turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.’” College Composition and Communication 57.4 (June 2006): 730 – 762.  
Downs, Douglas and Elizabeth Wardle. “Teaching About Writing, Righting Misconceptions: (Re)Envisioning ‘First-Year Composition’ as ‘Introduction to Writing Studies.’” College Composition and Communication 58.4 (June 2007): 552 – 584.  
Elbow, Peter. “Reconsiderations: Voice in Writing Again.” College English 70.2 (November 2007): 168 – 188.  
Fulkerson, Richard. “Composition at the Turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.” College Composition and Communication 56.4 (June 2005): 654 – 687.  
George, Diana. “Cultural Studies and Composition.” A Guide to Composition Pedagogies. Eds Gary Tate, et al. New York: Oxford UP, 2001.  
Hairston, Maxine. “Diversity, Ideology, and Teaching Writing.” College Composition and Communication 43

- (1992): 179 – 93.
- Halbritter, Bump and Todd Taylor. “Remembering Composition (The Book): A DVD Production.” JAC 26.3 – 4 (2006): 389 – 396.
- Johnson, T.R. “School Sucks.” College Composition and Communication 52.4 (2001): 620 – 49.
- Rice, Jeff. “The 1963 Hip-Hop Machine: Hip-Hop Pedagogy As Composition.” College Composition and Communication 54.3 (2003): 453 – 471.
- Ritter, Kelly. “The Economics of Authorship: Online Paper Mills, Student Writers, and First-Year Composition.” College Composition and Communication 56.4 (June 2005): 601 – 631.
- Robillard, Amy. “We Won’t Get Fooled Again: The Absence of Angry Responses to Plagiarism in Composition Studies.” College English 70.1 (September 2007): 10 – 31.
- Skorczewski, Dawn. “Everybody Has Their Own Ideas: Responding to Cliché in Student Writing.” College Composition and Communication 52.2 (2000): 220 - 39
- Vitanza, Victor. “‘The Wasteland Grows’; Or, What is ‘Cultural Studies for Composition’ and Why Must We Always Speak Good of It?: Para Response to Julie Drew.” JAC 19 (1999): 699 – 703.
- . “Three Countertheses; Or, a Critical In(ter)vention into Composition Theories and Pedagogies.” Contending With Words. New York: MLA, 1991. 139 – 172.
- Worsham, Lynn. “Going Postal: Pedagogic Violence and the Schooling of Emotion.” JAC 18.2 (1998): 213 – 45.
- Yagelski, Robert. “Radical to Many in the Educational Establishment: The Writing Process Movement After the Hurricanes.” College English 68.5 (May 2006): 531 – 544.

❖ **Attendance:**

Attendance is mandatory. Since the nature of this class largely relies on your participation, it is crucial for you to attend each class. If this is your first graduate seminar, you might not yet realize the importance of attending seminar. While I will lecture from time to time, this is fundamentally NOT a lecture course; hence, if you miss class, there is no way to recreate much of the work experienced in seminar. Part of your graduate education is to help you learn to negotiate the needs of others with your own and to learn rhetorically accurate ways to communicate your experiences and your learning. Therefore, **if you miss more than four classes, I will lower your course grade. In other words, you cannot get an “A” with five absences. If you are absent more than 6 times, I may ask you to drop the course. Chronic lateness is also unacceptable, as is coming to class unprepared/unread. I will only grant incomplete grades under the gravest circumstances.**

❖ **Course Objectives:** At the end of the semester, you should be able to:

1. explicate areas of debate, articulate theoretical issues, and explicate pointed of contention among competing theories involved in teaching writing
2. research and write a graduate-level, theoretical, argumentative paper
3. compose a rigorous syllabus for a first-year Composition
4. apply theoretical knowledge about writing to select course materials and write assignments
5. clearly explain the rationale for a first-year composition course mock-syllabus
6. identify key theorists and theoretical debates in Rhetoric and Composition
7. apply theories of composing to technological contexts
8. engage in current arguments about teaching Composition fluently, convincingly, and compellingly

❖ **Course Requirements:**

The fundamental requirement for this course is that you come well prepared to actively participate in every class. **Careful reading of the assigned texts, substantial class and beachboard participation, and satisfactory completion of all assignments are required to pass the course.** The readings for this course are not too theoretically difficult; however, if you have not encountered much theory in your graduate education, you will have to “learn to read” all over again. Skimming a reading and/or reading it carelessly will only frustrate and confuse you. You must devote chunks of time for reading and studying the texts being presented to you.

All reading and writing should be completed before each class session, and you should be ready to make critical and interpretive statements about the texts assigned. This is best accomplished by taking careful reading notes, flagging pages, and underlining important passages to discuss in class. Your commentary should always center on the text under consideration: how you’re reading it, connections you’ve made, or questions you have. I fully expect you to attempt to engage with the texts, even though you might find them difficult. It is all too common for new graduate students to dismiss theory at first because they don’t “get the point of it.” However, and as you will hopefully realize, “not getting it” is

precisely how learning difficult concepts begins to work. Additionally, if you plan to teach, you should have a strong theoretical base on which you base your practice; you should always be able to articulate WHY you teach the way you do.

❖ **Grade Distribution:**

Argumentative Essay (with abstract)	15%
Second Essay Project	15%
<i>Take 20</i> Response (text or video)	10%
Reading Presentation	5%
BB Posts (10 minimum)	20%
First-Year Composition Syllabus	20%
Syllabus Rationale	10%
Participation (in class and on BB)	5%

❖ **Brief Explanation of Assignments (more information will follow):**

Argumentative Paper: This 8 page (no more) paper will take on an issue or issues brought forth in the readings. You should begin by explicating your understanding of the issue/problem/area of inquiry and providing a short, concise review of scholarship concerning the issue. You will then, based on what you understand about the issue, take a position and support your position with textual and anecdotal evidence throughout the rest of the essay. It is not enough simply to develop a working understanding of the various theories/practices we read; instead, you need to develop a larger contextual understanding of the theories and issues involved, and, despite your newness to the field, you need to begin taking positions on some of these issues (especially since, for some of you, this will be the only class you will take on Teaching Composition before you actually teach it!). This further means that I am not interested in matters of simple agreement or disagreement. Thus, your papers should show that you have thought through the issue at hand, read relevant scholarship (beyond what's required for class), and started to take a position. Your position is not set in stone, however, and your paper can reflect that as well. You will compose a ½ page abstract of your paper to be read aloud in class on the due date. Post them on BB, so colleagues can reread and respond to your abstracts.

Second Essay: The topic of this essay will grow from your first argumentative essay and will feature 3 – 4 theorists from the COMpbiblio text who have dealt with the topic (from all angles) in the past. How do these theorists' works create a conversation? You will be required to read works from these theorists to give you a better understanding of their central tenets. You can think of this project as your compilation of thinkers that best represent what Composition is all about.

Take 20 Response: This project will respond to the 20 questions raised in the DVD *Take 20*. You, as graduate students, represent the major intended audience for this movie, so your response will creatively integrate the 20 questions and the various responses into your own perceptions of teaching writing. The form of this project can mimic the "20 questions" genre and can be video or text or a combination; you will be encouraged to make a video and can choose to work in small groups – specifics will be distributed after Spring Break.

Presentations: Each of you will prepare one presentation in response to the readings. You should talk about at least one of the assigned readings and can put together something for us to view as you see fit. The purpose of these presentations is to jump-start the discussion and to provide your colleagues with your take and analysis of the texts under discussion. For each presentation, you must provide a short but thoughtful "text" for your classmates either by way of a handout or something multimedia posted on BB. You must read at least three other primary or secondary sources and discuss particular connections you made with the particular text and theorist. You might, after explicating your understanding of the reading, provide a reading of a digital text or popular source by way of the theories you are presenting. You might also show how what you've read applies to pedagogy. In addition to other crucial information, your handouts must include a short (at least three entries) annotated bibliography of your primary or secondary works. Additionally, I am not interested in simply a compilation of material you located on the web. We can all access this information on our own, so your presentation should be more focused.

BeachBoard Reading Posts: You may use the discussion board as you see fit (see below), but you **must also** use the d-board to post your reading notes and responses. Almost each week that we have readings assigned (10 weeks total) you are required to post. Posting reading responses to the d-board allows your work to become public and networked, thereby taking reading response out of the merely introspective realm. Posting also allows a conversation to occur and forces you to respond to others' ideas, readings, and connections. Your notes/commentaries **MUST** go beyond "I like or dislike" or "I

agree or disagree.” Here is a format to use for posting your notes/commentaries (you can modify this format as the semester progresses):

First, briefly summarize the section of the text or site to which you are responding. Use quotations and really show us that you have not only read the text but thought about it as well. Next, provide your commentary about the selection you just summarized by taking a concept, issue, conflict, theme, etc. and exploring it. What connections did you make? What questions do you have? You might also point us to an example of what you’re talking about. These examples can come from articles, websites, blogs, etc. and should be relevant to the material we are working with. The length of your posts should be 3 substantial paragraphs at minimum. You also can comment on someone else’s post, but you must provide material from the readings to fulfill this requirement. Responding to someone else’s post will alleviate repetition and begin conversation and networking. I expect you to refer to each other’s posts regardless of if you are making a new post or commenting on someone else’s. **DO NOT** assume your post exists in a vacuum. **I will not tolerate a list of individual posts** that do not attempt to create a conversation. I also will not tolerate repetitiveness; therefore, you **MUST** read your colleague’s posts before writing your own. If you repeat what’s already been said without any acknowledgement of previous posts, you will not receive credit for your post. This shows us that you are not reading the posts and thus are not attempting to join the conversation. While this is a requirement, I expect you to approach the work as you would approach any intellectual conversation. **READING NOTES/COMMENTARIES SHOULD BE POSTED BY 3 PM EACH THURSDAY.** Please do not post your notes during class. If you are late posting your notes, your grade will be lowered. I add that the goal of this assignment is to foster sustained intellectual inquiry and exchange, and I will expect you to treat others with respect, regardless of the possible level of disagreement. Please visit our beachboard site several times a week so that you stay current with the discussions.

First-Year Composition Syllabus: Based on what you discover about teaching writing theoretically, you will write a detailed syllabus for a first-year Composition class, complete with a calendar of activities and assignments. Your syllabus should reflect your growing understanding of teaching writing and should reflect how you have internalized the readings and discussions we’ve had in class and on beachboard.

Syllabus Rationale: After you have written your syllabus, you will write an explanation detailing some of the theoretical reasons behind the choices you made. You should also, throughout the rationale, explain your philosophy of teaching writing, based on what you have been exposed to throughout the course.

Participation simply asks you to be a productive member of the class: attend regularly and be on time, offer comments and ask thought-provoking questions (both in class and on BB), engage your colleagues in discussion and in group activities, and complete all in-class tasks.

❖ **Late Assignments:**

Late assignments will not be accepted unless you speak to me about your situation **before (not on)** the due date. **NO EXCEPTIONS.** Otherwise, papers handed in late **will be penalized a letter grade** for each class period that they are late. Even if you are absent, you are expected to turn in the assigned work on time by way of BB digital dropbox **before the time class would end. Presentations cannot be made up.** If you are absent on the days you present, then you will simply not receive credit for those assignments. Do not miss class to work on an assignment that’s due. I look much more favorably on those students who come to class – with the reading complete – to engage in the discussion even though their papers are not complete.

❖ **Academic Integrity:**

Academic dishonesty is a serious crime. If you are suspected of academic dishonesty, you may receive disciplinary action. Forms of academic dishonesty include: Collusion – lending your work to another person to submit as his or her own; Fabrication – deliberately creating false information on a works cited page; and Plagiarism – the presentation of another person’s work as your own, whether you mean to or not. Plagiarism is easy to avoid; simply acknowledge the source of any words, phrases, or ideas that you use. If you are not sure how to quote or paraphrase a source, etc. check with me.

❖ **Special Conditions:**

If you have a disability that requires special accommodations, please see me within the first week of class to arrange such accommodations.

### ❖ Schedule ❖

(Reading assignments and due dates are subject to change. *CS* = *Composition Studies in the New Millennium*;  
*CB*= *COMPbiblio*; *TT* = *Take 20*)

T	1/29	Introductions; Why Theory? Pedagogy and Composition; Maps of the field
TH	1/31	<b>Fulkerson; Dickson</b> (“Interchanges”); <b>sign up for presentations</b>
T	2/5	<b>CS 1 – 61; CB</b> Bishop, Elbow, Emig, Fulwiler, Macrorie, Murray, Gere (presentations)
TH	2/7	<b>CS 56 – 94</b> ; What is the content of FYC? What is its object of study? (presentations) (notes due)
T	2/12	Cult. Studies/Critical Pedagogy; <b>George</b> ; <b>CS 227 – 255; CB</b> Berlin, Bizzell, Faigley, Gilyard, Lu, Rose, Smitherman, Villanueva (presentations)
TH	2/14	<b>Rose</b> (“I Just Wanna Be Average), <b>Berlin; Yagelski</b> (presentations) (notes due)
T	2/19	<b>CS 193 – 224; Bartholomae; Elbow</b> (“Reconsiderations”) <b>CB</b> Bartholomae; Royster(presentations)
TH	2/21	<b>Hairston; Bauer; Anderson</b> [Critique; Feminisms and Composition] (presentations) (notes due)
T	2/26	<b>Worsham</b> ; [Pomo critique of subjectivity] (presentations)
TH	2/28	<b>Argumentative Essay Due – Abstracts read and discussed in class</b>
T	3/4	<b>Johnson; Vitanza</b> (“Wasteland”) (presentations)
TH	3/6	<b>Tom Do</b> (Thesis chapter one) [Critiques of Critical Pedagogy] (notes due)
T	3/11	<b>Vitanza</b> (“Three Countertheses) [Critiques Continued] (presentations)
TH	3/13	Catch up day; Readings TBA (notes due)
T	3/18	<b>CS 129 – 154</b> [Theory and Methodologies] (presentations)
TH	3/20	Rest of COMPbiblio (presentations) (notes due)
T	3/25	<b>CS 157 – 190</b> [New Media and Composition] (presentations)
TH	3/27	NO CLASS – CCCC New Orleans (notes due)
SPRING BREAK 4/1 and 4/3		
T	4/8	<b>Rice; Halbritter and Taylor</b> (DVD as well) [New Media and Composition] (presentations)
TH	4/10	<b>Essay #2 Due – Abstracts read in class</b>
T	4/15	<b>Skorczewski; Hesse</b> (“13 Ways”); <b>Take 20</b> [Responding to Student Writing] (presentations)
TH	4/17	<b>Take 20</b> (presentations) (notes due)
T	4/22	[Labor Issues] <b>CS 97 – 125</b> (presentations)
TH	4/24	<i>Discuss Textbooks and textbook selection</i> (Rhetoric and Composition wikibook) (notes due)
T	4/29	<b>Downs and Wardle</b> (presentations)
TH	5/1	<b>Take 20 Response Due</b> ; Discuss Sample Syllabi and Typical Policies and Procedures for FYC
T	5/6	<b>Robillard; Ritter</b> (presentations)
TH	5/8	<b>Howard</b> (“Forget about Policing Plagiarism: Just Teach”);Plagiarism activities (notes due)
T	5/13	Syllabus draft due – Peer Review Session
TH	5/15	presentations and discussions
T	5/20	<b>Syllabus and Rationale Due</b> – class meets from 2:45 – 4:45