

ENG104 Texts:

Kaye Adkins, Professor

My approach is strongly informed by my work in eco-composition. This does not mean environmentalism, necessarily, but rather, an emphasis on the "placed-ness" of writing--how texts and context interact. This is the approach originally introduced by Marilyn Cooper, and expanded on by Sidney Dobrin. (Actually, Sid and I sit down and talk about this just about every year at 4Cs.) One context that I emphasize in ENG 104 is the academic context, and I tell students that one of the primary characteristics of academic writing is the exploration and analysis of abstract concepts. As the semester moves along, students will work with increasingly abstract concepts in their writing. This can be seen more obviously in my major assignments than in any particular textbook, so I'll start with my assignments.

Assignment 1: A descriptive essay. I'm one of those people who believes that abstract concepts are best explained and understood in concrete terms and images. (My background in metaphor theory is peeking through here.) As a result, I start with physical description, with an analytical element. Lately, I've been asking students to describe a website designed for children and analyze its rhetorical elements--particularly audience, ethos, and purpose.

Assignment 2: A description and analysis of a public place. Included in this is often a requirement that they consider a) why the architect/planner designed the place this way and b) how this space is used by the community of people who frequent it. The book I use has an excellent essay about urban planning and public spaces.

Assignment 3: An analysis of how technology has affected/will affect how we communicate. At this point, we are pretty solidly into argumentation, so I'm asking for solid examples and support.

Assignment 4: I assign Ray Oldenburg's "The Problem of Place in America," and ask students to respond to his thesis that Americans are missing a "third space"--an informal community gathering place (his example is European pubs and coffee shops), and as a result, our communities are weakening.

[I have to say, I was particularly gratified last spring when, upon receiving the fourth major assignment, a student commented, "Everything we've been doing led up to this didn't it!" It was great to have someone in the class figure that out.]

So--I use *Writing Analytically with Readings* by Rosenwasser and Stephen. I like the emphasis on analysis, the book begins with strong work in descriptive writing, and there are several readings about communities, places, and technology. The book also includes some good activities, and it has Guideline or Tip boxes--something I've discovered over the years that students like. I don't use a handbook; students will be buying one in ENG 108 (and frankly, I think it's more useful there), so I don't make them buy one that will be "wrong" they next semester. Some semesters, I've used *Writers' Choices: Grammar to Improve Style* by Kischner and Wollin, with varying success. Some years (especially fall semesters), students really like the work on sentence style, and because they are hearing "official" grammar terms along the way (without isolated grammar drill), they feel that they are learning something they didn't learn in high school. In spring semesters, this hasn't gone over as well, and, really, those students have plenty to do with more global writing issues.

Cynthia Bartels, Instructor

I like to approach the class as a means of getting students to think about using writing to promote citizenship and social awareness. I try to show them how we make decisions, how those decisions can be biased, and why we should look at many sides before we make those decisions. I try to teach them to think fairly. *America Now* has a lot of contemporary issues and articles, and current issues relate well to

my goals. In particular I like the essays about the press. We also look at the news on the Internet and clips of shows such as Jon Stewart. Not only do the students enjoy these, but these texts also give us a way to look at how media addresses current events and how media creates bias. We did a lot of this last fall with the election. Once we look at how we think and develop our viewpoints, we look at *The Things They Carried* since it talks about perception and truth vs. accuracy. Students usually really enjoy the book as well, and using a novel helps break the monotony of reading essays all the time. They also write about this book, and we often view related videos such as *Born on the 4th of July* and *Hearts and Minds*. All of these discussions relate to how we form our ideas, and subsequently, our arguments.

Tom Pankewitz, Instructor

Anderson, Chris and Lex Runciman. *Open Questions*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's. 2005.

Open Questions presents a series of readings on ethical and social action topics. The readings lead to active classroom discussions and activities. They also allow me to focus on teaching such reading-writing strategies as summary, paraphrase, and response. These readings also become topics for a variety of major writing assignments as well as sources of evidence for their writing.

Graff, Gerald and Cathy Birkenstein. *They Say/I Say*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2006.

As the authors indicate in their opening chapters, *They Say/I Say* teaches students how to enter into and take part in academic writing. Last spring, I used this text in English 108, but I feel it is a better text for English 104, especially when paired with *Open Questions* and my emphasis on responding to the text essays as readers, writers, and researchers. Graff's and Birkenstein's text provides a series of templates that help students interact with the essays.

Kay Siebler, Associate Professor

The Namesake by Arahanti Rohi

Lone Ranger and Tonto by Sherman Alexie

Girl Interrupted by Lisa Loeb

The Color Purple by Alice Walker

In talking about argument, I have students examine the covers of the required texts first: who is the intended audience? This works especially well with books that have various covers (Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* is an example). Students are challenged to think about who the target audience is for each cover and offer evidence for their opinion.

When reading the novels, we also talk about who the audience is for the text and what argument the author is trying to present, e.g. with *Girl Interrupted* the author is attempting to persuade the audience that she wasn't crazy, but women were often diagnosed as "crazy" to avoid dealing with larger problems within the family or the culture.

Once we have read the book and have talked extensively about the argument the author put forth, we analyze the film version of the text. How did the argument change? Why did it change? How did the director or screen-writer rewrite the text for a different audience? Why did they rewrite it that way?

Offering these various levels of analyses gets the students to think deeply about audience, author, context, purpose, and how and why books are revised for the film audience.