

English 621: Writing Research Theory and Practice

Instructor: Dr. Steven D. Krause
Email: skrause@emich.edu (the best way to get a hold of me)
Phone: 734-487-1363 (I do check my voicemail)
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 2 pm to 6 pm; Wednesdays, 5 pm to 7 pm; and by appointment
Web site: <http://www.stevendkrause.com/academic/eng621>

Course Description

This course has two related goals. First, the course is an introduction to some of the theoretical and practical approaches to research taken by scholars in composition and rhetoric. Second, the course is designed to help prepare students to write a project proposal which will in turn help them as they begin work on their MA thesis or writing project.

Textbook

MacNealy, Mary Sue. *Strategies for Empirical Research in Writing*. New York: Longman, 1999.

I order my textbooks **exclusively** through the EMU bookstore in McKenny Union. This means that you are unlikely to find this book at the other stores around campus. If I were a student in this course, I would probably find this book online.

Electronic Reserves

Instead of a course packet, I will be making a wide variety of reading materials available via the "e-reserves" system supported by the Bruce T. Halle Library. The disadvantage of this resource is you will have to print these materials out and you will need regular access to the Internet to retrieve these materials. The advantage of this resource is that it is free and it allows me to add materials as the semester goes along.

Web site

You will want to visit the class web site in order to link to a variety of course materials: the e-reserves system, the course schedule, your classmates' blogs, and so forth. You will want to visit the class web site noted above on a fairly regular basis.

Participation

Participation is worth 30% of the grade. This is the English Department policy regarding in-class participation:

"Students enrolled in English Department classes are expected to participate in daily interactive activities. They will, for example, routinely discuss reading assignments, write in class on impromptu topics, participate in collaborative activities, or engage in peer review of drafts. Students who miss these activities cannot reasonably make them up. As a result, students who do not participate regularly should expect to receive lower grades in the course, and students who miss more than the equivalent of two weeks of class should consider withdrawing and taking the class in a future semester. Students who know that other commitments will make it impossible to attend at certain times (early mornings, nights, Fridays) should enroll in classes that do not meet at these times."

Here is how this policy applies for this class:

Attendance. Simply put, you can't participate in the class if you don't actually attend. **Missing more than the equivalent of two weeks of class for any reason will certainly hurt your grade for the class.**

A special word about cell phones. Please turn off your cell phone and other electronic devices before class. Using them during a class is simply rude. If you don't do this and your cell phone rings during class, I will count you absent or I will require you to sing the class a song.

Research methodology homework projects. As we go through the readings of the semester, there will be several small homework projects where we will work on testing out various research methodologies. The details of this are yet to be arranged, but as an example: we will probably work collaboratively on writing and testing surveys, on conducting interviews, etc.

Peer review. We will be having a couple of peer review writing activities this semester; a key one comes at the end of the term where you will review each others' project proposals. Because of this, it will be important that you work diligently with each other in terms of reading and commenting on writing projects.

The usual things. You know what I mean: doing the readings, discussing them in class meetings, being respectful of your colleagues and your teacher, etc., etc.

The Writing Project/Thesis Proposal Portfolio

This portfolio of materials, the major work of the class, is worth 50% of the grade. While there are several different components to this portfolio, I would encourage you to think of this grade holistically-- that is, instead of assigning value to each project, think of the whole portfolio as being worth 50% of the course grade.

Obviously, we'll be discussing these assignments in some detail as the semester goes on. But in brief, they are:

- **An on-going weblog (or "blog") research diary**, where you will keep a blog about your progress on your research project as the semester goes along. This will be a fairly informal assignment, the main purpose of which is to start you and keep you thinking about your project throughout the semester and beyond.
- **A problem statement essay**, which is a brief (5 or so pages) essay that describes your initial thoughts on the question you hope to answer with your research project.
- **A review of a journal key to your research**, where you will write a brief essay (5 to 7 pages) that offers a detailed examination of one of journals that you see as important for your scholarship.
- **An annotated bibliography**, where you cite and annotate at least 20 sources relevant to your project, both items you note in the literature review portion of your proposal and items of research that lead you to think about your project in different ways.
- **The "first draft" of the thesis or project proposal**, which will ideally be in a format you can share with the project advisor you have chosen to work with. This 12 to 25 page essay will vary depending on your project, but generally speaking, it will include an explanation of the research problem, a literature review, a proposed methodology, a statement regarding the goals and outcomes of the project, and a tentative schedule for completing the project.

Drafts of all but the thesis or project proposal will be due at different times throughout the semester-- see the course schedule for details. On the last day of class, I will collect the "first draft" of the thesis or project proposal and any revisions of previous work in the form of a portfolio: a folder or binder of some sort that presents these materials in an orderly, professional way.

I'll be able to return your portfolio to you after April 26, and I will provide electronic or paper comments on your portfolio by the 26th as well.

Final

The final is worth 20% of the grade. It will be a "take home" I will distribute on the last day of class and I will collect electronically at the time of our final on April 26. The final will be about the assigned reading material of the class, things we discuss and things we don't. As long as you keep up with the reading assignments and participate diligently in class discussions, the final ought to be a fairly easy opportunity for success.