SEMINAR IN COMPOSITION: TECHNOLOGY & CULTURE

EngCmp 0200, Spring 2011, University of Pittsburgh
Prof. Annette Vee

Meeting time: T Th 2:30-3:45pm
Meeting place: 317 Cathedral of Learning (Japanese Nationality room)
Course website: http://www.annettevee.com/teaching/2011spring_0200

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 4-6pm, and gladly by appointment

Course Description

This class, like all Seminars in Composition at Pitt, assumes that you are willing and able to do the hard work of grappling with complex texts and ideas. It allows you to engage with texts worthy of study and ideas that cannot be summed up easily. Composition is difficult—or, more precisely, composing something good and interesting, something worth reading or viewing or watching, is difficult. Because this course aims to help you compose texts worth reading, viewing and watching, it reflects that reality of difficulty. Many students who have exceled in high school and even college writing courses are surprised at the high standards set for Pitt's Seminar in Composition. Do not be fooled by the course number. This will be hard work.

The main focus of the course will be on your composition practices, processes and products. Your work will be routinely shared with your fellow students in the class. Peer review workshops, blog posts, and presentations will help to make you more comfortable sharing your work with each other. Since composition can be a highly personal endeavor, I ask you to respect the work of your peers; in turn, they will respect yours. A classroom culture of trust will help us revel in our successes together.

So that we may collectively build a vocabulary and research agenda, together we will explore texts and ideas loosely based on *technology and culture*. We will ask (and perhaps answer): How do technology and culture intersect? How are they mutually constructed? How is technology changing the ways we communicate? How does technology affect the way in which power is distributed and exercised in society?

Because this class defines composition broadly, this theme of technology and culture will also inform the work you will do in this class. This class assumes that you will (or already) compose in 21st century modes in your life outside of class and after graduation. Beyond the traditional essays you may be accustomed to, you will write blog posts, create audio essays, produce short videos, and perform visual presentations.

A final, more personal note: I value hard work, the willingness to take risks in composition, and thoughtful contributions to class discussions. I engage deeply with your work and expect you to do likewise. We will meet several times during the semester by design, but I am very willing to meet with you during office hours and at other times. I look forward to a fun semester with you!

Course Goals for Pitt's Seminar in Composition

Seminar in Composition is the introductory writing course most undergraduates at the University of Pittsburgh take during their freshman year to fulfill the first of three writing-intensive ("W") requirements in the School of Arts and Sciences. Although sections of the course vary, all students in Seminar in Composition address a semester-long sequence of assignments demanding sustained attention to a complex subject. Each sequence is carefully designed to require students to do the following:

Engage in writing as a creative, disciplined form of critical inquiry

Students in this course use writing to generate ideas as well as explain them. Through writing, students form questions and explore problems as they work toward nuanced understanding of a multifaceted subject. Sequenced assignments serve to deepen students' engagement with writing and reading, assist them in examining their own experiences and observations, and encourage them to make productive use of their uncertainty rather than come to hasty conclusions.

Address challenging questions about the consequences of their own writing

This course approaches the essay as a flexible genre that takes on different forms in different contexts. Much class time is devoted to scrutiny of the purpose, logic, and design of students' writing, which they are given opportunities to revise in response to comments from their teacher and peers. This focus on their own texts increases awareness of what is at stake in representing an issue or problem in one way instead of another, thus helping students make more attentive decisions as they write.

Compose thoughtfully crafted essays that position the writer's ideas among other views

Rather than merely stating their own opinions, students learn to write essays in which they develop informed positions that reflect understanding of the positions of others. Analyzing as well as summarizing the ideas and writing strategies in assigned texts, students compose interpretations reflecting close attention to their own and others' specific language choices.

Write with precision, nuance, and awareness of textual conventions

Students work on crafting clear, precise prose that effectively uses a variety of sentence and paragraph structures. They are required to learn the conventions for quoting and paraphrasing accurately, responsibly, and adeptly. They are also assisted in developing editing and proofreading strategies that reflect attention to the relation between style and meaning.

Students who earn a C or above in Seminar in Composition have substantially progressed toward fulfilling the above-listed requirements. It is our expectation that subsequent courses in all disciplines also will insist on, and help students develop, these critical writing abilities.

Course Requirements

To succeed in this course, you will need to stay on top of assignments, participate actively in online and in-class discussions, and respect your peers in conversation and reviews of their work. Specifically, you will need to:

- complete all course readings;
- arrive on time and prepared for class meetings and conferences;
- participate in discussions online and in-class;
- draft, revise and submit all course projects;
- submit all drafts, projects and work **on time** (day/hour that it is due)

If, at any time, you have questions or concerns about your ability to fulfill the expectations for this course, please contact me. I aim to help you succeed in the course, and together we can resolve most issues that may come up.

Course Readings

You are not required to purchase texts for this course; all readings will be available online through CourseWeb unless otherwise noted. Readings for each week are listed on the course calendar (see below) by the day they are due to be read. You will need to read each course text at least twice, and the light reading load allows for this. Throughout the semester, you will also be reading your peers' work and your own. You should be interacting with all of these texts as you read them, so you may print them out to highlight and annotate them, take notes in a digital or physical notebook, or digitally annotate the texts using a program like Adobe Acrobat. We will regularly discuss your reading and writing strategies in class and in one-on-one conferences.

Grading

Your grade will be based on your portfolio of work for the class, your class participation, presentations and blog posts and comments.

Participation (online and in-class):   20%
Midterm graded review of portfolio: 40%
Midterm blog portfolio: 10%
Final blog portfolio: 10%
A Better Composition Technology project   10%
Remediation project   10%

Late work—including late or incomplete drafts on workshop days—will be docked one letter grade per day it is late, unless prior arrangements are made with me for extensions, etc. I offer extensions only in extreme circumstances. Some individual assignments are not graded until the portfolio; however, your portfolio grades will be adjusted proportionally for any individual late work the portfolio contains.

Participation

Participation in the class consists of short writings in class and on the course blog, peer review, discussion, and your general contribution to the work we do together. Participation grades are by their nature subjective, which does not mean they are arbitrary.

Someone with an excellent participation grade:
•   will have attended class and appeared engaged without fail;
•   will have offered timely, insightful comments to his peers;
•   will have always brought her readings or other materials to class;
•   will have contributed regularly and thoughtfully to class discussions both online and offline.

Some people are more likely to speak up than others and some are more comfortable sharing ideas after they have had more time to process them; for these reasons, I offer both online (that is, written and not time-sensitive) and offline (that is, vocal and real-time) venues in which to participate in the class. It's normal to be more comfortable in one space than another, but I strongly believe that you will need to be proficient in sharing your ideas in real-time, asynchronous, written and face-to-face contexts to be a successful teacher, entrepreneur, employee, or anything else you may want to be in the future. Therefore, I will consider your participation across all of these venues and may call on you both in class and online to give you an opportunity to share your ideas. Please see me if you have questions about how to participate more actively in any area of the class.

Policies and Procedures

Attendance

Regular attendance in this course is required. Because this is a low enrollment course, your presence and contributions affect everyone. Regular attendance also means that you are writing and responding to writing regularly, and it means that your peers and I can give your writing the attention it deserves. For these reasons, you need to be in class, on time, prepared, every meeting. If you miss more than **one** week total of this course (2 class meetings), I reserve the right to lower your final grade half a letter grade for each absence over two. If you miss more than two weeks total of this course (4 class meetings), you will not pass the course.

It is your responsibility to get the assignments, class notes, and course changes from a classmate if you do miss a class. It is also your responsibility to keep track of and complete the missing work. In-class work cannot be made up. If you miss class on the day a written assignment is due, make arrangements to send it along with a classmate. As mentioned above, every day the paper is late the grade drops by one letter grade.

I understand that things happen and occasionally you may need to miss a class because you're sick, you've missed your flight back to campus, or you have pressing personal or family issues. The policy above allows for such absences without penalty. If you need to be absent for some extraordinary reason—because of a severe accident or illness, a family emergency or death, a religious holiday or jury duty—please let me know, and we will work something out. For such absences, either prior notification or subsequent documentation will be required.

Guidelines for Written Work

I have specified word limits for assignments rather than page limits so that you do not need to use wide margins or tiny, strange fonts to display your work. Please use reader-friendly fonts such as Times New Roman, Arial, Calibri, Garamond, or Helvetica and sizes that are humane for your readers (10-12 point). Please use 1.5 to 2 line spacing. All work, including drafts, should be printed out and turned in at the beginning of class the day it is due, unless otherwise noted or arranged with me.

Academic Integrity

The University asks us to include in our course descriptions this quotation from Pitt's Senate Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom (February 1974):

> The integrity of the academic process requires fair and impartial evaluation on the part of faculty and honest academic conduct on the part of students. To this end, students are expected to conduct themselves at a high level of responsibility in the fulfillment of the course of their study. It is the corresponding responsibility of faculty to make clear to students those standards by which students will be evaluated, and the resources permissible for use by students during the course of their study and evaluation. The educational process is perceived as a joint faculty-student enterprise which will perforce involve professional judgment by faculty and may involve—without penalty—reasoned exception by students to the data or views offered by faculty.

Plagiarism hurts the relationships and scholarship we construct during this class. Assignments for this course are designed to be relevant to your specific contexts and are therefore nearly impossible to plagiarize in full. More commonly, students plagiarize by improperly quoting and documenting their sources. We will review how to properly document sources in class and I am happy to answer questions about how you can ensure that work you do for the class is your own. Additionally, please visit the English Department's site defining plagiarism and explaining how to properly document sources: http://www.englishlit.pitt.edu/lit_plagiarism.html.

Should you plagiarize, consequences are severe: students suspected of violating the University of Pittsburgh Policy on Academic Integrity, noted above, will be required to participate in the outlined procedural process that I initiate. A minimum sanction of a failing grade for the paper or project will be imposed.

Disability Resources

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, please inform me and the Office of Disability Resources and Services as early as possible in the term. You can reach DRS at (412) 648-7890 or (412) 383-7355 (TTY) and you can visit their office at 216 William Pitt Union. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

The Writing Center

The Writing Center is a free tutorial service for Pitt students. Writing Center consultants can help you learn how to generate ideas, organize your writing, and understand assignments. They can help you understand and deal with any sentence-level problems that you have, too. It's a great place to go in order to have a reader respond to your work so that you can do some intensive work on your writing. You can call for an appointment at (412) 624-6556.

The writing center is located in M-2 Thaw Hall and it is open Monday through Thursday 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Friday 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. You can also visit drop-in sites at Hillman Library and Tower A, 12th Floor Lounge. Visit the Writing Center website at http://www.english.pitt.edu/writingcenter/ for more information.

Technology etiquette

Please turn off your cell phone **before** class begins and keep it inside your book bag, purse, etc—do *not* keep it on your desk during class. I allow and encourage the use of computers, netbooks, tablets, etc. in class for those who want to take notes digitally during class. These devices are *not* for socializing during class, however—during class you must log out of Facebook, Twitter, IM and the message boards you follow. Studies show that these activities are distracting to your ability to learn and participate. You may visit our blog, Wikipedia or dictionary sites, etc. to help you understand a concept we're discussing in class, but be prepared to explain any of your in-class Internet use to the entire class. If you are socializing online or on your phone (including texting) during class, then you will be considered absent for that class period. Please contact me if you have specific questions about this policy.

Course Schedule

Life is complicated; consequently, this schedule is subject to change.

Week 1 (Jan 6): Introduction
Thurs: Intro to Course: digital contexts for composition, current issues in technology and culture

Blog post 1 (due Mon, Jan 10): Post a goal you have for your own writing, then leave a comment on your own post describing how you plan to meet that goal.

Week 2 (Jan 11 & 13): On writing and technology
Tues:　*Reading*
　　　William Zinsser, *On Writing Well*, pp. 1-12

Writing
In-class: 20 min in-class essay based on prompt from Zinsser.

Thurs: *Reading*
"Digital Disruption," Jared Cohen & Eric Schmidt, in *Foreign Affairs*, 2011.

Discuss Tuesday's essay responses to Zinsser.
Blog post 2: Group 1 posts (Mon); groups 2 and 3 respond (Weds).

Week 3 (Jan 18 & 20): What is technology?
Tues: *Reading*
Ruth Schwartz Cowen, "In the beginning," from A Social History of Technology

Thurs: *Writing*
Technology log & reflection, draft #1 (draft workshop in class)
Blog post 3: Group 2 posts (Mon); groups 1 and 3 respond (Weds).

Week 4 (Jan 25 & 27): Technology in social contexts
Tues: *Reading*
Nina E. Lerman, "Categories of difference, categories of power: Bringing gender and race to the history of technology," *Technology and Culture 51*(4), 2010.
(Only read pp. 893 - 904, but read it **twice.**)

Writing
Technology log & reflection, draft #2 due on CourseWeb
Response to questions for a second reading on Lerman and a question (print out and bring to class)

Thurs: *Writing*
Technology Artifact Analysis, draft #1 (draft workshop in class)
Blog post 4: Group 3 posts (Mon); groups 1 and 2 respond (Weds).

Week 5 (Feb 1 & 3): Technologies as forms of life
Tues: *Reading*
Langdon Winner, "Technologies as forms of life," from The Whale and the Reactor

Writing
Response to questions for a second reading on Winner and a question (print out and bring to class)

Thurs: *Writing*
Technology Artifact Analysis, draft #2 due to Prof. Vee & upload to CourseWeb.

Image workshop in class.
Blog post 5: Group 1 posts questions about the readings (Mon); groups 2 and 3 respond (Weds).

Week 6 (Feb 8 & 10): Technologies as forms of life
Tues: *Reading*
Re-read Winner.
Ruth Schwartz Cowen, "The birth control pill," A Social History of American Technology, 319-326.

Thurs: *Writing*
Defining Technology Image & Text, draft 1 due for peer review (upload to CourseWeb)

Blog post 6: Group 2 posts (Mon); groups 1 and 3 respond (Weds).

Week 7 (Feb 15 & 17): Technological lifestyles

Tues: *Reading*
Ruth Schwartz Cowen, "The 'Industrial Revolution' in the Home: Household Technology and Social Change in the 20th Century," *Technology and Culture.*

Writing
Upload an advertisement to the blog & comment on their connection to Cowen.
Reminder: Work on your blog selection and cover letter for the blog portfolio (due Feb 22).

Thurs: Class canceled.
Defining Technology Image & Text, draft 2 due to Prof. Vee in CourseWeb dropbox.
Blog post 7: Group 3 posts (Mon); groups 1 and 2 respond (Weds).

Week 8 (Feb 22 & 24): Technological lifestyles

Tues: Video composition workshop in class.

Writing
Midterm Blog Portfolio (with cover letter) due to Prof. Vee via Blackboard Dropbox BY NOON.

Thurs: *Writing*
Inquiry into Technology Consumption (text version), draft #1 (workshop in class)
Blog post 8: Group 1 posts (Mon); groups 2 and 3 respond (Weds).

Week 9 (Mar 1 & 3): Technologies of communication

Tues: *Reading*
Baron, Denis. "From Pencils to Pixels: The Stages of Literacy Technologies," Passions, Pedagogies, and 21st Century Technologies, 15-33.

Writing
Response to questions for a second reading on Baron and a question (print out and bring to class)
Inquiry into Technology Consumption (text version), draft # 2, due to Prof. Vee & uploaded to CourseWeb.

Thurs: **Video version of Inquiry into Technology Consumption due (upload to CourseWeb).**
3 min presentations of Defining Tech Image & Text OR Video Analysis of Tech Consumption (individual student choice)
Blog post 9: Group 2 posts (Mon); groups 1 and 3 respond (Weds).

Week X (Mar 8 & 10): Spring Break!

Week 10 (Mar 15 & 17): Technologies of marketing

Tues: Watch in class: "Century of the Self"

Thurs: Class canceled.
UPLOAD VIDEO to YouTube & turn in reflection, if you haven't already.
Due Thurs, Mar 17 midnight: 2nd round blog post 1: Group 1 posts questions
Due Sat, Mar 19 midnight: Groups 2 and 3 respond.

Week 11 (Mar 22 & 24): Technology & our free time

Tues: Re-read Cowan and be prepared to talk about the connections between technology and marketing

Thurs: *Reading*
          Shirky, Clay. "Gin, Television and the Cognitive Surplus"
Due Mon, Mar 21 midnight: 2nd round blog post 2: Group 2 posts questions
Due Weds, Mar 23 midnight: Groups 3 and 1 respond.
Due Thurs, Mar 24 midnight: 2nd round blog post 3: Group 3 posts questions
Due Sat, Mar 26 midnight: Groups 1 and 2 respond.

MIDTERM PORTFOLIO DUE MON, MARCH 28, midnight.

Week 12 (Mar 29 & 31): Technologies of surveillance

Tues: Daytum, lifelogging and how we spend our free time. Find partners, discuss lifelogging project.

Thurs: Discuss technologies of surveillance (and Foucault's reading of the Panopticon)
Due Mon, Mar 28 midnight: 2nd round blog post 4: Group 1 posts questions
Due Weds, Mar 30 midnight: Groups 2 and 3 respond.
Due Thurs, Mar 31 midnight: 2nd round blog post 5: Group 2 posts questions
Due Sat, Apr 2 midnight: Groups 1 and 3 respond.

Week 13 (Apr 5 & 7): Technologies of surveillance

Tues: **LIFELOGGING PRESENTATIONS**

Thurs: Class canceled. **LIFELOGGING PROJECT DUE by APRIL 11.**
          Work on your remediation project. Optional student conferences early this week.
Due Mon, Apr 4 midnight: 2nd round blog post 6: Group 3 posts questions
Due Weds, Apr 6 midnight: Groups 1 and 2 respond.
OPTIONAL post & response for all groups; posts due Thurs, Apr 7; responses due Sat, Apr 9.

Week 14 (Apr 12 & 14): Technologies of surveillance

Tues: **LIFELOGGING PRESENTATIONS**

Thurs: Draft #1 due for Remediation project. Peer review.
Final Blog Portfolio (with cover letter) due to Prof. Vee by APRIL 18 @midnight.

Week 15 (Apr 19 & 21): Final Presentations

Tues: Remediation project presentations

Thurs: Remediation project presentations

MON, APR 26, REMEDIATION FINAL PROJECT & REFLECTION DUE.

Class Projects and Portfolios

You will draft, workshop and submit individual and group projects throughout the term. I will comment on these projects individually, but I will not grade them until the midterm portfolio. This gives you a chance to revise your work after receiving my comments and before being grading for it. The two projects after the Midterm

Portfolio will be graded individually. You will also submit two blog portfolios to be graded, one at midterm and one at the end of the term.

Blog

The class blog is a central space for you to wrestle with the ideas from the class. Participation on the blog counts toward your class participation, but you will also be asked to submit two blog portfolios during the semester.

You will be split into three groups. Each week, one group will post to the blog and the other two groups will respond to the post. I may also post to the blog to offer you additional ways to reflect on the readings and ideas from class.

Blog posts should ask probing questions about the readings or ideas from class; alternatively, they may extend an idea from class or point to a current event that connects to our discussions. **Blog comments** should respond to a post by answering a posted question in a complex, thoughtful way or by extending the connection posted even further or in different directions.

You are welcome and encouraged to post more often than you are required to. The goal is for the blog to be a conversation about our ideas, not a series of monologues (as class discussion boards often are). Do not simply agree or disagree with your peers; nothing is ever that simple. Instead, comment on specific points and extend ideas and complicate theories. There are no word minimums or limits; however, you should spend the time and space necessary to reflect on complex ideas. Although you should generate and reflect on difficult ideas in your post, you are encouraged to write in a relatively informal, online style; include links and images to illustrate your points. The blog is public (although your name will be anonymized) and so you should consider your posts carefully.

Midterm Portfolio   (40% of grade)   Due Mar 28 @12midnight

The **<u>Midterm Portfolio</u>** will be introduced with a **400-750 word cover letter** describing its contents and how they reflect your composition processes and ideas during the term. Following the cover letter, it will also include:
1.   Technology Log & Reflection
2.   Technology Artifact Analysis
3.   Technology Image & Text
4.   Technology and Culture video

Midterm Blog Portfolio   (10% of grade)   Due Feb 22 @12Noon

The Midterm blog portfolio will consist of THREE responses or posts that you're proud of; include at least one of each. Introduce them with a 250-500 word cover letter explaining your choice of posts and responses; describe your thoughts as you posted them and now, upon reflecting on them. Tell me what you have learned, what you're still curious about, and anything else you want me to know.

Final Blog Portfolio   (10% of grade)   Due Apr 18 @12midnight

The Final blog portfolio will consist of SIX responses or posts that you're proud of; include at least two of each (you can include posts from your Midterm blog portfolio or the first part of the term). Introduce them with a 250-500 word cover letter explaining your choice of posts and responses; describe your thoughts as you posted them and now, upon reflecting on them. Tell me what you have learned, what you're still curious about, and anything else you want me to know.

Technology Log & Reflection   (draft #2 due Jan 25, final draft in Midterm Portfolio)

We swim in a world of technology, often unaware of how it intersects with our everyday activities. For one day, you will log all of the technology-inflected events you participate in. You may record using an audio recorder, Twitter, Facebook, a paper notebook, your smartphone or anything that's convenient for you. You will turn in an edited, typewritten printout of your literacy log, along with a 250-500 word reflection on your log.

Technology Artifact Analysis (draft #2 due Feb 3, final draft in Midterm Portfolio)

Choose one artifact that you consider a kind of technology and analysis how it structures your and others' lives. Who made this technology? Where did it come from? How should it change? How have people changed the ways they interact with it throughout history? Do different people interact differently with it? These are just a few of the questions you can explore in this 750-1000 word essay.

Technology & Culture Image/Text (draft #2 due Feb 17, final draft in Midterm Portfolio)

Choose one current issue that is connected to technology and culture. Some examples of this are: blocking of the Internet in Egypt; privacy controls on Facebook; net neutrality; the One Laptop per Child project; prosecution of college students for illegal music downloads; educational institutions' failure to keep pace with the technological savvy of your generation, etc. Read some newspaper and magazine articles on the issue. Do not rely solely on Wikipedia for your information. Learn enough about the issue to have a well-informed opinion on it. Then brainstorm the deeper questions that your issue raises: Too little funding for education? Generational divides? Censorship? Problems in copyright law? Corporate lobbyists that have too much influence on Congress? Access to information as a basic human right? Now create a visual argument that expresses your opinion of the issue and the larger questions it raises. A reflection on your composition process will be included in this assignment.

LifeLogging presentation (10% of grade, presentation due Apr 5; project due Apr 11)

For this project, you'll work with a partner, with whom you'll present. Together, you'll decide some aspect of your life to keep track of through some kind of technology. You will each design a kind of infographic or way of presenting this information. Then, in a collaborative presentation, you'll compare and contrast your personal habits regarding this thing you've decided to keep track of together. You will each design a kind of infographic or way of presenting this information. You will need to choose some new kind of software to use for this project—a new presentation software, a new website like Daytum to keep track of your information, etc. You will also write a reflection on this project and its collaborative nature, self-surveillance, and your presentation.

Remediation project (10% of grade, presentations Apr 19 & 21, final project due Apr 26)

This final project and presentation gives you the chance to revisit one of your projects from the term and *remediate* it—that is, revise it substantially and take it into a new medium. Your Technology artifact analsyis could become a video, your technology log could become a short play, etc. We'll get to see/hear/watch/experience the performances during the last week of class.