Nicole Brown
English 462: *Writing Social Change*
Spring 2011

Syllabus

Eng 462
MWF 1 p.m. – 2:20 p.m.
Prof. Nicole Brown
Office hours: W 2 p.m.- 3:50 p.m. and by appointment

Description: Writing for Social Change is a longstanding rhetorical tradition of using public writing as a tool for social critique and as a means of personal, community, institutional, and/or political dialogue and transformation. The course combines research methods for cultural analysis with professional, technical, and new media writing workshops.

Over the course of the quarter, students will work in teams to design and carry out a community-action project on a topic of their choice, providing an integrated and experiential learning opportunity that connects analysis and action through an educational experience that reaches beyond the classroom. Course materials include a range of multimedia open source education initiatives and documentation created by global social change leaders, activists, and organizations. In addition, several in-class workshops will be co-facilitated with local social change leaders.

Students will utilize a variety of rhetorical writing strategies including audience analysis, post critical research practices, community mapping, message framing, and visual story telling. Drawing on these skills, students will create and distribute effective audience-centered information using different forms of public writing and media tools explicitly connected to change. For example, blogs, editorials, concept papers, proposals, press releases, letters, videos, web sites, public events, social media, and other forms of visual-verbal persuasion.

While the rhetorical context of this course is public writing for social change, the rhetorical analysis and writing skills gained in this course will transfer well to professional and private writing contexts.

Materials: The open source movement is alive and well in the context of educating for social change. Course materials are available via the Internet and in some instances library reserve. In some instances, organizations that publish this open source documentation may request a voluntary donation. If a particular text speaks to you, consider supporting the open source movement through a donation in lieu of purchasing more traditional course materials.
I highly recommend that you keep a three ring binder for storing your materials and research data over the course of the semester.

I also recommend that you consider purchasing a social change book locally or ordering a social change book from either an independent publisher online (such as PM Press, New Society Publishers, Microcosm Publishing, etc.) or even Amazon.

Personally, I highly recommend Jason Del Gandio's *Rhetoric of Radicals: A Handbook for 21st Century Activists*, 2008 available through New Society Publishers or Amazon.

Grading: The primary class project is structured around a large group social change campaign, which will consist of the following:

Proposal (10%)
Campaign Portfolio (Meeting Facilitation, Framing and Messaging, 5 Supporting Genres, and Capstone Event) (60%)
Group Activities/Meetings (10%)
Campaign Reflection (20%)

The grading scale for the course is 100-93 = A, 92-90 = A-, 89-87 = B+, 86-83 = B, 82-80 = B-, 79-77 = C+, 76-73 = C, 72-70 = C-, 69-67 = D+, 66-63 = D, 62-60 = D-

Policies: A student-centered approach is encouraged where you assume personal responsibility for your learning. Participation is necessary and desired. Explorations of the subject matter in this course may generate a fair amount of ambiguity. Working through uncertainty or ambiguity reduction is a social process most often accomplished by interpreting or talking about them.

When it comes to group dynamics, your classroom is a place to generate dialogue. It is an opportunity to be creative and bold for creating actionable knowledge of group and organizational dynamics. Agreeing to the classroom being a space that has everyone's best interests in mind is an important step of creating dialogue and minimizing silencing or other exclusionary practices. Do your best to speak up and respect your audience. Also, know that I am always available to discuss any issues that may come up through the dialogue process for you or another class member.

Regular **Attendance** is required. A good portion of your grade is dependent upon class discussion and work done in the classroom. Thus, it is difficult to make up missed work. Aligned with this, you are allowed two absences, excused or unexcused. More than two absences will result in your final grade being lowered by one letter step. Also, you may not make up missed in-class assignments.

You should submit your work on time. **Late Work** will be accepted but lowered one letter-step. If you are absent, you are responsible for handing in any assignments due on that day via a fellow class member or email. Due dates for major assignments can be found on the course calendar.

All written work must be carefully **Proofread** before it is handed in.

Email may be used to contact students on an individual basis. Therefore, you should have an email address on file with me where you can receive class announcements. Any emails sent to me or another class member should contain Engl462 in the subject header. Any files sent electronically via attachment should contain your last name in the file name [brown.doc]. This is important to ensure that your message is not overlooked and that your attachment is not mis-filed.