RHET 104  
FALL 2015  
COLLEGE WRITING AND BEYOND:  
NEGOTIATING LANGUAGE, IDENTITY, AND POWER

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Course Description:

We are NOT going to spend out time together working on and towards your “mastery” of certain fixed academic norms and forms. The philosophy underlying this course is that writing is birthed in and through a writer’s “traffic” experiences. We can think about this notion of “traffic” in the traditional sense of the word — a coming and going of people, bikes, cars, trucks, ships, planes, etc. However, we must take this notion of “traffic” further, understanding that it is the “traffic in meaning,” a coming and going of ideas, concepts, symbols, and discourses (historical, social, political, cultural, etc.), which is important when we are talking about the language and literacy practices of individuals and groups.

With this overarching philosophy in mind, in this course, we will work to create meaning and knowledge through reading, writing, and discussion activities as we negotiate issues of language, identity, and power. All reading, writing, and discussion activities for this course are designed to assist us in our semester-long exploration of the relationship between language, literacy, identity(s), culture, and power.

Course Goals:

- We will engage the labor of writing, composing and thinking critically, analytically, and recursively about language use, literacy, and writing strategies.
- We will work to transcend limiting monolingual and normative ideologies by negotiating dominant language and literacy norms and conventions through prescription, resistance, and revision.
- We will work to develop critical and reflective awareness of the sociality and political nature of language and literacy resources and practices.
- We will explore and evaluate the recontextualization strategies of a diverse range of writers (including your own recontextualization strategies and the recontextualization strategies of your peer colleagues).
- We will explore the challenges and possibilities of using multiple language and cultural resources when writing for diverse purposes and audiences.

Required Materials:

Electronic device or other means of storing digital versions of all assignments and other written material you generate for this course.

Spiral Notebook: For in-class and journal writing assignments.
Intenet Access: I will post the readings and videos for the course on Blackboard:

- James Baldwin, “If Black English Isn’t a Language, Then Tell Me What Is?”
- Gerda Lerner, “Living in Translation”
- Amy Tan, “Mother Tongue”
- Fan Shen, “The Classroom and the Wider Culture: Identity as a Key to Learning English Composition”
- Chinua Achebe, “Politics and Politicians of Language in African Literature”
- Ngugi wa Thiong’o, “The Imperialism of Language”
- Rosina Lippi-Green, “Language Ideology and Language Prejudice”
- Amended Resolution of the Oakland School Board on Ebonics
- Patricia Williams, “The Hidden Meanings of ‘Black English’”
- Patricia Smith, “Ebonics Ain’t The Answer”
- Students’ Right to Their Own Language Statement and Background Information
- Video: Jamila Lipscott: Trilingual Orator
- Geneva Smitherman, “‘God Don’t Never Change’: Black English from a Black Perspective”
- Geneva Smitherman, “From Ghetto Lady To Critical Linguist”
- Gloria Anzaldua, “How to Tame a Wild Tongue”
- Tupac Shakur, “Me Against the World”
- William Shakespeare’s “O How Much More Doth Beauty”

Assessment of Course Goals:

Attached to this syllabus is a preliminary draft of a Learning Contract we will use for this course. Together we will be revising this preliminary draft of the Learning Contract and a final draft composed collaboratively will be adopted for the course.

The course is divided into four modules:

**Module One:** Scrutinizing the Relationship between Language, Literacy, and Identity  
**Module Two:** Scrutinizing the Politics of Sociolinguistics and College Literacy  
**Module Three:** Recontextualization as Literate Practice  
**Module Four:** The Politics, Problematics, and Possibilities of Translation

Tentative Module Schedules will be provided and posted on Blackboard. Assessment of the course goals will be based on assignments that will take several forms:

Major Assignments: There are 5 such assignments, varying in content, length, purpose, and genre. A detailed description of each Major Assignment will be provided, but here are the titles and due dates for the 5 Major Assignments:

- **Major Assignment One:** Your Language Practices, Your Identity(s): A Critical Analysis — First Draft Due 9/21
- **Major Assignment Two:** Informed Response to the SRTOL and the Translingual Statement – First Draft Due 10/12
- **Major Assignment Three:** Literacy Narrative: A Translanguaged and Hybrid Text – First Draft Due 11/9
- **Major Assignment Four:** An Exercise in Translation – First Draft Due 11/20
- **Major Assignment Five:** Heterogeneity in Scenes of Writing — Presentations Delivered 12/4-12/11

**Final Portfolio Project:** Due during the final exam period. Detailed information will be provided.

Short Writing Assignments: I will ask you on several occasions to take notes on the assigned texts. In addition, short writing assignments and in-class writing exercises will make up a portion of the writing you will do for this course. For these assignments and exercises, you will be asked to write in response to assigned readings for the course and in response to assignment prompts I have designed for the course. I will ask you on several occasions to write critically and analytically about your writing, considering various directives that I will provide for you in the assignment prompts.
Writing Workshops and Peer Review: You should expect to produce multiple revisions for some of the writing you compose for this course. Therefore, your active participation in Writing Workshops and Peer Review is important for this course, and thus mandatory for your success in this course.

Writing Associate:

I am pleased that we have Owain Heyden working with us throughout the semester. Owain will be available to discuss and work with you on your writing one-on-one. Owen will be scheduling appointments alongside each Major Assignment.

Attendance Policy:

Regular attendance in this class is mandatory. Each student will be allowed three absences with no penalty or questions asked (although this does not excuse you from turning in work on time). After that, however, absences or frequent tardiness will negatively affect your grade (see the Learning Contract for details). It is your responsibility to inform me of an absence beforehand. The earlier I know about a problem, the more flexible I can be. There is always something happening in class, so even if I inform you beforehand about what will be covered, it is still your responsibility to acquire notes or other important information from your classmates if you are absent.

Late Work Policy:

All work is due when assigned. I will only receive late work when an arrangement with me has been made prior to the class meeting for which the assignment is due. If you have a significant problem getting assignments in on time, (EX: an ongoing medical issue), talk to me as early as possible because the earlier I know about a problem, the more flexible I can be.

Cell Phones and Laptops:

Laptops may be used in class for class work only. Exceptions for keeping a cell phone on will be made in extreme circumstances and I should be informed before class if this is the case.

Physical and/or Learning Differences:

If you have physical or learning differences that may affect your work in this course, please inform me as soon as possible. Also, the office of Jane Boomer, Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities (Peters G27-28; x5-5588), can provide lots of help in addressing them.
Learning Contract

Dear Class:

I believe that grades create false hierarchies that are counterproductive to an educational environment. As such, I use Learning Contracts to create in the classroom what is often called a *culture of support*. Instead of a classroom made up of an instructor assuming the authoritative role and students competing (often against each other) for grades and the approval of the instructor, a *culture of support* fosters an environment where we all function as collaborators in the learning experience.

I offer to you this first draft of a Learning Contract for this course that focuses on the responsibilities we’ll assume for our work in this course. As the instructor, I will not assign a grade to individual pieces of writing you generate for this course. Now, don’t worry. You will receive lots of feedback on your work from me and your fellow peer-colleagues. My comments on your work will provide you with a sense of my assessment of your commitment to your work processes for this course (reading, drafting, revising, and self-assessments and self-reflections). I will also give you a midterm report and grade.

If you actively engage and continue to improve upon the work we engage during the semester based on the learning objectives for the course, then you will earn a “B” in this class.

**To Earn a B in this course, you must:**

- Complete all 5 Major Assignments and the Final Portfolio Project
- Complete all short writing assignments and in-class exercises and assignments on time
- Attend (and come prepared for) all required conferences
- Comply with the standards of the Honor Code (You must write/type the Honor Code statement at the end of every assignment: “I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment.”)
- Arrive on time and keep regular attendance (No more than 3 absences)
- Participate regularly in all in-class activities, discussions, writing workshops, and peer reviews
- Be civil and respectful to your classmates and to me as the instructor

**To Earn an A or A+**

- Demonstrate exceptional commitment to your work processes (reading, drafting, revising, and self-assessments and self-reflections) on all 5 Major Assignments, the Final Portfolio Project, short writing assignments, and in-class exercises and assignments.
- Contribute thoughtfully, collaboratively, and frequently to class discussion
- Satisfy all other B-level minimum requirements

**Final Grades Below a B**

- Failure to meet the terms of the Learning Contract (due to missing and/or incomplete work, excessive absences and late arrival to class sessions, lack of preparation, and lackluster performance on assignments) will lower your grade.
  - If you accumulate 4 or 5 absences, your final grade will automatically drop to a C.
  - If you accumulate 6 or 7 absences, your final grade will automatically drop to a D.
  - If you accumulate 8 or more absences, you will receive a failing grade for the course.

By staying in this course and attending class, you accept this contract and agree to abide by it. I (Joy Karega) also agree to abide by the contract, and administer it fairly and equitably.