ENGL 1102: Nature's Rhetoric

The Decatur Waterworks

Section B6 | 11:15am-12:05pm MWF | Skiles 311
Section G6 | 12:20pm-1:10pm MWF | Skiles 311
Section L3 | 1:55pm-2:45pm | Skiles 311

Instructor: Dr. Christina M. Colvin | Contact: christina.m.colvin@gatech.edu
Office: Skiles 304 | Office Hours: MWF 3:00pm-4:00pm and by appointment

Course Website: www.ColvinCourses.com | Course Twitter Handle: @Nature_Rhetoric

Course Description

This course explores how local institutions—including businesses, nonprofit organizations, and our own campus—variously advance and challenge received ideas about nature and sustainability. By analyzing the public-facing, multimodal rhetoric of these institutions, we will ask: how suitable are these ideas for a consideration of the complex environmental issues of our present age? Specifically, students in this course will analyze how projects at Georgia Tech (the Living Building project) as well as businesses and nonprofit organizations across Atlanta (including Zoo Atlanta, the Georgia Aquarium, Trees Atlanta, the West Atlanta Watershed Alliance, and others) conceive of "nature" and humans' relationship to it. We will also examine several contemporary literary texts (poetry, creative nonfiction, and a novel) to advance and complicate our discussion of key concepts.

Throughout this course, students will practice how to structure and support arguments, engage in inquiry-driven research, produce meaning through situation-appropriate language, genre, and design choices, and critically reflect on our rhetorical strategies and the strategies of others. This course trains students to identify, employ, and synthesize the principles of written, oral, visual, electronic, and nonverbal (WOVEN) communication through informal and formal writing assignments, collaborative work, in-class discussion, group excursions, volunteer work, and presentations, as well as the use of a variety of digital tools.

Course Outcomes

Using the learning outcomes established by the University System of Georgia Board of Regents and the Council of Writing Program Administrators, Georgia Tech's Writing and Communication Program (WCP) has established learning outcomes and expectations for English 1102, which you can review here. Go to the site and read the policies; you are responsible for knowing and adhering to them.

In addition to the course goals for all WCP courses (above), in this course, you will also *identify and describe* several pervasive ways that rhetorical texts (including digital media, literary texts, and locations across the local built environment) construct and exercise concepts such as "nature," "culture," "sustainability," and "wilderness."

WCP Common Policies

Review the WCP Common Policies here. You are responsible for reading, knowing, and adhering to these policies. By signing the syllabus agreement at the conclusion of this document, you verify that you have read and understand both this syllabus and the WCP Common Policies.

Required Materials

1. *How the Dead Dream* by Lydia Millet

2. *WOVENText*, edited by Amy Braziller, Elizabeth Kleinfeld, and the Georgia Tech Writing and Communication Program; this is the official textbook for Georgia Tech's first-year Writing and Communication Program and is available for purchase as a RedShelf eBook

3. Cost of admission and/or transportation to a local Atlanta business (ex. Zoo Atlanta) or organization's worksite (ex. a Trees Atlanta worksite)

"Wild Encounters" at Zoo Atlanta

4. Laptop computer with access to internet-based tools, brought to class daily

Additional required texts will be made available through our course website, Course Reserves, or Canvas.

Final Grade Scale	**Project Grade Weights**
90-100……….…..A	Common First Week Video 1%
80-89……….……B	Twitter Responses 14%
70-79……….……C	Project I: Audio Guide 15%
60-69……….……D	Project II: Letter of Reading Recommendation 20%
Below 60…….…..F	Project III: Video Essay 25%
	Class Participation 10%
	Reflective Portfolio 15%

Overview of Graded Components

Common First Week Video (1%)

Review the syllabus for the class and "Critical Concept Three: Communication is Multimodal" in *WOVENText* Chapter 2 (pp. 39-44). Create a video (60-90 seconds) in which you articulate a challenge relating to one of the modes—written, oral, visual, electronic, or nonverbal—that you'll be engaging with in class projects this semester. What challenges do you expect to face in relation to this particular mode (use specific examples from your past experience)? How might you overcome these challenges (again using examples from your past experience)? Your project must comply with the specifications on the assignment sheet available via our course website.

Twitter Responses (14%)

Each student will maintain an individual Twitter account and tweet regularly at the class Twitter handle, @Nature_Rhetoric, in response to the course readings. If you already have a personal Twitter account, you must create a new one for the purposes of this course. If your Twitter account does not include your real name, email me your handle by the deadline listed on the course schedule.

Tweeting will allow you to develop your ability to articulate succinct, focused questions and claims about course texts; you can then build on these questions and claims in future projects and during class discussion. Tweets should not summarize readings; *they should raise a discussion question or make a claim*. A passing tweet constitutes a legible, readable "whole." Even if you tweet a series of interconnected ideas, each single tweet in the series should stand on its own and be understandable independently of other tweets. Do not split tweets in the middle of long sentences; rather, use the medium and its constraints to your advantage.

The audience for your tweets will be public. Anticipate that your tweets will be read by me and your peers: I will often draw on your tweets to generate class discussion, so be prepared to elaborate on the content and ideas brought up in your tweets during class. Tweeting also enables you to engage and explore the readings, topics, and writing and communication strategies brought up during class more thoroughly than our class exercises and discussion allow. Tweets should follow the Georgia Tech codes of conduct.

Tweet in response to readings from each day of the week; you should produce *at least* five outside-of-class tweets per week. Your Twitter Responses grade will suffer if you only tweet one day a week or only in response to one reading per week. By the end of the semester, you should have directed *at least forty* "passing" tweets to the course handle. You are not required to tweet on a week with an asterisk next to it on the schedule. Occasionally, I will ask that you tweet during class. Unless specified, tweets produced during class *do not substitute* for the minimum number of tweets you should produce outside of class every week.

How do you know when you have posted enough outside-of-class tweets for the week? Answering "yes" to each of these questions for most weeks (at least eight) during the semester would constitute excellent work in the Twitter Responses graded category.

- Did I tweet a discussion question or claim about Monday's reading?
- Did I tweet a discussion question or claim about Wednesday's reading?
- Did I tweet a discussion question or claim about Friday's reading?
- Did I respond to classmates to engage in a discussion, share resources, or help brainstorm ideas?

Tweets are assessed on a pass/fail basis. Passing outside-of-class tweets will be *retweeted* by the course Twitter handle. You must tweet at the course handle for your tweet to be considered for credit.

Communication competencies emphasized: Written; Visual; Electronic
(Assignment adapted from the work of Brittain Fellows Rebekah Fitzsimmons and Kate Holterhoff)

Mistle thrush nesting in a traffic light; image courtesy of Manchester Evening News Syndication

Project I: Audio Guide (15%)

In groups of 4-5 students each, use the genre of the audio guide to describe the way a physical location on Georgia Tech's campus exercises, embodies, and/or inhibits *one* of the seven "performance categories" associated with the Living Building Challenge. The seven petals are Place, Water, Energy, Health and Happiness, Materials, Equity, and Beauty. You can read about how the International Living Future Institute, the administrator of the Living Building Challenge, defines the seven petals here.

Your project will consist of five components: Focus Declaration, Script Draft, Audio Guide, In-class Presentation, and Reflection. Completed Audio Guides should be between 5-8 minutes in length.

The goal of this project is for your group to use direct evidence in the form of patient, observant, descriptive analyses of your chosen location to convince a listening audience that your location defines a petal in the way that you claim it does. Consider that your audience *may or may not* have direct access to the location you describe when they listen to your guide. How can you use descriptive language, nonverbal resources (including sounds recorded at the location), and directional cues to provide your audience a "mental image" of what you want them to see and understand?

The rhetorical purpose of your audio guide should be to persuade an interested, public audience unfamiliar with your location and your petal of the validity and significance of your argument.

Your project should comply with all the specifications on the assignment description available on our course website. Upload your completed audio guide to the course SoundCloud account (login information provided during class) with the title "[Place] – [Petal] by [Group Members]" (without quotation marks or brackets).

Communication competencies emphasized: Written; Oral; Nonverbal

Project II: Letter of Reading Recommendation (20%)

Using the genre of a formal letter, choose one article, poem, or novel we've read in the course and recommend it to a real, living person. In the letter, use direct, analyzed evidence of moments from the text to convince your letter's recipient that the text is relevant to him/her/them personally and that he/she/they should read it. Throughout, justify your choice of your letter's recipient by referencing and analyzing his/her/their understandings, actions, writing, or otherwise and how these relate to your chosen text.

Your reason for recommending a text should *not* be that your recipient will "like" or "enjoy" it. Rather, convince your reader that the ideas, concepts, or arguments forwarded in the text will complicate, support, and/or challenge the reader's own analyzed ideas, concepts, or arguments. The body of your letter should span 600-900 words in length.

This project will consist of three components: Letter Draft, Revised Letter, and Final Reflection. Your project should comply with all the specifications on the assignment description available via our course website.

Communication competencies emphasized: Written; Visual

Project III: Video Essay (25%)

For this project, work in groups of 4-5 to produce a Video Essay about a local Atlanta business or nonprofit organization invested in a key concept relevant to the course (such as "nature," "conservation," or "sustainability"). According to the UW-Madison DesignLab, video essays "use audiovisual materials to research and explore topics in an objective, subjective, or even poetic manner. Like written essays, video essays may contain an introduction, argument, supporting evidence, and conclusion. The simultaneity of sound, visual, text, and voice and the rhythms of editing and juxtaposition can create complex patterns of meaning and association."

All group members are required to plan a day when you can all visit the site together and/or volunteer together with the organization. I will not arrange this for you. You will be required to provide specific documentation of all group members' participation in the work/visit, so plan ahead so as to accommodate everyone. *Start early and communicate frequently.* Throughout the semester, I will check in with your group to make sure that your collaboration is proceeding successfully.

Completed Video Essays should span 12-15 minutes in length. This project consists of six components: Topic Declaration, Script Draft, Revised Script Draft, Video Essay, In-class Presentation, and Reflection. Your project should comply with all the specifications on the assignment sheet available via our course website.

Your project should comply with all the specifications on the assignment description available on our course website. Upload completed videos to YouTube; then, post a link to the YouTube video on Canvas.

Communication competencies emphasized: Written; Oral; Visual; Electronic; Nonverbal

Class Participation (10%)

The success of this course depends on your active, engaged class participation. You are required to have completed all of the assigned readings prior to the beginning of the class session; you are also required to have the text we are discussing open to the proper page (digital and/or physical) during class.

You will participate in many in-class activities including peer review sessions, site visits, writing workshops, and group collaborations. These activities, in addition to your regular contributions to discussion (I expect, at minimum, at least two substantive contributions to class discussion every week), will be factored into your class participation grade.

Communication competencies emphasized: Written; Oral; Nonverbal

Reflective Portfolio (15%)

In lieu of a final exam, ENGL 1102 students complete a final multimodal portfolio that is due during your section's scheduled final exam time (see http://www.registrar.gatech.edu/students/exams.php for the final exam schedule).

The portfolio will include a substantial reflective essay, brief introductions to each artifact, and selected examples of your WOVEN work products. You will develop your portfolio throughout the semester and work on finalizing it at the end of the semester. You will design your Reflective Portfolio to persuade WCP professors that you have met the stated outcomes of the course. Your project should comply with all the specifications on the assignment sheet available via our course website.

The multimodal reflective portfolio is produced in an open-source portfolio platform called Mahara; you can access the GT instance of Mahara using your GT login credentials at http://mahara.gatech.edu.

Communication competencies emphasized: Written; Visual; Electronic

Assessment and Feedback

The WCP common assessment rubric is a guide to how your work for the course will be assessed and will help you understand where your work can improve. We will reference the assessment rubric frequently throughout the course and discuss the ways it can support the completion and revision of your projects.

You are welcome to see me during office hours to discuss strategies for improving your work. Additionally, I will provide feedback for each of your major projects; this feedback will reference the assessment rubric. In addition, you should keep track of your own grade in the course. If you have trouble doing so, please email me to clarify your current standing in the class.

When I return a graded assignment to you, I request that you read my comments about your work carefully and wait 24 hours before coming to speak with me about your grade. I have found that this approach results in more productive discussions about graded work.

Contact/Communication

Email is the best way to contact me if you have questions or concerns. Generally, I will respond to all student email within 24 hours (although on weekends and holidays, I may take a little longer). Likewise, I may need to contact you by email. You are responsible for checking your campus-based email account at least once every 24 hours.

Late Work

All projects and assignments must be turned in on the date and time indicated. Late submission of a major project will reduce the highest achievable grade of that project by 1/3 of a letter (i.e., a "B" project will become a "B-"). The project's grade will continue to drop 1/3 of a letter for every additional 24-hour period the assignment is not submitted in full.

Attendance

You are expected to attend all class sessions. You are, however, permitted four absences without penalty. If you exceed four absences from class, your overall, final grade for the course will drop by 1/3 of a letter (i.e., a final grade of a "B" will become a "B-"). Your grade will continue to drop 1/3 of a letter for every additional absence thereafter. Missing eight or more classes will result in an "F." I take attendance every day.

If you miss a class session, you are responsible for finding out what the class covered in your absence. You should first contact a classmate for this information; only after having consulted with a classmate (or two) should you get in touch with me for additional clarification, if needed. I will not respond to generalized, "So what did I miss?" inquiries or requests for summaries of class content.

You are expected to come to class on time. Every three late arrivals to class will count as an absence. In short, three tardies equal one absence. Such an absence will count towards your total number of missed classes.

Electronics

Since we are composing multimodally throughout the course, you are expected to bring to class and operate laptops, tablets, and smartphones. I encourage you to develop best practices for negotiating among virtual communities and the real time of the classroom. What choices can you make to remain attentive to your peers and me, while at the same time engaging with digital resources for appropriate class use?

Public Nature of the Course

Consider most work for this class to be "public." Part of becoming an effective writer and communicator is learning to appreciate the ideas and feedback of others. In this course, our purpose is to come together as a community. Avoid topics that you wish to keep private or that you feel so strongly about that you are unwilling to listen to the perspectives of others. You have the option of not associating your full and/or real name with the public work you produce. Your grades will not be made public.

Course Affiliations

Serve-Learn-Sustain. This course is part of Georgia Tech's Serve-Learn-Sustain (SLS) initiative, which provides students with opportunities to combine their academic and career interests with their desire to make worthwhile contributions to the world and build sustainable communities where people and nature thrive, in Georgia, the United States, and around the globe. More information about SLS can be found at www.serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu. Visit the website to sign up for the SLS Email List, view the full list of affiliated courses and projects, and find links to Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

Resources for Students

Communication Center. The peer and professional tutors at the Georgia Tech Communication Center are trained to help you brainstorm, plan, and execute your multimodal projects. I encourage you to take advantage of this excellent resource. The Communication Center is located in Clough Commons 447, and you can find information about it on the web here.

Academic Misconduct. I take plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct seriously. Should I suspect that you engage in academic misconduct in this course, I will refer the case to Georgia Tech's Office of Student Integrity. You can find their website here: http://osi.gatech.edu/

You should also become familiar with Tech's Academic Honor Code (http://policylibrary.gatech.edu/student-affairs/academic-honor-code) as well as the OSI's Academic Misconduct Process (http://osi.gatech.edu/content/academic-misconduct-process).

Schedule of Classes, Readings, and Assignments

Schedule Changes. Please be aware that this schedule is tentative and may change as the course progresses.

Week One, January 8-12*

MON. Institute closure in response to severe weather conditions

WED. *Read*: The syllabus for ENGL 1102: Nature's Rhetoric and the assignment sheet for the Common First Week Video (CFWV)

In class: Class introductions; syllabus review
Due today: Printed and signed syllabus form

FRI: *Read*:
- "Critical Concept Three: Communication Is Multimodal" in *WOVENText* Chapter 2 (pp. 39-44)
- *WOVENText* pages about portfolio/Mahara (Chapter 7, pp. 151-158)

In class: Peer review of CFWV script drafts
Due today:
1) A complete, digital draft of your CFWV script, brought to class
2) Tweet at the class handle, @Nature_Rhetoric and briefly introduce yourself to the class/the Twitterverse
3) Email me your Twitter handle if your account does not use your name
4) Follow the class Twitter account, @Nature_Rhetoric

Week Two, January 15-19
MON. No class; Martin Luther King Jr. holiday

WED. *Read:* John Muir, "The Hetch Hetchy Valley"
Due today: Common First Week Video, link uploaded to Canvas

FRI. *Read:* Bill McKibben, excerpt from *The End of Nature*

STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING
PLEASE READ, SIGN, AND RETURN THESE STATEMENTS TO DR. COLVIN.

I affirm that I have read the entire syllabus and Common Policies site for ENGL 1102 and understand the information and the responsibilities specified.

_____

print full name

_____

legible signature

_____

Date

DIRECTIONS: Read carefully and check all that apply.
☐   I give my instructor, Christina M. Colvin, permission to use copies of the work I do for this course, ENGL 1102, as examples in presentations and in print and electronic publications.
      I do not want my work used as examples in any situations.

If you give permission for your work to be used, please indicate how you want to be acknowledged:
☐   Please acknowledge me by my full name.
☐   Please use my work, but do not acknowledge me by name.

      The following information enables me to contact you if your work is used.

_____

print full name

_____

legible signature

_____

print permanent home address

_____

print campus address

_____

cell and home phones

_____

school and home email addresses

_____

date