

Course Objectives for ENGL 20803: Intermediate Composition

In ENGL 20803, students should engage in the following:

- Produce writing assignments that go beyond the length and complexity of those assigned in ENGL 10803 (a minimum of 35-40 polished pages is recommended)
- Learn key terminology for discussing argument
- Practice analyzing arguments in various forms
- Practice producing arguments in various forms
- Practice analyzing and producing complex texts that go beyond typical textbook genres
- Practice conducting primary and secondary research
- Engage with digital texts. Explore digital rhetoric/argument.
- Engage with “real” rhetoric. Ask students to analyze and/or produce arguments that are current and that have “real” consequences.
- Engage in a collaborative project
- Engage issues of oral and visual rhetoric

Writing Assignments

You will work on four major writing assignments in the class.

Personal-Public Argument

The assignment will ask you to choose an issue that has both personal and public significance and to use your experience as well as outside sources to make a case for the importance of the issue. As you explore multiple kinds of evidence and their effects, you should also consider how personal experience and group identification(s) affects the issues that we consider important and the kinds of arguments we respond to (about 7 pages)

Evaluation of Community Web Sites

Choose a community or organization and identify several web sites affiliated with that community or organization. Apply your skills of rhetorical analysis in order to determine what these sites tell us about the community or organization they represent, what the rhetorical objectives are for each site, and what means of persuasion each site is using to meet those objectives. Considering text as well as other elements of the site, including design, evaluate the rhetorical effectiveness of each site, providing a “Guide to BLANK sites” for future readers. (about 7 pages, not counting illustrations)

Rhetorical Case Study Analysis

In this assignment you will need to choose a public issue or event and identify a group of primary texts that presents arguments about the issue. The essay you write in response to these texts should explain to readers the rhetorical situation, including what community or communities are involved, who the stakeholders are and what’s at stake for each of them, what the major positions are, what kinds of arguments are being made for each position, who is representing the various positions (and whose positions are not being represented), what kinds of evidence are being presented. You may choose a current issue or one of historical importance, just keep in mind that you have to work

from primary texts—actual arguments written during the controversy, before the controversy was resolved—rather than commentaries or analyses written after the fact. You may also choose an issue that is currently important to a particular group on campus or in the Fort Worth Community, in your workplace or a professional organization that you’re interested in or affiliated with. “Texts” for analysis may include transcripts of oral discussions, print documents produced by the community involved others interested in the issue, political cartoons, advertisements, online sources—any text that constitutes an argument about an issue of importance to a group, community or the public at large. (about 10 pages, not counting case study texts)

Collaborative Proposal

In this project, you will be assigned to a small group whose job it will be to investigate a problem on campus or in the community and to propose a solution to the problem. This investigation should include primary as well as secondary research. (Primary research includes interviews, field observation, and surveys, as well as the analysis of original texts.) The final proposal will be presented as both a paper and an oral presentation and should include some use of images or other media in addition to print/speech. Be as creative as you wish while keeping in mind your objective: to persuade skeptical readers/listeners of both the existence of a problem and the reasonableness of your proposed solution. Since learning to collaborate effectively is one of the objectives of the assignment, you will need to keep track of your contributions to the group project and be prepared to explain your contribution as well as the contributions of other group members when you submit your portfolio. It is possible that group members may not receive the same grade for the Collaborative Proposal (about 10 pages, plus oral presentation materials)

TCU Composition Program
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Guidelines for Conducting Human Subjects

Research

One outcome that we have designated for ENGL 20803 is giving students practice conducting primary research, some of which may include what is commonly referred to as “human subjects research,” research that involves human participants such as interviews, surveys, and observation. The federal government (through the National Institutes of Health) has created guidelines for the ethical treatment of human subjects that all researchers in federally-funded institutions (including colleges and universities) must abide by. Since students are not institutionally-sanctioned researchers who plan on publishing their research findings, they do not need official approval from the Human Subjects Research Review Board. But the ethical guidelines still apply. As instructors, you are responsible for making sure that students conduct their research according to

these guidelines; as Director of the Composition Program, I am responsible for making sure that you understand these principles. Students should be required to write detailed research plans and have their survey and interview questions approved by you.

1. **Informed Consent.** The principle of informed consent dictates that human participants be fully informed of the purpose of the research, of the potential benefits to them, and of any potential risks. Researchers are ethically obligated to explain purpose, benefits, and risks prior to conducting research. In the case of surveys, a statement at the top of the survey form (see sample below) is generally sufficient. In the case of interviews and observations, researchers should provide participants with a written description of the project (including the purpose, benefits, and risks) and ask for the participant's signature before proceeding with the interview or observation. (A copy of the signed consent form should be retained by the researcher.)
2. **Confidentiality.** A common principle of human subject research is that researchers will make every effort to protect the confidentiality of participants. Surveys should be completed anonymously (though researchers may collect demographic information such as age, sex, etc. in order to generalize about those who completed the survey). Interview subjects can be referred to with a pseudonym or through general description only ("a female sophomore business major") except when participants have given voluntary, informed consent to be identified.
3. **Voluntary.** Participation in research should be voluntary, and researchers are ethically responsible for making that clear to research participants. Again, this principle can be communicated on the top of a survey form or in a permission form that participants are asked to sign.
4. **Withdrawal.** Research participants have the right to withdrawal from the research project at any time. This includes in the middle of an interview or observation, if the participant so chooses.
5. **Fairness.** Researchers are ethically obligated to treat research participants fairly. That means creating surveys and interview questions that do not lead participants to answer in a particular way, that are not offensive or unnecessarily intrusive. It also means that surveys will be distributed in a way that will not make participants uncomfortable or put them at risk, and that interviews will be conducted at a place and time that are convenient for the interviewees. Researchers are responsible for explaining how they chose whom to survey. Interview participants should always ask permission to audio or videotape interviews.
6. **Ethical Representation.** Researchers are ethically obligated to represent the results of their research as objectively as possible. Although all research is affected by the researcher's perspective and interests, researchers should make

every effort not to distort or exaggerate their results or to represent human subjects maliciously.

Sample Informed Consent Statements:

SURVEY STATEMENT

This survey is part of a research project we are conducting for our ENGL 20803 class. The purpose of the research project is to answer the question [e.g. “How handicapped-accessible is TCU?”]. Completion of this survey is voluntary, and all responses should be anonymous.

INTERVIEW/OBSERVATION PERMISSION FORM

**Make Two Copies

I [We], names of researchers am [are] conducting interviews as part of a research project for my [our] ENGL 20803 class. The purpose of this research project is to answer the question [e.g. “How handicapped-accessible is TCU?”] Participation in this research project is voluntary, and participants may discontinue participation at any time. Your participation will also be confidential; research participants will be referred to by pseudonym.

I _____[print name]_____ agree to participate in the research project [name of research project].

_____ [signature] _____

_____ [date] _____

_____ [signatures of researchers] _____