***ENG 2512: The Rhetoric of Social Media (CRN 55660)***



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| Meeting Days/ Times/ Place: | Mondays and Wednesdays, 12:30-1:45, in KC 303 |
| Instructor Contact Information: | Elizabeth Kleinfeld, Ph.D.  she/her/hers [ekleinfe@msudenver.edu](mailto:ekleinfe@msudenver.edu)  <http://sites.msudenver.edu/ekleinfe/home/>  Twitter: @lizkleinfeld  Office: KC 454 /303-615-1316  Cell: 303-915-5895 (texts preferred) |
| Office Hours[[1]](#footnote-1): | M 2-3, T 8:30-9:30, W 11:30-12:30, R 8:30-9:30 / by appointment / by chance  You can make an appointment with me outside my office hours by going to <https://calendly.com/elizabethkleinfeld>. |

Welcome to ENG 2512!

Students will study how traditional notions of literacy and creativity are being both challenged and encouraged by pervasive computing, particularly social media. Through readings, research and discussion, students will assess and critique how social media are effective (or not), how they function rhetorically, and how they influence perceptions of written communications. Students will learn to analyze the rhetorical features of texts both in print and digital form.

This course will help you:

**General Studies SLOs—AHUM**

2. Demonstrate the ability to locate sources when information is needed, and to evaluate the authenticity, validity, and reliability of resources applied to a specific purpose.

3. Create persuasive and well-reasoned arguments that are appropriate to topic and purpose.

5. Communicate in writing with an awareness of audience, by using language conventions appropriate to the occasion and task.

12. Identify important examples of texts, creative works, artifacts, or problems in the discipline including the cultural context.

13. Analyze text(s), artifact(s), or problem(s) using a point of view informed by the critical or aesthetic perspectives appropriate to the discipline.

**Specific, *Measurable* Student Behavioral Learning Objectives:**

Upon completion of this course the student should be able to:

1. Explain relationships between changes in material technological relationships and cultural formations.
2. Define key terms in a digital culture.
3. Learn the modes, consequences, responsibilities, and dangers of different kinds of digital participation.
4. Discuss how the concepts of literacy, creativity and written communication have been complicated by digital technologies.
5. Analyze, evaluate, and create digital cultural artifacts.
6. Discuss the significance of historical, legal and cultural milestones around the movement from print to social media.
7. Conduct scholarly research into issues related to digital culture.
8. Make and defend in writing a position regarding a key debate around the use of social media.

This class supports MSU Denver’s mission to “provide a high-quality, accessible, enriching education that prepares students for successful careers, post-graduate education, and lifelong learning in a multicultural, global, and technological society. To fulfill its mission, MSU Denver’s diverse university community engages the community at large in scholarly inquiry, creative activity and the application of knowledge.” In addition to supporting the University’s mission, this class supports the MSU Denver English Department’s stance on diversity: “MSU Denver English Department embraces the University's mission of inclusive excellence and strives to offer courses that value diversity in all its forms: race and ethnicity, gender, gender identities and expressions, sexual orientations, religion, socioeconomic class, national origin and nationality, linguistic diversity, age, disabilities, individual differences, and cultural affiliations.” This means that no matter what your previous schooling experiences, linguistic background, documentation status, (dis)ability, religion, race, sexual identity or orientation, body type, and history are, you belong here, and so do your colleagues. WELCOME. I’m glad you’re here.

To ensure that this classroom is humane, inclusive, and just, I ask us all to practice the following behaviors in class:

* Arrange your chairs in a circle and face the person speaking.
* Make room for others to share their perspectives by inviting them to comment.
* Listen to understand and ask clarifying questions before determining whether or not you agree with someone else.
* Disagree respectfully.
* Acknowledge that we are all works in progress.
* Dare to fail.

Texts:

# Required

# Banks, A. (2006). *Race, Rhetoric, & Technology: Searching for Higher Ground*. Routledge.

# Graff, G., & Birkenstein, C. (2014). *They Say/I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing* (3rd ed.). WW Norton & Company.

# Walls, D. M., & Vie, S. (Eds.). (2017). *Social Writing/Social Media: Publics, Presentations, and Pedagogies*. WAC Clearinghouse. Available for free download here: <https://wac.colostate.edu/books/perspectives/social/>.

On Reserve at the Auraria Library

Robillard, A. E., & Fortune, R. (Eds.). (2015). *Authorship Contested: Cultural Challenges to the Authentic, Autonomous Author*. Routledge. On reserve at the Auraria Library (you can only check the book out for 2 hours).

HIGHLY Recommended: *Getting Things Done* by David Allen, *Time Management from the Inside Out* by Julie Morgenstern, or another book on time/action management. Time management and the discipline to revise laboriously are two of the most overlooked and sorely lacking skills in writers. Do not underestimate the importance of these things. YOU WILL NOT MAKE IT ON SHEER TALENT AND INSPIRATION. Trust me.

Blackboard. Class handouts, answers to frequently asked questions, and online class readings will be on Blackboard. Please commit to checking Blackboard regularly.

Evaluation:

Grade Contract. Instead of grading the traditional way, I use a grading contract[[2]](#footnote-2). This means that instead of getting a percentage of points possible on each assignment, you will simply get credit for doing it or no credit for not doing it. Contract grading allows you to make mistakes and learn from them without being penalized, and making mistakes is a very important part of learning. The premise of the contract is simple: *If you turn in every single assignment on time (or use late tickets) and miss no more than two classes, you will earn at least a B in the class.* Turning in incomplete assignments, skipping assignments, and missing more than two classes will result in grades of less than B, as the chart below shows. In other words, grades of B or lower are wholly dependent upon the quantity of work done.

If you turn in work that is complete and on time (or with late tickets) but is not of passing quality, you will receive a revise and resubmit request (R&R). This means you have one calendar week from the time of the R&R to revise and resubmit the work for credit. If the resubmitted work is of passing quality, you will get full credit for the assignment; if the resubmitted work is not of passing quality, you will receive another R&R and have another week to revise. If you choose not to resubmit the work, you will get no credit for the assignment. You can (and should) consult me and/or a Writing Center consultant during your revision process.

The grade of “A” is the only grade dependent upon the quality of work. An A grade in the course is earned by doing everything required for the B—turning in every single assignment on time and missing no more than three classes—and completing a final research project that is of exceptional in quality, as judged by colleagues in class (if you do not already have a B in the class, completing a research project of exceptional quality will result in a one-letter grade bump in your final grade).

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|  | **# of absences** | **# of late assignments (not including use of late tickets)** | **# of skipped assignments (never turned in)** | **# of incomplete assignments (missing a required component)** | **additional criteria** |
| A | ≤ 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | quality of final project |
| B | ≤ 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |  |
| C | ≤ 2 | 1+ | 1 | 1 |  |
| D | 3+ | 1+ | 2 | 2 |  |
| F | 3+ | 1+ | 3+ | 3+ |  |

Assignments. Many of the assignments have flexible parameters that allow you to choose how you want to demonstrate to me that you have met the assignment outcomes. In terms of credit for assignments in fulfilling the contract, every assignment carries equal weight. For something to be considered complete, it must meet length and source requirements, follow basic instructions, and include all components.

Each assignment is described in more detail on Blackboard.

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| * Reading responses * Participation in class co-gens * Case study of a person’s or organization’s use of social media | * Selfie project * Social media platform analysis * Social media usage homework * Final project & proposal |

Class Policies, Three Habits of Highly Successful Students, and Frequently Asked Questions are on Blackboard and considered part of the syllabus.

|  | **Activities & Assignments**  \*\*For each class meeting, do ONE reading response, alone or collaboratively, that touches on all of the readings assigned for that day. Reading responses must be shared with me ([liz.kleinfeld@gmail.com](mailto:liz.kleinfeld@gmail.com)) by 11:59 p.m. the day before class.\*\* | |
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| **Week** | **Monday** | **Wednesday** |
| 1 | 8/19: Introductions. What is Rhetoric? What is performance theory?  Co-gens: TBD | 8/21: What is participatory culture?  Co-gens: TBD  Begin Social Media Usage Assignment Read before class: Graff & Birkenstein Introduction and chapter 12, “Entering Class Discussions,” Walls & Vie Introduction |
|  | Before 11:59 pm on Friday, 8/23, take the syllabus quiz on Blackboard and post as much or as little of your contact information as you like on the Class Member Information Sheet on Blackboard  \*\*BONUS OPPORTUNITY TO GET A LATE TICKET: Come by during my office hours (or make an appointment outside my office hours) this week for a conversation about who you are and where you are going. Bring at least one class-related question, tell me why you’re interested in this course topic, or ask about the research in the field. [[3]](#footnote-3) | |
| 2 | 8/26: How does the internet draw/shape our attention?  Co-gens: TBD  Read before class: Dadas, “Hashtag Activism: The Promise and Risk of ‘Attention’” (in Walls & Vie), Graff & Birkenstein chapter 1, “’They Say’” | 8/28: What does it mean to be literate today?  Co-gens: TBD  Read before class: Beck, “Sustaining Critical Literacies in the Digital Information Age: The Rhetoric of Sharing, Prosumerism, and Digital Algorithmic Surveillance” (in Walls & Vie) and Graff & Birkenstein chapter 2, “’Her Point Is’” |
| 3 | 9/2: Labor Day – NO CLASS | 9/4: Who uses social media and to what ends?  Co-gens: TBD  Begin case study assignment  Read before class: Adkins, “Social Spill: A Case-Based Analysis of Social Media Research” (in Walls & Vie) and Graff & Birkenstein chapter 3, “’As He Himself Puts It’” |
| 4 | 9/9: Who is engaged by social media?  Co-gens: TBD  Read before class: Potts, “Still Flying: Writing as Participatory Activism Circulating Across the Firefly ‘Verse” (in Walls & Vie) and Graff & Birkenstein chapter 4, “’Yes/No/Okay, But’” | 9/11: Which news is fake?  Co-gens: TBD  Read before class: Head, DeFrain, Fister, & MacMillan, “Across the Great Divide: How Today’s College Students Engage with News” (on Blackboard), Graff & Birkenstein chapter 5, “’And Yet’” |
| 5 | 9/16: Workshop  Co-gens: TBD  Bring 3 hard copies of your case study draft | 9/18: What’s real on the internet?  Co-gens: TBD  Read before class: Smith, “A Gay Girl in Damascus” (in Robillard & Fortune, on reserve in Library—note that this is an actual book and you will need to go to the actual Library to read the chapter or copy it) and Graff & Birkenstein chapter 6, “’Skeptics May Object’” |
| 6 | 9/23: Can you opt out of social media?  Co-gens: TBD  Read before class: Bullinger and Vie, “After a Decade of Social Media: Abstainers and Ex-Users” (in Walls & Vie) and Graff & Birkenstein chapter 7, “’So What? Who Cares?” | 9/25: (Why) Do selfies matter?  Co-gens: TBD  Start the Selfie Assignment  Read before class: Senft & Baym, “What Does the Selfie Say? Investigating a Global Phenomenon” (on Blackboard) and Graff & Birkenstein chapter 8, “’As a Result’” |
| 7 | 9/30: How do memes shape thought? How does thought shape memes?  Co-gens: TBD  Read before class: Chagas, Friere, Rios, & Magalhães, “Political Memes and the Politics of Memes: A Methodological Proposal for Content Analysis of Online Political Memes” (on Blackboard) and Graff & Birkenstein chapter 9, “’Ain’t So/Is Not’” | 10/2: Who doesn’t love open source?  Co-gens: TBD  Read before class: Cantrell, “The Status Quo Bias and the Uptake of Open Source” (on Blackboard) and Graff & Birkenstein chapter 10, “’But Don’t Get Me Wrong’” |
| 8 | 10/7: How does privacy function on the internet?  Co-gens: TBD  Read before class: Tsay-Vogel, Shanahan, Signorielli, “Social Media Cultivating Perceptions of Privacy: A 5-Year Analysis of Privacy Attitudes and Self-Disclosure Behaviors Among Facebook Users” and Graff & Birkenstein chapter 11, “’He ~~Says~~ Contends’” | 10/9: How do users perform across platforms?  Co-gens: TBD  Read before class: Williams, “Having a Feel for What Works: Polymedia, Emotion, and Literacy Practices with Mobile Technologies” (in Walls & Vie) and Graff & Birkenstein chapter 13, “’IMHO’” |
| 9 | 10/14: How does anonymity function on the internet?  Co-gens: TBD  Read before class: Hutchinson, “Writing to Have No Face: The Orientation of Anonymity in Twitter” (in Walls & Vie) and Graff & Birkenstein chapter 14, “’What’s Motivating This Writer?’” | 10/16: Who is social media (not) designed for?  Co-gens: TBD  Read before class: Arola, “Indigenous Interfaces” (in Walls & Vie) |
| 10 | 10/21: What does social media do?  Co-gens: TBD  Read before class: Banks, chapter 1 | 10/23: What does social media do?  Co-gens: TBD  Platform presentation  Read before class: Banks, chapter 2 |
| 11 | 10/28: What does social media do?  Co-gens: TBD  Platform presentation  Read before class: Banks, chapter 3 | 10/30: What does social media do?  Co-gens: TBD  Platform presentation  Begin research project  Read before class: Banks, chapter 4 |
| 12 | 11/4: What does social media do?  Co-gens: TBD  Platform presentation  Read before class: Banks, chapter 5 | 11/6: What does social media do?  Co-gens: TBD  Platform presentation  Read before class: Banks, chapter 6 |
| 13 | 11/11: What does social media do?  Co-gens: TBD  Platform presentation  Read before class: Banks, chapter 7 | 11/13: No class meeting  Work on projects |
| 14 | 11/18: No class meeting  Work on projects | 11/20: No class meeting  Work on projects |
| 15 | 12/2: Workshop  Co-gens: TBD | 12/4: Workshop  Co-gens: TBD |
| Finals week | Final projects due  Scores and comments due | |

1. You should come by during my office hours to ask questions about class readings or content; explore ideas or theories that interest you; bounce ideas around related to rhetoric and social media; get advising related to courses, degree plans, graduation, and beyond; to get feedback on assignments and drafts; get moral support when you have hit an obstacle in your education; or you want my input on something for any reason. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Asao Inoue is a writing assessment scholar who has researched the effectiveness of grade contracts versus conventional grading. He observes that,

   Most courses that have writing in them ask us to write something, turn it in to the professor, and get back a grade . . . We are writing for grades, not for feedback, not for developing the ideas we find most valuable, not for expressing those ideas in ways that we see as important. If we get comments from our teacher on our writing, typically, we are likely to read those comments so that we can figure out what the teacher wants, what will get a better grade. If we get comments or feedback from our colleagues in class, we may feel conflicted about listening to them or taking their advice. If they suggest something, would the teacher agree? What if we took their advice but the teacher did not agree with that advice? Furthermore, using conventional grading systems to compute course grades often leads us to think more about our grade than about our writing, to worry more about pleasing a teacher or fooling one than about figuring out what we really want to learn, or how we want to communicate something to someone for some purpose. Additionally, conventional grading may cause us to be reluctant to take risks with our writing or ideas. It doesn’t allow writers to fail at writing, which many suggest is a primary way in which people learn from their practices. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. A recent study connects students’ use of faculty office hours with academic success (Guerrero & Rod, 2013), but in my experience, students are reluctant to use faculty office hours; hence, this actual bonus opportunity to motivate you! Guerrero, M., & Rod, A. B. (2013). Engaging in Office Hours: A Study of Student-Faculty Interaction and Academic Performance. *Journal of Political Science Education*, *9*(4), 403-416. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)