

Instructor: Jason Palmeri

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Work in the U.S.: Narratives / Rhetorics / Images (Eng 367.01)

In this course, we will explore a variety of texts (films, websites, novels, scholarly articles, non-fiction reportage, business consulting books), which explore the themes of “work” and “success” in American life. After beginning with a classic American narrative of work (Horatio Alger’s, *Ragged Dick*), we will turn to contemporary texts which contest, complicate, or build upon classic American definitions of “work” and “success.” Engaging with a diversity of perspectives (from Marxists to Management Consultants), we will challenge ourselves to think deeply and complexly about the ever-shifting meanings of work in American life, resisting simple binaries and easy answers.

Some key questions we will consider include:

- 1) What cultural narratives (and counter-narratives) influence the ways in which work is perceived in American life? What experiences do these narratives privilege and exclude?
- 2) How is work in America changing in light of globalization and the rise of the “knowledge economy”? How have contemporary academic and popular texts represented these economic shifts?
- 3) How do we (as individuals and members of groups) define ourselves as workers? What pragmatic and theoretical considerations influence our definitions? What are the broader ethical, political, and material implications of these definitions?
- 4) What diverse theoretical perspectives have been used to shed light on work in American life? What are the underlying assumptions of these perspectives? What rhetorical strategies do they use? What are their strengths and limitations?
- 5) What (tentative) conclusions can we come to about work in American life? What rhetorical strategies can we use to influence the academic and public dialogue about this crucial topic? (note: I’m sure we will all come to different conclusions)

While we will spend a good deal of time reading and analyzing texts about “work,” this course is ultimately centered on writing; indeed, it could be said that writing is the primary “work” you will do in the next ten weeks. Writing both formally and informally in a variety of genres and media, you will use writing as a tool both for understanding and developing ideas about texts and for persuasively communicating your ideas to audiences within the academy and beyond. Recognizing that writing is a process, you will revise your formal assignments in light of teacher and peer feedback (as well as your own evolving perspectives).

Course Goals

When you complete English 367.01 you should be able to:

- 1) Critically analyze a variety of texts (both popular and academic), exploring their rhetorical strategies, theoretical assumptions, social-historical contexts, and material implications.
- 2) Locate, evaluate, and use secondary sources (both print and on-line) for academic and public writing.
- 3) Interrogate a diversity of perspectives on work in American life, placing your own writing on this topic within a broader cultural and scholarly conversation.
- 4) Write and speak persuasively to academic and public audiences in a variety of genres.

Texts

- 1) *Writing Analytically* (WA). By David Rosenwasser and Jill Stephen.
- 2) *Ragged Dick*. By Horatio Alger.
- 3) *The Brand You 50*. By Tom Peters.
- 4) A Course Packet (CP) available from Cop-EZ.

Course Requirements

Reading responses and informal writing activities: In this course, you will respond in writing to almost all of the readings that you complete. On nine occasions, you will be asked to post a reading response (answering a specific prompt) to WebCT by 7PM the evening before class (you will also write three “responses” to your peers’ posts). In addition, you will complete informal writings in class, which you must save in a notebook that I will periodically collect. To receive an “A” in this part of the course, you

can miss no more than two in-class writings or WebCT posts. WebCT posts and in-class writings may be informally written (I won't count off for grammar and spelling and I understand that your ideas may not be fully organized and flowing); however, for full credit, all WebCT posts and in-class writings must fully address the prompt and demonstrate specific critical engagement with the reading material. WebCT posts and informal writings will be evaluated holistically at the end of class, but I will email you privately at least twice during the quarter to give you evaluative feedback and a tentative grade. If you would like more regular feedback, just email me and I will provide it to you.

Formal Writings: You will complete two major formal writings for this course: an analytical essay and a practical project. In the analytical essay (written for an academic audience), you will critically examine cultural representations and/or current debates about a particular aspect of work in American life. In the practical project (written for a specific public audience of your choice), you will seek to revise representations of and/or make specific changes to particular work-related practices. Depending on your chosen audience and purpose, the practical project may involve a variety of genres or media. Both the formal essay and the practical project will be accompanied by critical self-reflections on what you have learned from the process of writing (as well as what you still have to learn). Ideally, the analytical essay and practical projects will build upon one another. Toward the middle of the quarter, you will write a proposal (for both the analytical essay and practical project) as well as an annotated bibliography of sources you may use. More specific guidelines will be provided both in-class and on WebCT.

Participation: In this course, you will learn as much from your peers as you will from me. Thus, participation is crucial for your own success as well as for the success of the class as a whole. You will be expected to participate in discussions, small group activities, and individual conferences. Try to make at least one comment in discussion every day!

Panel Presentation: You will participate in a PowerPoint panel presentation during the quarter. As part of a panel of your peers, you will raise provocative issues about a course reading (extending and/or critiquing it). Your entire panel will meet with me in advance to plan the presentation. Evaluations will be determined by a rubric (to be posted to WebCT), combining group and individual grades.

WebCT: In order to have access to our class's WebCT discussions and materials, you must activate your OSU email account and obtain your username and password. The course website can be accessed at class.osu.edu. You will submit some of your papers and projects via WebCT. I will also post notes, handouts, assignments, visual texts, and other things via WebCT. It is your responsibility to check WebCT frequently to keep up with the course.

Evaluation

Your final grade for English 367.01 will be based on:

- Analytical Essay: 30%
- Practical Project: 20%
- Reading Responses (on WebCT and in-class): 20%
- Research Proposal and Annotated Bibliography: 10%
- Panel Presentation: 10%
- Participation: 10%

Classroom Policies

1. *Attendance*: Your successful completion of this course and development as a writer is dependent on your active and continual attendance. Thus, each unexcused absence (after two) will result in the lowering of your final grade by one-third. Excused absences with documentation (i.e. illness, family tragedy, religious observance, or inter-collegiate athletics) will not affect your grade. Please note, more than five unexcused absences will automatically result in failure for the course.

2. *Lateness*: Two late arrivals (more than five minutes) will equal one unexcused absence.

3. *Plagiarism*: When you use another person's words or ideas, you must acknowledge that you have done so (we will review definitions of plagiarism in class). At no point in the writing process should words or ideas that are not your own be represented as such. In accordance with university rules, all cases of suspected plagiarism will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct.

4. *Student Work*: I expect that all assignments will be handed in on time. Papers are due at the beginning of class (or by the time and date specified). Any late assignments will be lowered by one letter grade each day it is late. To receive full credit on a paper, you must turn in each assigned draft and you must also attend any mandatory individual conferences or peer response groups. If you do not complete all required drafts or attend all required meetings, your grade will be lowered one letter.

Resources

The OSU Writing Center is a free service that provides professional consultation/tutoring at any stage of the writing process. You may set up an appointment by calling 688-5865 or by dropping by the center at 485 Mendenhall Labs. The writing center provides an incredibly valuable service for all writers (from undergrads to faculty). I encourage you to visit!

The Writing Programs Ombud, Matt Cariello, mediates conflicts between teachers and students in 367 and 110. You can contact him at 292-5778 or cariello.1@osu.edu. His walk-in hours for the Fall 2003 quarter are in Denney Hall 533 on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday 11.30-3.30; other times are available by appointment. All conversations with the Ombud are strictly confidential.

The Office for Disability Services, located in 150 Pomerene Hall, offers services for students with documented disabilities. Any student who feels he or she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. You can contact ODS at 2-3307.

Daily Schedule

W (9/24): Introduction to the Course

Reading: Syllabus

M (9/29): Rags To Riches: Analyzing Narratives of Work

Reading: Ragged Dick, Alger 1-66
WA 24-27, 37-41

Writing: Reading Response (WebCT)

W (10/1): American Success Stories: Exploring Multiple Interpretations

Reading: Ragged Dick, Alger 67-120
WA, 30-32, 42-52.

Writing: Reading Response (WebCT)

M (10/6): Living the American Dream: Representations and Silences

Reading: Ragged Dick, Alger 121-186.
CP, "Panopticism," Foucault (selection)
WA 53-59

Writing: Reading Response (WebCT)

W (10/8): American Dreams Deferred: Revising Narratives of Success

Reading: CP, "Selling in Minnesota," Ehrenreich

Writing: Reading Response (WebCT)

Speaking: Panel Presentation #1

M (10/13): Rewriting Capitalism in the "Knowledge Economy"

Reading: CP, "From Capitalism to Knowledge Society," Drucker
CP, "Communist Manifesto," Marx (selection)
WA 60-67

Writing: Reading Response (WebCT)

Speaking: Panel Presentation #2

W (10/15): Branding I: Marketing Subjectivities

Reading: "The Brand You 50", Peters (selections TBA)

CP, "New Branded World" Klein
WA 87-89

Speaking: Panel Presentation # 3

Writing: Reading Response (WebCT)

M (10/20): Developing a Thesis and Using Evidence

Reading: WA 78-87, 121-129

Writing: Invention Activity (in-Class)

W (10/22): Researching

Reading: WA 141-149, 163-184.

Writing: Research Proposal Draft (posted to WebCT before class)

M (10/27): Branding II: What kind of a brand are you?

Reading: "The Brand You 50," Peters (selections TBA)

Writing: Reading Response (WebCT)

W (10/29): Satirizing the Knowledge Economy

Viewing: Office Space (in class)

Writing: Viewing Response (in class)

Due: Annotated Bibliography

M (11/3): Analyzing Management Discourses

Reading: CP, "Fast Capitalism: Theory and Practice," Gee, Hull, and Lankshear

Writing: Reading Response (WebCT)

Speaking: Panel Presentation #4

W (11/5): Style

Reading: WA 227-231, 234-237

Writing: Revising Activity (in-class)

Due: 1st Draft of Analytical Essay

M (11/10): Individual Conferences

Mandatory Individual Conferences with Jason

W (11/12): Revising

Reading: WA 191-206

Writing: Revising activity (in-class)

M (11/17): Globalization Comes Home

Viewing: Bread and Roses (in-class)

Writing: Viewing Response (in-class)

Due: 2nd Draft of Analytical Essay

W (11/19): Pathos, Logos, and Reportage

Reading: CP, “The Most Dangerous Job,” Schlosser
Writing: Reading Response (WebCT)
Speaking: Panel Presentation 5

M (11/24): Representing Labor Movements

Reading: CP, “Holding up Half the Sky: Chinese Immigrant Women Workers,” Louie (selection)
Writing: Reading Response (in-class)
Due: Draft of Practical Project

W (11/26): Class cancelled (Happy Thanksgiving!)

M (12/1): Peer Response on Practical Projects

Reading: Your peer’s practical projects
Writing: Peer Response

W (12/3): Final Reflections

Writing: Final Draft of Analytical Essay

M (12/3): Practical Project due by 5PM