

ENG 615: Seminar in Composition Theory: Collaboration

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Section 1: Macomb: Tuesday, 5:30–8:00pm

Section Q1: Quad Cities: Thursday, 5:30–8:00pm

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Course goals

For quite some time, collaborative learning has been one of the tools I use in every class I teach—from first-year composition to graduate courses like this one. In the hopes of better understanding collaboration, as well as improving my motivations of it in the classroom and my own work, I have researched collaborative learning extensively. This semester, I hope to share my enthusiasm for collaboration with you as we consider its role in composition and English studies.

In this seminar course, we'll study the theory and practice of collaborative learning and collaboration, focusing on applications relevant for composition and rhetoric, but considering larger issues such as associated discursive and epistemological theory. As a group, we will read selections from many of the writers who have shaped collaborative learning practices, supplementing those readings with other research and our experiences with collaboration and collaborative learning. We will consider any type of collaboration which seems relevant to our investigations—from classroom consensus groups, to rules which govern pickup football games, to sharing iTunes playlists online.

As we build a common base of knowledge and experience, we'll engage quite a bit of collaborative work ourselves, trying out some of the in-class activities and electronically mediated collaborations described in our text. I'll encourage those of you who are teaching to try the collaborative learning models described in our texts in your classes, so we can discuss the results (more of my desire to integrate theory and practice). We'll use a variety of online software, including my experimental courseware server, for our computer-supported collaborative work. I hope that we'll be able to connect our two sections through the use of these electronic tools.

Texts

- Kenneth Bruffee, *Collaborative Learning: Higher Education, Interdependence, and the Authority of Knowledge* 2/e (Johns Hopkins UP, 1999).
- James Inman, Cheryl Reed, and Peter Sands (editors), *Electronic Collaboration in the Humanities* 1/e (Erlbaum, 2004).
- Course pack, including essays from John Trimbur, Greg Myers, and others (from QuickPrinters in Macomb; TBA in the Quad Cities).

Requirements

By far, **active participation in every facet of the class** is the most important contribution I expect from all of you. This participation begins with serious and careful engagement with our course texts—reading each of them carefully, taking notes, and considering their relationship to other texts we have read, as well as relevant composition theory from other sources. In class, I expect you to share your thoughts about our texts and any connections you see with your academic and professional experiences with collaboration. A good faith effort from every student will ensure we have vigorous, rewarding class discussions and activities.

To further stimulate our discussions, I will ask that **students introduce our readings** at least twice during the semester. Working individually or in a small team, you will give a brief introduction to the readings (10–15 minutes), naming the central themes, problematics, and issues you find relevant for discussion. Because I'd like to see a variety of approaches to these introductions, I'm not going to prescribe a format here; instead, we'll discuss the possibilities in class. Plan to consult me for assistance if you are nervous about this; I can provide feedback on your ideas, help you with any difficulties, supply suggestions for additional readings, or just discuss the readings with you. I will distribute a schedule for these introductions next week, after course enrollment is finalized.

Finally, each of you will produce a **semester project** which accomplishes most, if not all, of the following: (1) examines one or more of the issues we frequently discussed during the semester; (2) shows your engagement with the course texts; (3) connects course readings to other primary and secondary texts; and (4) provides you with opportunities to share your work with other scholars interested in collaboration. The final project will be due May 12, 2005.

Formal guidelines for this project are limited; you should complete a critical work that best meets your long-term research needs. Here are three possibilities: (1) work toward a thesis: an annotated bibliography, a prospectus, and 15–20pp of finished analysis; (2) two short essays, 10–15pp in length, which engage the course content; or (3) a traditional seminar paper: a critical research project 25–30pp in length. I strongly encourage you to present your semester project, in whole or in part, at an academic conference—in fact, in class, we will have a “mini-conference” where we present talks based on our projects. We'll discuss the semester project in depth in the second week of class.

Policies

Because I expect everyone to devote a substantial amount of energy to every part of the course, I don't think extensive statements of policies regarding attendance, class participation, and expected behaviors are necessary. Graduate seminars are collective endeavors, and I hope everyone will enrich our shared experience with a sustained intellectual effort. Additionally, because this course is as much yours as it is mine, I've planned our course to allow you to make suggestions about activities, readings, and schedules throughout the semester.

Grades will be determined by the following point system:

<i>assignment</i>	<i>points</i>	<i>range</i>	<i>grade</i>
Class participation	200	900-1000	A
Reading introductions	100	800-899	B
Final project	700	700-799	C
Total	1000		

Please make every effort to turn in assignments on time. If you expect to need more time to complete an assignment, please discuss that with me. Also, though I prefer not to give “incomplete” grades, I will do so to benefit your studies on the long term. Again, you must ask in advance.

I will be setting up a class email list to use for announcements (e. g. in case of bad weather) and, if we think it would be useful, for discussion. These lists will be hosted on a server I maintain (wrecking.org) since its software is more robust than that offered by WIU. Links for the web interface for the email list (where you can view archives, change your list settings, etc.) are on the course web site.

WIU brings you the following announcements

In accordance with University policy and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), academic accommodations may be made for any student who notifies the instructor of the need for an accommodation. It is imperative that you take the initiative to bring such needs to the instructor’s attention, as he/she is not legally permitted to inquire about such particular needs of students. Students who may require special assistance in emergency evacuations (i. e. fire, tornado, etc.) should contact the instructor as to the most appropriate procedures to follow in such an emergency. Contact Disability Support Services at 309.298.2515 for additional services.

It is the responsibility of the student to comply with the prerequisites/corequisites for a course that he/she plans to take. Instructors who place the appropriate information on the syllabus and emphasize it during the first three class periods may exclude a student from the class who does not meet the prerequisites/corequisites by sending a note to the student with a copy to the registrar within the first two weeks of the term.

Schedule

Please see the course web site for an up-to-date schedule. I'll announce any changes in class as well.

<i>wk</i>	<i>dates</i>	<i>readings</i>	<i>activities</i>
1	Jan 18 or 20	Gamson, "Collaborative Learning Comes of Age" (in class)	Course introduction
2	Jan 25 or 27	McKeachie, "Active Learning: Cooperative, Collaborative..." Goggin, "Collaboration" Bruffee, "Collaborative Learning..." and "Social Construction..."	
3	Feb 1 or 3	Lencioni, "Introduction" and "An Overview of the Model" Maxwell, Table of Contents Bruffee, <i>Collaborative Learning</i> Ch. 1–5 (up to p 92)	Intro: Group A
4	Feb 8 or 10	Bruffee, <i>Collaborative Learning</i> Ch. 6, 8–9 (pp 93–110, 133–164) Petralgia, "Interrupting the Conversation..."	Intro: Group B
5	Feb 15 or 17	Myers, "Reality, Consensus, and Reform..." Trimbur, "Consensus and Difference in Collaborative Learning" Tarule, "Voices in Dialogue..."	Intro: Group C
6	Feb 22 or 24	Bruffee, <i>Collaborative Learning</i> Ch. 10–11 (pp 165–195) Schlegel & Pace, "Using Collaborative Learning Teams..." Daniels & Walker, "The Essence of Collaborative Learning"	Intro: Group D
7	Mar 1 or 3	Bruffee, <i>Collaborative Learning</i> Ch. 7 (pp 111–130) Inman <i>et al.</i> , <i>Electronic Collaboration</i> Part I (up to p 88)	Intro: Group E
8	Mar 8 or 10	Review of selected texts; specifics TBD	Intro: Group F Midterm course evaluations
SB	Mar 14–18	None	None
9	Mar 22 or 24	Bruffee, <i>Collaborative Learning</i> Ch. 12–15 (pp 196–end) Wiener, "Collaborative Learning in the Classroom..."	Intro: Group G Project prospectus due
10	Mar 29 or 31	Inman <i>et al.</i> , <i>Electronic Collaboration</i> Part II (p 91–209)	Intro: Group H
11	Apr 5 or 7	Inman <i>et al.</i> , <i>Electronic Collaboration</i> Part III (p 213–281)	Intro: Group I
12	Apr 12 or 14	Inman <i>et al.</i> , <i>Electronic Collaboration</i> Part IV (p 285–end)	Intro: Group J
13	Apr 19 or 21	None	Project workshop
14	Apr 26 or 28	Review of selected texts; specifics TBD	Intro: Group K
15	May 3 or 5	None	Mini-conference Final course evaluations
EX	May 9–13	None	Final project due 5/12