

RHETORIC, WRITING, & EMERGING MEDIA

ENG 431 | section 001

MWF 10–10:50am | Robert Bell 291



Dr. Allison Hitt
she/her/hers



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office hours Tuesdays 12-2pm (Zoom)

by appt MWTh 1-4pm (calendly.com/allisonhitt)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

BSU course catalog: Emphasizes and explores theories and practices of networked writing activity inherent in emerging media platforms and applications. This course has an applied focus, such that students will produce professional and public content for the Web, including a professional portfolio. Prereq: ENG 231

From Dr. Allison:

ENG 431 combines and extends the ideas and approaches of both ENG 213 (Digital Literacies) and ENG 231 (Professional Writing) with a specific focus on producing professional writing within digital contexts.

Students will explore rhetorical theory and practice in networked environments; analyze the infrastructures of online writing (including usability issues, metadata; content delivery, and information architecture); develop accessibility guidelines for digital texts; and produce public, professional content in and for digital environments that is both *ethical* and *accessible*. At the end of the course, students will create a digital portfolio that showcases their work as Professional Writing and Emerging Media minors and/or Rhetoric and Writing majors.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

Horton, Sarah, and Whitney Quesenbery. ***A Web for Everyone: Designing Accessible User Experiences.*** Rosenfeld Media, 2013. 978-1933820972.

Most of the work of this course will be run asynchronously through Canvas, which you will need to check regularly to access weekly modules, assignments, additional readings, the course calendar, and class notes.

woman with face mask icon: becris at flaticon.com
hand holding smart phone icon: freepik at flaticon.com



LEARNING OUTCOMES

In ENG 431, students will do the following:

- Explore digital rhetorical theory and approaches to writing in digital environments
- Analyze and practice web writing conventions, such as writing for clarity, using plain language, chunking information, and providing appropriate attribution to digital content
- Analyze and practice web design conventions, such as designing for clarity, adhering to design principles, and incorporating accessible media elements
- Explore rhetorical infrastructures of online writing, such as information architecture, metadata and algorithms, content strategy and delivery, and accessibility and usability issues
- Conduct accessibility audits, usability testing, and website inspection reports to evaluate digital interfaces, such as websites and mobile apps
- Use a range of professional writing and design technologies
- Work collaboratively in teams to problem-solve writing and design issues
- Represent themselves, their rhetorical and technical knowledge gained from the major or minor, and the technical writing and design skills they have developed through a professional portfolio

ASSIGNMENTS

1. **Content Strategy Analysis (100 pts)**

For the first project, you will identify an organization and observe the content they write across digital platforms. Then, you will write an analysis of their rhetorical strategies, online writing conventions, and practices for circulating information and engaging different audiences. Deliverable: 4–5-page analysis

2. **Accessible User Experience (200 pts)**

We will read about web accessibility guidelines and develop protocols that can be used to evaluate both the content and design of digital texts. You will first create a protocol for assessing the accessibility of a website or mobile app, then conduct an accessibility audit of a social media platform. You will present your results in a 2-page report. Deliverables: assessment protocol, 2-page report

3. **Collaborative Usability Testing (250 pts)**

Understanding how users use websites is critical to designing your own digital texts. You will work in teams to evaluate the website or mobile app of a professional organization. Your team will conduct a web inspection report based on accessibility best practices, conduct usability testing on the interface, and write a recommendation report that synthesizes the data you collected and makes a recommendation for improvement. Full results of the web accessibility inspection and usability testing will be included as appendices to the report.

Deliverables: 4-5-page recommendation report, web report, usability test results

4. Portfolio (200 pts)

For the final project, you will create a digital portfolio that demonstrates the knowledge and skills that you have developed from your classes in the Professional Writing and Emerging Media minor or Rhetoric and Writing major. Portfolios will include a statement of educational and professional experiences, a résumé, and at least three documents that are representative of your knowledge and work. All portfolios must be curated and organized thoughtfully, accessible, and usable. You are welcome to use any platform to design your portfolio. Deliverables: portfolio, 500-word (max) reflection.

5. Emerging Media Profile (50 pts)

Once this semester, you will create a media profile of an informal or formal communication platform, collaborative writing tool, or design program. You can choose from a list or select your own. Media profiles will include a 5-minute overview of the technology and how it could be used in a professional setting. You will use screensharing or presentation software to create your media profile and submit it to a shared discussion board.

6. Reading Discussions (50 pts)

I will create a discussion board each week with a few prompting questions about the readings. For each weekly discussion, you need to either create or respond to one post with a comment, question, or relevant example.

EXTRA CREDIT: Take class notes (5 pts/day) for up to 25 points. Take reading notes (5 pts/reading) for up to 25 points. Post resources about mental health and academic success to the discussion board (5 pts/post) for up to 15 points. **30 points max**

EVALUATION CRITERIA

For each project, you will be assessed on your rhetorical choices: audience awareness, genre conventions, organization, accessible style, effective delivery, and persuasive rhetorical strategies. Each assignment will be accompanied by its own specific instructions and evaluation criteria.

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
93-100%	90-92%	87-89%	83-86%	80-82%	77-79%	73-76%	70-72%	67-69%	63-66%	60-62%	59% & below
788-850	736-787	737-762	703-736	678-702	652-677	610-651	593-609	567-592	534-558	510-533	509 & below



I will provide written feedback on each major assignment that you submit. Please read that feedback carefully prior to emailing me about your grade.

COURSE POLICIES

Accessibility

I am committed to creating a classroom environment that is respectful of and inclusive to different learning and writing processes—whether that is in person or through Canvas. All the multimodal materials I share will be made accessible: videos will be captioned, audio will have transcripts, and images will be described. If we can work together to make the class more accessible, let me know.

Canvas Accessibility

Canvas provides a user experience that is easy, simple, and intuitive. Special attention has been paid to making Canvas screen-readable. The Rich Content Editor encourages users to create accessible content pages, e.g., text formatting is accomplished using styles. Canvas is designed to allow limited customization of colors and schemes to be accessible for all users. Find more information by visiting the Canvas Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT): <https://www.instructure.com/canvas/accessibility>

Zoom Accessibility

Zoom has a number of user-tested accessibility features, such as closed captioning, automatic transcripts, keyboard accessibility, and screen reader support. You can email access@zoom.us for additional support, open a support ticket at support.zoom.us, and read more about Zoom's accessibility features by visiting their accessibility page: <https://zoom.us/accessibility/faq>

Accommodations

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please contact me as soon as possible. Ball State's Disability Services office coordinates services for students with disabilities; documentation of a disability needs to be on file in that office before any accommodations can be provided. Disability Services can be contacted at 765-285-5293 or dsd@bsu.edu.

Attendance

I will take attendance this semester for contact tracing purposes only, i.e., to make sure that we stay adequately safe if someone in class gets sick. Because you will only come to class once a week, I hope you will be able to attend. Now more than ever, use good judgment about coming to class if you are sick. Set boundaries with yourself about your physical and mental health. If you can, let me know about your absence prior to class; otherwise, follow up with me through email.

Basic Needs Security

Anyone who lacks access to sufficient food to eat or a safe and stable place to live and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Dean of

Students for support: <http://www.bsu.edu/about/administrativeoffices/dean-of-students>. If you are comfortable in doing so, let me know and I will direct you to appropriate resources. For example, Cardinal Kitchen is the campus food pantry, which is available for use to all undergraduate and graduate students.

COVID-19 Safety

Everyone on campus is required to wear a face mask while inside campus buildings. If you forget to bring a mask, you can grab one from the Cardinal Copy mask stand (RB 160). If you choose not to wear a mask during class (or refuse to wear a mask in a way that complies with CDC guidance), you will be asked to leave. We will also practice social distancing in the classroom, and there will *not* be a point this semester where we are all in the classroom at the same time (details about what day of class you will attend are available on Canvas). These safety guidelines are nonnegotiable: I care about my students' health, my health, and my family's health.

Diversity & Inclusion

Ball State University aspires to be a university that attracts and retains a diverse faculty, staff, and student body. We are committed to ensuring that all members of the community are welcome, through valuing the various experiences and worldviews represented at Ball State and among those we serve. We promote a culture of respect and civil discourse as expressed in our Beneficence Pledge and through university resources that you can access through The Multicultural Center's website:

<https://www.bsu.edu/campuslife/multicultural-center/resources>

Late Work

Assignments are due by the time specified on Canvas. However, we are in the middle of a *pandemic*, and there's a good chance that at some point (or at many points) throughout the semester, you will need some extra help. You can request a one-week extension for any assignment (excluding the final project) by emailing me: ahhitt@bsu.edu. If you get sick this semester, we will work together to come up with a catch-up plan.

Respect

With COVID, social unrest, and a volatile political climate, we are all on edge right now. It's difficult not to bring those feelings into the classroom, but I ask you to be respectful and remain open to ideas and perspectives that challenge your own. I expect you to be respectful when participating in class discussions, interacting with me in class and through email, and working with your peers. *You do not have to agree with someone to treat them, their ideas, and their work respectfully.*

Technology

Technology is integral to the writing process, and we will be using different technologies this semester to complete work and communicate.

In-Class Technology Usage

On the days we meet on campus, you are welcome to bring a laptop, tablet, or smartphone to class for taking notes and completing in-class writing exercises if you prefer. I expect you to be responsible with your technology use. You are welcome to wear headphones during individual work but not during lectures or group work. If you need to take a phone call, please step outside to take the call. If I ask you repeatedly to stop doing something on your phone or your technology use becomes distracting to others, you will be asked to put it away.

Canvas and Online Communications

You will use Canvas to submit work, access calendars and each week's module, download assignment prompts and readings, and contribute to the class notes. I expect you to check your BSU email daily and to respond within 24 hours during the work week, just as you will expect me to do. All email messages to me regarding this class should include the course number in the subject line and should be respectful and professional. If your message is *urgent*, please note that in the subject line.

Title IX

Consistent with the University's Notice of Nondiscrimination and in accordance with the U.S. Department of Education's implementing regulations for Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 ("Title IX"), Ball State University prohibits sexual harassment that occurs within its education programs and activities. This prohibition extends to all applicants for admission or employment and to *all students (any status) and all employees (any status)*. An individual who is found to have committed sexual harassment in violation of this policy is subject to the full range of University discipline, up to and including termination of employment or expulsion. The University will provide persons who have experienced sexual harassment with ongoing remedies as reasonably necessary to restore or preserve access to the University's education program and activities.

Inquiries concerning the specific application of Title IX at Ball State should be directed to Ms. Katie Slabaugh, Associate Dean of Students/Title IX Coordinator in the Frank A. Bracken Administration Building, room 238, 765-285-1545, kslabaugh@bsu.edu. Persons can also contact the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, Washington, D.C. 20202-1328, 1-800-421-3481, ocr@ed.gov.

Writing Center

All writers improve with practice and feedback, so as a student in this course, you are encouraged to use the Writing Center at Ball State (Robert Bell 295) to get additional feedback on your writing. To schedule a free appointment to discuss your writing, go to www.bsu.edu/writingcenter. Appointments are available seven days a week; however, plan ahead because appointments book quickly. *For health and safety: all writing center appointments will be online for Fall 2020.*

COURSE CALENDAR

Although you will attend class once a week, most of this class will run asynchronously. It is organized by what you need to complete *each week* rather than what you need to complete for the following class period. Every Monday, I will post a module with the work that you need to complete that week (indicated in the left column in the table below), and assignments are due by the end of the day on Sunday (11:59pm EST), unless otherwise specified (indicated in the right column).

With the many unknowns of this semester, it's possible that our schedule will change. You will receive an updated calendar if that's the case.

WEEK 1 - DIGITAL RHETORIC	
Introduction to course, each other, and digital rhetoric Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PDF: "Defining and Locating Digital Rhetoric" (Eyman) 	Due Sunday: discussion board post
WEEK 2 - INTERFACES	
Digital interfaces and interfacing with technologies Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PDF: "Interface" (Brooke) PDF: "Indigenous Interfaces" (Arola) 	Due Sunday: discussion board post
WEEK 3 - ALGORITHMS	
Writing for/against algorithms Read excerpts from <i>Algorithms of Oppression</i> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PDF: "A Society, Searching" PDF: "Searching for Protections from Search Engines" 	Due Sunday: discussion board post

WEEK 4 – DEFINING CONTENT STRATEGY	
<p>Introduction to Project 1</p> <p>Read <i>The Elements of Content Strategy</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Basic Principles” http://elements-of-content-strategy.abookapart.com/03-chapter-1/ • “The Craft of Content Strategy” http://elements-of-content-strategy.abookapart.com/04-chapter-2/ • “Tools and Techniques” http://elements-of-content-strategy.abookapart.com/05-chapter-3/ 	<p>Due Sunday: discussion board post</p>
WEEK 5 – ANALYZING CONTENT STRATEGY	
<p>Analyzing social media content</p> <p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDF: “Content Strategy: More Than Words” (Unger & Chandler) • PDF: “Delighted to Death” (Wachter-Boettcher) 	<p>Due Sunday: Project 1 (Content Strategy Analysis)</p>
WEEK 6 – INTRODUCTION TO ACCESSIBILITY	
<p>Introduction to Project 2 and web accessibility</p> <p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 1 “A Web for Everyone” • Chapter 2 “People First” • Chapter 3 “Clear Purpose: Well-Defined Goals” • Chapter 4 “Solid Structure: Built to Standards” 	<p>Due Sunday: discussion board post</p>
WEEK 7 – ACCESSIBLE USER EXPERIENCES	
<p>Accessible writing, design, and media</p>	<p>Due by noon Friday: discussion board post</p>

<p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 7 “Clean Presentation: Supports Meaning” • Chapter 8 “Plain Language” • PDF: “Inclusivity and Accessibility: Writing That Works for Everyone” (Metts & Welfle) 	<p>Due Sunday: accessibility checklist</p>
<p>WEEK 8 - ACCESSIBILITY AUDIT</p>	
<p>Conducting and reporting on accessibility audits</p>	<p>Due Sunday: Project 2 (Accessible User Experiences)</p>
<p>WEEK 9 - INTRODUCTION TO USABILITY</p>	
<p>Introduction to Project 3, usability, and working collaboratively</p> <p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 5 “Easy Interaction: Everything Works” • Chapter 6 “Helpful Wayfinding: Guides Users” • PDF: “Don’t Make Me Think!: Krug’s First Law of Usability” 	<p>Due Sunday: discussion board post, team norms emailed to ahhitt@bsu.edu</p>
<p>WEEK 10 - WEBSITE INSPECTION</p>	
<p>Creating website inspection checklists, conducting web inspection, and synthesizing results</p>	<p>Due Sunday: website inspection report</p>
<p>WEEK 11 - USABILITY TESTING</p>	
<p>Creating guidelines; begin conducting team usability testing</p> <p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDF: “Usability Testing on 10 Cents a Day” 	<p>Due Sunday: usability testing guidelines</p>

WEEK 12 – WIREFRAMES & PROTOTYPING	
<p>Finish conducting team usability testing</p> <p>Introduction to wireframes, annotations, and prototypes</p> <p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PDF: “Wireframe and Annotations” (Unger & Chandler) 	<p>Due Sunday: usability testing results</p>
WEEK 13 – RECOMMENDATION REPORTS	
<p>Team conferences</p> <p>Drafting the recommendation report: purpose, methods, recommendations, wireframes</p>	<p>Due by noon Wednesday: draft</p> <p>Due Sunday: Project 3 (Collaborative Usability Testing)</p>
WEEK 14 – THANKSGIVING	
<p>No Classes – Eat. Sleep. Rest.</p>	
WEEK 15 – PORTFOLIO CONTENT	
<p>Reflecting on the PW minor</p> <p>Showcasing rhetorical knowledge and digital ability: Adobe Spark, Wix, WordPress, Squarespace, InDesign</p> <p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 9 “Accessible Media: Supports All Senses” 	<p>Due Sunday: résumé, discussion board post</p>
WEEK 16 – PORTFOLIO DESIGN	
<p>Portfolio design feedback and revisions</p> <p>Course evaluations</p>	

WEEK 17 – FINALS WEEK

The final examination period for this class is Wednesday, Dec. 16 from 9:45–11:45am, so you need to **submit your Project 4 Portfolios to Canvas by 11:45am.**