

WRT 105 Syllabus

Justice Without Borders: Writing about Ethics in a Globalized World

Class Location: Rush Rhees G108

Class Hours: TR 3:25-4:40

Instructor: Matthew Baddorf

**Office Location:** Rush Rhees 304F

(First office on the left as you enter the Writing, Speaking, and Argument area on the third floor of the library)

Office Hours: Tuesdays 11-1

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## I. Course Description

If you passed a drowning child to save \$50, you would be considered a moral monster. Are you any better if, instead, you fail to donate money for famine relief in another country? Famed ethicist Peter Singer has argued that nearly everyone in developed countries has an obligation to give almost all their income away. In this class, we will contribute to disputes about global ethics in order to learn skills for effective academic writing. Are sweatshops always immoral? What moral problems stem from climate change? And was Singer right? We will address questions like these by learning from the works of contemporary ethicists and economists (such as Singer's "Famine, Affluence, and Morality", and the video "The Story of Stuff"), and through critical, argumentative writing. Our writing skills and moral judgment will be honed through class discussion and peer review, and you will develop your thinking through in-class writing assignments, essays, self-assessment, draft revision, and an 8-10 page research paper.

## II. Course Policies

### **Textbook:**

You will need a copy of *They Say, I Say*, by Graff and Birkenstein, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. It is available at the bookstore and innumerable places online.

### **Revising and Multiple Drafts:**

Revision is key to good writing. Therefore, all of your formal assignments will involve two drafts, only the latter of which will be graded. You should take advantage of the comments you receive on your first draft (by me and your peers) to create a better paper.

Revision goes beyond mere proof-reading; it often includes major changes in tone, organization, and argumentation. My own essays have been immeasurably improved by reader feedback worked out over the course of several drafts (even

this syllabus went through this process). We do not know whether our writing has accomplished what we intended until readers tell us, and every revision makes our thinking clearer and our writing sharper. If there is one skill I hope you will take from this class, it is the ability to receive feedback and effectively rewrite.

Please note that your first drafts need to be complete, and readable. But they need not have the “polish” of a final product; instead, focus on presenting your ideas in a way that enables others to give you effective feedback.

### **Late Work and Extensions:**

Please make every effort to turn your work in on time; typically, it is better to turn something that isn't quite where you want it in on time, rather than waiting and turning it in late. Catching up on old work while new work comes in is difficult, and by turning in work late you may prevent yourself from benefiting from peer review. Furthermore, you would be surprised at the amount of stress late work adds to your instructor.

**Informal Assignments:** Late informal assignments will be penalized; a check-plus will become a check, and a check will become a check-minus. (“Late” means either more than five minutes after the time they are due (for assignments due outside of class time) or more than five minutes after the start of class (for assignments due at the start of class).) In addition, **no informal assignments will be accepted more than two weeks after they are due.**

**Formal Papers:** Formal assignments will be penalized one-third of a letter grade per 48 hours late. (Again, “late” means more than five minutes after the time it is due.) So from 1-47 hours an A would become an A-, an A- a B+, etc.) This applies to all drafts, not just the final one; however, in cases where both drafts of a paper are late, only the larger of the two late penalties will be applied. So if you turn in your first draft 1 day late, you lose one-third of a letter grade. If you turn in your first draft 1 day late, and your second draft three days late, you only lose two-thirds of a letter grade (the larger of the two penalties). In all cases, Sundays and University holidays will not count for purposes of assessing late penalties.

**Extensions:** If you need to turn in work late (formal or informal) because of an illness or family emergency, then you may ask for an extension. Normally, these will only be granted before the assignment is due, and I reserve the right to ask for a doctor's note or other verification. Please contact me as early as you can, and I will try to make an arrangement that best enables you to continue learning.

I will return your work promptly—within one week of my receiving it. In the unlikely event that I ever fail to do so, I will compensate the class by giving you an extension on your next formal assignment.

## **Working In Community: Or, We're Here to Help**

Successful academic writing requires initiation into an academic community. Fortunately, you have a large community available to help you find your way. You will do your best work when you get help, so get your tuition's worth and make use of them!

### **Your Instructor:**

Please come by during my office hours some time (or make an appointment). I am happy to help you work through your thoughts, or to explain something you didn't understand in class or a reading. **Please know that this classroom respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds and abilities, and that I invite you to talk with me about any concern or situation that affects your ability to complete your academic work successfully.**

### **Your Librarian (Eileen Daly):**

Eileen is a fount of helpful advice about research strategies, and helping people is her favorite part of her job. She can help you navigate the library, find sources, and understand how to use them. She is very happy to meet with you in person or communicate via email, at: [edaly@library.rochester.edu](mailto:edaly@library.rochester.edu)

### **The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning:**

CETL is a general source for help developing more effective strategies for tackling academic work, and I'd encourage you to look into the services they offer. You can set up a one-time meeting or get regular support. Here is the way they describe themselves:

CETL is a resource available to all students in the College. All kinds of students with all kinds of GPAs and academic records make use of our programs. We work with strong students who wish to become even better, as well as with students who have not yet tapped into the strategies needed to succeed in college, and everyone in between. We offer an extensive study group and Workshop program, individual study skills counseling, study skills workshops and a study skills course, and disability support. We are located in 1-154 Dewey Hall on the River Campus. To make an appointment or to learn more, stop by our offices, call us at (585) 275-9049, or send an email: [cetl@rochester.edu](mailto:cetl@rochester.edu).

### **Writing and Speaking Center:**

The Writing and Speaking Center, located in the library on the tunnels level, is a great place to get help with a paper or presentation. Here is their self-description:

*At the University of Rochester, we are all writers. And every writer needs a reader. The College Writing Center is a place where you can find readers who can provide critical feedback at any stage of the writing process, from brainstorming for a topic to polishing a final draft. To learn more about the College Writing Center services and/or to find a tutor, please visit <http://writing.rochester.edu>*

I cannot stress enough how important it is to get feedback about your writing from as many sources as possible. As you advance in your academic career, finding people who can give you good feedback will continue to be important. So I urge you to use the Writing and Speaking Center. I do so myself. In fact, I consider it so important that you can **earn extra credit just by going**. Any student who attends a tutoring session will receive a bonus to their participation score equal to %1 of the maximum final grade. (In other words, there is about a 1 in 3 chance that your *semester* grade will improve if you go to the writing center—a good deal for an hour of your time.) You can only take advantage of this once.

### **Academic Honesty:**

Respectful speaking in an academic context involves telling your listener (that is, your reader) whose voices you have relied on. Plagiarism misleads your listener about this, which silences and marginalizes the voices that impacted your thinking. (And as we will discuss, marginalizing others in the context of global ethics often leads to mistreating them.) It also disrespects your listener by preventing them from using the sources you have found to build on your work. The rule against plagiarism is not arbitrary; it reflects the way our community seeks to respect those who spoke before us, and those who will speak afterwards. So please work hard to abide by it and internalize it.

Here is the college's statement on academic honesty and plagiarism:

*As members of an academic community, students and faculty assume certain responsibilities, one of which is to engage in honest communication. Academic dishonesty is a serious violation of the trust upon which an academic community depends. A common form of academic dishonesty is plagiarism: the representation of another person's work as one's own, or the attempt "to blur the line between one's own ideas or words and those borrowed from another source" (Council of Writing Program Administrators, January 2003, <http://wpacouncil.org/node/9>). More specifically, plagiarism is the use of an idea, phrase, or other materials from a written or spoken source without acknowledgment in a work for which the student claims authorship.*

*Examples include: the misrepresentation of sources used in a work for which the student claims authorship; the improper use of course materials in a work for which the student claims authorship; the use of papers purchased online and turned in as one's own work; submission of written work such as laboratory reports, computer programs, or papers,*

*which have been copied from the work of other students, with or without their knowledge and consent.*

*A student can avoid the risk of plagiarism in written work or oral presentations by clearly indicating, either in footnotes or in the paper or presentation itself, the source of any idea or wording that he or she did not produce. Sources must be given regardless of whether the idea, phrase or other material is quoted directly, paraphrased or summarized in the student-writer's own words.*

*In all cases of suspected plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty, the College's procedures and policies governing academic honesty will be followed. This pertains to all work in writing courses, including (but not limited to) rough drafts, final drafts, presentations, and informal writing assignments. As required by College policy, all instances of academic dishonesty are reported to the College Board of Academic Honesty. For the complete College honesty policy, see <http://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty/index>.*

*In cases where academic dishonesty has been established, the typical penalties for a first event in a WSAP course are as follows. In cases of particularly egregious dishonest behavior, the penalty may be more severe.*

- *For informal assignments: the work fails to meet assignment criteria and earns no credit (which, according to the syllabus, may or may not affect course grade); the penalty is a 1/3-letter-grade reduction in the final course grade.*
- *For rough drafts of formal papers: the student may write a new draft for a final paper grade; the penalty is a 1/3-letter-grade reduction in the final course grade.*
- *For a final draft of a formal paper or presentation other than the 8-10-page argumentative research paper: the work fails to meet assignment criteria and earns a 0.*
- *For the 8-10-page argumentative research paper: The paper earns a 0, and the course grade may not be higher than C-.*

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As an additional reminder: the academic honesty policy applies to informal writing and all drafts of a paper (not just the final draft). All of the drafts you turn in to your peer reviewers or me are academic products addressed to fellow members of your academic community, and so the rules of the academic community apply.

### III. Assignments, Grades, and Schedule

This course is designed to teach you to write within an academic community, and the assignments reflect this goal. The majority of your grade will be determined by the final grades on four formal papers. The remainder will be based on informal writing assignments, class participation, and your diligent engagement in peer review.

#### Readings:

We will read authors writing about global ethics, as well as authors discussing principles and strategies for academic writing. Whatever we read, come to class prepared to discuss both the content of the reading and the way in which that content was successfully/unsuccessfully conveyed. Do the readings on time; your ability to participate in class and peer review, and to successfully perform peer reviews, informal writing assignments, and formal papers will depend in large part on whether you have done the readings on time.

#### Class Participation, Peer Review, and Informal Writing:

Your participation is quite important to the success of this class, and you will get a participation grade.

Throughout the semester, you will be reading and discussing both course readings and each other's work. You can get participation points by prompt attendance (including days when papers are due, and peer review days), and by participating in in-class writing exercises. The best way to earn participation points, however, is by thoughtfully responding to the reading in class. This does not mean that you need to do a lot of talking. Asking questions about things you did not understand—either in the reading, or things someone else in the class said—demonstrate your engagement better than mere chattiness. (*They Say, I Say* chapter 11 has good advice about how to participate in a class discussion.) You will also give two brief presentations which will contribute to your participation grade—one in which you lead class discussion for a day, and one in which you present your individual research for your research paper. I am always happy to discuss your participation with you, and to help you find ways to contribute that you are comfortable with.

In this class, peer review will happen both in class and between classes. You will participate in a peer review session for each formal paper. Trust me: peer review can help everyone involved a great deal. So put effort into learning how to do it well.

In addition to your formal papers, you will do informal writing throughout the semester. Some of this will be free-writing plans, notes, and outlines for your

formal assignments, which I won't see. Other informal writing assignments will be turned in, such as self-assessments and exercises. One important form of informal paper will be short (1-2 page, double-spaced) responses to your readings. You need to write **5 of these**, and they are due **two hours before the class** in which we discuss the reading you are responding to. (Plan to write most of these during the first half of the semester, as there will be fewer readings to respond to in the second half.) You can write a response to readings about feminism or about writing. In either case, you may write almost anything that reading provokes: questions, notes on things you didn't understand, comments on the author's writing choices or style, personal stories the reading made you remember, musings, or objections—etc. I may ask you to read some part of your reading response aloud if it would benefit the discussion.

### Grades:

Final grades will be calculated as follows:

Argument Analysis Paper (Final Draft)	%10
Argumentative Essay (Final Draft)	%15
Research Paper (Final Draft)	%30
Popular Article (Final Draft)	%15
Peer Review	%10
Class Participation & Informal Writing	%20

You will not get numeric grades for your writing. For formal papers, you will get a letter grade. Here is how to translate that into the points used to calculate your final grade:

A+=100
A=96
A-=92
B+=89
B=86
B-=82
C+=79
C=76
C-=72
D+=69
D=66
D-=62
F=50

For informal written work, you will get a check, check-plus, or check-minus. For grading purposes, a check is equivalent to a B+, a check-plus to an A, and a check-minus to a B- on the above chart.

I will average your scores and consult the following chart to as a guide to your final grade:

- A 100-93
- A- 92-90
- B+ 89-87
- B 86-83
- B- 82-80
- C+ 79-77
- C 76-73
- C- 72-70
- D+ 69-67
- D 66-63
- D- 62-60
- F 59 or below

### **Primary Writing Requirement:**

Receiving at least a C in this course satisfies the Primary Writing Requirement. Students should endeavor to fulfill the Primary Writing Requirement by the end of their freshman year.

### **Major Assignments/Course Schedule:**

Please see Blackboard (the Class Materials page) for the latest draft of the course schedule. Here are the major due dates, which are not set in stone, but should be thought of as set in somewhat hardened clay. (In other words: it is unlikely that they will be changed much.) These drafts are due at **class time on the relevant date**. Upload all of these drafts to the appropriate drop box in Blackboard.

Formal Paper	Due Date
Argument Analysis Paper Draft A	9/9
Argument Analysis Paper Draft B	9/23
Argumentative Essay Draft A	9/30
Argumentative Essay Draft B	10/9
Research Paper Draft A	11/4
Research Paper Draft B	11/18
Popular Writing Draft A	11/25
Popular Writing Draft B	12/11