

## COMMUNITY WRITING ENG 120-9125

Spring 2016  
T/R 11:00-12:15  
Meredith 233

Co-taught with Prof. Timothy Knepper, Philosophy & Religion

### INSTRUCTOR

- Carol Spaulding-Kruse; [carol.spaulding@drake.edu](mailto:carol.spaulding@drake.edu); 515.271.2167 (office) 515-250-4272 (text)
- Office Hours (in 306 Howard): T/R 1:30 – 3:30 (or by appointment)

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

- Community Writing is defined as an academic course of study in which students research and produce written, spoken, digital, and multimedia projects about, with, and for university, non-profit, and for-profit agencies that deal with pressing social issues. Courses combine traditional academic research and readings with community-based work to enhance the educational experience and encourage students to understand real world applications of rhetorical situations and theories. This course is a unique iteration of a community-based writing course in which students from two academic disciplines, Religion & Philosophy and English & Writing, will combine their areas of expertise as they collaborate on the production of a book about religions and religious spaces of Des Moines.
- Students taking this course under the REL designation will be researching and writing entries for a photo-illustrated guide to fifteen religious communities in the greater Des Moines area. Each REL student will be assigned to one religious community, the services of which they will attend for most of the semester, a poster about which they create toward the end of the semester, and an entry about which they will write at the end of the semester. This means that students will first need to cultivate skills and sensitivities apropos the kind of sociological research they will be conducting as well as to acquire considerable knowledge about the histories, diversities, cultures, practices, beliefs, etc. of the tradition they are observing. The former will largely happen during the first four weeks of the course, the latter, throughout the remainder of the course.
- By the fifth week of the course REL students will begin regularly attending the services of their community. Given the time commitment this requires, REL students are required only to attend Tuesday sessions from this point until the end of the semester. For these Tuesday meetings, students will be required to submit “fieldwork reports” that contain (1) a detailed summary of that week’s research, (2) an analysis of that week’s service, (3) a prospectus about how the information gathered under (1) and (2) will be used toward the project’s end goals (poster, entry), and (4) a research and observation plan for the upcoming week.
- Groups of students will be assigned to student editors from the ENG section of this course. One responsibility of these editors is to ensure uniformity of content and style across the entries. REL students will work with ENG students to achieve this goal. REL students will also work with the project’s photographer to ensure a complementary relationship between what is written and what is photographed.
- After the 5<sup>th</sup> week of the course, ENG students will prepare readings from Folder 2 of the Cowles Library e-Reserves system in CRN #9215 (our ENG-REL cross-listed course). They will also prepare reading notes for Tuesday discussion for REL submissions on BB (posted by Monday **NOON**) and then write responses to these submissions *after* Tuesday discussions to help develop their pieces from a stylistic and rhetorical standpoint. These readings and responses will be the subject of Thursday sessions for ENG students.

- In addition to developmental editing of the work submitted by REL students, ENG students will have individualized public- and project-writing responsibilities. These may include assignments such as project-related research, research in composition theory, blogging, website content, social media work, project correspondence in the community, and grant-writing. Assignments will be determined as the project advances.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES/OUTCOMES (ENG 120)**

- To balance theory and research with student reflection about community-based experiences
- To recognize & analyze correlations between theoretical concepts and community experiences
- To assess (and if necessary revise assessment of) rhetorical circumstances in the public sphere
- To draft, revise, and polish writing that effectively responds to or addresses a community topic/need respond to the writing of other project participants
- To create purposeful documents for audiences beyond the classroom

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES/OUTCOMES (REL 199)**

- To learn the skills needed to conduct participant-observation research of religious practice
- To acquire in-depth knowledge about one religious tradition
- To conduct participant-observation research of one local religious community
- To create a poster and write an entry about the religious community
- To further develop the skills and knowledge reflected in the learning objectives of Drake's religion major: (1) identify and compare diverse religious traditions, practices, beliefs, and texts; (2) explain and analyze religion as existentially lived, historically conditioned, and culturally intertwined; (3) recognize and analyze the role that theory and method play in the study of religion; (4) analyze and evaluate religiously informed ethical positions

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS/GRADING**

- **Ten (10) Editorial Responses (30% total: 3% each)**
  - Student is responsible for writing (and posting to Blackboard) ten editorial responses that respond to developmental, stylistic, and rhetorical aspects of the submissions with an eye toward preparing them for the book entry. Students should not copy read or proofread these submissions for errors in punctuation, grammar or spelling. Each response should contain (1) a detailed summary response in the form of a letter to the writer containing: (2) analysis of the writing that draws from or adds to the ongoing list of questions posted in the Content section of BB, (3) reference to readings from Folder 1 e-Reserves (first 5 weeks of class) or from Folder 1/Folder 2 e-Reserves in the remainder of the class, (4) suggestions or questions for the writer to think about in the coming week. Fieldwork reports from REL students are due by **NOON** on preceding Monday. Editorial responses are due by 4 PM on Wednesday. They will be graded as check-plus (3 points) or check (2 points) or check-minus (1 point)
- **Book Entry (30%)**
  - Student is responsible for editing and finalizing one book entry for our photo-illustrated guide to fifteen religious communities in the local Des Moines area. Student will work closely with class researchers from REL 199 to revise and finalize entry. Specifics will be worked out as the project advances.
- **Project Writing (30%)**
  - Student is responsible for additional project writing that assists with progress on the book. These will be individualized or small groups assignments. Specifics will be worked out as the project advances.

- **Overall Course Contribution (10%)**
  - Student is responsible for contributing to the course in general. Although this encompasses a number of things, it primarily involves preparation for and participation in the classroom. Note that this means more than just coming to class and doing the reading responses—it means actually contributing to the well-working of the course. Still, it is strongly recommended that students attend each and every class. Reasonably excused absences (e.g., religious observances, medical appointments, interview trips, and athletic and musical trips) will be permitted, provided that you notify me about them, provide documentation (when appropriate), and make up any work that you miss. *You are responsible for everything that occurs during classes that you miss.*

## **BOOKS/READINGS**

- No books are required for this class. Readings for the first five weeks of the class will be available as pdfs or e-books in Folder 1 of the Cowles Library e-reserves for REL 199- ENG 120 CRN #9125. Readings for the rest of the class will be available in Folder 2 and negotiated with the professor. A desk reference book on editing may be purchased as an optional text.

## **BLACKBOARD**

- This course will utilize Blackboard in at least three ways: (1) students will post editorial responses to the “discussion board” and interact with one another in the forum; (2) students may post informal (and, if desired, anonymous) course evaluations to the “discussion board” (see below); (3) professor will post grades to the “gradebook.”

## **ABOUT THE BOOK**

- *Religions of Des Moines* (as it is tentatively titled) will feature fifteen Des Moines area religious communities that collectively represent a diversity of religions and cultures. Each entry will not only describe the embodied practices, sacred spaces, and local histories of one community; it will also contain a number of vivid photographs that pictorially “tell the stories” of these communities’ practices and spaces. In particular, the book aims to focus on the different ways in which local religious communities create sacred spaces out of spaces that were formerly non-sacred or differently-sacred. More generally, the book simply celebrates the rich diversity of religion in Des Moines

## **ABOUT THE PRESS**

- The Drake Community Press (DCP), directed by Prof. Carol Spaulding-Kruse, is a unique small press publisher that partners with Iowa organizations that have a story to tell. Students, faculty, and community professionals from a variety of disciplinary and cultural backgrounds co-create a volume from conception to completion that advocates on behalf of the organization’s work and, through book sales, produces funds to support its mission. DCP has already published two books, each of which has raised many thousands of dollars for its partner organizations, and provided rewarding experience that dozens of Drake students have acquired in working on these projects.

## **COURSE FEEDBACK**

- I am teaching this course for you. This means that if something about it is not “working” for you in such a way that significantly hinders your learning experience, I want to know about it so that I can try to fix it. To this end, I will do two things: (1) invite you to write informal evaluations in class from time to time; (2) invite you to post informal evaluations to the discussion board of Blackboard anytime you so desire. Both may be done anonymously.

## **DEVELOPMENTAL EDITING**

- The practice of editing written work for publication can mean many things to many people and takes various forms depending on the goals of the publisher and the stage of production. For the purposes of

this class, ENG students will help REL writers to develop their ideas through in-class and online dialogue informed by readings and questions that promote awareness of visual, stylistic, rhetorical, and cultural concepts and that promote overall coherence and publication readiness. Your job as editors is to help the writers achieve the vision they set forth for their work within the overall context (words & photographs) of the book project. Correctness or late-stage editorial concerns associated with copy reading and proofreading are not our focus in this class.

## RELIGION

- The academic study of religion is not the confessional practice of religion. Students need not have a religious practice of their own or any particular stance with regard to religion in order to successfully edit texts with a religious focus. According to Professor Knepper, the study of religion in the (secular) university involves an attitude of critical empathy—empathy in that it attempts to understand and appreciate religious beliefs and practices from the perspective of the practitioner, but critical in that it also attempts to understand and explain these beliefs and practices as objectively as possible (where objectivity is a product of managing distorting biases and utilizing scholarly methods). As editors, we remain mindful of these objectives as we respond to the writing and photographs produced for this book project.

## COURSE CONDUCT

- Please conduct yourself in class as though you are at work—indeed, being a student is your job (or one of your jobs). This means you are expected to arrive on time, remain focused, play well with others, and attend to bodily needs such as eating, sleeping, texting, and using the restroom at appropriate times other than class time.

## CONFERENCES

- I welcome and encourage you to meet individually with me regarding your work for this class. It is my goal that you develop considerably as a practitioner, and that involves not only classroom work but time spent writing, talking and reflecting. A big part of our relationship will be conducted through writing and in class, but I also hope to extend that relationship in individual consultation with you. My office hours are often busy, especially during a semester when I am teaching first-year students. Please know that I can arrange other times and that I am happy to meet at any place that serves coffee and pastries, too!

## DISABILITY STATEMENT

- If you have a disability and will require academic accommodations, please see me. Accommodations are coordinated through Student Disability Services. Please contact Michelle Laughlin, Director of Student Disability Service at 281-1835 or [michelle.laughlin@drake.edu](mailto:michelle.laughlin@drake.edu).

## DISCLAIMER

- I reserve the right to revise the syllabus should I deem it in your best educational interest.

## ACADMIC CONDUCT: PLAGIARISM

- Plagiarism will be taken very seriously in this class. Plagiarized papers will be automatically failed. Repeated plagiarism *will* result in failure of the course and *may* result in academic probation or expulsion.
- **The A&S Policy** (<http://www.drake.edu/dos/handbook/academic.php>)

## CRITICAL QUESTIONS FOR WEEKLY REPORTS

### General

1. What do we want this book to do, and for whom?
2. Who do we imagine as ideal readers of this book, and why?
3. How will we assess its impact on readers? On participants?
4. What inspiration can we gain from other texts with similar purposes?

### Practical

1. What language barriers present themselves with religious services, interviews, etc.?
2. What gender barriers might prove disadvantageous to research? How addressed?
3. What scheduling and transportation issues for attendance at weekly services?

### Community Literacy

1. What does “community” mean to us? What is writing’s role in the concept of community?
2. What conscious “rhetoric of practice” do we bring to this project that can help us understand the diversity of ideology (unacknowledged theory of experience) and affect the interactions and understanding among all participants?
3. What do our community partner DMARC & faith communities expect from this book?
4. Do all participants understand what is in it for them to be involved with this project?
5. Do all participants understand how the interests of the collective are served?
6. Do the faith communities see themselves as taking rhetorical action with this project?
7. How does each faith community see its own rhetorical agency vis-a-vis this project?
8. Do participants understand the transformative potential of the "contact zone"?
9. What can we observe about the situated nature of each participating faith community?
10. What opportunities does the project provide to achieve insight about one's position?
11. What is the role of literacy in the faith communities who will be a part of this project?
12. What role do writing, book objects, reproduced images play within their faith practices?
13. Through what discursive system do these faith communities construct religious meaning?
14. How do we plan to address tensions between participants' and editorial vision?
15. How will negotiation, collaboration and self-reflection be a part of every participant's experience with the project?

### Cultural Awareness

1. How do participants regard difference? How do they articulate notions of difference?
2. In what ways does participation for all individuals help develop critical competence?
3. What is our responsibility with regard to representing the Other?
4. How does each faith community understand the notion of "embodied practice"?
5. Is "embodied practice" what they expect will be represented in their chapter?
6. What assumptions do we bring to our encounter with these faith communities?
7. What assumptions do the faith communities bring to this university partnership?
8. What assumptions underlie the book format and representational choices?
9. What are advantages & disadvantages of each; how can disadvantages be mitigated?
10. In what ways does being in the U.S. affect religious practice for each faith community?
11. In what ways is change and adaptation part of the story of these faith communities?
12. Does a "one chapter each" model promote a view of these communities as insular?
13. In what ways do we enact a liberal multicultural model (“benign compilation of cultural spheres” in the words of Peter McClaren) and how might we resist that?
14. In what ways are our participating faith communities interested in interfaith exchange?

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### Part I: Preparation: Access Part I readings in Cowles Library e-reserves for CRN #9125

- 01.26 (I): Course introduction:
  - In-class/Take home readings: “Comp Tale” (handout), *Zakery’s Bridge: Children’s Journeys From Around the World to Iowa* & *The Ones I Bring With Me/Los Que Llevo Conmigo*
- 01.28 (R): Community Writing
  - Readings (1): “Community” (Williams) from *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture & Society*; “Strategic Speculations on the Question of Value” (Parks)
- 02.02 (I): Community Writing
  - Readings (2): “Intercultural Inquiry and the Transformation of Service” (Flower)
- 02.04 (R): Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion
  - Readings (3): *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion*, General Introduction, Part I Introduction (McCutcheon)
- 02.09 (I): Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion
  - Readings (4): (a) *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion*, Part I essays (Miner, Pike, MacIntyre, Geertz); (b) “The Insider/Outsider Debate” in *Feminism And Method* (Naples)
- 02.11 (R): Space & Place
  - Readings (5): Religious Architecture (photographs) <http://www.onbeing.org/blog/religious-architecture/6099>; “Religious Sites” (Goh); Chapter 11 “Ritual, Belief, and Meaning in the Production of Sacred Space” (Taylor) from *Transcending Architecture* (ed. Bermudez)
- 02.16 (I): Words & Pictures
  - Readings (6): “Graphic Design in Context” (Davis) from *Graphic Design Theory*; “Structure and Composition” (Smith) from *Structure of the Visual Book*; “Semiotics: Principles in Action for the Graphic Designer” (Ockerse)
- 02.18 (R): Logistics
  - Readings (7): Selected chapters from *Discovering Qualitative Methods* (Warren & Kamer)

### Part II: Readings from Folder 2 Cowles Library e-Reserves for CRN #9125

- 02.23 (I): Reponse 1
- 02.25 (R): Readings (7) TBD
- 03.01 (I): Reponse 2
- 03.03 (R): Readings (8) TBD
- 03.08 (I): Reponse 3
- 03.10 (R): Readings (9) TBD

- 03.15 (I) & 03.17 (R): Spring Break: No Class
- 03.22 (I): Reponse 4
- 03.24 (R): Readings (10) TBD
- 03.29 (I): Reponse 5
- 03.31 (R): Readings (11) TBD
- 04.05 (I): Reponse 6
- 04.07 (R): *PREP FOR POSTER SESSION*
- 04.12 (I): Reponse 7
- 04.14 (R): Readings (12) TBD
- 04.19 (I): Reponse 8
- 04.21 (R): Readings (13) TBD
- 04.26 (I): Reponse 9
- 04.28 (R): Readings (14) TBD
- 05.03 (I): Reponse 10
- 05.05 (R): Readings (15) TBD