

Semester: Fall 2026

Credit Hours: 3

Days/Times: T/R 11am-12:15pm

Classroom: LIB-0610A (6th floor of Morris Library)

Instructor: Dr. Corinne Dekkers

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Dr. Dekkers' Office Hours: W10am–4pm (and by appt.)

Office: Faner 2241

Instructor: Dr. Anna Sicari

Email: anna.sicari@siu.edu

Dr. Sicari's Office Hours: M11am–3pm, TR12:30-1:30 (and by appt.)

Office: Faner 2243 or 2378

We will respond to email within 24-36 hours

UNIV HONORS 351 | Writing with and for Carbondale: Rhetorics of Community Writing and Service-Learning Pedagogy

THE WHY | OR, COURSE DESCRIPTION

Description:

In this course, we'll collaborate and write alongside and for local service organizations through the Rhetoric and Writing Studies lens of community writing and service-learning pedagogy. Together, we'll look at the landscape, histories, and presents of community engagement in Southern Illinois, and we'll collaboratively and imaginatively chart pathways forward through writing. We'll pose questions about coalition-building, honor and acknowledge difference, and consider how we might learn to more deeply work and thrive together for better futures, using Carbondale and the surrounding region as a deep case study to explore. Through learning local histories of community writing and studying them through the lens of community rhetorics, we'll prepare to work and learn with community partners through service-learning pedagogy and create a portfolio of writing projects that celebrate and promote the Carbondale community and intentional partnerships. We'll constellate research, discussion, deep listening, and practice, and cultivate the futures we would like to create as integral citizens and members of our communities.

Required Materials:

- ◇ Dedicated Notebook/Journal to be used throughout the semester
- ◇ Access to email and D2L
- ◇ Readings on D2L
- ◇ Curiosity, Compassion, Openness
- ◇ Attend at least two community events

THE WHAT | OR, STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Analyze key theories and practices of community writing and service-learning within the fields of Rhetoric and Writing Studies, drawing connections between local and national conversations about civic engagement and social responsibility.

2. Research and represent the histories and current landscapes of community engagement in the Carbondale and Southern Illinois region, integrating local voices, archives, and narratives into their analyses and writing projects.
3. Collaborate ethically and effectively with local service organizations or community partners to co-create writing/literacy projects that support the organization's mission and honors community expertise.
4. Produce a portfolio of community-focused writing projects (e.g., reports, public narratives, digital media, promotional materials) that demonstrate rhetorical adaptability, professional polish, and civic purpose.
5. Reflect critically on their roles as writers, researchers, and community participants, articulating how their learning has informed their understanding of civic identity, reciprocity, and the ethics of representation.
6. Demonstrate deep listening and relational awareness in their community engagement, showing sensitivity to diverse perspectives and the complexities of working across cultural, institutional, and social boundaries.
7. Envision and articulate sustainable pathways for future community partnerships or writing initiatives, situating their work within broader frameworks of social justice, equity, and civic participation.

Major Assignments:

You'll have the opportunity to earn up to 1000 points over the course of the semester in the following ways.

(Students must earn a C or above in UHON seminars to get Honors credit for the course. For our class, that means you'll need no less than 700 points by the end of the semester to earn Honors credit.)

MA 1: Class Participation and Engagement (150 points):
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Being an active member of the class is important to your success, and the class's overall success. Coming to class, being present, being mindful, and responsive is crucial. This does not necessarily mean being a vocal member of class via discussion (although that is one way of showing responsiveness) -- paying attention, taking notes, listening, and thinking and talking in smaller groups are all ways to participate in class. Each class, you will have the opportunity to earn 5 points through an in-class participation activity. Included here, too, is the understanding that you come to class prepared to discuss and be present with one another. These activities can't be made up if you are absent. This total value will be updated at the close of the semester.

MA 2: Class Journal (150 points):

In this class, there will be a great deal of "low-stakes" writing, in the form of free-writing, collaborative group work, brainstorming, listing, and personal/reflective writing. We ask that you keep a running class journal to record the low-stakes writing (which will be helpful for you as the class progresses). As much of this writing will be messy, and some of it personal, as instructors we will not closely read, and will certainly not grade *content* of this journal. However, we will occasionally do "check-ins" and briefly glance at the journals to make sure we are keeping up with this practice as a class.

MA 3: StoryCorps Project (100 points):

For this project, you will be paired with a board or Buckminster Fuller community member and will facilitate a conversation to elucidate and reveal their impact on and from Buckminster Fuller and his work. This will require you to respectfully and professionally prepare by doing research on your interviewee, writing robust questions, arriving on time for your interview, and recording and uploading your interview to the StoryCorps and LOC databases through the StoryCorps app and D2L. You will also include a self-reflection about the process and your experience.

MA 4: Facing Your Fears, a Multimodal Project (100 points):

This project asks you to engage with a realistic concern and/or fear you have for the future. It can be a personal concern (re: what type of job will I get once I graduate college?) or it can be a larger, systemic issue/concern (re: what will accessibility to clean drinking water look like in the next fifty years?). Based on outside research and your experience working with local communities thus far, you will be tasked to create a multimodal project that represents a potential solution and/or way(s) you (individual “you” or a larger, societal “you”) can face and overcome this concern/fear. This project encourages you to embrace messiness and think creatively as you explore concerns for the future and ways you can address them individually, locally, or through larger networks, and reject apathy and/or apocalyptic narratives.

MA 5: Professional Materials (100 points):

Throughout the semester, you’ll develop a wide range of skills and amass a large swath of experiences. Through this project, you’ll document some of those skills into professional materials (such as personal statements and teaching writing philosophy statements) that you will be able to use moving forward for applications to academic and professional opportunities.

MA 6: Elevator Pitch Proposal (100 points):

Arriving at the end of our semester, this activity tasks you with proposing and thinking through a community engaged project. You’ll research a need, identify your strengths, abilities, and connections, and practice writing a proposal, incorporating elements of grant writing. Then, you’ll create a condensed three-to-five minute “elevator pitch” to help communicate your vision and need.

MA 7: Final Portfolio (300 points):

At the end of the course, you will turn in a final portfolio--as this class will be valuing and prioritizing the process of writing and learning over any finished, final “draft.” However, it is our hope that these portfolios will be of benefit to you both personally and professionally as we will be writing with and for the Carbondale and Southern Illinois community). Included:

- StoryCorps Interview with reflection (45 points)
- Collaborative Narrative (45 points)
- Facing Fears Multimodal Project with reflection (45 points)
- Personal Statement and Teaching Writing Philosophy Materials with reflection (45 points)
- Elevator Pitch Proposal (45 points)
- Mini Autoethnography and Revised Project (75 points)

THE HOW | OR, COURSE POLICIES

Unique Educational Experience for Honors:

This course highlights the research expertise of both professors, as we have written and presented extensively on community writing and community engaged research, as well as participated and worked with community partnerships throughout our academic careers. As the motto of Honors is “learn, lead, and serve,” our class embodies these values through a deep engagement of theory, research, and pedagogy, to apply this work to inform our collaborations with local community partners and help students become leaders through academic citizenship. This course will allow for students to not only complete community and service-learning requirements, but to recognize and value why learning the history of the local communities is so important to growth and fostering change for the better.

Labor Based Assessment:

As this course primarily wants us to be excited to learn and write, to not be afraid to take risks and experiment with our writing and knowledge, we’ll be implementing a labor-based assessment practice. To quote a writing studies scholar Asao Inoue, “to learn is to labor.” He and various other scholars in different disciplines provide plenty of research to show how and why grades can be detrimental to our learning processes--and much of what we know in writing studies is the importance of valuing process over product.

In this course, we will be doing A LOT of writing--and that will be challenging--and you will receive A LOT of different types of feedback for revision. But your writing will not be assessed through traditional grades (A, B, C)--rather, you will be graded by the labor you put forth in the class. In this class, we will stress the importance of writing, writing a lot, turning our projects in on time, providing quality feedback to one another during class workshops, participating in class, and doing the work.

To help you track your progress, you’ll have the opportunity to earn a total of 1000 points by the end of the semester. Students must earn a C or above in UHON seminars to get Honors credit for the course. For our class, that means you’ll need no less than 700 points by the end of the semester to earn Honors credit.

Attendance Policy

This is a writing- and making-intensive class. Each meeting session, we’ll be collaboratively building our community, discussing concepts, writing, making, and being together, and each session is designed to build off the last to scaffold all work. Because of this, it is imperative that you attend class regularly. Missing more than five (5) days total over the semester for any reason is grounds for failure of the course.

That said, if you are unwell (physically or otherwise), please communicate with us. Our goal is to make this course as useful to each of you as possible, and to be a resource for you. If you encounter an emergency or have an issue you know is or might impact your success in our class, please reach out to us as soon as possible. We are here to help!

Missed or Late Work

Our class is designed to scaffold work and incrementally build work for you over the semester and directly impacts our communities and community partners. Because of this, it is in your best interest to not fall behind. All work should be submitted by the assigned due dates, but if you need an extension, please do reach out ahead of the deadline so we can find a solution together.

Technology Policy

Being present in class means more than just keeping our seats warm. It also means that we bring our intention and presence to the discussion and activities at hand. Because of this, there will be times in our sessions together where we will work in analog formats and those when we work in digital/technological formats. We'll have clear guidelines for how we'll operate in each session, but as a rule of thumb, please refrain from texting, listening to music, recording, being on socials, taking calls, doing work for other classes, or otherwise allowing technology to be a hindrance on your or others' learning.

If technology for you is a necessary or important accommodation, please do let us know. While we know that sometimes is communicated through the Office of Accommodations, we also know that not all needs are always met this way. We'll find what works best for you.

If you know you are expecting an important call or text, please do let us know ahead of time and step into the hallway to take any calls or send messages.

We will also co-develop our AI policy together during Week Two.

A Safe and Welcoming Environment

In this class, it is imperative we are respectful to one another, we listen thoughtfully, and we respond generously. In this class, we will encourage each other and affirm our writing choices and lived experiences as we work to build community. No hate speech of any kind will be tolerated (not that we even expect this would be an issue). When we dialogue, and have discussions on issues like identity, it is possible we might say things that can be harmful and/or hurtful--and we will make sure to call each other in to continue to learn and be better (we are included in this). We also ask that you pay attention when your peers and we speak, that you come to class prepared and ready to discuss the material and do the work, and be mindful of how much you are on your phone, or on your laptop engaged in things not related to class. Please also never hesitate to email us with a question, concern, if needing guidance on something related to class or outside of class (if we don't have the answer or cannot help, we can at least pinpoint you to someone who can). If you're struggling with anything, just reach out--the only way we cannot help is if you ghost on us!

Inclusive Excellence and Disability Support Services

SIU contains people from all walks of life. Learning from and working with people who differ from you is an important part of your education in this class, as well as essential preparation for any career. SIU is committed to providing an inclusive and accessible experience for all students. Please inform us about specific accommodations you may have or need at the start of the course. You can also reach out to Disability Support Services if needed.

Counseling Services

Our mission is to provide mental health-related services to facilitate students' adjustment to college and their personal and psychological growth in becoming high-functioning and socially responsible adults. Our staff works to help students resolve problems that interfere with personal, social, and academic functioning while also emphasizing prevention, development, adjustment, and wellness: [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#)

Academic Integrity:

Information on SIU's Academic Integrity Policy can be found in the [Morris Library Guide on Plagiarism](#) and the [SIU Student Conduct Code](#).

We will talk about plagiarism in-depth as a class and discuss where automated writing tools (like Chat GPT) fall into that.

SIU Writing Center

The [SIU Writing Center](#) is a fantastic space to support your writing projects and work one-on-one with a writing consultant--and it is completely free. Graduate and undergraduate consultants are available to talk with you about your writing projects and concerns and can help at all stages. We highly encourage you to make a session with the WC at some point throughout class--both for our writing projects and in other classes.

Technical Support

If having D2L Issues- you can always access the help desk:

Phone: 618-453-5155

Email: salukitech@siu.edu

Alternatively, you can look for the **Self-Help** button at the bottom right of the D2L **My Home** menu.

Need D2L help? -- Click the "Get Help" bubble in the lower right corner of your screen.



Provost Syllabus Attachment:

Information on important SIU dates and student services can be found on the [Provost's website](#) within the current [semester's syllabus attachment](#). This is also located in a widget in MyCourses (D2L) and course page homes within D2L.