Brian Jackson, Erik Juergensmeyer & David Reamer, 
University of Arizona

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

English 109H: First-Year Composition (Honors)
English 109H is a composition course for advanced first-year students interested in studying rhetoric and composition through argumentation and poetics.

English 307: Business Writing
In business writing, students practice strategies for approaching different rhetorical situations through writing in the genres of the workplace.

English 308: Technical Writing
Technical writing invites students to plan, create, and user-test a range of projects including technical documentation, proposals, reports, job materials, and other genres.

SHOWDOWN IN SUPERIOR! PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In Fall 2005, Brian Jackson, Erik Juergensmeyer, and David Reamer, writing instructors at the University of Arizona, collaborated on an innovative composition pedagogy that culminated in a mock town hall meeting called “Showdown in Superior!” In order to simulate a current public controversy over a proposed mine in Superior, Arizona, three writing classes assumed roles as competing interests and composed researched and reasoned arguments that supported the viewpoints of those interests. David’s Technical Writing class represented Resolution Copper Company (RCC), a corporation looking to extract copper from Superior’s vast reserves; Erik’s Business Writing class took on the role of several special interest groups who opposed the mining company’s bid; and Brian’s First-Year Honors class
assumed the role of the townspeople of Superior. As townspeople, Brian’s students wrote imaginary letters to Superior’s newspaper, speeches for the town hall meeting, and refined research arguments advocating that the town pursue a specific course of action. Erik’s students, as special interest groups, prepared professional documents arguing against permitting the mining project in Superior. As representatives of the mining company, David’s students prepared websites, brochures, newsletters, and oral presentations that blended technical information with arguments encouraging the townspeople to approve the mining project. Together we synchronized our last units of instruction so that the documents we produced—researched essays, letters to the editor, pamphlets, websites, and so on—would be circulated among the three classes in preparation for a mock town hall meeting. At the end of the semester, all three classes met together in a large lecture hall, argued their cases through PowerPoint® presentations and public speeches, and voted on the copper company’s proposal.

**Institutional Context**

Showdown in Superior! was designed with several regional and institutional factors in mind. The university’s location and student body, for example, determined the scope of the project and the breadth of student engagement. The University of Arizona is a large land-grant university in the nation’s second-fastest growing state, visibly located amid the urban sprawl of the American Southwest (“Top 10”). Though Tucson itself is a thriving city with nearly one million residents, the surrounding area is marked by scattered former mining towns like Tombstone, Bisbee, and Jerome. Our students, seventy percent of whom are in-state residents, know these places primarily as tourist attractions and ghost towns whose mines have long ceased operations. When an outside subsidiary made public its interest in opening a new mine less than 100 miles north of Tucson, just outside the town of Superior, we saw an opportunity to provide our students with a writing topic intimately tied to the history of the region.

In addition to regional dynamics, the structure of the Writing Program at the University of Arizona greatly influenced our curriculum design. Our writing program offers both a first-year composition sequence and a small selection of upper-division writing courses that consists of Advanced Composition, Business Writing, and Technical Writing. Outside of the FYC sequence—a standard two-semester writing curriculum with honors, developmental writing, and second-language variants—there is no formally articulated relationship among courses within the Writing Program. The upper-division courses are autonomous of one another and feature no standardized curriculum within course numbers. Though many students in the social, commercial, and agricultural sciences are required by their major to take one of these upper-division writing courses, their programs determine a required writing course based largely on the descriptor “business” or “technical” regardless of the actual curriculum. Our primary challenge, then, was
to combine three different courses with disparate goals, students, and curricula into an integrated collaborative project that would serve the needs of all three.

Orchestrating our project required a considerable amount of planning, with each course’s character always in mind. English 109H is a first-year honors course for students who passed the AP English exam with a 4 or 5 or who exhibit enough writing skill to fulfill the first-year composition requirement in only one semester. According to the course description on the Writing Program’s website, 109H students “engage in a wide range of intellectual, aesthetic, and rhetorical inquiries” that include readings of “interdisciplinary texts” and writing projects in rhetoric and poetics carried out “independently and collaboratively.” Students in 109H courses often come from backgrounds of privilege, and they enter the university with (at least for freshmen) sophisticated communication and study skills. Graduate instructors covet this course not only for the academically advanced student population but also for the freedom afforded them to develop the course creatively and individually.

In developing curricula for the Business and Technical Writing courses participating in Showdown in Superior!, we faced two significant challenges. First, while the Writing Program articulates Business and Technical Writing as different courses, assignments and approaches often overlap between classes. This confusion stems in many cases from a lack of clear articulation about what those courses do or should accomplish in the University curriculum. Given the vague curricular expectations, we thus faced the problem of constructing unique but practical syllabi. In addition, we were tasked with constructing syllabi appropriate for the diverse collection of students enrolled in our courses. Business and Technical Writing are required courses for students in a range of disciplines, and students choose to fill that requirement at various stages of their academic careers: While the majority are upper-classmen, first- and second-year students may take the course if they meet certain prerequisites. Our students thus enter the classroom with a diverse range of specialized knowledge and skills. Engineering students, for example, often come into the class with experience developing and maintaining websites, while Retail and Consumer Science majors may have little experience with computers beyond word processing and email. As instructors, we can assume very little common knowledge between students and must therefore work to provide assignments that are engaging and challenging for both beginners and experienced technical or business writers.

In order to allow students from all three classes to contribute their own unique skills and knowledge to the group effort, we designed the project to incorporate multiple perspectives on the proposed mining operation. While each class was assigned a particular position on the issue, we provided numerous topical areas (economic, environmental, public works, etc.) for students to research within each class’s overall pro- or anti-mining stance. Students in both the Business and Technical Writing courses were thus given the opportunity to research aspects of the mining proposal related to their own majors or interests, synthesize that information into
persuasive arguments, and present those arguments in multiple genres. Students in English 109H, assuming the role of the townspeople of Superior, could channel their interdisciplinary writing projects into expressing public opinions about the issue in multiple genres for different audiences.

In addition to the institutional and situational constraints affecting our project, we were influenced by a larger dissatisfaction with popular pedagogical models in composition and business and technical communication. Case study models such as that espoused by Ann Rippin et al. often focus on fictional situations that limit research opportunities for students and involve no real “stakes” for their writing; other case models ask students to research historical events, such as the Challenger explosion, in which they have little investment and of which they have little or no recollection. On the other hand, service-learning models like the one proposed by James Dubinsky in “Service-Learning as a Path to Virtue” ask students to produce documents for needy organizations, often in a spirit of noblesse oblige, while they are still learning the necessary skills (see also Schutz and Gere). Due to the rigors of the semester and the unpredictable nature of collaboration with understaffed nonprofit groups, students in service-learning courses often feel the pressure of having to perform rhetorically on a professional and frighteningly public level using tools and skills they themselves are still learning.

This latter point about practice in public communication concerned us as writing instructors. One thing service-learning pedagogy does well is emphasize the public performance aspect of writing. Rhetoric is performative in nature, but few composition pedagogies address performance, instead focusing on using analytical skills to produce documents for the teacher’s eyes only (Hauser 48-49). Students in First-Year Composition courses craft essays and the occasional presentation, but rarely engage in truly public acts of rhetoric. In business and technical communication, similarly, performance is often limited to document production in the closed environment of the classroom; at best the curriculum is expanded to include PowerPoint presentations composed for their peers but nearly always graded by instructors. We sought to provide our students with a performative space outside the classroom and at the same time expand the impact of their work beyond a simple grade for the course. Showdown in Superior! was our response to the call of Rosa Eberly, Susan Wells, and others to theorize the writing classroom as a public space—or “protopublic space” to use Eberly’s phrase—within which students could actively and publicly participate in a debate about a community issue with limited consequences for themselves and their peers.

**Theoretical Rationale**

We created Showdown in Superior! based on two related theoretical assumptions: [1] in the words of John Dewey, “the improvement of the methods and conditions of debate, discussion and persuasion is the problem of the public” and a central concern for anyone concerned about the shape of democracy (208); and,
rhetorical literacy—the ability to perform eloquently and analyze critically in different situations for practical purposes—can and should be taught to undergraduates in order for students to develop the kind of character, wisdom, and civic virtue required for a progressive democratic culture. Though these assumptions are not unique, we distinguished our project from similar pedagogical strategies (like service learning, public writing, critical pedagogy, or community collaboratives) by theorizing an ideal deliberative situation—a town hall meeting—and inviting our students to assume rhetorical roles within that situation. (For scholarship on civic writing, see Ervin; Peck, Flower, and Higgins; Schutz and Gere; and Wells.) We asked our writing students to role-play in a mock town hall scenario that invited them to practice public performance and critical analysis in writing and speaking on a regional issue that had real consequences in the world “out there” in actually existing democracy. Our preparation, execution, and reflection for Showdown in Superior! were informed at each stage by the two theoretical assumptions listed above, even though our conclusions led us to consider anew the pedagogical viability of those assumptions for future collaborative projects.

In *The Public and Its Problems*, John Dewey defends deliberative democracy from the criticism of democratic realists like journalist Walter Lippmann who believed that ordinary citizens should be kept from making political decisions because they are “necessarily ignorant, usually irrelevant and often meddlesome” (Rossiter and Lare 114). Though Dewey acknowledges the manifold problems of the public, he argues for a democratic faith in ordinary citizens’ political judgment and their ability to actively participate in “the flow of social intelligence” through writing and speaking about issues of collective importance (Dewey 219). Dewey was unique for his time not only because of this democratic faith, but also because he situated the activities of speaking, writing, and listening in dialogic public exchanges as the ideal of democratic life. Specifically, he argued that effective public deliberation requires the following qualities: [1] a “scattered, mobile and manifold public” needs to “recognize itself” and “define and express its interests” in a community free of coercion (146); [2] “social inquiry” must be freely practiced and its results freely disseminated by those who have expert knowledge on key issues (166); and [3] writing and speaking on public issues must take on “the potency of art” in order to “break through the crust of conventionalized and routine consciousness” (183).

Our second theoretical assumption is that Dewey’s three qualities for public communication fit quite well into writing courses that focus on teaching students how to participate in public rhetoric by engaging a public problem, gathering data, analyzing arguments, making arguments, and creating documents using rhetorical invention. The second and third qualities listed in the previous paragraph are particularly helpful for teachers of rhetoric interested in teaching *paideia*, the Greek term that David Fleming and others use to describe rhetoric education for civic participation (Fleming 178; Hauser). This type of education is our inheritance from classical figures like Isocrates and Quintilian who taught students a rhetoric
of civic engagement. The goal of this education, according to Fleming, is to enable a student to go beyond skillful communication to become “engaged, articulate, resourceful, sympathetic, civil, trained in, conditioned by, and devoted to what was once called ‘eloquence’” (172-73). In this sense, civic literacy—the skill or knowledge or habit of the heart that fits individuals to engage in the symbolic activities of public choice—is rhetorical literacy. Rhetorical literacy is the term we have adopted to encapsulate the goals of writing courses that aspire to teach paideia.

Since practically we cannot adopt the totalizing lifetime rhetorical pedagogy that Quintilian suggests, Fleming describes three aspects of a contemporary rhetoric education that coincidentally match with Dewey’s prerequisite qualities of public communication. A contemporary education in paideia would provide a theoretical vocabulary as “a way to isolate, analyze, and manage communication situations, goals, resources, acts, and norms” (Fleming 183). Such a vocabulary can be provided by theories of rhetoric, argumentation, poetics, or any other critical lens that encourages intense, active engagement with texts, institutions, and practices. The second aspect of rhetorical literacy for civic engagement is performance, or the practice of public communication in writing and speaking. Performance begins with instruction, observation, and imitation and ends with exercise, peer response, and evaluation in a community of actors committed to listening and analyzing the arguments of others in the protopublic spaces of composition. Finally, paideia invites inquiry into what Dewey called “all the conditions which affect association and their dissemination in print” (218). Composition courses in the paideutic tradition teach research as an activist project based on exploring pressing public issues and writing arguments that add to the aggregate pool of the public’s collective knowledge. These arguments are then made public and are themselves read, analyzed, and argued about. Rhetorical literacy, then, is the ability to use a theoretical vocabulary for analyzing public arguments, the power to speak and write with eloquence and reasoned argument for diverse audiences that may be antagonistic, and the habit of inquiry that approaches a public issue as an intellectual issue requiring careful research and collaboration in preparation for public performances of argument.

After articulating these two theoretical assumptions, our first challenge as teachers of writing was to create a pedagogical environment conducive to a Deweyan conception of public communication and a pedagogy for rhetorical literacy—while at the same time maintaining the integrity of our courses as composition courses. We decided to collaborate on a project concerning a pressing public issue for which each class would represent a different vested interest and create argumentative documents accordingly. As avid rock climbers, Erik and David were aware of a burgeoning political conflict in Superior, a mining town in southern Arizona (and one of the best rock climbing sites in Southern Arizona). Resolution Copper Company, a subsidiary of Australia’s Rio Tinto Mining company, had discovered what appeared to be North America’s largest copper reserve just outside of the city limits and proposed a land exchange with the state of Arizona that would al-
low them to mine it. Not surprisingly, the land swap was opposed by a number of special interest groups—including rock climbers, environmentalists, recreationists, and others—who marshaled their rhetorical forces to block Resolution Copper from coming to Superior.

This issue seemed ideal for our writing classes: students could take on the roles of the various stakeholders and present arguments, produce documents, and collaborate on projects to endorse a particular course of action in the scenario concerning Resolution Copper’s proposal. (We hasten to add that none of the actual groups involved in the conflict participated in any way in this project; the arguments our students composed were informed by Resolution Copper Company and various special interest groups but did not directly represent the opinions of the parties involved.) Better yet, our students could collaborate among classes, using each other as live audiences for their work. David’s Technical Writing students took on the role of Resolution Copper Company by creating newsletters, brochures, and websites that deal with different aspects of RCC’s bid, such as economic sustainability, environmental impact, and public relations. Taking the role of special interest groups opposed to RCC’s bid, Erik’s Business Writing students produced similar documents that argued in favor of recreation, environmental protection, and public interest against mining interests. David and Erik’s classes represent the “experts” Dewey speaks about in The Public and Its Problems who, contra Lippmann’s Platonic notion of an intellectual aristocracy leading the public along, participate with other individuals to “uncover social needs and troubles” in an equalized exchange (206). Brian’s First-Year Composition students assumed the role of the townspeople of Superior who invented their own arguments by reading the documents produced by the upper-division writing classes, holding in-class debates about the issues, and writing letters to the editor of an imagined local newspaper. Though ostensibly the citizens of Superior had no technical or political expertise, we assumed, again with John Dewey, that “the man who wears the shoe knows best that it pinches and where it pinches, even if the expert shoemaker is the best judge of how the trouble is to be remedied” (207). Each document—every letter, brochure, researched essay, website, newsletter or PowerPoint Presentation—was taught as a writing activity that required instruction and practice in invention, drafting, revision, and ultimately “publication” in the form of exchanging documents with the other classes.

With the three courses positioned to assume roles in the debate, we scheduled a town hall meeting at which David’s Technical Writing students and Erik’s Business Writing students gave oral presentations that supported the various interests involved. As the townspeople of Superior, Brian’s students listened to the presentations and then led what we called deliberative breakout groups—small groups of about twenty with an equal number of people from each class. The twenty-minute breakout groups were meant to simulate ideal deliberation in situations where each stakeholder has a chance to speak, defend positions, give reasons, and make rebuttals in a face-to-face exchange of “political talk” (Barber 173).
these deliberative sessions, the students role-playing the townspeople presented questions in response to the information and arguments presented by the other two groups. Finally, after the deliberative session, all three classes reconvened to listen to the townspeople students make public speeches advocating either that Superior should accept Resolution Copper’s bid to mine or that they reject it. On the night of our town hall meeting, the townspeople rejected the bid.

To conclude this discussion of our theoretical assumptions, we add that the kind of democracy we have imagined for this course collaboration is “strong democracy,” to use Benjamin Barber’s term, as opposed to the usual weak democracy that culminates in a vote rather than a conversation. We wanted to simulate what we believe is an ideal deliberative setting. In our scholarship as rhetoricians we have studied the ways that publics have traditionally organized themselves to debate important issues and deliberate on specific political decisions that influence everyone involved. Recent discussions about the decline in civic participation and social engagement—the most popular one for writing teachers being Robert Putnam’s *Bowling Alone*—have been picked up and championed by teachers of writing as a way to create innovative writing curricula that encourage students to see themselves as social agents. In addition to declining participation, we are continually challenged to discover opportunities for political participation from underrepresented groups and common citizens, and we are often daunted by the bigness of the political arena, the mazes of bureaucracy, the powerfully-funded private interests, and the smoke and mirrors of mass media that we seem impotent to resist. As we prepared our three-class collaboration, we hoped that our Showdown in Superior! curriculum would encourage students and teachers to be powerful agents in public settings outside the institution by increasing their rhetorical literacy to analyze, perform, and inquire into matters of social importance.

**Critical Reflection**

Showdown in Superior! successfully accomplished many of the goals we set while designing it. Students learned about an issue affecting the region and composed arguments about how it should be addressed. They developed a vested interest in the course project, both as a competitive endeavor and as an issue they cared about. They created documents for their peers’ use, presented their arguments in front of a live and interested audience, and actively debated their points, all in a protopublic environment. And within this framework, our students were able to learn and be assessed on the same daily lessons as their peers in more traditional classes.

Many of our students perceived the benefits of Showdown! for themselves as social actors and writers. In a post-Showdown! questionnaire, students in the Business and Technical Writing courses reacted positively to the document production phase of the project, during which they were able to target a real, specific audience and make rhetorical choices based on their knowledge of that audience.
When asked to describe the project’s strengths, students acknowledged “a sense of purpose with assignments” and appreciated “working together in a group and doing good research together.” Significantly, many students even enjoyed the project. One noted that “the fun atmosphere provided for learning and using collaboration while recognizing a specific audience,” and more than one student responded that the multi-class debate was “exciting.”

Students also valued the presentation component, which allowed them to present their arguments in a public forum for a live, involved audience. Some of the students also appreciated the competitive element of the project, which culminated in the final vote in the town hall meeting. Brian’s honors composition students particularly appreciated the public deliberative sessions, seeing them as a way to interact with the authors of documents they had read. They also valued the opportunity to employ their own rhetorical skills while questioning the representatives of both sides of the debate. One of Brian’s students appreciated “getting to interact personally and up close with these representatives. . . . Their argument back and forth brought the conflict to life.” Responding to a question about what skills were useful in the town hall meeting, one student listed “finding logical fallacies and asking provocative questions.”

Perhaps most rewarding for us as instructors, students recognized that the project had helped them develop the kind of rhetorical literacy they could use beyond the classroom in personal, professional, and public life. When asked if the project could affect their lives outside the university, one student responded that “if there was something happening in my community that I disagreed with I would become involved in the same way.” Another student saw the project as “helping me find relevant points in any side I choose to take and different ways of looking at the given information.” The project also influenced those rare students who already participate in public deliberation. “I take part in community meetings,” said one student, “and this helped me learn how to prepare more for the meetings.”

As teachers, we also reaped the benefit of collaborating with our own peers as well as with students from other classes. Instructors at the university level rarely see the work their peers and their peers’ students are doing, but as teachers and scholars in rhetoric and composition we believe this kind of exchange can help us to develop new and innovative curricula. The Showdown in Superior! project brought together instructors and students from different courses in order to demonstrate multiple approaches to solving a rhetorical problem. We were also able to parlay this particular selling point into small instructional grants from the Alltel Fund for the Arts, the Dean of Students, and the Writing Program that funded our town hall meeting and eased the financial burden of printing off large numbers of brochures and newsletters for distribution among classes. In addition, we were able to articulate—for ourselves as well as for our students—the relationship between upper-division and lower-division writing courses and emphasize some of the possibilities for students who wished to pursue writing courses beyond their requirements.
That is not to say that this project was without its challenges. To begin, we had difficulties finding a physical space for our town hall meeting that would accommodate all three classes and other guests (over 100 people) while facilitating the main components of the project. Showdown!, as we envisioned it, required an auditorium for the large-group oral presentations as well as a space with tables or desks (or at the very least, moveable chairs) where we could hold small-group deliberations. We debated reserving three separate rooms, but in the interest of time and simplicity we settled on a large auditorium in the U of A’s Integrated Learning Center. On the night of the town hall meeting, we were horrified to discover that the auditorium had been double-booked. Luckily another room was available that night that suited our needs. We recommend to teachers interested in this model that they stake out and reserve possible town hall sites well in advance of the meeting.

We also experienced the ethical challenge of coming to terms with our own political investment in the mining proposal. As avid rock climbers, David and Erik had a vested interest in the preservation of the climbing and camping areas threatened by Resolution Copper. Though Erik opposed the mine outright and united ideologically with the special interest groups against it, David saw the mine as an employment boon for the economically-repressed region. These biases turned out to be useful in determining which roles each advanced writing class assumed. Brian did not have a strong investment one way or another, but in class he found himself acting the contrarian by defending the mining project when it was apparent that students opposed it. Whatever our political leanings, we were challenged with the democratic task of giving different viewpoints fair play in the discussions, reading, research, and writing our classes performed.

Another pedagogical challenge presented itself when we assigned students roles to play and ideological stances to assume in a public controversy. Though we believe inviting students to assume an argumentative stance can be an excellent critical practice, we have since debated the ethical complications involved in compelling students to take sides regardless of their personal opinions. Students in Erik’s Business Writing class and David’s Technical Writing class were assigned into groups to create arguments they may or may not have embraced personally, and this kind of pedagogy has a tendency to limit the rhetorical agency of students. We were concerned that students who held opposing viewpoints might feel like their voices weren’t valuable, or weren’t being heard. To combat this potential problem, we encouraged students with opposing viewpoints to act as an ethical barometer in their groups—they could not change the group’s overall purpose, but they could work to ensure that their group’s arguments were presented in an ethically responsible manner. By contrast, Brian’s Honors Composition students had a hard time separating their own interests from those of the townspeople of Superior, and on the questionnaire, some suggested that students should be assigned specific ideological roles to play so that they would have clearer criteria for the final vote. Future enactments of this model should consider whether it is more advantageous to assign students predetermined roles, or whether they should...
be allowed to adopt their own positions as they see fit: In the Fall of 2006, Erik and David are collaborating with another colleague on a similar model that gives students in all three groups more freedom to craft arguments based on their own political opinions on the issue. (The new issue they’ve chosen—also appropriate for the region—is border management.)

The deliberative sessions fostered some additional ethical concerns for us as instructors. We envisioned the town hall meeting as a sort of ideal Deweyan democratic space, where viewpoints could be expressed and analyzed in a free exchange, culminating in a popular vote by the primary stakeholders—the townspeople. Our deliberative model, though consonant with much of the best scholarship about deliberative politics, shares the primary weakness of that scholarship: its myopic optimism masks the complexities and inherent inequalities of “actually existing democracy,” to use Nancy Fraser’s memorable phrase. Our model was productive—our students had fun coming face to face to discuss each others’ arguments as if they really mattered—but in a post-industrial, mass democracy, deliberation is often impractical and all too rare. In fact, from some of deliberative democracy’s strongest critics we may get the idea that it would be better to teach students how to organize, mobilize, demonstrate, bargain, lobby, fund-raise, and campaign rather than write arguments or practice deliberation in a composition class. In politics, argues Michael Walzer, “the victory is rarely won by making good arguments” (66). In Showdown!, this statement proved all too prescient: we found that students’ preexisting opinions about mining and romantic notions of small-town life influenced the final vote far more than the facts presented by either side. This result was disappointing, but it forced us to attend to the critiques of ideal deliberation as a pedagogical activity that gives every person affected an equal opportunity to voice an opinion and challenge the experts—while at the same time maintaining objectivity and bracketing status differentials like gender, class, race, education, or ability. That critique challenges us to rethink the merits of the deliberative component of Showdown in Superior!

The deliberative sessions also exposed a flaw in the research component of the project: When quizzed on the details of Resolution Copper Company’s proposal, students in David’s Technical Writing class were often unable to provide answers, thus failing to fulfill the role of Dewey’s informed experts. This was due in part to some students’ poor preparation, but more often students simply didn’t have access to the information they were being asked for. Students had no way of knowing particulars such as soil density and acidity, budget forecasts, and employee demographics, which were not part of the public record and which they lacked the training to research on their own. The special interest groups, who built their platforms without the benefit of a corporation to model themselves after, also lacked access to some of the details requested of them. The limitations of our students’ research were brought to the forefront by a troubling power dynamic that presented itself in the deliberative sessions: Brian’s Honors Composition students were responsible for interrogating rather than composing researched arguments.
for the town hall meeting and, in the spirit of high school debate, they grilled the other two classes mercilessly on the minutiae of their proposals. This problem could be addressed in the future by limiting the scope of the deliberative sessions to information discussed in the brochures, newsletters, and websites, or by providing students with strategies for answering questions that exceed their knowledge base. We have also attempted to level the playing field in future incarnations of the project by including a second meeting in which the roles of featured presenter and audience are reversed. Instructors should in any case be aware of the dangers of conceptualizing students as “experts,” as they have not yet completed training in their own areas of study, let alone studied the issue at hand in enough depth to reasonably qualify.

Despite the potential pitfalls of such a project, we hope instructors of college writing will consider Showdown in Superior! as an example of an innovative course design that can be replicated to meet the needs of their own students in their own local context. We believe that educational institutions exist in unique local and regional contexts, and that students can interact with their communities in a variety of ways that can foster an interest in democratic participation while using all of the benefits of the classroom. While this particular project did not, in the words of one representative of the writing program, “change the world,” it did provide students with an opportunity to experience writing as a public act within their own community and the writing classroom as a laboratory of civic engagement and a locus of social change.

**Works Cited**


**Syllabi for the Showdown in Superior! Unit**

**English 109H Honors Composition**

Instructor: Brian Jackson

**Required Texts**


**Bibliography of texts on e-reserve**


For the final unit of the semester you will write a well-supported argumentative essay that proposes a certain course of action concerning a real public issue. This semester we will be discussing, researching, and debating a proposed copper mine in Superior, Arizona. Our class will assume the role of townspeople of Superior, while two advanced writing classes will assume the roles of the copper company and various special interest groups who oppose the copper company. As you read the available information and listen to arguments from the other citizens, you will begin to form an opinion on the issue *as if you were a voting citizen of Superior*. Your first writing task will be to write a 500 word “letter to the editor” that expresses your opinion about the issue in whatever tone or manner you see fit. You may want to consider developing a *dramatis persona* for this activity, but the opinions you express must be your own and the facts you use must be accurate.

Part of your grade is to attend the town hall meeting, participate in the break-out discussion groups, express your opinion orally at the gathering, ask challenging questions of the other groups in the spirit of deliberation, and then vote yea or nay on the proposed copper mine. The final product of this unit will be an informed argumentative essay written to the town council expressing your opinion, backing up that opinion with rhetorical gestures and evidence (including the documents produced by the other classes), and encouraging the town council to follow a certain course of action on the issue.

Since this final unit focuses on argument, you will also be invited to participate in a “tennis” debate with one of your peers on an issue of your choice. The tennis assignment emphasizes the *dissoi logoi* aspect of argument—the arguing of both sides of an issue. To begin the exercise, one of you will write a 500-word argument supporting a specific position on an issue and then “serve” your essay to your tennis partner as an attachment on email. The second writer will then respond to the arguments of the first, making counterclaims and proposing new arguments in the process. The argument will then go back and forth until each writer has written three essays.
**English 109h Unit III Syllabus: Argument and Argumentation (Weeks 12-16)**

*Key for readings:* ER = Electronic Reserves; GR = Good Reasons; RW = Rules for Writers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Reading Due</th>
<th>Writing Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Introduction to argument: Public Issues, public arguments</td>
<td>GR chap 1 &amp; 2 “Disagreement &amp; Public Spheres” (ER)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is an argument? What is the relationship between argument and democracy?</td>
<td>Tannen (ER) Graf (ER) Skim GR pp. 109-171</td>
<td>Response to Tannen/Graf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>The Town Hall Meeting and argumentation portfolio; logical fallacies; <em>listening and assenting</em></td>
<td>GR chap 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Showdown in Superior!</td>
<td>English 307 documents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More Showdown in Superior! Developing attitudes and arguments</td>
<td>English 308 documents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Drafting the viewpoint paper</td>
<td>Tennis assignment due to caucus before midnight</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Assignment</td>
<td>Reading Material</td>
<td>Due Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Preparing the argumentation portfolio; reflecting on the town hall meeting</td>
<td>GR chap 14 <em>Ancient Rhetorics</em> pp. 330-343 <em>(ER)</em></td>
<td>Viewpoint paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Mandatory attendance at the Town Hall Meeting</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using evidence; addressing the opposition; concluding remarks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Style issues?</td>
<td>Draft of argument essay to caucus by 5pm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Writing workshops</td>
<td><em>Student papers on ER</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Last day of class: more workshops; semester evaluations</td>
<td><em>Student papers on ER</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Portfolio Submission</td>
<td>Argumentation portfolio</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
English 307 Business Writing  
Instructor: Erik Juergensmeyer

Required Texts

Williams, Joseph M. Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace. 7th ed.

Showdown in Superior! Project Outline

To demonstrate your understanding of principles of business writing, you will propose, research, implement, and present a case study project based on information you research. Throughout this project, you will be required to employ principles from readings, discussions, and in-class exercises. The final documentation of this group project is due on the last day of class, with several intermediate stages due during the semester.

In groups of 3 or 4, select a special interest group in the Showdown in Superior! case study. As stated on the syllabus, the case study will count for 50% of your final grade. Your group will be responsible for the following:

Proposal  
This formal proposal details the scope of your work. It must outline your group’s objectives and provide specific details about your finished documentation. It must contain a formal mission statement that will appear on your brochure. It must also provide a timeline and description of individual responsibilities.

Formal Letter  
This formal letter will be written to the citizens of Superior, AZ. All letters will be distributed to the other classes participating in the case study, and their content will serve as the basis for our mock town hall meeting.

Brochure  
This formal 3 fold brochure will be directed to the citizens of Superior, AZ. As a persuasive document, it intends to convince the citizens to adapt your viewpoint and reject the mining proposal. All brochures will be distributed to the other classes participating in the case study, and their content will serve as the basis for our Town-Hall Meeting.

Formal Report  
This 6-8 page (excluding back matter) report will detail your group’s research on the case study. It must contain relevant source information as well as demonstrate your knowledge of effective visual design.
Final Portfolio

This portfolio contains all information relevant to your project. It must contain all documentation and drafting as well as documentation of group meetings and collaboration. Your final portfolio must include:

- Mission statement
- Objectives
- Audience analyses
- Research annotated bibliography
- Proposal revision
- Formal Letter revision
- Newsletter/brochure revision
- Formal report

English 307 Unit III Syllabus – Case Study: “Showdown in Superior” (Weeks 7-14)

Key for readings: BWC = Business Writers Companion, 4th Ed.; ER = Electronic Reserves; ST = Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace, 7th Ed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Reading Due</th>
<th>Writing Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Case Study, Collaboration, Objectives and Audience</td>
<td>Markel “Writing Collaboratively” (ER)</td>
<td>Reaction Paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proposal Writing</td>
<td></td>
<td>Proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Research</td>
<td></td>
<td>Case Study Research Annotated Bibliography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correspondence</td>
<td>BWC pp. 165-185 “correspondence” Sample Formal Letters</td>
<td>Letter to Citizens of Superior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Brochures and Newsletters</td>
<td>BWC pp. 79-80 “brochures”; pp. 85-87 “newsletters”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MS Publisher Workshop</td>
<td></td>
<td>Newsletter/ Brochure Draft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Concision</td>
<td>ST “Concision”</td>
<td>Reaction Paper</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

124 Composition Studies
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>STC “Ethical Principles” (online), ST “The Ethics of Prose”</td>
<td>Reaction Paper, Project Ethics Analysis Memo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Project Presentation</td>
<td>BWC pp. 246-55 “presentations”</td>
<td>Course Introduction Slideshow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multi Media Workshop</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Conflict and Mediation</td>
<td>BWC p. 244 “deal with conflict”</td>
<td>In-class role play reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Generative ethos and conflict Transformation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Town Hall Preparation and Meeting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Readings on Electronic Reserve**


English 308 Technical Writing
Instructor: David Reamer

Required Texts: Electronic Reserve Readings

Project Summary
For your major project this semester, you will be representing a local copper company in their quest to obtain public-use lands located outside of Superior, AZ. You will produce a series of documents, including internal and external documents about the mining project, all leading up to a final Town Hall meeting. These documents, along with various in-class writing assignments, will be worth 50% of your final grade in this class.

Ethics
All ethical concerns will be considered; I strongly encourage anyone opposed to your company’s proposed mining operation (at least as it stands) to voice their concerns and act as a sort of moral checkpoint for the rest of the group. However, for the purpose of this class you must compose documents representing the interests and corporate image of the company.

Project Overview
In groups of 3 or 4, you will take on the role of the company and produce a series of documents. As a group you will need to research your company’s role and stake in the issue, as well as the positions of other affected parties. You will prepare 4 technical documents informing several different audiences about your group’s interests: a newsletter for an internal audience (the company), a brochure for an external audience (the citizens of Superior), a website, and a PowerPoint presentation for the town hall meeting.

Internal Documentation
The Final Project will include several documents produced during the course of the term. These include an Ethics Analysis and Gestalt Analysis.

Brochure and Newsletter
These documents should appeal to the needs and knowledge bases of very different audiences. The newsletter is intended for other employees of the company, while the brochure is designed for an audience of outsiders. These documents will be delivered to other groups that represent the intended audience.
Website
Your website should follow the principles established in class for good web design. Your audience here is the same as for your brochure, but you must be aware that the group of potential viewers of your site is much larger, and includes members of opposing organizations.

English 308 Unit III Syllabus – Case Study: “Showdown in Superior” (Weeks 8-14)

Key for readings: ER = Electronic Reserves

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Reading Due</th>
<th>Writing Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Introduce Showdown in Superior!</td>
<td>Jackson “Disagreement and Public Spheres”</td>
<td>Audience Analysis Memo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research</td>
<td></td>
<td>One-page Research Summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Brochures</td>
<td></td>
<td>Brochure Objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Brochure Draft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Newsletters</td>
<td></td>
<td>Newsletter Objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Newsletter Draft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Document Analyses</td>
<td>Moore and Fitz “Using Gestalt Theory to Teach Document Design and Graphics” (ER)</td>
<td>Gestalt Analysis Memo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“STC Ethical Principles” (online) Katz “Ethic of Expediency” (ER)</td>
<td>Ethical Analysis Memo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Visual Presentation</td>
<td>Johnson-Sheehan “Preparing and Giving Presentations” (ER)</td>
<td>Reaction Paper</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Bibliography of e-reserve readings


