Syllabus for English 131: Rhetoric and Composition

Section 007
Semester: Fall 2018
Location: Ferguson 476
Time: TTh 8:00 – 9:15

Instructor: Billy Longino
email: longinobp@sfasu.edu
Office: LAN 258
Office Hours: MWF 10:00 – 11:00
                    Monday 12:00 – 2:00

Course Description
Study and application of the writing process and the skills of writing with a focus on analytical reading and writing. Essay assignments address rhetorical analysis and evaluation and critical responses to close readings of texts. Required of all students who do not qualify for English 133H. Prerequisite: acceptable THEA score or at least a C in English 099. Must earn a grade of C or higher to be admitted to English 132.

In English 131, you will study and practice the writing process and endeavor to acquire and further craft the skills necessary to actively engage with the various cultural institutions, whether political, economic, journalistic, or ones involving entertainment, through analytical reading and writing. Students will read selections of articles, essays, and short stories to expand their experience with the cultural process of rhetoric. Demonstration of their understanding and acquisition of these skills will be assessed in the completion of four formal essays.

Textbooks
Lumberjacks Write (To be provided by instructor);
Perfect English Grammar by Grant Barrett;
Access to Arrival, a film directed by Denis Villeneuve;
Additional reading material will be provided by the instructor in print or pdf format.

General Education Core Curriculum
The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board has identified six core learning objectives: Critical Thinking Skills, Communication Skills, Empirical and Quantitative Skills, Teamwork, Personal Responsibility, and Social Responsibility. SFA is committed to the improvement of its general education core curriculum by regular assessment of student performance on these six objectives.
By enrolling in English 131: Rhetoric & Composition you are also enrolling in a Core Curriculum Course that fulfills the Communication Skills requirement. You will see this course on your D2L list.

At one point during the semester, you will receive an assignment that fulfills both the requirements of this course and the needs of Stephen F. Austin State University’s Core Curriculum Assessment Plan with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. When you complete this one assignment, you need to upload the assignment to both your standard course dropbox determined by your Instructor and the “Core Curriculum” dropbox. The Core Curriculum dropbox will be identified by the Objective for which work is being collected. (Examples: Critical Thinking, Teamwork, Social Responsibility Empirical & Quantitative Skills, Personal Responsibility, Communication Skills-Written, Communication Skills-Written & Visual, and Communication Skills-Oral & Visual.) Please note that this only applies to the approved assignment. All other assignments should be submitted according to regular class operations. If you have any questions, please see your Instructor or the Office of Student Learning and Institutional Assessment.

When you complete the assignment mentioned above, you will upload the assignment to both the English 131: Rhetoric & Composition dropbox and the Communication Skills dropbox.

Please note that this only applies to the specific assignment listed in the matrix below. All other assignments should be submitted according to regular class operations.

If you have any questions, please see your instructor or contact the Institutional Effectiveness Office at (936) 468-1130.

The chart below indicates the core objectives addressed by this course, the assignment(s) that will be used to assess the objectives in this course and uploaded to the D2L Communication Skills dropbox this semester, and the date the assignment(s) should be uploaded to the D2L Communication Skills dropbox. Not every assignment will be submitted for core assessment every semester. Your instructor will notify you which assignment(s) must be submitted for assessment in the D2L Communication Skills dropbox.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Objective</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Course Assignment Title</th>
<th>Date Due in D2L</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td>To include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication Skills</td>
<td>To include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication.</td>
<td>Argumentative Response Essay</td>
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<tr>
<td>Empirical and Quantitative Skills</td>
<td>To include the manipulation and analysis of numerical data or observable facts resulting in informed conclusions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>To include the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Responsibility</td>
<td>To include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Responsibility</td>
<td>To include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.</td>
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**Student Learning Outcomes for ENG 131:**
At the completion of this course, students will be able to:
• Identify and analyze texts with the goal of examining the rhetorical structure, veracity of claims, sufficient use of accurate and credible evidence, as well as possible use in creative, analytical, and persuasive components (Critical Thinking);

• Participate in productive class and group discussion and examination of texts, in order to analyze and synthesize a variety of texts, via a multi-step drafting process (Critical Thinking);

• Understand the role of personal responsibility in the inevitable choices involved in the composition process, in the evaluation of one’s own writing and the writing of other students, in the ethical use of ideas and information, and in the critical evaluation of all assigned texts (Personal Responsibility);

• Recognize the collaborative and social aspects of the writing process by producing collaborative work and/or feedback for peers and selectively using peer feedback in their own work (Teamwork);

• Demonstrate knowledge of organizational and linguistic structures – including grammar, punctuation, and spelling – through practice in composing and revising (Communication);

• Compose texts in response to a variety of situations and contexts calling for purposeful shifts in voice, tone, level of formality, design, medium, and/or structure (Communication).

Assignments
The final grade for this course will be determined by arriving at the sum of the points for each of the major assignments for the class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daily Reading/Writing Assignments</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay 1 – Location Profile</td>
<td>200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay 2 – Arrival Adaptation Summary</td>
<td>200</td>
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<td>Essay 3 – Rhetoric of Retro-Futurism Analysis</td>
<td>200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay 4 – Oregon Trail Analysis &amp; Response</td>
<td>200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extra Credit</td>
<td>TBA</td>
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**Participation (10 Points)**
Over the course of this semester, I will document student participation in class. Participation will depend upon the student’s timely completion of daily assignments and readings, participation in classroom discussions, and attentive engagement in class meetings.

Students participation will be affected by the following offenses:

• Being late to class without a “reasonable” excuse.
Daily Reading/Writing Assignments (100 Points)
To become more effective writers, students will need to engage with written texts and analyze the methods and tactics various authors use in composing their work. Students will be expected to keep up with daily reading and writing assignments throughout the semester, a process which will be assessed via in-class discussion and/or online discussion posts due at the beginning of class every day. Not all these assignments will be directly related to the major essays, but it is essential that students habituate themselves to daily reading.

Essay 1 – Location Profile Essay (200 Points)
In this four-page essay, students will profile a location within the Nacogdoches community. This essay is intended to aid students in the development of strategies for honing their skills at observation as an aspect of the writing process. This essay will involve the students spending at least two hours immersed in a location determined by the instructor, gathering factual information about the location, as well as noting their own subjective impressions, and composing a profile essay wherein they communicate their findings with clarity and conciseness. The essay will mimic those of travel writers and professional nonfiction writers we will read in class beforehand.

Essay 2 – Arrival Adaptation Summary (200 Points)
Building upon their observation techniques in the first essay, students will apply these skills in critical engagement toward a close reading and viewing exercise. We will read the short story “Story of Your Life” by science-fiction author Ted Chiang and view its film adaptation Arrival, directed by Denis Villeneuve and written for the screen by Eric Heisserer. Students will be expected to pay close attention to the choices both Chiang and Villeneuve make regarding the construction of their respective versions of the story and compose a four-page essay summarizing what they find to be the most significant changes from the short story to the film while explaining why they believe these changes were made by the screenwriter and director.

Essay 3 – Rhetoric of Futurism Analytic Synthesis (200 Points)
Over the course of the past decade, nostalgia appears to increasingly drive popular culture in the United States, with the popularity of “retro” media emerging in film, music, and literature. This has manifested in a glut of *remakes* of movies created primarily in the 1980s, though such nostalgia has now begun to include the 1990s, as both Millennial and Gen-X consumers increasingly influence popular culture. However, while nostalgia primarily refers to a “[r]egret or sorrowful longing for the conditions of a past age; regretful or wistful memory or recall of an earlier time,” according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a particular mode of nostalgia appears to involve a longing for the imagined futures people of these past ages believed would have come to pass by the time our own, current time period arrived. In this six-page essay, students will discuss the rhetoric underlying three primary sources involving such “past-futures” and develop a critical analysis of the nostalgic mode regarding contemporary futurism to uncover the motives, desires, and systems driving this nostalgia.

**Essay 4 – Oregon Trail Analysis & Response Essay (200 Points)**

A popular learning resource for a few decades, *The Oregon Trail* is a video game developed with the intention of teaching students about the migrations of settlers across the United States in the 1800s during westward expansions. However, the game developed a notorious reputation for the grim nature by which players’ characters in the game were injured or killed, most famously dying “from dysentery.” To complete this seven-page essay, students will play several sessions of *The Oregon Trail* before reading authentic accounts of the migration written by settlers who traversed this famous route and a survey regarding the use of digital games in the classroom. The goal of this essay is for students to develop their own analysis of the effectiveness of such games as teaching tools according to their own subjective response to the game and experience as recently (or soon-to-be) graduating adults.

**Guidelines for Written Essays**

To receive a passing grade for written assignments in this class, students must carefully follow the guidelines provided hereafter. These guidelines are not provided as a suggestion but are absolutely required for every single major essay students complete in this course. There are no exceptions to these guidelines though additional guidelines will be provided in the specific prompts for each assignment. Not following these guidelines may result in a failing grade for the assignment. All essays must:

- be in essay form;
- meet the appropriate page length;
- be typed, not handwritten, in double-spaced MLA format, using Times New Roman 12-point font with 1 inch margins on all sides;
• have appropriate and complete headings;
• have an original title, not the title of another work or a general title such as the type of assignment;
• be submitted online through D2L by the due date (papers that are not turned in online will receive a 5% deduction for every business day they are late until after one week, at which point the paper will receive a zero);
• properly cite quotes, summaries, and sources.

Revisions
Students will be allowed one revision this semester from the first two major essays. The final essay and annotated bibliography are not revisable. The research proposal works differently, as will be explained in the prompt for that assignment. Revisions offer students an opportunity to recover from a possibly grade-damaging paper; however, revisions will only be awarded sufficient points to raise their grade by one letter (that’s 10% of the grade). Revisions will only be allowed for papers that receive a C or below. Any paper that is plagiarized or was never turned in is not eligible for revision unless otherwise discussed. For a revision to count, the student must complete several things:

• Make corrections beyond just those marked on the original paper. What this means is the student sat down, read my comments, looked at what was marked, reread his or her paper, and understood what the errors were and how to fix them. Any paper that only “fixes” the areas I marked will not be given full credit for a rewrite. The Prentice Hall Reference Guide or The Purdue Owl are valuable resources for helping students with their grammar and style. If the student is not sure what a comma splice is, he or she should look there first.

• Along with a revision, there must be a one-page explanation of the changes the student made and why he or she made those changes. This explanation needs to provide examples from his or her original graded paper as a way to support the claim of understanding. No revision will be accepted without this page. This page must follow the same format as the original paper (MLA style).

• Because this is a revision, there should not be an abundance of grammar, spelling, or formatting errors. Any revisions that still contain these types of errors will not improve the student’s grade, but will burn his or her revision opportunity. Students should make the revision worth their time and mine.

• Students will need to see me within one day of receiving the original graded paper to inform me of their plans to revise, as well as confer with me on ways to improve their paper. This is not
optional. Any student that does not meet with me, yet hands me a revision, will have it handed right back to them.

- Students will need to go to the AARC at least once to have a tutor look at their revision. It would be in their best interest to go with specific questions and concerns, as well as the paper prompt. If they do not understand why they received the grade they did, the AARC is not going to help them in that way. Students need to be cognizant of their writing abilities and be able to see what they are doing and not doing to make the visit to the AARC effective. If they go with generalities, the tutors will focus on the areas they think needs the most work, which may not be what the student is looking for. The AARC visit is not optional.

- The original graded copy must be turned in with the revision. If I do not receive this copy, I will not grade the revision.

- The revision must be submitted online through D2L. There will be a separate link for revisions. Again, if it is not turned in online by the time the revision is due, I will not accept it.

**Attendance & Punctuality**

Attendance is required for this class. Students will not have the necessary information to successfully complete assignments in the class if they are not present. Students are allowed 3 absences in this class without penalty. Between 4 and 6 absences will result in the loss of five points from their final grade while 7 – 9 absences will result in a loss of ten points and 10 or more absences result in a failing grade for the class. If students are absent beyond their 3rd absence and have a “valid” excuse for being absent, I will excuse it, and it will not be counted toward the total. Validity is determined by me if the excuse doesn’t fit within university policy on guidelines for an excused absence—I understand that life can be stressful, and things come up.

Additionally, being late to class will be taken very seriously. Punctuality and personal responsibility is a skill that students must develop to be successful in the classroom and beyond. If students are not present when I take roll for the class, they will be counted absent. But if something happened that made getting to class on time difficult, students should let me know at the end of class. I can be fairly lenient, at times. Also, leaving class early, without an emergency or getting my prior acknowledgment, will result in an absence.

Whether an absence is excused or not, students are responsible for any coursework or content that was presented that day in class. Students should ask their classmates or check the class’s D2L site to receive any missed assignments or material.

**Late Work**

If a student does not have a valid excuse for an absence, I will not repeat material from the class which the
student missed. Students cannot make up missed in-class activities unless they have a documented, excused absence. See SFA policy for what constitutes an excused absence. **If students are unable to turn in a major paper on time, they must make arrangements with me prior to the class meeting in which the paper is due,** and I must determine that the excuse for not being able to do so is valid. Otherwise, papers will be accepted for up to one week after the due date, but the grade for the paper will be reduced by ten percent of its total worth in points **per business day that it is late.** The papers must be turned into BOTH Dropbox and me in paper form at the beginning of class on the due date. If either of these is not turned on time the paper is considered late.

**Grades**

For each assignment a grade will be calculated according to the number of points it is worth. For some papers I will use a 10 point scale while on others I will use a 20 point scale. According to university policy, final grades for the course will consist of a letter grade only (no plus or minus). Here is a general description of my letter grades:

**A:**

Students earning the grade of an A on any assignment will have completed work that obviously demonstrates a more than average understanding of the course material and completion of all aspects and requirements of the assignment. The grade of an A is reserved for that work which expertly displays one’s ability to engage the ideas at hand, recognize and dialogue about the complications of such ideas, and translate such dialogue into clear, academic prose that is free of stigmatized errors.

**B:**

Students earning the grade of a B on any assignment will have completed work that demonstrates a more than average understanding of the course material and completion of all aspects and requirements of the assignment. The grade of a B is reserved for that work which adeptly displays one’s ability to engage the ideas at hand, recognize and dialogue about the complications of such ideas, and translate such dialogue into clear, academic prose that is free of stigmatized errors. However, the level of thought, while still above average, may fluctuate in terms of analytic abilities and expression.

**C:**

Students earning the grade of a C on any assignment will have
completed work that demonstrates an average understanding of the course material and completion of all aspects and requirements of the assignment. The grade of a C is reserved for that work which displays one’s ability to engage the ideas at hand (more so through summary and response rather than analysis), recognize and dialogue about the complications of such ideas (however, the complications recognized will focus more on surface level issues rather than the greater whole), and translate such dialogue into clear, academic prose that is free of stigmatized errors. As can be seen from this description, the level of thought will be acceptable and display that a student has read the assignment, but his/her analytic abilities and level of expression will not be nearly as complicated nor developed. Instead, C work will display a student’s hold to traditional methods of expression (simpler construction of sentence and paragraph development) and a struggle to develop complex, critical thinking skills.

D: Students earning the grade of a D on any assignment will have completed work that demonstrates a below average understanding of course material and a lack of completion of all aspects and requirements of the assignment. The grade of a D is reserved for that work which displays one’s struggle or refusal to engage the ideas at hand, simply summarizes the work under study with no actual recognition of or dialogue about the complications of such ideas, and the translation of ideas into writing is completed in such a convoluted manner that the audience will have difficulty following the conversation.

F: Students earning the grade of a F on any assignment will either not have completed the assignment, will have completed the assignment but not followed the guidelines, or will have completed the assignment and demonstrated a complete misunderstanding of the course material. In this case, it will be obvious that the student has either not completed the required reading and/or given him/herself
enough time to develop the work. The grade of a F is reserved for that work which does not engage the issues at hand, offers a base (not complete) summary of the work at hand with no critical engagement, and the translation of ideas into writing is either incomplete or the audience will be unable to follow the conversation. It is important to remember that a student can receive 0 out of 100 points. In the case that a student only partially completes an assignment or completes a work (in terms of page length, but not purpose) s/he may receive 0 points.

Withheld Grades Semester Grades Policy (A-54)
Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

Note-taking
You should always take notes in class. This gives you a record of what occurred that day, helps you internalize the material, and provides you with information that you may be able to use in your papers.

Academic Integrity (A-9.1)
Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

Definition of Academic Dishonesty
Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1)
submitting an assignment as if it were one's own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper without giving the author due credit.

If plagiarism is discovered on a student’s assignment, no credit will be given for the assignment unless the student and I reach an agreement for revision of the offending essay. Please read the complete policy at http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp

Students with Disabilities
To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/.

Acceptable Student Behavior
Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (see the Student Conduct Code, policy D-34.1). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who disrupt the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be subject to judicial, academic or other penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including electronic, classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The instructor shall have full discretion over regularly or who perform poorly on class projects/exams may be referred to the Early Alert Program. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance that is available to help SFA students succeed.

AARC
Writing tutors are available in the Academic Assistance and Research Center on the first floor of the library. Drop-in tutoring is offered Mon.-Thurs from 1 to 8 p.m and on Sunday afternoons. You can also make an appt. by calling 468-4108.

Course Calendar
Please note that the following schedule is tentative and subject to change at a moment’s notice. No due
dates for paper will be moved up to an earlier date, since I believe that is being unfair to students. I will attempt to keep changes to a minimum, but students must be aware that each class is a living thing and becomes unpredictable as the semester progresses. Daily work will be announced in class and listed on the day’s D2L page. This schedule should be seen as a general overview of the semester.

**Tuesday Aug 28** – Class introduction and syllabus review
   **Homework:** Write two-page, double-spaced letters of introduction and read “Shitty First Drafts” by Anne Lamott.

**Thursday Aug 30** – Discussion of the writing process; revision exercise.
   **Homework:** read “My Father’s Brain” by Jonathan Franzen and “Looking for Judas” by Tom Bissell

**Tuesday Sept 4** – Discussion of reading and profile writing.
   **Homework:** Read “Disneyland with a Death Penalty” by William Gibons.

**Thursday Sept 5** – Discussion of reading and profile writing. Give out profile assignments.
   **Homework:** Begin work on Essay 1.

**Tuesday Sept 11** – Grammar lecture.
   **Homework:** Continue work on Essay 1.

**Thursday Sept 13** – In-class work on Essay 1. *Essay 1 Due by 5:00 pm.*
   **Homework:** Read “Story of Your Life” by Ted Chiang and write 2-page summary.

**Tuesday Sept 18** – Discussion of reading.
   **Homework:** Read assigned article and write discussion board post.

**Thursday Sept 20** – Continue discussion of reading.
   **Homework:** Watch *Arrival*, directed by Denis Villeneuve and write 2-page summary.

**Tuesday Sept 25** – Discussion of film.
   **Homework:** Read assigned article and write discussion board post.

**Thursday Sept 27** – Continue discussion of film.
   **Homework:** Begin work on Essay 2.

**Tuesday Oct 2** – MLA Citation lecture and in-class work on Essay 2.
   **Homework:** Continue work on Essay 2.
Thursday Oct 4 – In class work on Essay 2.
   **Homework:** Complete Essay 2.

Tuesday Oct 9 – Essay 2 Due. Introduction to rhetoric.
   **Homework:** Read assigned article and write discussion board post.

   **Homework:** Read “Closer than We Think” comics.

Tuesday Oct 16 – Introduction to the rhetoric of futurism.
   **Homework:** Read “There Will Come Soft Rains” by Ray Bradbury.

Thursday Oct 18 – Discussion of futurism and the Apocalypse.
   **Homework:** Read excerpt from “The Singularity is Near” by Ray Kurzweil.

Tuesday Oct 23 – Discussion of the Singularity and contemporary futurism.
   **Homework:** Read articles regarding the nature of nostalgia and write discussion board post.

Thursday Oct 25 – Discussion of nostalgia and its relationship with the future.
   **Homework:** Complete outlines for Essay 3.

Tuesday Oct 30 – In-class work on Essay 3.
   **Homework:** Begin work on Essay 3.

Thursday Nov 1 – In-class work on Essay 3.
   **Homework:** Complete Essay 3.

Tuesday Nov 6 – Essay 3 Due. In-class playing of *The Oregon Trail*.
   **Homework:** Read historical material regarding the actual Oregon Trail and “Oregon Trail: How Three Minnesotans Forged Its Path” by Jessica Lussenhop.

Thursday Nov 8 – Discussion of game vs. reality and effectiveness of teaching with *The Oregon Trail*.
   **Homework:** Review digital games in teaching survey.

Tuesday Nov 13 – Discuss survey and the use of games in teaching/learning.
   **Homework:** Replay *The Oregon Trail*, taking notes for essay.

Thursday Nov 15 – Discussion of argument construction.
   **Homework:** Begin work on Essay 4.
Tuesday Nov 20 – Thanksgiving Holiday.
Thursday Nov 22 – Thanksgiving Holiday.

Tuesday Nov 27 – In-class writing.
Thursday Nov 29 – In-class writing.

Tuesday Dec 4 – Conferences.
Thursday Dec 6 – Conferences.

December 10-14 – Finals Week. Essay 4 due.