

# ENG 692

## Writing Technologies

**When:** TH | 6:30-9:10

**Where:** Robert Bell 284

**Professor:** Dr. Rory Lee

**Email:** [rlee2@bsu.edu](mailto:rlee2@bsu.edu)

**Office:** RB 2108

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### Course Description:

Pencils, pens, paper, and computers: all of them are technologies that are common to our culture and that we use to write our culture. However, when we cite these writing technologies, we simultaneously elide other historically important writing technologies, such as cuneiform, clay tablets, papyrus, parchment, typewriters, and word processors. What these examples of writing technologies indicate is that the tools we use to write, and thus the cultures that we write, inevitably change: some progress and persist, while others are replaced and effaced. All of these writing technologies are nonetheless connected to and influence one another in multiple ways, and as such, it would behoove us to tease out the relationships between and among writing technologies historically. Doing so allows us to understand better not only how and why writing technologies emerge and evolve but also what those evolutions mean for who is able to write, how, why, and to whom.

In focusing on the access to and the affordances of writing technologies historically and contemporarily, this course also offers us the opportunity to explore the implications of writing technologies along different and intersectional axes of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and identity broadly. Here, we'll consider critically issues of power, design, and literacy vis-à-vis the ways technologies privilege certain subjectivities, minoritize (further) others, and make possible performances of identity that are



controlled, monitored, monetized, subversive, and multiple. In so doing, we must not forget what Walter Ong and others continue to remind us: that is, that writing itself is a technology, one that restructures thought. In that sense, writing and the technologies we use to write are not innately human; in fact, they call into question what it means to be (post)human.

Writing technologies also impact and inform how those participating in academic disciplines know and do the best practices that constitute their fields. Even though every discipline has and is constructed through its own rhetoric, rhetoric is itself a discipline whose theories and practices both shape and are shaped by writing technologies. Knowing this, we'll examine the disciplinary ramifications of emerging digital technologies by attending to the nascent subfield of Digital Rhetoric, looking specifically at how rhetoric and the digital are theorized, practiced, and taught in the 21st Century in ways that both extend and complicate the writerly practices and traditions common to the West.

Because the scope of this topic and course can be rather capacious, we'll ground and orient ourselves by working within three units in particular:

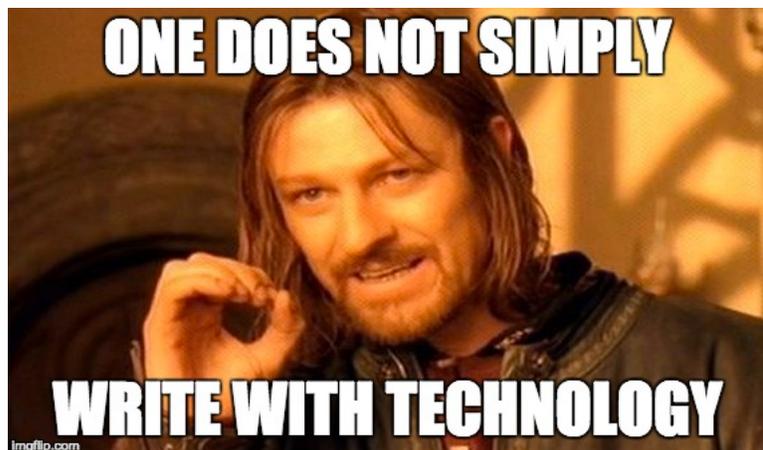
- [Unit 1: History](#)
- [Unit 2: Implications](#)
- [Unit 3: Disciplinary](#)

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## Course Goals and Outcomes:

Upon successfully completing this course, you'll be able to:

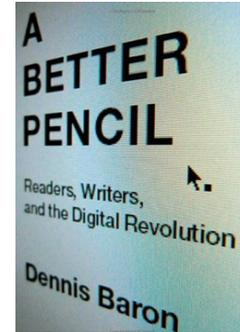
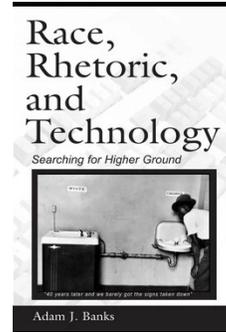
- think critically with and about rhetoric, technology, culture, and the intersections thereof;
- comprehend and conversate about the histories, theories, intersections, affordances, and constraints of writing technologies;
- examine and articulate the ways that writing technologies not only are identity (per)formative but also have tangible personal, social, political, educational, economic, and ethical implications that affect what, why, where, and how we compose (as well as who can compose);
- identify and explore issues of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and power associated with the design and use of writing technologies;
- understand and articulate the ways technologies influence and are influenced by disciplinary ways of knowing and doing, especially in and for the subfield of Digital Rhetoric, which works to reconsider and extend the study and



- practice of rhetoric in the 21st Century;
- compose with and think critically about different writing technologies; and
- play

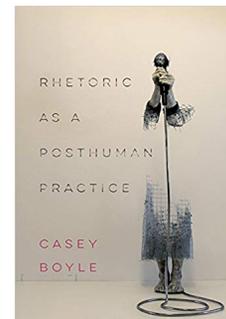
## Texts:

Banks, Adam. *Race, Rhetoric, and Technology: Searching for Higher Ground*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2006.



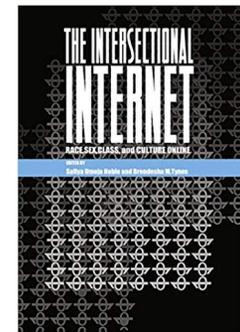
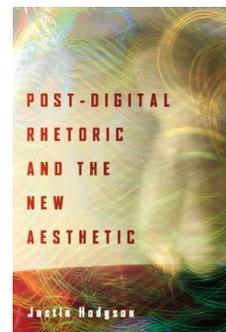
Baron, Dennis. *A Better Pencil: Readers, Writers, and the Digital Revolution*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Boyle, Casey. *Rhetoric as a Posthuman Practice*. Columbus, OH: The Ohio State UP, 2018.



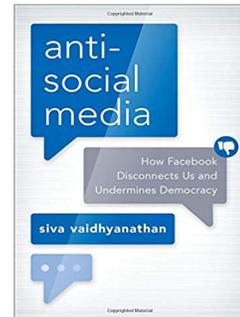
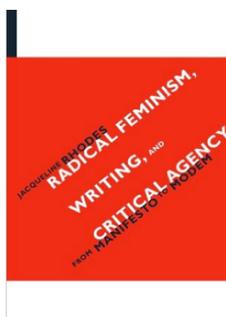
Eyman, Douglas. *Digital Rhetoric: Theory, Method, Practice*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2015.

Hodgson, Justin. *Post-Digital Rhetoric and the New Aesthetic*. Columbus, OH: The Ohio State UP, 2019.



Noble, Safiya, and Brendesha Tyne. *Intersectional Internet: Race, Sex, Class, and Culture Online*. New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing Inc, 2016.

Rhodes, Jacqueline. *Radical Feminism, Writing, and Critical Agency: From Manifesto to Modem*. New York, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005.



Vaidhyanathan, Siva. *Anti-Social Media: How Facebook Disconnects Us and Undermines Democracy*. New York, NY: Oxford UP, 2018.

## Projects:

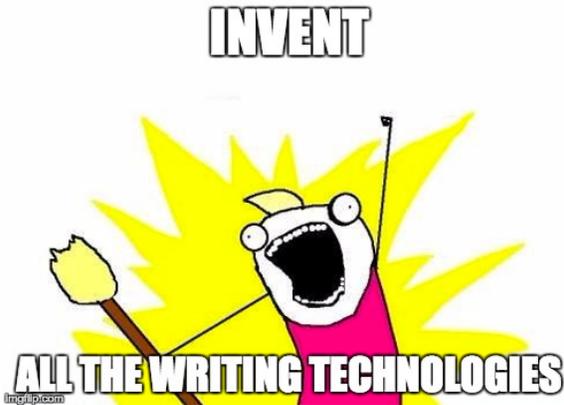
- Invent a Writing Technology 10% (100 points)
- Writing Technology Genealogy 20% (200 points)
- Writing Technology Critical Analysis 20% (200 points)
- Seminar Project 20% (200 points)
- SRRs (3 total) 15% (150 points)
- Weekly Takeaways and Artifacts (5 total) 15% (150 points)

**Total:** 1000 points

*All projects must be completed to earn a passing grade in this course.*

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## Project Descriptions:

- **Invent a Writing Technology (10%):** In an effort to understand better not only the materiality of writing but also the relationship between the technologies that we use to write and what it is that we write, you'll complete two tasks during the middle of the first unit: (1) write a 20-word-ish text of any type and on any subject using only writing tools and technologies invented by you, found in nature, and/or around the house, etc., and (2) write a *rhetorical rationale* wherein you explain how and why you created the first part of this project and what the first part of this project illuminated (or didn't) for you about the relationship between the technological tools you use to write and what sort of text you end up producing. **DUE: January 30th.**
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- **Writing Technology Genealogy (20%):** Upon examining the emergence, evolution, intersections, and implications of writing technologies historically, you'll select one writing technology in particular and provide a genealogy of it. To that end, you'll need to research and articulate how and why the technology was developed; what influenced its design; how (if at all) it influenced the design of subsequent writing technologies; how individuals used it, and how such uses changed (or not) over time; how it assists yet constraints the act of writing; and how it invites and excludes particular users and uses. **DUE: February 27th.**
  - **Writing Technology Critical Analysis (20%):** At the end of the second unit, which will cover the implications of writing technologies, you'll conduct an analysis of a writing technology through a critical lens of your choosing (e.g., race, feminism, class, intersectionality, remix). Here, you'll need to

explain how the critical lens you applied allows us to approach, understand, and interact with the writing technology in more informed and nuanced ways. **DUE: April 2nd.**

- **Seminar Project (20%):** To cap off the semester, you'll create a project that draws from and is informed by the work we've done throughout the semester. Such a project, however you envision it, should be practical in the sense that it has applicability and use outside of our class. Examples of such projects could include but are not limited to a conference proposal and presentation, a course proposal and the curricular design of it, a workshop proposal and the corresponding materials, and a previous or new project revised for publication. During the last week of class, you'll give a brief and informal **5-minute presentation** on your project to the class, and immediately following it, you'll receive feedback on your project-in-progress from your classmates. **DUE: May 2nd.**
- **SRRs (15%):** SRRs refer to the intellectual practices of summarizing, responding, and reflecting. During the semester, you'll compose 3 SRRs, which will summarize, respond to, and reflect upon that particular week's (set of) reading(s). In reflecting, you should (1) draw connections between the readings and your own experiences and/or other texts and (2) raise additional questions. Each SRR should be around 2 pages (single-spaced) and can be submitted to me via email ([ralee2@bsu.edu](mailto:ralee2@bsu.edu)). **DUE: 2/6, 3/19, and 4/9.**
- **Weekly Takeaways and Artifacts (15%):** Before five designated classes, you'll need to post two items on Canvas in the "Assignments" page: (1) a sentence or three that summarizes your major takeaway from that week's (set of) reading(s), and (2) an artifact (e.g., article, video, image, meme, current event, etc.) as well as a few sentences that briefly explain how said artifact connects to, complicates, and/or clarifies ideas you encounter in the week's (set of) reading(s). These takeaways and artifacts are an integral part of our course; they help you and your peers think through theoretical readings and offer each of you the opportunity to shape the class curriculum and discussion. **DUE: 1/16, 1/23, 2/13, 2/20, and 3/26.**

Technology has made it much easier to complain about technology.



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## Class Participation and Discussion:

This course is intended to help you both **know** and **do**: in other words, know about writing technologies and write about and work with them in well-informed, thoughtful ways. Our collective objective is to be exposed to and see value in different perspectives

and to foster **critical thinking**, which is to say: it's one thing to understand the material; it's another to engage with it, discuss it, apply it, critique it, question it, and respond to it. We want to do all of that, not just the understanding.

As such, and as is so often the case in graduate courses, your participation in class is imperative. And if we all participate, you'll want to come to class. Although I'm capable of it, I don't intend to act as a lecturer. In other words, you'll very much dictate where our conversations go. I'll assist us along the way, of course, but in doing so, I'll often look for your input. We truly are, as the metaphor goes, a team.

ME



WHEN NO ONE PARTICIPATES  
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While you're in class, please do what you can to make our discussions accessible, productive, and useful to everyone. This takes a great deal of energy; I realize that. Some of the texts we read may seem impenetrable at first because the authors are dense writers, their ideas may challenge your worldview, and/or you're unfamiliar with their historical context. I'll do my absolute best to ensure that our class time is spent meaningfully, but I nonetheless expect you to spend time with the material and work through it in order to help you situate yourself and the reading(s). To help us in this regard, I've attempted to make each week's reading load reasonable with the hope that you'll be able to get through the readings and, what's more, that we'll be able to wrestle with them thoroughly in class.

## Attendance:

Coming to class is—*\*surprise\* \*surprise\**—important. Our time spent together as a class sharing ideas, engaging in dialogue, and grappling with larger theories and concepts will prove most beneficial to your development as a student and a teacher, your understanding of the field, and your continued efforts toward professionalization. If you miss more than one class, you cannot pass the course.

There are "excused" absences, however. Excused absences include documented illness, deaths in the family and other documented crises, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, and official University activities. These absences will be accommodated in a way that does not arbitrarily penalize students who have a valid excuse. Consideration will also be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness.



Lastly, please do let me know if you're going to be absent and why. Attendance is mandatory, yes, but I'm also fully aware that life is messy and complicated and that shit happens. Please do keep me in the loop and updated if extenuating circumstances arise.

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## Late Work:

Work should be turned in on time, but late work will still receive credit. Extensions are also available for those with extenuating or hindering circumstances (e.g., ADA, health-related issues, emergencies, severe computer and technical problems, etc.). As such, please do let me know if there's a reason you don't think you'll be able to complete your work on time, so we can negotiate a plan going forward.

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## Plagiarism and Academic Integrity:

Since we're all here to learn, I assume you won't cheat or plagiarize. Although the concept of originality is fraught and frequently misunderstood and oversimplified, blatant plagiarism is still incredibly tacky. Plain and simple: *it will not be tolerated*.

If you have any questions concerning plagiarism and/or citation, please contact me. For more information regarding Ball State's policies on plagiarism and academic dishonesty, you can view the Handbook of Students' Rights and Responsibilities: <http://cms.bsu.edu/about/administrativeoffices/studentrights/policiesandprocedures/studentcode/viiethicspolicy>

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## Disability Services:

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please contact me as soon as possible. Ball State's Disability Services office coordinates services for students with disabilities; documentation of a disability needs to be on file in that office before any accommodations can be provided. Disability Services can be contacted at [765-285-5293](tel:765-285-5293) or [dsd@bsu.edu](mailto:dsd@bsu.edu).

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## Computer Access and Privileges:

You'll need to have access to digital technologies outside of class. In particular, you'll need to have Adobe Reader (which is free) to view and read some of the assigned readings posted on Canvas that are in .pdf form.

In addition, I encourage you to bring your laptop/tablet to class, as we'll engage in many exercises that will require you to write and/or work in digital environments. That said, don't abuse your computer/tablet privileges; that is, don't become physically absent by immersing yourself in your computer/tablet in ways that aren't pertinent to the class and its materials.

In addition, you need to prepare yourself for potential technological problems. Yes, I'm aware that computers crash and work gets misplaced/erased; thus, you need to take precautions and be prepared for that possibility. Save your work frequently. Back up your work. Buy a flashdrive. Create a cloud account. I urge you, however, to explain your situation to me, as we all experience difficulties with computers and other technology.

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## Writing Center:

All writers improve with practice and feedback, so as a student in this course, you are encouraged to use the Writing Center (Robert Bell 295/Bracken Library/online) to get additional feedback on your writing. To schedule a free appointment to discuss your writing, go to [www.bsu.edu/writingcenter](http://www.bsu.edu/writingcenter). Online and in person appointments are available seven days a week; however, plan ahead because appointments book quickly!

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## Digital Writing Studio:

The Digital Writing Studio (DWS), located in room 116 on the first floor of Robert Bell, provides a working and tutoring space where students (individually or in groups)

1. have access to and can learn how to use digital composing tools, and/or
2. can receive feedback on digital work in progress.

The DWS can help students understand better and work to complete a variety of digital and multimodal projects, such as (but certainly not limited to) constructing a website, producing a video, developing a digital portfolio, creating a blog, leveraging social media, organizing an informational campaign, designing an infographic and other documents, selecting and editing images, crafting a presentation, and writing and producing a podcast. The DWS is equipped with five workstations that house digital composing tools such as Photoshop, InDesign, MovieMaker, iMovie, and more.



In the spring of 2020, the DWS will be open from 12-4 Monday through Thursday and 12-2 on Friday. Students can drop by during open hours, or they can make an appointment by going to [www.bsu.edu/writingcenter](http://www.bsu.edu/writingcenter).

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## Follow #BSUEnglish:

The English Department maintains a blog, Facebook page, and Twitter account. We use these channels to relay information about jobs, internships, immersive learning opportunities, alumni success stories, career ideas, cool events, great books, and literary happenings. If you're thinking about the next step after college, you should definitely follow the English department using these

resources.

- Blog: <http://bsuenglish.com>
  - Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/bsuenglishdepartment>
  - Twitter: @bsuenglish, #bsuenglish
  - Instagram: @bsuenglish
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## Diversity Statement:

Ball State University aspires to be a university that attracts and retains a diverse faculty, staff and student body. We are committed to ensuring that all members of the campus community are welcome through our practice of valuing the various experiences and world views of those we serve. We promote a culture of respect and civil discourse as evident in our [Beneficence Pledge](#). For Bias Incident Response service information, go to [bsu.edu/multiculturalcenter/bias](http://bsu.edu/multiculturalcenter/bias) or e-mail [mc2@bsu.edu](mailto:mc2@bsu.edu).

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## Civility Sheet:

I will tolerate neither disruptive language nor disruptive behavior.

Disruptive language includes—but is not limited to—violent, belligerent, and bigoted remarks, including sexist, racist, homophobic, transphobic, and xenophobic language, either spoken or written. While I do not disagree that each of you have a right to your own opinions, inflammatory language founded in ignorance, bigotry, or hate is unacceptable and will be dealt with immediately.



Disruptive behavior includes the inappropriate use of cell phones or other technology during class (e.g., texting, web-browsing, browsing social media, etc.). Disruptive behavior also includes whispering or talking when another member of the class is speaking or engaged in relevant conversation (remember that I am a member of this class as well).

*This classroom functions on the premise of respect, and I have no qualms about asking you to leave the classroom if you violate any part of this statement on civility.*

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## Syllabus Change Policy:

This syllabus is subject to reasonable modification given the needs of the class. If that happens, I'll keep you posted.

# Course Calendar

## ENG 692: Writing Technologies

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### Week 1 (1/9): Salutations, Course Logistics and Overview, Experiences with and Definitions of Technology, and the Rhetorical Situation

Bitzer, Lloyd. "The Rhetorical Situation." *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 1 (Jan. 1968): 1-14. (.pdf)

Vatz, Richard. "The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation." *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 6.3 (Summer 1973): 154-161. (.pdf)

Consigny, Scott. "Rhetoric and Its Situations." *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 7.3 (1974): 175-186. (.pdf)

Shirky, Clay. "Why I Just Asked My Students to Put Their Laptops Away." Medium. Sept. 8, 2014. <<https://medium.com/@cshirky/why-i-just-asked-my-students-to-put-their-laptops-away-7f5f7c50f368>>

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## Unit 1: History

### Week 2 (1/16): Writing is/as a Technology

Plato. *Phaedrus*. (context and excerpt) (.pdf)

Ong, Walter. "Writing is a Technology that Restructures Thought." *The Written Word: Literacy in Transition*. Ed. Gerd Baumann. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1986. 23-50. (.pdf)

McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Berkeley, CA: Gingko Press, 1964. 17-50 and 109-124.

Porter, Jim. "Why Technology Matters to Writing: A Cyberwriter's Tale." *Computers and Composition*. 20 (2002): 375-394. (.pdf)

Haas, Angela M. "Wampum as Hypertext: An American Indian Intellectual Tradition of Multimedia Theory and Practice." *Studies in American Indian Literatures*. 19.4 (2008): 77-100. (.pdf)

Ridolfo, Jim, and Dánielle Nicole DeVoss. "[Composing for Recomposition: Rhetorical Velocity and Delivery](#)." *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*. 32.2 (2009)

DUE: Takeaway #1

### Week 3 (1/23): Baron's *A Better Pencil*- Part 1

Baron, Dennis. *A Better Pencil: Readers, Writers, and the Digital Revolution*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009. 3-111.

DUE: Takeaway #2

### Week 4 (1/30): Baron's *A Better Pencil*- Part 2

Baron, Dennis. *A Better Pencil: Readers, Writers, and the Digital Revolution*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009. 113-246.

DUE: Invent a Writing Technology

Week 5 (2/6): Rhodes's *Radical Feminism*

Rhodes, Jacqueline. *Radical Feminism, Writing, and Critical Agency: From Manifesto to Modem*. New York, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005.

DUE: SRR #1

Week 6 (2/13): Banks's *Race, Rhetoric, and Technology*

Banks, Adam. *Race, Rhetoric, and Technology: Searching for Higher Ground*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2006.

DUE: Takeaway #3

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## Unit 2: Implications

Week 7 (2/20): Noble and Tyne's *Intersectional Internet*

Noble, Safiya, and Brendesha Tyne. *Intersectional Internet: Race, Sex, Class, and Culture Online*. New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing Inc, 2016.

DUE: Takeaway #4

Week 8 (2/27): Noble's *Algorithms of Oppression*

Noble, Safiya. *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism*. New York, NY: New York U Press, 2018.

DUE: Writing Technology Genealogy

Week 9 (3/12): Vaidhyathan's *Anti-Social Media - Part 1*

Vaidhyathan, Siva. *Anti-Social Media: How Facebook Disconnects Us and Undermines Democracy*. New York, NY: Oxford UP, 2018. 1-105.

Week 10 (3/19): Vaidhyathan's *Anti-Social Media - Part 2*.

Vaidhyathan, Siva. *Anti-Social Media: How Facebook Disconnects Us and Undermines Democracy*. New York, NY: Oxford UP, 2018. 106-220.

DUE: SRR #2

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## Unit 3: Disciplinarity

Week 11 (3/26): *Ways of Knowing and Doing in Digital Rhetoric*

McElroy, Stephen, Matthew Davis, Rory Lee. "Ways of Knowing and Doing in Digital Rhetoric: Pedagogy." *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*. 24.2 (2020).

Eyman, Douglas. *Digital Rhetoric: Theory, Method, Practice*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2015.

DUE: Takeaway #5

Week 12 (4/2): Boyle's *Rhetoric as a Posthuman Practice - Part 1*

Boyle, Casey. *Rhetoric as a Posthuman Practice*. Columbus, OH: The Ohio State UP, 2018.

DUE: Writing Technology Critical Analysis

Week 13 (4/9): Boyle's *Rhetoric as a Posthuman Practice* - Part 2

Boyle, Casey. *Rhetoric as a Posthuman Practice*. Columbus, OH: The Ohio State UP, 2018.

DUE: SRR #3

Week 14 (4/16): Hodgson's *Post-Digital Rhetoric and the New Aesthetic* - Part 1

Hodgson, Justin. *Post-Digital Rhetoric and the New Aesthetic*. Columbus, OH: The Ohio State UP, 2019.

Week 15 (4/23): Hodgson's *Post-Digital Rhetoric and the New Aesthetic* - Part 2

Hodgson, Justin. *Post-Digital Rhetoric and the New Aesthetic*. Columbus, OH: The Ohio State UP, 2019.

DUE: (informal) Seminar Project Presentation (3-5 minutes)