

Internship Log: Initial Fall Meeting

I had the privilege of working with Dr. Ellie Long in the Spring 2015 semester by developing the initial documents and terminology for this English concentration in Writing, Rhetorics, and Literacies. I worked with a colleague to develop this material, and then we attended and responded to one focus group where the material was workshopped and discussed. Dr. Long agreed to let me continue on as an intern in the Fall 2015 semester and help continue developing language and awareness about this concentration.

The details of what I would actually be writing and/ or researching as the Fall 2015 intern was a bit hazy, though, so she and I met with Kristen Larue and the current director of Writing, Rhetorics, and Literacies, Dr. Keith Miller, at the end of August. Together the four of us discussed the possibilities for my internship, as well as the future of this concentration in general.

The following items were discussed in the meeting:

- The College of Liberal Arts & Sciences is interested in developing a process that is in touch with what young people want to hear. They use focus groups for this work, and want to to apply the method not only to this new concentration in the English department, but also a new concentration in the Communications department that was approved in Fall 2014 and others.
- Depending on the direction of the work, there might be a need for IRB approval. We discussed asking for IRB participation from the Spring 2015 ENG 205 class that participated in the focus group session, if needed.
- The wording and material that got the most traction from those in the focus group was the language that differentiated how this concentration was *different* from other concentrations in English, Communications, or Journalism. The students also liked how it opened up the possibilities for English majors other than just pigeonholing them as just a literature, creative writing, or linguistics.
- Some questions that were raised in moving from what has already been done to what we will compose this semester were:
 - What kind of language or advertisement gets students really interested in a new major?
 - How do we educate students on what rhetoric *is* and what it is *not*?
 - What kinds of literacies are used, valued, and/ or desired by students?
 - How do you know what you know?
 - How do you do what you do?
 - What products are most persuasive to students? Web presence, video, ASU news story, newsletter, social media, postcard, photographs?

- Possible stakeholders or consultants for this work:
 - Opel Tometi
 - Katherine Heenan
 - Jacqueline Wheeler
 - ASU News
 - PBS Newshour

From this discussion, we developed an initial action plan, as well as some possibilities for possible final deliverables for the semester. The initial action plan that we developed for my work was:

- Go through the summer data. This included a written transcript of one of the focus group sessions and the surveys data from both of the focus groups.
 - I was tasked with pulling out cool language and looking for talking points that make sense to the outside audience.
- Look at articles on literacies: these articles would help us choose the direction of our work and decide what to focus on in terms of persuasive messages to students.
- Refine the talking points with the purpose of using them in an article for ASU in the future. This article would be written with the purpose of positioning ourselves as part of what ASU is doing more broadly.

From this initial work, then, Kristen and I would draft an article to be used for the purpose stated above. This article would be written with the focusing of attracting and informing not only students, but also parents and other invested stakeholders. It would highlight what is unique about this concentration and how it differs from subjects like Journalism or Communications, with discussions about the strengths and constraints of rhetoric, the crafting of rhetorical compositions, and the focus on community, material, and culture literacies.

Based on those focus points, we also discussed the possibility of me drafting a BuzzFeed listicle that starts to get at some of those issues. A lot of students were turned off by the term “rhetoric,” associating it with only negative and propaganda type language. Along with our discussion of reaching this specific student audience, a BuzzFeed list that addresses the variety of ways that rhetoric can be understood seemed both useful and accessible to a variety of audiences.