

Writing for the Arts

VA 9586B / 9686B – Winter 2021
Tuesdays 11:30 am – 12:30 pm
1 hour synchronous + asynchronous



Yinka Shonibare, *The American Library*, detail, 2018

Professor Sarah Bassnett

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Virtual office hours – Tuesdays 2 – 2:30 pm via zoom

Class time: Tuesdays 11:30 am – 12:30 pm + asynchronous

Course Description:

This seminar is for MA, MFA, and PhD students who hope to contribute to public discourse on the visual arts. We consider different forms of evaluative, expository, and narrative writing in relation to recent exhibitions and other events in the world of visual art. Concentrating on op-eds, exhibition reviews, and catalogue essays, we discuss how to write for various kinds of publications and a range of audiences. We apply techniques to improve aspects of writing such as structure, style, argumentation, and narrative. Students also learn how to offer constructive feedback to peers. This seminar will be held online with one hour weekly of synchronous learning in addition to asynchronous course content and activities.

Format

This course has synchronous and asynchronous components. For the synchronous component, we meet on Zoom for one hour a week on Tuesday at 11:30 am. For the asynchronous components, you'll determine your own schedule for working through course activities and materials while still meeting the course deadlines.

Western University is located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Neutral peoples.

Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

- engage in writing as a process by drafting and revising your pieces of writing
- discuss and analyze selected articles
- communicate ideas in orally and in writing at a professional level in a variety of forms and to different audiences
- conduct research using scholarly and reputable news sources. Use these sources effectively to develop and express personal values on issues in the visual arts
- participate constructively in group discussions and workshops by offering feedback, sharing ideas, and listening respectfully to the views of others
- apply writing techniques and incorporate feedback from peers and the professor

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Technical Requirements



Stable internet connection



Laptop or computer with microphone, speakers, camera

For technical assistance, check the [OWL Help page](#) or contact the [Western Technology Services Helpdesk](#). Phone 519-661-3800.

[Google Chrome](#) or [Mozilla Firefox](#) are the preferred browsers to use for OWL.

All course material will be posted to OWL: <http://owl.uwo.ca>. Any changes will be announced on the OWL site.

Required Readings are posted as PDFs on OWL.

ASSESSMENTS

DUE DATES & GRADING

Assignment	Due date	Grading
Participation	Weekly	15%
Draft of op-ed	Feb 4 @ 5 pm	Ungraded
Workshop for op-ed	Feb 9 @ 11:30 am	5%
Final version of op-ed	Feb 22 @ 5 pm	25%
Presentation	Mar 9 @ 11:30 am	10%
Draft of catalogue essay	Mar 25 @ 5 pm	Ungraded
Workshop for catalogue essay	Mar 30 @ 11:30 am	5%
Final version of catalogue essay	Apr 6 @ 5 pm	40%

Participation 15% (weekly)

The participation portion of your grade will be based your contributions to discussions and activities. Please note that this course includes synchronous and asynchronous elements, and there is a weekly schedule. You are expected to complete course work on a weekly basis, and this includes contributing to asynchronous VoiceThread activities and synchronous discussions.

Workshop preparation & feedback – 5% x 2 = 10%

The workshops are an important part of this course, and in order to receive feedback, you need to circulate a draft of your writing before the workshop. Also, in order to offer constructive feedback to peers, you need to be present and prepared (having read the workshop submissions). When we workshop writing, each person will have a few minutes to offer feedback to the author. You should also prepare a written blurb summarizing your comments, which you will submit to the author after the discussion of their writing. We will review how to offer constructive feedback early in the course.

Opinion piece – 25%

The term op-ed means “opposite the editorial page,” because in the era of print newspapers, opinion pieces by individuals were published opposite editorials written by newspaper staff. Now, many media outlets publish op-eds online and even produce newsletters of opinion and analysis from a variety of authors, often providing a platform for diverse opinions. Examples include *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, and *The Conversation*. Opinion writing is based on research and conveys a specific viewpoint. Your opinion piece should be approximately 1000 words. There are two stages to this assignment: a draft for the workshop, and the final submission.

Presentation – 10%

Select a catalogue essay that offers a model for the essay you plan to write. Scan and submit the essay to me by February 23. You will be responsible for presenting an overview and moderating the class discussion on the essay. In addition, you should outline plans for your own catalogue essay.

Catalogue essay – 40%

This assignment is a 2000-word essay suitable for an exhibition catalogue. It should focus on a body of work by one artist, but it does not have to relate to an actual exhibition. There are two stages to this assignment: a draft for the workshop, and the final submission.

POLICIES ON LATE OR MISSED ASSESSMENTS

Extensions, granted for valid reasons, must be negotiated before assignments are due. Late assignments will be penalized by 5% each day. Exceptions to the late penalties are outlined below under academic consideration.

Academic Consideration:

The University recognizes that a student’s ability to meet their academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by extenuating circumstances, including short-term illness or injury. Reasonable academic consideration is a cooperative process between the University, the student, and academic staff. All participants in the process must act in good faith, and fulfil their respective obligations, if it is to succeed.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All work for the course **MUST** be entirely your own. All sources that you use for your assignments must be accurately cited. If you have doubts about how and when to cite sources, it is better to err on the side of caution. Consult the academic integrity lesson on OWL and / or consult with me before assignment due dates. All course work must be completed specifically for this course. Submitting the same work for credit in more than one course is considered cheating. Plagiarism and cheating are very serious academic offences and they will be dealt with strictly. Plagiarism includes:

- Quoting verbatim or almost verbatim from any source, including all electronic sources, without acknowledgement.
- Adopting someone else's line of thought, argument, or supporting evidence without acknowledgement;
- Submitting someone else's work, in any form, without acknowledgement;
- Knowingly representing another person’s idea as one's own.

For information concerning Western's Plagiarism and Academic Offences (Scholastic Offences) policies see:
www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2016/pg113.html#

All assignments are subject to review through plagiarism detection software. The University uses Turnitin.com for this purpose. Turnitin is an anti-plagiarism tool that screens assignments against a database of the Internet, e-journals, e-books, and a range of other scanned material, including other assignments for this course. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system.

CITATION STYLE

The Chicago Manual of Style, Humanities format, is the standard style for art history. Use this style to cite your sources for your research paper and other assignments. Please refer to the guide in OWL and the Library website for examples:
<http://www.lib.uwo.ca/services/styleguides.html>.

POLICIES & CONDUCT

Student Conduct

Students will conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the maturity and academic integrity expected of university students. Student conduct shall be consistent with the general laws of the community and with University regulations. Students shall show regard and respect for the rights, safety, and property of all members of the University community and are expected to act in a responsible manner within the University and the community at large.
https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/code_of_conduct.pdf

I am committed to fostering a class environment that is comfortable for all students, especially those from marginalized or underrepresented backgrounds. These core values include using preferred gender pronouns and human-centred language, which convey respect for people's diverse experiences. We do not always have to agree with one another; however, everyone is expected to show respect for the views of other people. Behaviour that is disruptive or discriminatory will not be tolerated.

Absences on Religious Holy Days

For purposes of this policy "the University has approved a list of dates which are recognized religious holidays which require members of those religions to be absent from the University; this list is updated annually and is available at departmental, Deans' and Faculty advising Offices." For Western's Policy on Religious Holidays see
<http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2016/pg119.html>.

Professionalism & Privacy

In addition to following the [Student Code of Conduct](#) Western students are expected to adhere to the following expectations of professional conduct:



- Students are expected to follow online etiquette expectations provided on OWL
- All course materials created by the instructor(s) are copyrighted and cannot be sold/shared
- Recordings are not permitted (audio or video) without explicit permission
- Permitted recordings are not to be distributed
- Students will be expected to uphold academic integrity standards
- All recorded sessions will remain within the course site or unlisted if streamed

Copyright and Audio/Video Recording Statement

Course material is copyrighted and using this material for any purposes other than your own education contravenes Canadian Copyright Laws. You must always ask permission to record another individual and you should never share or distribute recordings. Do not post course material on any websites or platforms.

RESOURCES

Office Hours / Email

Office hours will be held on Zoom. Please see me during my office hours if you are having difficulty with any aspect of the course, including readings or assignments. If you cannot make it during office hours, arrange an appointment or contact me by email. I will make every effort to reply to email within one to two business days. As I have other professional and personal responsibilities I typically respond to email Monday through Friday during normal business hours.

Support Services

There are numerous support services designed to assist students with the challenges of university. Please see the Student Development Centre web site for a description of the full array of services: <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>. Learning Skills Services offers one-on-one assistance with academic issues: <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/learning/>. Other services include Student Health Services <http://www.shs.uwo.ca/student/studenthealthservices.html>, the Registrar's Office <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/> and the Ombuds Office -- <http://www.uwo.ca/ombuds/>.

Health and Wellness

Western offers a variety of counselling services and several mental health resources for students. If you or a friend are feeling overwhelmed, confused or unsure of your mental health state, please don't ignore it. There are steps you can take to help yourself or help others. Western provides several on-campus health-related services to help engage in healthy living while pursuing your degree. For example, to support physical activity, all students receive membership in Western's Campus Recreation Centre. Further information regarding health and wellness-related services available to students may be found at <http://www.health.uwo.ca/>.

If you are in emotional or mental distress should refer to Mental Health Support at Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

University of Western Ontario Department of Visual Arts GRADUATE GRADING STANDARDS

90 – 100 Work of **excellent** quality

(PhD / MA) Approaching if not already at professional standards.

Thoroughly and creatively engaged at high level of research, possibly with primary sources; very high standards in writing and evidence of sophistication in all aspects of the work

(PhD studio / MFA) Approaching if not already at professional standards.

Thoroughly and creatively engaged at a high level of artistic and/or written production; very high standards and sophistication evidenced in all areas of production

86 – 89 Work of **very good** quality

(PhD / MA) Demonstrably better than expected with respect to research effort, mastery of critical and analytical tools, and involves polished presentation style

(PhD studio / MFA) Demonstrably evolved beyond expected standards of critical, theoretical and creative engagement in artistic and/or written production

80 – 85 Work of **good** quality

(PhD / MA) Shows competence in research and writing but could be improved in one or more ways

(PhD studio / MFA) Shows competence in artistic and/or written production but could be improved in one or more ways

78 – 79 Work of **acceptable** quality

(PhD / MA) Needs substantial improvement in one or more areas

(PhD studio / MFA) Needs substantial improvement in one or more areas

70 – 77 Work of **passable** quality (a warning regarding removal of funding)

(PhD / MA) Shows sufficient ability and effort to allow the student to pass the course, but is seriously deficient with respect to research approach, or critical or analytical skills, or writing ability

(PhD studio / MFA) Shows sufficient ability and effort to allow the student to pass the course, but is seriously deficient with respect to critical, theoretical or practical engagement in artistic and/or written production

– 69 Work of **unacceptable** quality

(PhD/MA/MFA) Removal from program