

Wed. January 22, 2014

Dear Students of WRT 104:

Welcome to your section of WRT 104, and to University of Rhode Island!

Whether this is your first semester here, or your third or fourth, the University of Rhode Island is an amazing place to experience some of the best years of your life. URI is also an incredible place to *learn*. With caring faculty, staff, and fellow peers, in addition to such a vivacious and historically enriching state like Rhode Island as the backdrop, you are all in for a journey unlike any other.

WRT 104 is a writing course with a focus on rhetoric. At times, the work may feel quite intensive. It's designed that way, though not to scare you and not to overwhelm you. The intensity of reading, thinking, and writing in this WRT 104 is to help you learn about *you*. Your thoughts. Your feelings, emotions and curiosities. Additionally, this is designed to help you become aware of how we communicate in particular instances as well as in our everyday lives. It's about seeing parts of life according to you and according to how we all interpret the messages around us. We'll do our best to capture that on paper in your projects and in class discussions. This course is not intended to see how much writing you can possibly fit into one semester. It *is*, however, about what you can bring to life through interpretation and writing between now and May 6th. In this process, of course you will be asked to react to various pieces of writing; with these assignments, I'll be guiding you on how to put your best writing and analyses forward. You *will* need reading and writing in nearly all other aspects of life – if it hasn't already started for you, it starts now.

With this letter I'd like to introduce you to the structure of this course. There will not be any formal lectures except for when I facilitate discussion that we will all contribute to, and when I introduce a workshop or group work, which you will independently manage with my guidance. In many instances, I participate right along with you. In essence, we are a community of learners all learning from each other and each other's discoveries. Furthermore, I will not be giving comprehension quizzes nor will I be asking you to simply write 'about' the readings or concepts you encounter. I will, instead, give homework assignments and journal prompts that can help guide you through thinking about and analyzing our rhetorical situations, our brainstorming processes, our thinking processes, and our reading processes. Everything we'll do is intentional.

The sequence of assignments I've created for you this semester is intended to introduce you to new ways of thinking about your life experiences and every day encounters with communication. We'll also consider our reflections, our course readings, and new ways of thinking about our own thinking. In addition to brief homework assignments that will help you become familiar with our concept and/or our readings, I've also built in class exercises that will spark discussion and help in the development of your own perspectives about rhetorical concepts (which some of you may be encountering for the first time). I will consistently go over all the methods we'll be using so you will always have an opportunity to get clarification on any process that which you do not fully understand.

In addition to the discoveries you'll make throughout the course, you will also gain hard skills as a result of your work. You will learn to respond both personally and critically to writing prompts, to pieces of writing, and to a variety of methods of communication; you will learn to pose and answer rhetorical questions while interpreting text, and you will most certainly finish the course having gained the ability to continually analyze rhetorical situations as you encounter them. You will also be introduced to a rhetorical language and reflective process that will allow you to better understand your reactions and your interpretations. As these skills are "transferable,"—meaning they can be used in other aspects of your academic and personal life—you may find yourself eventually applying these new approaches to your other courses or within your work environment. I encourage you to consider our work as a way to "see and re-see" all of your courses here at URI. There is much involved and we will discover as much as we can (starting with this letter!). If our progress feels awkward or difficult at times (or—*gasp*—impossible), I will walk us through the hard parts and/or provide us all with the direction we need. The understanding and brainstorming won't always be easy or smooth, but nothing worth discovering ever is.

Rather than think about our class occurring in a vacuum (that is to say, happening in our tiny classroom in isolation from the rest of the world), I'd like you to consider our class to be part of a type of research center—and a *thinking* center. The analyses we undertake, the rhetorical terms we come to know and appreciate, and the connections and discoveries we establish (and *re*-establish) will become the foundation for our research. In addition to learning about rhetoric, our other charge is to study **revision**—how we might "re-see" or "look again" at our texts, our own pieces of writing, our decisions, and opinions in everyday life. We will delve into how "looking again" can be established, how the act changes our thinking, and what contributing factors affect our larger interpretation of "re-vision." This will include re-establishing our initial interpretations or analyses, perhaps reseeing ideas in new and different ways, and this will especially include direct revisions of your essays (which, in turn, will require reestablishing and reseeing ideas...). An important part of learning both inside and outside a classroom requires taking new information and adding it to previous information to foster an even greater or broader scope of an idea or concept. This will happen with the course's ideas as well as with your pieces of writing. You will come to recognize 're-vision' as: 're-seeing,' 're-interpretation,' 're-thinking,' 'restating,' and 'rewriting' (are there others?).

As for my role in this course, while I am here as your instructor, I will act more so as a facilitator for the discussions and discoveries that happen while we're here. I will be your guide throughout the semester, although much of the learning will happen in discussion with each other and within your writing process—and your **re-writing** process. I am not going to stand in front of you and 'profess' information to you while you sit back in your chairs (how boring!). I'm also not going to impart life-changing knowledge onto you and expect you walk away having taken in every word. What I will do is walk you through processes that can help you make your own discoveries, connections, and conclusions through our coursework. I may ask you to think through your own thoughts in ways you never have before, and I may ask you questions you've never pondered before now. Additionally, I expect you all to pose questions (even difficult ones) to your classmates and to me. Each and every single one of you has permission to pose complicated questions and to toss out abstract ideas. And certainly bounce ideas off of each other, especially in small group work. I'm not expecting you to have answers to every single question, but I do expect all of you to think, to ponder, to contemplate – and to get curious about new concepts (especially concepts I've already

posed about ‘expectations’ considering I’ve just laid out varying course expectations...how’s that for a start!?!).

Lastly, I know there will come times when this course is not your #1 priority; however I do expect a consistent effort. Life happens, and sometimes we must revise our plans (there’s that word again). None of us are perfect—let’s face it. Finding the balance within this life and connecting that with your thoughts and reactions will set the stage for this journey ahead of you. I’m excited to watch it unfold.

As I close this welcome letter to you, I want to stress that you are not alone in your transition, nor are you alone in your celebrations or struggles along the way, whatever they may be. *We* are a community of learners. In addition, I’ve worked with college students in various roles for nearly fifteen years, and two years ago I left a position in academic advising to go back to school for my third degree. That went quickly, and here I am in this course with you. This semester starts my second at URI as a PhD student. My desire to work with students is just as important as it was ten years ago. Many changes are happening, and I assume you have them, too. My changes have certainly brought ups and downs (that’s an understatement!)—and you’ll have them, too. We all will. Also, I do love to read and write—but believe it or not there was a time when I absolutely loathed reading and writing, and then somehow it changed my life. #proofanythingispossible! I also run, practice yoga, love being outside, and greatly enjoy exploring all that Rhode Island has to offer. I am thrilled that we are all here.

With this – I urge you to contact me at any time (email to: lindy_briggette@my.uri.edu; or call or text at: 207.671.1033) with questions or concerns about class, assignments, readings, writing, or anything else you feel the need to ask about. Don’t ever hesitate.

Let’s have a great semester, shall we?

Your WRT 104 Instructor,

Lindy E. Briggette

Lindy E. Briggette

PS: Your first assignment is on the back of this letter. Happy writing...and welcome!

WRT 104; Spring 2014

Instructor: Lindy Briggette

Letter assignment

DUE: Friday, January 24th (email as an attachment to lindy_briggette@my.uri.edu)

Response to Letter from WRT 104 Instructor

ASSIGNMENT

Read the entire letter I've written to the class. I'd like all of you to write a letter back to me. This should be in formal letter format; in other words, start your letter with "Dear Professor Briggette," or "Dear Lindy." And be sure to close with an e-signature of your choosing – it can be your name in plain font, in fancy font, or it can be a visual icon of some sort, too.

Please address the following items in your letter:

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself and how you came to be in WRT 104 at URI.
2. How do you feel about writing, in general?
3. What specifically do you enjoy about writing and why? And what do you specifically not enjoy about writing and why? *(Please give detailed and **specific** reasoning such as "I love to write *because* it helps me deal with negative emotions," and/or "I do not enjoy writing *because* it makes me anxious".)
4. What do you like to write about?
5. What is your typical writing process? (Please be as specific as possible.)
6. Do you feel like you are a good writer?
7. What is one thing that you are proud of?
8. What is one thing you'd like to accomplish this semester?
9. What is one thing you'd like to accomplish in this English class?

(This assignment does have to be typed, however don't really worry about structure or grammar or what you think is right or wrong. And don't even censor if you don't want to. Just go with whatever you want to say.)