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EN 104: Fidelity or (Re)Vision in Adaptation

Course Description:

This course examines several major concerns of adaptation study: to what extent an adaptation—specifically a filmic adaptation—is “faithful” to the original, whether revisions alter the essence of the source, and how adaptations address new audiences, purposes, and situations. Oftentimes, popular film reviewers, fans, and even scholarly critics vilify adaptations for straying from what they consider the “original” text without considering the conditions under which the adaptation was created. These critics tend to offer side-by-side comparisons and neglect the ideological ramifications of any changes made. This course will challenge students to question the underlying assumptions of such arguments and to write their own arguments that reflect thoughtful consideration of the rhetorical situation of an adaptation of their choice, as well as offering the student’s own critical analysis of that adaptation.

Course Objectives:

- Students will understand and use the processes of writing and revision as tools for analyzing topics and evaluating their own writing.
- Students will learn to collaborate productively.
- Students will be exposed to a variety of rhetorical strategies and processes of analyzing; they will also understand the advantages associated with composing in different print, visual, and digital media.
- Students will understand how to use writing strategies and processes to analyze and write about issues aimed at different audiences and for different purposes.
- Students will understand their part in the university discourse community and how its written conventions operate.
- Students will understand and apply the elements of formal argumentation in writing; will understand the differences between Aristotelian, Rogerian, and post-modern argumentation; and will understand that various disciplines apply these principles in different ways.
- Students will learn to locate source material both in the library and online, read and evaluate this material critically, analyze and summarize points of view and assumptions, and synthesize sources in order to write extended papers incorporating source material.
- Students will be able to demonstrate the appropriate and ethical use of academic research, understand that citation formats vary among disciplines, and use at least one format correctly.
- Students will become conscious of their own development as writers.

Unit 1: Origins of Adaptation Study (3 weeks)

The first unit will expose students to adaptation theory. We will read several short theoretical works that define adaptation, as well as the pitfalls of the so-called “fidelity” model of adaptation. Class discussions will consider various approaches to adaptation, as well as adaptations that they think “work” particularly well, and why. We will also begin our discussion of classical argumentation, starting with the rhetorical triangle and other methods of literary analysis and argumentation. This first unit will require students to find and present two articles on an adaptation of their choice: one article that adheres to the so-called “fidelity” model of criticism, and one that provides a deeper analysis of the same work. A short compare and contrast essay will allow students to consider the pros and cons of each approach.

Unit 2: The Process of Adaptation (4-5 weeks)

To establish a model from which to work, we will examine the process of adaptation in one particular work: Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*.^{*} Using the Norton Critical Edition, we will read early modern works that influenced Shakespeare’s play, will study the play itself, and will look at literary and popular adaptations of *The Tempest*. We will watch the most recent film adaptation, Julie Taymor’s *The Tempest*, which stars Helen Mirren as Prospero (2010, available on DVD 13 Sept 2011). Students will read

popular and critical reviews of the film and, because it is so new, will brainstorm possible critical approaches to the film (for example, considering the film through the lens of feminist, postcolonial, or cultural studies). This unit will require a close reading of a scene from Shakespeare's play and an essay on Taymor's treatment of that scene.

Unit 3: Arguing Adaptation (6 weeks)

This research unit will require students to choose an adaptation of their choice and to create an argument about it. We will study in more detail the various approaches to argumentation (including Aristotelian, Toulmin, and/or Rogerian models), as well as proper methods of summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting. Readings will include handouts on different methods of argumentation, as well as *They Say, I Say: Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*. Students will be directed through the process of writing a research paper in a series of steps: the question analysis, the research controversy summary, the logical outline, and at least two drafts of the final essay. In addition, they will present their research to the class. During this unit, we will continue to consider different adaptations and will compare scenes from screenplays and filmed versions.

Unit 4: Adapting Creatively (3 weeks)

This unit will allow groups of students to create their own adaptations. Using the ideas we have discussed throughout the semester, they will choose a work of classic or popular literature and will write a short script, cast roles, and film their adaptation outside of class. We will have a special screening of their adaptations, and the final exam will be a reflection essay on the adaptive process.

Note: In addition to the essays outlined above, eLearning will allow for additional online discussions or responses to our readings.

Grade Breakdown for the course:

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| ➤ Compare/Contrast Essay (800 words) | 10% |
| ➤ Literary Close Reading (600 words) | 5% |
| ➤ <i>The Tempest</i> Essay (800 words) | 10% |
| ➤ Research Project (4000 words) | |
| • Question Analysis (350-500 words) | 5% |
| • Research Controversy Summary (500 words) | 5% |
| • Logical Outline (500 words) | 5% |
| • Research Essay (2800 words) | 20% |
| ➤ Final Exam (Group project and individual process essay) | 15% |
| ➤ Online Discussions/Responses | 10% |
| ➤ Research Presentation (5-10 minutes) | 5% |
| ➤ Daily work | 10% |

Course Texts:

- Hacker, Diana. *A Writer's Reference*, Custom 6th Edition. Bedford/St. Martin's. (isbn 0312538006)
- Graff, Gerald and Cathy Birkenstein. *They Say, I Say: Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*. 2nd ed. Norton, 2009. (isbn 9780393933611)
- Shakespeare, William. *The Tempest*. A Norton Critical Edition. Ed. Peter Hulme and William H. Sherman. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004 (isbn 0393978192).
- Other readings to be posted on eLearning

*If Blount students are already reading *The Tempest* in another course, another work could be substituted. Examples include *The Taming of the Shrew/10 Things I Hate About You*, *Othello/O*, or *Macbeth/Scotland, PA*.