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# Seminar in Academic Writing: Empathy & Activism

## Course Description & Inquiry

The University of Connecticut's **First-Year Writing** (FYW) seminars are characterized by collaborative, student-driven inquiry. As a **general education** course, FYW prepares students for future academic work by asking them to use writing to contribute to active academic conversations across various media. The instructor in an FYW seminar provides a site and offers contexts with

assigned texts, central questions, and directed discussion for the development of this ongoing work. Through cycles of writing, feedback, and reflection, students work on projects in which they select and define places where they might advance the class conversation. Writing projects in this course will be grounded in a semester-long inquiry of a fairly specific topic.

activists to see how they use rhetoric and empathy to get others to care about their issues and to take action. Our class "texts" will encompass various forms of media, which we will use to expand our ideas about what activism is and how to care for others. This will include in-class discussions and workshops, mini lectures, guided research, and several short compositions. Throughout the semester, I will guide you in a semester-long research & creative project to learn more about and take part in activism for a cause that matters to you.

## Your Instructor

Hayley Stefan  
(she|her|hers)

[hayley.stefan@uconn.edu](mailto:hayley.stefan@uconn.edu)

Office Hours:

Austin/CLAS 114

T/Th 10:00-11:00 am & by appt.

I will do my best to respond to emails within 24hrs, but I will not always be available past 7PM.

In this class, we will practice composition by centering our critical inquiry around how we respond to issues affecting our world and how we use empathy to encourage others to take action. We will learn about different ways of engaging in and understanding activism. We will look at case studies of global and local social movements and

## How to read this syllabus:

Resources and course materials are embedded in this syllabus. Click the **bold brown underlined links** for more information. Course readings are accessible via these links in the schedule.

## Course Outcomes & Practices

Your work in this class is geared to help you practice and achieve the following outcomes.

- Approach composition as a complex process
- Identify yourself as a writer
- Engage with a conversation
- Critically examine different ways of knowing
- Use technology rhetorically

### Writing, Reading, & Revision

In class, we will look at many texts, which will help you shape your ideas and experiment with ways to best communicate your ideas. Through the drafting process of each major project, we will use small group or individual conferences during, in addition to, or in place of regular class meetings. The quality of your involvement in these processes is a crucial factor in your participation grade in this course. You should expect to put significant time and effort into the revision process and for your projects to shift, change, and develop as you revise. Only final drafts will be assigned a grade, but all of your work may contribute to your final grade in the course.

We speak and write across languages in our classroom, and I expect you to be respectful of your colleagues in this multilingual space. I encourage you to speak to me about any concerns you have with language use (reading, speaking, and/or writing) in this course.

### Attendance & Engagement

Do your best to arrive on time and to stay in class for the full session. Please come to every class & engage in discussion; students find that this is the best way to interact with the materials assigned for in- and out-of-class work. The goal of the classroom is to work through ideas together, so take notes while you read, ask questions, and pose ideas to your classmates. When classes are cancelled due to snow or other emergencies, I may ask you to complete out-of-class work through HuskyCT.

### Submitting Work

Please do your best to stay on track of course work. Our course covers a substantial amount of material and moves at a swift pace — submitting work late may make it difficult to follow long with course discussion. That said, life events do sometimes occur which make it difficult to maintain our usual schedules. Please meet with me if any circumstances prevent you from maintaining the suggested schedule so that we can work on a plan together. All work should be submitted in .docx, .rtf, or .pdf format digitally through HuskyCT or email unless otherwise noted.



The NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt spread across the Mall in Washington, D.C.

## Resources for Students

This class is founded on an environment of mutual respect.

In line with respecting others, we will use the names and pronouns that members of this class ask us to use. Please share with me and/or the class (as you feel comfortable) the name(s) & pronouns you would like for us to use for you, if they ever differ from information shared on the first day of class. Throughout the semester, we will read texts that introduce complex, diverse, and even controversial subjects. I want this class to be a space in which we all feel safe and comfortable to share our thoughts, ideas, and opinions. Please remember at all times that your thoughts and ideas as writers and scholars are important and valuable. One of the goals of a university is to challenge us to apply pressure about what we know (and all that we don't know). I will never ask you to change your mind, but I will expect it will remain open in this course. That being said, dehumanizing others is antithetical to learning, and students who make implicitly violent remarks will be asked to leave immediately and will be counted absent.



Water protectors at the Oceti Sakowin camp protest the Dakota Access Pipeline's appropriation of unceded indigenous land in October 2016.

### Basic Needs

Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to

contact the [Dean of Students](#) for support. Please also notify me if you are comfortable in doing so, so that I can help.

### Accessibility & Inclusion

I know that we each learn through diverse methods, and my goal is to make our course as accessible as possible. This means we will work with methods and documents that prioritize how we process information, following the guidelines of the Universal Design for Learning. All course documents are available digitally for your use outside of the classroom. Please approach me as soon as possible with your individual learning needs so that I can adjust the course as needed. UConn provides guidance and resources for students at the [Center for Students with Disabilities](#), and in some cases they will contact your professors to instruct them on how best to teach you. Support is also available through UConn's [Academic Achievement Centers](#). I assume that our daily life directly affect how we engage in our education; please contact me so that we can discuss possible adjustments or alternative arrangements, as needed for homework, exams, or class.

### Harassment & Abuse

In accordance with UConn policies and [Title IX](#), this course is a safe space for all students, regardless of background, ability, citizenship, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, socioeconomic status, race, or ethnicity. If you have experienced discrimination or harassment at UConn, you can find help at the [Office of Institutional Equity](#) (OIE). Additionally, several places on campus are available for your support, including [Health Services](#), [Counseling & Mental Health Services](#), the [Rainbow Center](#), & the [Women's Center](#). My office and inbox are open should you need help accessing these resources. Please note that I am a mandatory reporter, so I must contact OIE if I become aware of issues that may pose a danger to a student's health or safety.

## Assignments at a Glance

### Social Engagement Project

Over the semester, you will choose one cause to research in depth to create a form of empathy-driven activism yourself. We will work on this in steps over the course of the semester, including a research log and project proposal. Former students will visit class to share their projects, which have included websites, social media accounts, documentaries, memes, blogs, and news articles.

### Essay 1: Interpretation

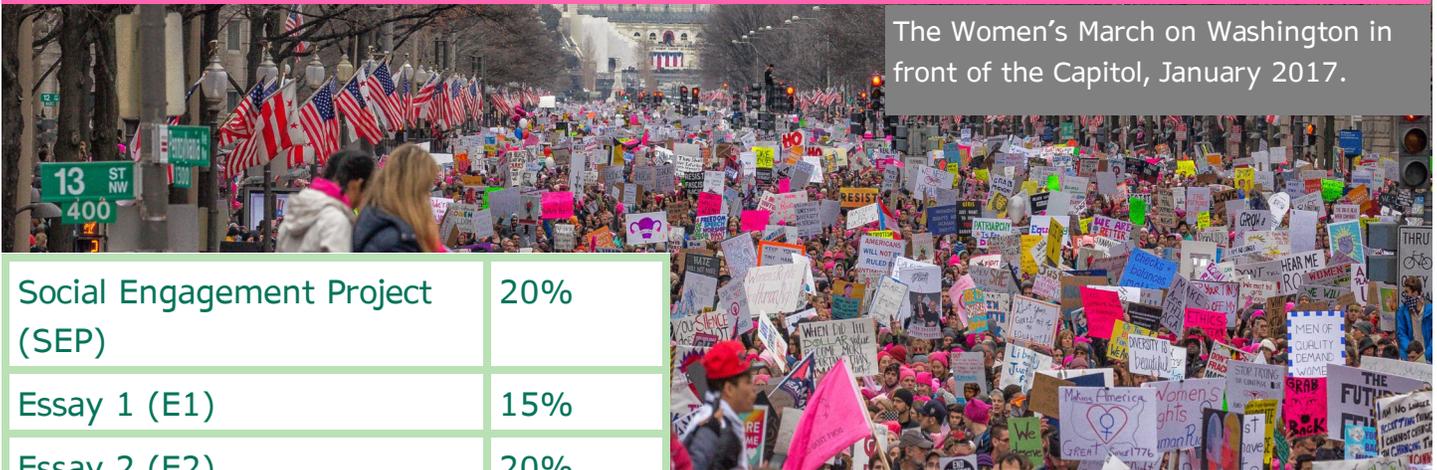
This composition asks you to digest and explain the concepts in our first two major readings, which are critical pieces about activism.

### Essay 2: Frame & Case

This composition asks you to apply the concepts you explained in your Interpretation Essay to a specific instance of activism. The ways of thinking about activism act as critical "frames" which you use to analyze the specific "cases" or examples.

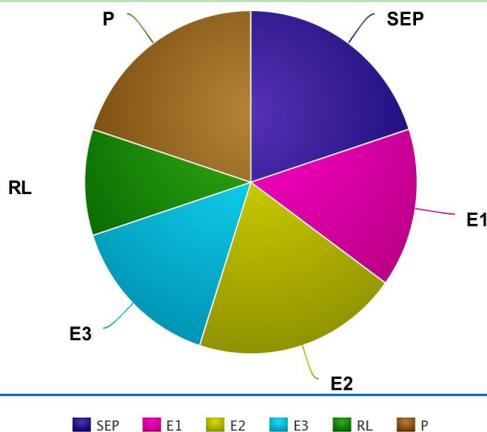
### Essay 3: Reflection

This composition asks you to analyze the decisions you made while creating your Social Engagement Project by applying the activism "frames" that you have researched and learned about.



The Women's March on Washington in front of the Capitol, January 2017.

Social Engagement Project (SEP)	20%
Essay 1 (E1)	15%
Essay 2 (E2)	20%
Essay 3 (E3)	15%
Research Log (RL)	10%
Participation (P)	20%



## Grading Scales & Components

Use this breakdown of grades to help you keep track of your progress throughout the semester. If at any point you would like to confirm your grade or discuss it with me, please email me, and I will be more than happy to talk through it with you.

94-100	A
90-93	A-
87-89	B+
84-86	B
80-83	B-
77-79	C+
74-76	C
70-73	C-

## Course Schedule

This schedule is tentative. It may change depending upon our interests as a class and the weather. I will keep you apprised of any changes in class and on HuskyCT. Be sure to check your UConn email address for updates.

The tentative schedule below is broken down into sections by week and then day. Homework appears on the class in which it is due. Essay deadlines are written underneath class dates & on assignment prompts. Items which are connect to hyperlinked resources. Clicking the links in **bold brown underlined font** in the schedule below will direct your browser to the reading or assignment described. Please note that you may need to be sign in with your UConn NetID for items hosted by the library.

Week One		
Tuesday, January 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Introduction to the class</li><li>• First-day writing assignment</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review syllabus.</li></ul>
Thursday, January 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Begin exploring types of activism</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review semester-long Social Engagement Project (SEP).</li></ul>
Week Two		
Tuesday, January 29 *Bring laptops to this class*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b><u>Martin, Hanson, &amp; Fontaine's "What Counts as Activism?"</u></b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Guided class research</li></ul>
Thursday, January 31 Due: Essay 1A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Writing workshop on "What Counts...?"</li><li>• In-class work on projects</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discuss Academic integrity</li></ul>
Week Three		
Tuesday, February 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b><u>Excerpt from Srikanth's <i>Constructing the Enemy</i></u></b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• SEP: Discussion of ongoing research</li></ul>
Thursday, February 7 Due: Essay 1B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Putting texts in conversation with one another</li></ul>	
Week Four		
Tuesday, February 12 *Bring laptops to this class* Due: Essay 1C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Revision &amp; writing workshop</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• SEP: Discussion of ongoing research</li></ul>
Thursday, February 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Writing group meetings</li></ul>	

### Week Five

**Tuesday, February 19**  
\*Bring laptops to this class\*

- Writing group meetings

**Thursday, February 21**

- Practicing close reading
- Revision workshop

### Week Six

**Tuesday, February 26**  
Due: Essay 1D

- Discussion of celebrity activism
- SEP: Discussion of ongoing research

**Thursday, February 28**  
\*Bring laptops to this class\*

- Miller's "War Room"
- Close reading & writing practice

### Week Seven

**Tuesday, March 5**  
\*Bring laptops to this class\*  
Due: Essay 2A

- Discussion of digital activism
- Presentation from former students
- In-class writing/research time

**Thursday, March 7**  
Due: Essay 2B

- Discussion of being an ally vs. being an advocate
- In-class work on essay 2

### Week Eight

**Tuesday, March 12**  
\*Bring laptops to this class\*  
Due: Essay 2C

- Writing workshop

**Thursday, March 14**

- Writing group meetings

### Week Nine

**Spring Break—No classes**

### Week Ten

**Tuesday, March 26**  
\*Bring laptops to this class\*

- In-class writing & research time
- SEP: Discussion of ongoing research

**Thursday, March 28**  
Due: Essay 2D

- Discussion of music activism

### Week Eleven

**Tuesday, April 2**  
\*Bring laptops to this class\*  
Due: SEP proposal draft

- In-class work on SEP proposal
- Meetings on SEP proposal

**Thursday, April 4**  
\*Bring laptops to this class\*

- In-class work on SEP proposal
- Meetings on SEP proposal

### Week Twelve

**Tuesday, April 9**  
\*Bring laptops to this class\*  
Due: Revised SEP proposal

- Mini-presentations sharing SEP progress
- In-class work on SEP

**Thursday, April 11, 2019**

- In-class work on SEP

### Week Thirteen

**Tuesday, April 16, 2019**  
Due: SEP

- Presentations

**Thursday, April 18**  
Due: SEP

- Presentations

### Week Fourteen

**Tuesday, April 23**  
Due: Essay 3A

- Discussion of empathy burnout
- Workshop on reflection essay

**Thursday, April 25**

- In-class writing time

### Week Fifteen

**Tuesday, April 30**  
\*Bring laptops to this class\*  
Due: Essay 3B

- Writing & revision workshop

**Thursday, May 2**

- Course evaluations
- End-of-semester reflection

### Note Regarding Recording & Sharing Course Materials

Please be courteous and respectful with our course materials. My lectures, notes, handouts, and displays are protected by state common law and federal copyright law. They are my own original expression; I've recorded them prior or during my lecture in order to ensure that I obtain copyright protection. Students are authorized to take notes in my class; however, this authorization extends only to making one set of notes for your own personal use and no other use. First-Year Composition: Empathy and Activism, 2018 Syllabus by Hayley C. Stefan is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).