“We Are Not in a Post Fact World: Wikipedia and the Production of Knowledge”
Spring 2021: First-Year Seminar
Thursdays, 3:30-6:00

David Cregar, Senior Language Lecturer
(David, Dave, or Professor Cregar; pronouns he/him)
411 Lafayette, 4th Floor, Room 413 South 212-998-8860 (EWP Main Number)
david.cregar@nyu.edu

Course Introduction
In this seminar, we will write, edit, and comment on articles in Wikipedia, learning the principles and practices of writing and editing in the Wikipedia community.

This hands-on work, with what is arguably the largest collaborative writing project in human history, will allow us to investigate key questions about how knowledge is constructed in Wikipedia and other sites of information:

- Who has access to information, and of what kinds?
- How is access to information controlled or “disciplined”?
- What perspectives are overrepresented or underrepresented in the texts (written, visual, audible) we encounter and engage with?
- How does a particular knowledge source shape or influence public knowledge or culture?
- What do the rhetorical stances or structures in Wikipedia reveal about the values of its editors and readers?

Our work will also focus on discrete academic skills: identifying gaps in existing knowledge, locating, accessing and crediting sources, understanding genre, audience, style, organization. and more.

Perhaps most important of all, you will be writing to an authentic audience of readers: readers who, as they say in Wikipedia, will “speak back” to what you write and edit.

Learning Objectives
- Pose questions and articulate ideas in clear and compelling prose
- Cultivate analytical and critical thinking
- Develop research skills, finding and analyzing source materials
- Incorporate source materials fairly and ethically
- Collaborate with peers, giving and getting good feedback
- Consider audience, genre, and disciplinary conventions
- Develop multimodal communication and presentation skills

Course Materials
- All required readings will be freely available on the web and posted on our class site.
- We will be working on laptops or tablets in every class. If you do not have a laptop or tablet with internet capability, we will arrange for you to have one for use in our class. Please do not plan to use your phone for this work.

**Grading Criteria**
There will be three main components for your grade: the work you do editing in Wikipedia, the work you do with the reading and writing assignments (related to but separate from the editing) and your participation in class. Your final grade will be the average of these three:

**A. Working in Wikipedia.**
This includes working directly in Wikipedia, or in the “Sandbox,” where you can draft and develop work before you make it public. (35%)

- Completing Training Modules & Exercises
- Writing & Editing Articles
- Evaluating and Commenting on Articles

What you will not be graded on. It’s important to note that for the work you do in Wikipedia itself, you will not be graded according to the quantity of edits you make: quality will be more prized than quantity. And you will not be graded according to whether your work “sticks” or not. Wikipedia is always a work in progress, and you may well experience having what you write or edit reverted back to what was there before. That is part of the process.

This also includes written reflections on your work in Wikipedia and a presentation to the class, reporting and reflecting on that work (20%)

**B. Reading & Writing Assignments**
This includes written responses to readings that discuss key questions about Wikipedia, as well as texts that address more theoretical or conceptual issues about the production of knowledge, culminating in a final 5-6 page essay (25%)

This also includes a presentation to the class, in response to one or several of the readings. (10%)

**C. Class Participation & Attendance** (10%)
Attendance is required for every class session, and your engagement with and participation in the class (both in class and out) – is essential. Being prepared for class means completing all the readings and writings on time, knowing the readings well enough so that you can discuss them in class (which is different than knowing the readings perfectly or comprehensively), and having all the necessary course materials with you and ready to go at class time. Maybe most of all, being prepared means
**remembering**: what were we doing in the last class? How did that work lead to the homework assignment? Where might we be headed next, given what we have done so far?

Participating in class means being engaged and invested in the work, struggling, in class, to figure out more about the questions you are thinking through. Participating also means both speaking and listening in class sessions. What did you *say* that helped others understand something better? What did you *hear* that helped you understand something better?

Finally, good participation means being a good citizen: respectful of each other, not making assumptions about someone’s background or beliefs, believing in each other, and your capacity, as a classroom community, to help each other develop as readers & writers, thinkers & learners.

**Academic Integrity, Plagiarism, and Cheating**  
(adapted from the website of the College of Arts & Science)

Academic integrity means that the work you submit is original. Obviously, bringing answers into an examination or copying all or part of a paper straight from a book, the Internet, or a fellow student is a violation of this principle. But there are other forms of cheating or plagiarizing which are just as serious — for example, presenting an oral report drawn without attribution from other sources (oral or written); writing a sentence or paragraph which, despite being in different words, expresses someone else’s idea(s) without a reference to the source of the idea(s); or submitting essentially the same paper in two different courses (unless both instructors have given their permission in advance). Receiving or giving help on a take-home paper, examination, or quiz is also cheating, unless expressly permitted by the instructor (as in collaborative projects).

**Office Hours**

Please plan to meet with me at least twice this semester, for individual or small group conferences. We’ll schedule these as we get further along in the semester. But also please feel free to email me anytime to ask a question, check-in or to schedule a meeting apart from these occasions.

**Disability Disclosure Statement**

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. The Moses Center website is [www.nyu.edu/csd](http://www.nyu.edu/csd). Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.
Academic Resources & Support:

**The Writing Center**
The Writing Center is a place where any NYU student can get help with their writing. Students meet with EWP Faculty for one-on-one help with their writing, for any class, at any stage of the writing process. [The Writing Center](https://nyu.mywconline.com)

**Writing Partners Program**
Sponsored by The Writing Center, The Writing Partners Program pairs trained, NYU peer tutors with undergraduates who would like to have regular tutoring and ongoing support in their efforts to meet the demands of university writing. Writing Partners will meet with international or multilingual students weekly or bi-weekly throughout the semester. Interested students should contact The Writing Center.

**Writing Affiliates Program**
The Writing Affiliates are experienced Expository Writing Program faculty who offer programming in the residence halls and commuter student spaces, designed to foster a culture of writing, and help students develop as readers, writers, thinkers, and learners. [Writing Affiliates](https://cas.nyu.edu/ewp/writing-resources/writing-affiliates.html)

**RISE "Essay Edit Workshops"**
International students can get one-on-one help with their writing from EWP Writing Affiliates. Students who plan to go can (and should) RSVP; these are drop-in sessions, but students who RSVP are given preference at the event. [RISE](https://sites.google.com/nyu.edu/nyu-r-i-s-e/welcome)

**Academic Resource Center/University Learning Center**
Offers peer tutoring, and special sessions for help with writing, at both the Academic Resource Center (18 Washington Place; 212-998-8085) and University Hall (110 East 14th Street 212-998-8047). [Academic Resource Center](https://goo.gl/4OetVO)

Work-Life Resources & Support:

- [The Wellness Exchange](http://goo.gl/hZ9tq3)
- [The Moses Center for Students with Disabilities](http://goo.gl/7CAcva)
- [Resources for Commuter and Off-Campus Students](https://goo.gl/ij50NS)
## Schedule

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<td>“Rhetorical Situations”</td>
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<td>What is an Encyclopedia?</td>
<td>O’Sullivan, Borges</td>
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<td>What is Knowledge?</td>
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<td>1 Mar</td>
<td>Content Gaps &amp; Bias</td>
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<td>Cultures in Contact</td>
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<td>No Class--Spring Recess</td>
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<td>What is Plagiarism?</td>
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<td>Expertise &amp; Authority II</td>
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**See below for titles and links to the reading and texts listed here.

### Readings

**Week 1**

Larry Gordon, “Wikipedia Pops Up in Bibliographies, and even College Curricula”
Clay Shirky, “How Cognitive Surplus Will Change the World”
https://www.ted.com/talks/clay_shirky_how_cognitive_surplus_will_change_the_world/transcript

Week 2
https://books.openedition.org/obp/1658?format=reader

Lawrence Liang, “A Brief History of the Internet from the 15th to 18th Century”
in Critical Point of View: A Wikipedia Reader, pp. 50-63
https://www.networkcultures.org/_uploads/%237reader_Wikipedia.pdf

Week 3
Dan O’Sullivan, “What is an Encyclopedia? A Brief Historical Overview from Pliny to Wikipedia”
in Critical Point of View: A Wikipedia Reader, pp. 34-49
https://www.networkcultures.org/_uploads/%237reader_Wikipedia.pdf

Jorge Luis Borges, “The Analytical Language of John Wilkins”

Week 4
Heather Ford, “The Missing Wikipedians”
in Critical Point of View: A Wikipedia Reader, pp. 258-268
https://www.networkcultures.org/_uploads/%237reader_Wikipedia.pdf


Week 5
Maja Van Der Velden, “When Knowledges Meet: Wikipedia and Other Stories from the Contact Zone”
in Critical Point of View: A Wikipedia Reader, pp. 236-257
https://www.networkcultures.org/_uploads/%237reader_Wikipedia.pdf

Week 6
Mary Louise Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone”
Week 7
James J. Brown, Jr., “Essjay's Ethos: Rethinking Textual Origins and Intellectual Property”
https://www-jstor-org.proxy.library.nyu.edu/stable/40593532

Margaret Price, “Beyond ‘Gotcha’: Situating Plagiarism in Policy and Pedagogy”
https://www-jstor-org.proxy.library.nyu.edu/stable/pdf/1512103.pdf?ab_segments=0%252Fbasic_SYC-5144%252Fcontrol&refreqid=excelsior%3A34df1b5f00031d9273ab9eb75a4178d4

Week 8
https://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2015/04/20/vital-link-discovery-access/

Kristin Yiois, “The Open Access Initiative: A New Paradigm for Scholarly Communications”
https://ejournals.bc.edu/index.php/ital/article/view/3378/2988

Aaron Swartz. Guerilla Open Access Manifesto

Week 9
https://www.networkcultures.org/_uploads/%237reader_Wikipedia.pdf

Week 10
Lawrence M. Sanger, “The Fate of Expertise After Wikipedia”
http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.proxy.library.nyu.edu/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=da9dece4-9b55-4317-8441-48420c391942%40pdc-v-sessmgr05

Week 11
E. Joanna Hartelius, “Wikipedia and the Emergence of Dialogic Expertise”
http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.proxy.library.nyu.edu/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=6&sid=da9dece4-9b55-4317-8441-48420c391942%40pdc-v-sessmgr05
Damien S. Pfister, “Networked Expertise in the Era of Many-to-Many Communication on Wikipedia and Invention”

Week 12
Donna Haraway, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of the Partial Perspective”
https://www-jstor-org.proxy.library.nyu.edu/stable/3178066

Week 13
Alan N. Shapiro, “Diary of a Young Wikipedian”
in Critical Point of View: A Wikipedia Reader, pp. 203-220
https://www.networkcultures.org/_uploads/%237reader_Wikipedia.pdf

Supplemental/Optional Readings
This is a small sampling of books, all entirely optional, offered in the spirit of opening paths into more specific areas of disciplinary interest.

Burke, Peter. A Social History of Knowledge II: From the Encyclopedia to Wikipedia.
Foucault, Michel. The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences.
Longino, Helen E. Science as Social Knowledge: Values and Objectivity in Scientific Inquiry.
Shirky, Clay. Here Comes Everybody.