English 101B – An Introduction to Rhetoric

Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 4:30-5:50pm
Location: HH2107
Instructor: George Ross, gross@uwaterloo.ca
Course blog: http://uw-engl101b.blogspot.com/
Office hours: Fridays 3:00-5:00pm, PAS 1284

Course Description

This course will introduce rhetoric – which, in a nutshell, is the art and study of persuasion. As a student in this course, you will learn to approach arguments in a critical and systematic manner, using a variety of methods and theories that this field of study has offer.

Course Objectives

1) You will learn what rhetoric is and how it works, in the context of history, literature, language, and a variety of popular media.
2) You will learn to use your knowledge to analyze existing arguments in a systematic, critical and respectful manner.
3) You will learn to produce effective academic arguments and think critically about the world around you.

Theory of rhetoric is far from straightforward and easy – it was and is subject to intense debate among experts, and it offers few simple answers or all-encompassing methods. Models of good arguments, such as Aristotle’s or Toulmin’s, will be discussed – but so will their shortcomings and criticisms. The goal of this course is not to give you ready answers or provide formulas to follow, but to engage you in using rhetoric to work with real, complex, multi-sided issues in media and literature studies.

Readings and lectures will provide ideas and approaches for you to build on, but the real focus of the course will be on applying rhetorical analysis to a variety of real arguments, ranging from the pages of history to today’s headlines, from academic debates to pop culture, from ordinary logic to surprising and controversial positions. You will engage with these arguments through class discussions and written assignments, learning to analyze and critique all types of rhetoric in a serious, balanced and well-composed manner. And in this process, you will most importantly be expected to produce your own effective arguments.

In the long term, the goals of this course fit into the overall aims of higher education, whatever you choose to specialize in. It is hoped that better understanding of rhetoric will make you a better critical thinker, speaker and writer, and will allow you to approach all types of arguments, problems and ideas with a rational, respectful and practical mindset.

Text

Course Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic of the week</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment (due)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sep 13</td>
<td>Rhetoric: Introduction</td>
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<td>Sep 15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sep 20</td>
<td>Rhetoric: Theory</td>
<td>Chapters 1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>Sep 22</td>
<td>Journal 1</td>
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<td>Sep 27</td>
<td>Narrative inducements</td>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
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<td>Journal 2</td>
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<td>Oct 4</td>
<td>Dramatistic inducements</td>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
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<td>Journal 3</td>
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<td>Oct 11</td>
<td>Power inducements</td>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>Oct 13</td>
<td>Essay Proposal</td>
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<td>Oct 18</td>
<td>Gender inducements</td>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td>Oct 20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 25</td>
<td>Musical inducements</td>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td>Oct 27</td>
<td>Take-home midterm</td>
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<td>Nov 1</td>
<td>Graphic inducements</td>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
<td>Nov 3</td>
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<td>Nov 8</td>
<td>Video inducements</td>
<td>Chapter 9</td>
<td>Nov 10</td>
<td>Journal 4</td>
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<td>Nov 15</td>
<td>Essay workshop</td>
<td>TBA</td>
<td>Nov 17</td>
<td>Journal 5</td>
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<td>Nov 22</td>
<td>In-class artifact analysis</td>
<td>TBA</td>
<td>Nov 24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 29</td>
<td>In-class artifact analysis</td>
<td>TBA</td>
<td>Dec 1</td>
<td>Final essay</td>
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Course Evaluation

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<tr>
<th>Journals</th>
<th>15% (5x3%)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Take-home midterm</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final essay</td>
<td>35% (proposal – 5%, essay – 30%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-class participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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Coursework Description

In-class Participation

Much of what we do in this course, particularly towards the end, will involve in-class discussions and activities. There will be both discussions of theory and of artifacts (i.e. examples of arguments). You will be expected to contribute to these discussions and to be rhetorical as much as possible – meaning that you will be expected to demonstrate that you can apply the theories you learned, participate in reasoned arguments, and contribute new ideas effectively to the course.
(In-Class Participation continued)
Note that while you are graded individually on all of your work, including participation, you will be expected to work with other students extensively during class, and there will be activities to complete as a group. Please be respectful, considerate and proactive when working with partners – don't count on others to do all the talking for you, and make sure that you both make yourself heard and give others the opportunity to speak!

Journals

Reflective journals are designed to give you an opportunity to engage with concepts discussed in the course, develop ideas for your final paper (or other projects), and practice writing. It also allows me as the instructor to get a better sense for your writing and thought process, and help guide you with direct feedback.

There will be 5 total journal entries assigned on weeks with no other work due. These must be 500 words (approx. 2 double-spaced pages) long, and will be based on a prompt given to you a week in advance. You may be asked to address concepts in the course, brainstorm on ideas, or analyze a bit of text. The journals are a reflection of your work-in-progress, so don't get overly formal with them, and use prompts as take-off points – there is no right and wrong answers, and what I am looking for as the instructor is evidence that you have studied course material and can formulate your ideas about it effectively.

The journals will be worth 3% of final grade each: 1 point for how well your journal responds to the given prompt and/or develops a creative/persuasive idea, 1 point for how closely and effectively it connects to theories of rhetoric discussed recently in the course, 1 point for completion (i.e. sufficient length and depth) and quality of writing.

Take-home Midterm

The take-home midterm is designed to test your ability to apply specific methods of rhetorical analysis to a given text artifact. You will be given texts to analyze, and three short-essay questions to respond to, each worth 5% of your final mark. It is designed similarly to a 1.5-2 hour written exam, but you will be given 2 days of your own time to work on it. The assignment (text artifacts + prompt + analysis methods to be covered) will be given at the end of class on Tuesday Oct. 25th. The submission is due at the start of class on Oct. 27th.

Final Exam

The final exam will be similar to the midterm in format, but written as a single 2-hour exam in December. It will include two parts – definitions of terms/theories from the course (short answers), and analysis text artifacts (short essay answers). The exam will be worth 20% of your final grade. More information on the exam and preparation for it will be given towards the end of the course.
Final Essay

The final essay is the largest single component of your grade, worth 35% of the final grade, and comprised of a proposal (500-1000 words = 2-3 double-spaced pages, worth 5% of final grade, due Oct. 13th), and the final paper (2000-2500 words = 6-8 double-spaced pages, worth 30% of the final grade, due Dec. 1st).

The assignment for this essay is to apply rhetorical theory to critically examine an artifact or a discourse (through a set of artifacts). You will choose the artifact(s) and methods of analysis yourself, using theories and approaches studied in the course, as well as additional academic literature. In other words, the choice of topics, texts and theories is up to you – as long as you do a bit of research and demonstrate a critical approach, virtually any type of cultural artifact is acceptable. Your topic can be as broad as discussing the discourse of global warming in the media, or a particular theme in a genre of literature - or as narrow as analyzing a movie scene, a song, an advertisement, or even the design of your favourite T-shirt or soft drink can. However, be wise about your choice, and choose something that you're confident you can make a compelling argument about! Don't choose something that is either too broad and ambitious for a course paper, or something that is too insubstantial or one-dimensional to make an interesting analysis of. When in doubt, you are welcome to consult with me about your topic.

The proposal is designed to help you decide on your topic. You are expected to do sufficient research and make a convincing argument for your essay topic in the proposal. Your proposal should include 3 sections: a description of your artifact, a discussion of what you want to argue about it (i.e. your thesis), and a preview of the theories and supporting materials (e.g. other research written about your topic) that you will use to produce your argument. While your proposal should reflect the contents of your final paper, you can change your topic or approach later in the course if you find it unmanageable. You will not be penalized for changing your topic after the proposal, however you must consult me about this in advance. You will not need to re-do the proposal for a new topic, but I may ask you to write about it in one of your later journals. Changing your topic late in the course without consulting me may raise serious concerns about your academic integrity.

The key to writing your essay successfully is not what you research and write about, but how you go about it. You must demonstrate substantial effort and understanding, and produce an interesting, critical and original analysis. It is not enough to imply describe the contents and history of your artifact, and list ways in which it is rhetorical – you must discuss your reasoning substantially.

More information on this assignment will be provided as the course goes on, and there will be an in-class writing workshop on the week of Oct. 15th.
Course Policies

**Academic Integrity:**
Members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. [Check Academic Integrity at UW for more information.]

**Attendance and Responsibility for Course Materials:**
*Attendance of all classes in this course is mandatory.* Missing classes without a valid (e.g. documented medical) reason will result in the loss of participation marks. If you must be absent from a class, please alert me in advance.

While this course does use a textbook, much of the study material will be provided in lectures – the textbook is only a starting point and will not provide sufficient information to complete assignments and pass the course. Likewise, while some of the course notes will be posted weekly on the course blog, these will only provide a brief outline of what has been discussed in class. You are expected to follow lectures and keep your own course notes.

If you miss a class or due date for medical reasons, you must submit the [University of Waterloo Verification of Illness form](https://www.uwaterloo.ca/health/services/medical-forms), completed and stamped by UW Health Services or your family physician, or you will lose credit for missed work.

**Written Assignment Guidelines:**
You must submit all your written work (journals, proposal, in-class midterm, final essay) typed and printed on paper. If you are unable to attend class, please email the work to me, but also to print and bring it to the following class. Please make sure that every assignment you submit includes at least the following information in the header, on separate lines: name, student number, course number, and date. All assignment submissions must be double-spaced and in standard size 12 font (Times New Roman, Arial, Calibri recommended; others acceptable as long as they are reasonably professional). Title pages are not required. Please print your assignments in black ink on plain white 8”x11” paper. Double-sided printing is acceptable and recommended. Assignments printed on multiple sheets should be stapled together.

**Due Dates:**
All written work is due at the start of Thursday classes, as per the schedule above. Please ensure that all work is submitted on time – no late assignments will be accepted, unless you have a documented medical reason, or make arrangements for extension with me at least two days in advance.

Since all work in this course, including the short journals, is assigned at least a week in advance, extensions will be granted only in exceptional cases. Missing previous classes, forgetting due dates, workload in other courses, extracurricular activities, writer’s block, or addictions to video games are not considered legitimate excuses for extension! Avoid leaving your work until the last moment, and when stuck for any reason – please let me know as far in advance as possible so I can give advice, grant extensions or issue partial credit. No credit will be given if you simply come to class without your assigned work.
Respect and Potential Offense:
Since analyzing interesting, up-to-date and unusual text artifacts and arguments is an integral part of class discussion and participation, please be aware that some of these artifacts may be potentially offensive (e.g. when discussing the rhetoric of racism, you may be presented an example of explicitly racist text to analyze, etc.). As course instructor, I will never endorse offensive or controversial views, but I may ask you to critically examine them. You may encounter opinions which you strongly disagree with in the process of discussion. Please approach these critically, and remain respectful of everyone else in the class at all times. If any of the discussion in the class makes you uncomfortable, please make me aware as soon as possible. However please do not disrupt the class to do so, and please keep all discussion at a level expected of a serious academic setting.

Discipline:
You are expected to know what constitutes academic integrity [check Academic Integrity at UW] to avoid committing an academic offence, and to take responsibility for your actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course instructor, academic advisor, or the undergraduate Associate Dean. For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71, Student Discipline. For typical penalties check Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties.

Appeals:
A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70 (Student Petitions and Grievances) (other than a petition) or Policy 71 (Student Discipline) may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to Policy 72 (Student Appeals).

Grievances:
A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70, Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4. When in doubt please be certain to contact the department’s administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.

Note for Students with Disabilities:
The Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD), located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the OPD at the beginning of each academic term.