University of Waterloo
Spring 2012
ENGL 101B: Introduction to Rhetorical Studies
T Th, 2:30-3:50, HH 139

“Rhetoric may be defined as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion. This is not a function of any other art.”
- Aristotle

“Rhetoric is rooted in an essential function of language itself, a function that is wholly realistic and continually born anew: the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols.”
- Kenneth Burke

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Course Description and Goals:

“An introduction to the study and practice of persuasion, including the history and theory of rhetoric, the structures and strategies of arguments, and the analysis of texts and artifacts” (University of Waterloo Course Calendar).

ENGL 101B is a foundational course designed to expose students to the history, theory, and scope of rhetoric. Although we will examine classical rhetorical theory, the primary focus of this course will be the application of rhetorical criticism in a variety of modern contexts, including (but not limited to) politics, marketing, media, and everyday communication. Above all, this course aims to provide students with the tools and vocabulary needed for engaging the social world in a critical, reflexive manner. In addition to readings from the course text (below), there will also be required readings from supplementary texts, which can be accessed via the course blog.

Required Text:


Recommended Text:


Assignments and Mark Breakdown:

- Participation: 10%
- Course Blog Contributions: 5%
- Vocabulary Quiz: 10%
- Mid-Term Exam: 20%
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Essay: 25%
Final Exam: 30%

Participation (10%):

Your participation grade depends upon your attendance, punctuality, and contribution to class discussion. If you merely show up everyday on time you will receive a participation grade of 7/10; the remaining 3 marks will come from asking/answering questions in class or on the blog, and demonstrating respect for your fellow classmates.

Course Blog (5%):

ENGL 101B will have its very own course blog, designed to provide students with an online forum for sharing items of interest (e.g. news articles), asking questions, or discussing any issues relevant to the course specifically, and rhetoric generally. Assignments and supplementary readings can be accessed via the blog. Students must participate in the course blog, contributing a minimum of two (2) blog posts at 250 words each, and one (1) response to another student’s blog post. The posts are due June 14th and July 19th respectively. Students will be provided with a username and password.

Although you are free to write on whatever you choose, your analysis should be grounded in concepts from class and/or readings. For example, you may want to write about a politician’s attempts to boost ethos, or comment upon the visual rhetoric of a music video or commercial. The blog is also a great way to practice argumentation in a (hopefully) non-threatening environment. NB: While I encourage lively debate, personal attacks or other disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated; we can disagree in a civil, respectful manner, and we should always aim to do so.

Vocabulary Quiz (10%):

Students must provide definitions for 15 terms taken from class and/or the readings (e.g., what is an enthymeme?). There will be an element of choice, and students will be provided with a master list of terms to study before the quiz. Date: May 24th. Time: 30 minutes.

Mid-Term Exam (20%):

Students will conduct a rhetorical analysis of a provided text, drawing from class material and course readings. Responses will be in essay/long answer format. An absence from a mid-term will require a doctor’s or other health care professional’s documentation in the case of illness. Any other extraordinary circumstances will also require documentation. Only under these circumstances can an alternative examination be scheduled. Date: June 12th. Length: 80 Minutes.

Essay (25%):

The term essay is your chance to apply the course material to a written, oral, visual, or procedural text. Essay topics will be provided; however, you may write on your own topic if you choose. You must submit an essay proposal to me no later than July 3rd. It is a good idea to start thinking about potential essay topics immediately. Try to apply the concepts from the course to your everyday life – while watching TV or a movie, while playing a video game, or while reading a book or the newspaper. How does rhetoric manifest itself in any or all of these
communicative modes? In addition to course material, you must conduct supplementary research in order to strengthen your argument (2-3 secondary sources should suffice). Proper bibliographic indexing is required, using MLA format. Specifications: Times New Roman 12pt font, double-spaced with 1 inch margins. Due: July 24th. Length: 2,000 – 2,500 words.

NB: Late essays will be penalized at a rate of 2% per day. If there are extenuating circumstances and you cannot submit your essay on time, speak with me before the due date and alternative arrangements can be made.

Final Exam (30%):

The final exam will cover the entire course, and will be broken into two parts: the first part will be a series of short answer, “fact” based questions; the second part will require students to conduct a rhetorical analysis of a provided text within a particular critical framework. If you have attended classes regularly and have taken careful notes while reading, there will be no surprises. Date: TBA. Length: 2.5 hours.

Class Schedule:

Week 1 (May 1, 3): Introduction: Rhetorical Studies. What is rhetoric? The 3 persuasive appeals. Read: Aristotle, Rhetoric Book 1, Ch. 2; Sellnow, Ch. 2.

Week 2 (8, 10): Classical rhetoric: Deliberative, Forensic and Epideictic rhetoric; the 5 canons. Read: Aristotle, Rhetoric Bk. 1 Chs. 4, 6, 8-10 (May 8); Selected readings from Cicero and Quintilian (May 10).

Week 3 (15, 17): Argument and Audience Analysis: Read: Aristotle, Rhetoric Bk. 2 Chs. 20, 22; Booth, “The Rhetorical Stance” (May 15); Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca “The Universal Audience;” Logical Fallacies and the Toulmin Model (May 17).

Week 4 (22, 24): Rhetorics of Popular Culture and Narrative. Read: Sellnow, Ch. 1. (May 22); Sellnow, Ch. 2; Hemingway, “A Very Short Story;” Vocabulary Quiz (May 24).

Week 5 (29, 31): ROOM CHANGE: Classes will be held in PAS 1237 (computer lab) this week. The rhetoric of Videogames and the Internet. Read: portions from Ian Bogost’s “Procedural Rhetoric” (May 29).

Week 6 (June 5, 7): Kenneth Burke and Dramatistic Criticism. Read: Sellnow, Ch. 4 (June 5); Burke, selections from “Container and Thing Contained” (June 7).

Week 7 (12, 14): Midterm Examination (June 12); Marxist Criticism. Read: Sellnow, Ch. 5; Blog Post Due (June 14).

Week 8 (19, 21): Postmodernism and Feminist Criticism. Read: Sellnow, Ch. 6 (June 19); bell hooks, “Postmodern Blackness” (June 21).

Week 9 (26, 28): Musical and Visual Rhetoric. Read: Sellnow, Ch. 7 (June 19); Sellnow, Ch. 8 (June 21).
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**Week 10 (July 3, 5):** Media-Centered Perspectives: Rhetoric in Television and Movies. Read: Sellnow, Ch. 9 (June 26); Film Theory Reading: TBA (June 28).

**Week 11 (10, 12):** Propaganda and Psychological Operations (PSYOPS). Read: Bernays, Propaganda, Ch. 1; U.S. and Canadian PSYOPS manuals (July 5).


**Note on plagiarism:**

The Faculty of Arts requires that the following statement on the avoidance of academic offences, including plagiarism, be included on all Arts course outlines: “Note on avoidance of academic offences: All students registered in the courses of the Faculty of Arts are expected to know what constitutes an academic offence, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for their academic actions. When the commission of an offence is established, disciplinary penalties will be imposed in accord with Policy #71 (Student Academic Discipline). For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students are directed to consult the summary of Policy #71 which is supplied in the Undergraduate Calendar (section 1; on the Web at http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infoucal/UW/policy_71.html). If you need help in learning how to avoid offences such as plagiarism, cheating, and double submission, or if you need clarification of aspects of the discipline policy, ask your TA or course instructor for guidance. Other resources regarding the discipline policy are your academic advisor and the Undergraduate Associate Dean.”

Note: On November 18/02, Senate passed a motion that all course outlines also contain the following reference to the student’s right to grieve: “Students who believe that they have been wrongfully or unjustly penalized have the right to grieve; refer to Policy #70, Student Grievance, http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.html.” For guidance on avoiding plagiarism and other academic offences, please consult the Arts Faculty Web page, “How to Avoid Plagiarism and Other Written Offences: A Guide for Students and Instructors” (http://watarts.uwaterloo.ca/~sager/plagiarism.html).

**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.