Department of English Language and Literature  
Fall 2011  

ENGLISH 104: Rhetoric in Popular Culture

Instructor: Stephanie Swinamer (slswinam@uwaterloo.ca)
Class Place & Time: Modern Languages 349, T/Th 2:30pm - 3:50pm
Office: PAS 1066
Office Hours: T/Th 4:00pm - 5:00pm, or by appointment

Course Description

This course examines the role of popular culture in shaping, influencing, and persuading everyday experiences. Using a variety of rhetorical theories and methods, this class will analyse, assess, and explore a range of artefacts, including advertisements, film, literature, television, music, radio, art, politics, and fashion. The goals of this course are both theoretical and practical: to understand rhetorical criticism and use this method of analysis to dissect the various forms of popular culture artefacts. This course seeks to promote critical analysis to increase awareness of how popular culture impacts daily experiences. We will use UW-ACE for communication and document management.

Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Articulate a coherent definition of "rhetoric", "rhetorical criticism", and "popular culture";
- Engage in the processes of close reading of an artefact by completing weekly assignments, rhetorical analyses, and a major research essay;
- Analyse how a particular artefact operates rhetorically through its ideas, arguments, structure, style, and context;
- Develop and structure a rhetorical analysis of a popular culture artefact using a reasoned argument and integrated source material to articulate and support positions.

Course Materials


Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Response</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>3 responses at 5% each (see schedule)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rhetorical Analysis #1</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Due November 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rhetorical Analysis #2</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Due November 22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Essay</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>Proposal Nov 15 - Final Dec 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation / Preparedness</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Throughout the term</td>
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Assignments

1. **Reading Response 15% (3 responses x 5% each):**

   Three reading responses will be assigned throughout the term. These responses will be derived from the sample published essays in Sellnow's book. In these responses you are expected to reflect and connect your responses to relevant course material. You will summarize the essay and respond to its argument and its application of a particular rhetorical strategy. The response paper will be marked on three criteria: summary of the original argument, adherence to proper grammar and mechanics, and the quality of your engagement with the essay. While the format of the response papers will adhere to the same style as for the class essays—12 point Times New Roman font, double spaced, MLA citation—you are not required to adhere to essay format; no introductory paragraph or thesis statement, for example, is needed. Direct quotations are also not required, but any included must follow MLA format.

   Please bring your responses to class, on the assigned dates, as they will also be used to facilitate class discussion. 400-500 words each.

2. **Rhetorical Analysis #1 10%  
Rhetorical Analysis #2  15%**

   Choose one popular cultural artifact and one appropriate method of criticism for analysis. You may not use the same artifact twice or discuss an artifact already covered in class group work. Write a three page (analysis 1) and a five page (analysis 2) rhetorical analysis of the artifact that demonstrates your understanding of terminology and critical method. The assignment must be original, have a thesis based argument, be structured in essay/paragraph form, and utilize at least three acceptable academic resources. The assignment must be typed in 12 point Times New Roman font, be double spaced with one inch margins, and adhere to MLA citation style.

3. **Research Essay (Critical Response Paper) 50%:**

   Choose a popular cultural artifact and perform an in-depth critical analysis, referencing the theories and applying tools of analysis covered in the course. You may not use an artifact you have already used or one referred to in class or group work. Your critical analysis skills will be evaluated in three stages:

   **Proposal 10%**
   You will need to submit a one page essay plan before you work on the essay. The proposal should identify the thesis you will be arguing. You will need to do preliminary research on your thesis: on both critical analyses of the artifact and on the theoretical framework you are applying. Your grade for the proposal will be based on how well you articulate your thesis, outline your research, and your overall style and grammar.

   **Peer Review Workshop 5%**
   In class you will peer review another student’s proposal - providing constructive comments and feedback. Your grade for the peer review will be based on the quality of your peer review comments.
Final Draft: 35%
From your proposal you will write a research based critical analysis. You will have to go beyond the course readings, lectures, and discussions (use approx 6-8 sources). A critical analysis rhetorically examines a popular culture artifact in the light of some theory or theorist we are studying.

What matters for your understanding, and consequently for your grade, is how you develop your analysis: what your examination yields in terms of explaining central aspects of the artifact and/or the framework you adopt, and how you demonstrate that yield. 2500-3000 words.

4. Participation / Preparedness 10%

This grade is based on your participation in class discussions, regular punctuality, completion of weekly readings, and general preparedness for class. Please bring a copy of *Rhetorical Power of Popular Culture* to all classes.

Course Policies

1. Class attendance is mandatory.
2. Late assignments will be penalized 5% each day, for a maximum of seven days. After seven days I will not accept papers for grading. You may submit late papers to the English Department drop box, located on the second floor of Hagey Hall or via email. Make sure that my name is on the first page for easy identification by the administrative assistants. The final critical response paper must be submitted on the due date, or it will not be accepted for marking.
3. No extensions will be granted unless there is an exceptional circumstance, such as a medical illness or family emergency, and proper documentation is given. “Busyness” is not a valid reason for an extension.
4. Use proper MLA formatting for all papers. Please double-space all written assignments and use 12-point Times New Roman font. Do not use cover sheets for assignments; rather, make sure that your name, student number, and the date are at the top left-hand corner of the first page, and please title all papers.

Class Schedule & Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Class Material</th>
<th>Assignments Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept 13</td>
<td>Introduction, Review Syllabus, and Group Organization</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept 15</td>
<td>Workshop</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept 20</td>
<td>Rhetorical Theory</td>
<td>RPPC 1 - Storey introduction</td>
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<td>Sept 22</td>
<td>Popular Culture</td>
<td>RPPC 2</td>
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<td>Sept 27</td>
<td>Narrative Analysis</td>
<td>RPPC 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept 29</td>
<td>Workshop: Narrative</td>
<td>Reading Response #1 (5%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 4</td>
<td>Dramatistic Analysis</td>
<td>RPPC 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 6</td>
<td>Workshop: Dramatism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 11</td>
<td>Power and Hegemony</td>
<td>RPPC 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 13</td>
<td>Workshop: Marxist</td>
<td>Reading Response #2 (5%)</td>
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Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/ her 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 professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 - Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline, http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/ infosec/ Policies/ policy71.htm

Grievance: 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, http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/ infosec/ Policies/ policy70.htm

Appeals: A student may appeal the finding and/ or penalty in a decision made under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline if a ground for an appeal can be established. Read Policy 72 - Student Appeals, http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/ infosec/ Policies/ policy72.htm

Academic Integrity website (Arts): http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/ arts/ ugrad/ academic_responsibility.html

Academic Integrity Office (UW): http://uwaterloo.ca/ academicintegrity/

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.