No such thing as unrhetorical ‘natural’ language exists that could be used as a point of reference: language is itself the result of purely rhetorical tricks and devices.

—Friederich Nietzsche

We are being swallowed up by American popular culture, but then the Americans are being swallowed up by it, too. It’s just as much a threat to American culture as it is to ours.

—Northrop Frye

**Tuesdays, Thursdays, 10:00-11:20, HH 150**

Course conductor: Randy Harris, x35362, raha@uwaterloo.ca,
Office hours: Wednesdays, 9:30-10:30, Thursdays, 12:30-2:00

**Objectives**

The objectives of 104 are the objectives of liberal arts (the arts of liberty) as a way of life: the enhancement of critical thinking in both the private sphere (exercising judgement) and the public sphere (engaging society and culture). We will pursue them by building and refining our facility with rhetoric. If you do this with energy and focus, you should also gain more facility with the ways and means of communication.

**Course epitome**

This course is about you. No kidding. You. It’s also about me, about the people sitting around you, about Charlie Sheen and Louis Armstrong, and about your best friend in grade six. But it’s you that you really need to learn more about.

You are a rhetorically formed creature, and the most massive instruments of that formation are those of popular culture. So we are going to look at how pop culture forms you, and what you should be doing about it.

**Digital base of operations**

For a variety of electronic services, we will be using UW-ACE.

**Required text**

A few ‘object texts’ may require purchase; details in the schedule

**Recommended text**

### Requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirements</th>
<th>worth</th>
<th>due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Take-home midterm exam</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>16 – 19 June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>tba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>proposal due: 28 June; essay due: 26 July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being rhetorical</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>all the livelong day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Exams

**Midterm**

The Midterm will be an analysis of some assigned artifact along specific critical grooves; the artifact and the grooves will be revealed during the 16 June class; your analysis must be digitally submitted by midnight 19 June.

**Final**

You will have to know both "facts" and "ideas" for this course. To test the former, the final exam will include multiple-choice, true/false, short-answer questions. These facts will come mostly from me. You need to show up for class, take clear, thorough notes, ask any questions that surface, talk to each other, get notes when you miss class; most of all, think about and apply what you hear. If you use the information, it will stick. For the "ideas" quotient of 104, there will be essay questions.

The final exam will cover the entire course.

### Being rhetorical

Come to class, contribute to discussions, participate in the development of the course. You need to be engaged in the topics and themes of 104 every time you're in class (and you need to be in class).

Ways to get a good grade: ask relevant questions, make salient observations, look for and point out connections in the discussions, use the rhetorical concepts we encounter to complain about the unbelievable pressure of having to be rhetorical on demand, ...

Ways to get a mediocre grade: sit in your seat; avoid eye contact with the professor.

Ways to get a poor grade: stay away from class (of course, but also, if you come), make long irrelevant commentaries, treat your fellow students with notable disrespect while they are commenting to class, read your e-mail, text your friends and enemies, review the calls on your cell phone, have a sandwich and a thermos of soup, ...
Essay

Your essay grade is the largest and most important component of your mark. Start thinking about your essay right away. I’m not kidding. It will not have to be very long (2,750 - 3,250 words), but it will have to demonstrate thought, research, and craft. You should work on your essay diligently. It should shape your thought and understanding as you shape it. I will work with you on all stages of its development—invention, arrangement, style and delivery. Feel free to bring drafts to my office hours to discuss and develop.

I require digital submission, in RTF or PDF only, by midnight on 26 July; this makes the logistics much simpler, and also permits easier screening for originality/plagiarism. Use the Turnitin.com drop box on the UW-ACE course page.

The essay will be a research-based critical analysis. You will have to go beyond the course discussions to find relevant rhetorical materials and apply them to the artifacts.

A critical analysis rhetorically examines a cultural artifact in the light of some theory or theorist we are studying. A typical artifact for analysis would be an aspect of some magazine or website or video or game, a scene from a movie or a TV programme, or a theme in a series, or a DVD interface, or a podcast, or the poster over your room-mate’s bed, ... look around you: pop culture is everywhere. Remember though, critical analyses need to be theoretically informed, so you will have to draw on the concepts and positions explored in the course, reinforced by specific readings, documented in the essay and listed in its bibliography. No fewer than five sources are acceptable.

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 (significantly including the research you marshal and deploy, and the cogency of your argument).

A proposal is required. You will need to write up a one-page essay-plan and discuss it with me before you write the essay. The proposal should identify the thesis you will be arguing (for instance, that Nip/Tuck is a critique of the commodification of beauty, or that Modern Warfare 3 is dangerous because of the motives it inculcates in its players, or that Marilyn Manson is an ironic persona). You will need to do preliminary research on your thesis: on both critical analyses of the artifact and on the theoretical notions you are applying.
My evaluation of the essay (including the proposal) will depend on the soundness, analytical sophistication, research depth, and rhetorical appropriateness of your work, along the following metrics:

### Proposal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Articulation of your thesis</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research outline</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style and grammar (sentence and paragraph structure, diction, spelling, punctuation, agreement, ...)</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Essay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Articulation and framing of your thesis</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research (quality of sources)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of evidence (research and analysis)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argumentation (relevance, coherence, structure)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style and grammar (as above)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Academic Integrity

Members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to both follow and promote principles of honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. That includes me as much as you. That’s one of the reasons I spell things out in this much detail. If you think any aspect of my conduct, including teaching, marking, and counseling, is unfairly detrimental to you or the class in general, you have not only the right but the obligation to let me, the English Department Chair, or the Dean of Arts, know about it, whomever you are most comfortable speaking with or you feel most appropriate for hearing your views and their reasons.

The late policy is simple: don't be. If personal concerns, including health issues, prevent you from meeting a deadline, contact me ahead of time to make arrangements; if unforeseen circumstances prevent you from meeting a deadline, contact me when you are able and we can work something out. Please note that bad planning, conflict with assignments in other courses, and video-game addictions (to list a few attested reasons offered by students in the past) are not interpretable as personal concerns.

**Discipline:** You are expected to know what constitutes academic integrity [check Academic Integrity at UW](http://www.arts.uwaterloo.ca/~raha) 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. But ignorance is not a defence. 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.

**Digital screening:** The University of Waterloo utilizes the plagiarism detection application, Turnitin.com.