Our Class

We all use writing every day to communicate to multiple audiences, in multiple situations, using multiple genres and media. Rarely, though, do we get to stop and examine how we fulfill our purposes in each of these contexts. But a close examination of rhetoric—that is, the choices we make when we communicate—is essential to effective writing. When we analyze the rhetoric around us, we can recognize that writing is not about right and wrong, but rather is about making choices depending on the context. With this understanding, we can develop our abilities to make effective choices in writing situations and therefore improve our communication skills.

To that end, this class offers you a chance to examine the rhetorical choices you and others make when writing and to improve your ability to make those choices in a wide range of contexts. That means our goals are:

- to help you think critically and communicate effectively
- for you to learn and practice a variety of strategies for inventing, drafting, and editing texts
- for you to learn and practice writing in a variety of academic genres
- for you to learn to read critically
- for you to learn to write persuasively by effectively employing elements of formal argumentation
- to help you give and receive useful feedback on writing for the purposes of revision
- for you to learn and practice communicating to a variety of academic audiences

To achieve these goals, we'll read and analyze the communication acts around us, and you'll develop vocabulary and methods to improve how you do so. You'll also write your own communication; you'll write four short assignments, including short essays and presentations, and you'll write three major projects: a personal narrative, a rhetorical analysis, and a report based on your research. Finally, you'll learn to workshop and talk about your own writing so that you can improve it.

Contacting Me

I look forward to getting to know you, so please stay after class anytime or come to my office hours to say hello, talk about your writing, or discuss ideas or concerns about the class. If those times don't work for you, please email me, and I'll make sure we find a time to meet. I’m happy to talk about our class and your writing, so don’t hesitate to get in touch.
Feedback

Conferences: We’ll meet three times during the semester for individual or group conferences so that we can talk about your work in person. These conferences will replace class periods when we have them, which indicates how important they are (in other words, missing a conference is equal to missing a class).

Written feedback: I’ll give you written feedback on your assignments and on drafts of your projects. I’ll make comments and suggestions, ask questions, and generally respond to your work.

Workshops: In addition to feedback from me, you’ll also get feedback from your classmates—often! Research suggests that the instructor is not always the best reader for student writing; you need as many readers as you can get, especially readers who are not also evaluating you. Peer workshops are a great way to get that kind of feedback, and you’ll learn about your own writing as well as your classmates’ when you practice this skill. Successful workshops depend on good classroom relationships, so you’ll need to get to know your classmates so you can learn to trust their readings of your work and, in return, to read their projects with careful attention.

Commitment to the Class

In order for this class to be successful, you need to be committed to it. That means not only that you come to every class, but also that you come on time, that you arrive having done all of the assigned work with energy and enthusiasm, that you show respect for your classmates by engaging with them, and that you come ready to be an active participant in class.

Being an active participant in class doesn’t mean you talk a lot. Rather, it means that you listen carefully, speak thoughtfully, ask questions whenever you have them, and help to create a class environment that involves everyone.

In the same way, being an active participant in workshops means that you prepare your own work fully and also respond thoughtfully to your classmates’ writing. And being an active participant in conferences with me means coming prepared to talk attentively about your work.

Finally, being committed to this class in terms of writing assignments and projects means that you complete and turn in all of the assigned drafts on time and in the correct format. But, more than that, it means that you think hard, take risks, and push yourself to try new, more challenging things with each piece of writing. I don’t expect you to be perfect writers—but I do expect you to work your butts off.

Individual Abilities

I’m looking forward to getting to know each of you and seeing what abilities you have. If you’re aware that your abilities don’t always fit into the structure of classes at UW, I hope you’ll talk to me so that I can accommodate you in whatever way you need. You can also make use of the AccessAbility Services office, located on the first floor of the Needles Hall extension (NH 1401), which 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 AS office at the beginning of each academic term.
Books and Materials

- Course reader (required, available at the book store). **Be sure to only buy the reader for sections 11 and 12 of ENGL109, which has my name on the cover.**
- Assignments, projects, and a few videos on LEARN.
- A notebook or loose-leaf paper for taking notes in class, freewriting, and drafting project ideas.
- Printing capabilities for plenty of printing, since you’ll need to print your work weekly.

The Writing Centre

The Writing Centre works across all faculties to help students clarify their ideas, develop their voices, and write in the style appropriate to their disciplines. Writing Centre staff offer one-on-one support in planning assignments and presentations, using and documenting research, organizing and structuring papers, and revising for clarity and coherence. You can make multiple appointments throughout the term, or drop in at Porter Library for quick questions or feedback. To book a 50-minute appointment and to see drop-in hours, visit www.uwaterloo.ca/writing-centre. Group appointments for team-based projects, presentations, and papers are also available. Please note that writing specialists guide you to see your work as readers would. They can teach you revising skills and strategies, but will not proofread or edit for you. Please bring hard copies of your assignment instructions and any notes or drafts to your appointment.

Grades

You’ll receive points for completing work throughout the semester, as per this breakdown:

- Assignments (4 in total, worth 10 points each) | 40 points possible
- Projects (3 in total, worth 100 points each) | 300 points possible
- Commitment to the class | 30 points possible

Your short assignments are a means to take risks when the stakes are low and to practice the kinds of writing you’ll do for your larger projects. At the same time, I have high standards for these assignments, so I expect you to work hard on them. I’m not looking for you to perform some specific magic writing formula, but I am looking for strong ideas, careful thought, and stellar effort for each assignment. I’ll mark these out of ten points, which roughly translates to 10=outstanding, 8=good, 6=okay, and 4=weak. I’ll put this mark into your grade calculations on LEARN.

Along with feedback on short assignments, I’ll give you feedback on drafts of each project by way of our conferences. I’ll then give you a grade for the final draft of each project using the rubrics found on LEARN. I want you to learn about writing in a setting that allows you to practice, take risks, and develop your abilities. Because the emphasis here is on the making choices and improving as a writer—something that cannot occur without trial and error—I won’t be grading you solely on how good the final draft of a project is or on whether or not I think you’re a “good writer.” Rather, I’ll take into account your revision process.

At the end of the semester, I’ll also give you points for your commitment to the class based on the breakdown found on LEARN.
Honesty and Careful Citation

I expect you to present your work honestly and to credit others carefully. If you have any questions about how to do so, ask. If you’re ever getting too far behind and are thinking about resorting to faking or stealing, talk to me so we can make arrangements to help you avoid those bad choices.

Attendance, Punctuality, Electronic Devices, Late Work...

This course is not actually a lecture course—you can’t simply get the notes on class discussions or workshops. Therefore, skipping class is not an option. If you’re sick or can’t come to class for another reason, you must email me before class to let me know and you must talk to a classmate about what you missed. This is your responsibility, so don’t forget.

Because this is a participatory course, if you miss more than three classes for a reason other than a documented family or medical issue, I’ll lower your final grade by 20 percentage points. If you miss more than six classes, you’ll fail the course.

Please also be on time. I don’t like to have to repeat things and take up class time because someone missed the first few minutes of class. Remember that being on time is a reflection of your commitment to the class.

In order to keep your focus on the class, and since you won’t every need to take extensive notes, you’re not permitted to use electronic devices during class time.

Finally, I don’t accept late work. You’ll receive 0 points for any work not turned in on time.

Additional Institutional-Required Statements for Undergraduate Course Outlines

Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. See the Academic Integrity and the Arts Academic Integrity webpages for more information.

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. For typical penalties check the Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties.

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.

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.
Schedule of Events (which is subject to change based on our class’s needs)

UNIT 1: WRITING AND REWRITING

Week 1

Monday, September 14 (Rosh Hashanah)

- Introductions to each other and to the class
- When we write...

Wednesday, September 16

- The syllabus
- Video: “Language,” by Stephen Fry and Matt Rogers
- “Let the Copula Be,” by Sonja Lanehart
- Syllabus overview
- Your languages

Friday, September 18

- Assignment 1: A letter to writing (hard copy due in class)
- Introduction to workshopping
- Mini workshop

Week 2

Monday, September 21

- Revised assignment 1: A letter to writing (hard copy due in class)
- “Me Talk Pretty One Day,” by David Sedaris
- “Bodies in Motion and at Rest,” by Thomas Lynch
- Analysing narratives

Wednesday, September 23 (Yom Kippur, Eid-ul-Adha)

- “Of Grace and Gold (A Personal Retrospective of Michelle Kwan),” by Karissa Chen
- Another essay in Some Call it Ballin’ that catches your eye
- Emulating narratives
- Planning for Project 1
Friday, September 25

- “Shitty First Drafts,” by Anne Lamott
- “The Poison Fish,” by Ken Macrorie
- Shitty first draft of Project 1: Personal Narrative (hard copy due in class)
- Self-workshop
- Sign up for conferences

Week 3

Monday, September 28 (Sukkot)

- Second draft of Project 1: Personal Narrative (2 hard copies due in class)
- Workshop

Wednesday, September 30

No class—conferences instead

Friday, October 2

No class—conferences instead

Week 4

Monday, October 5 (Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah)

- Project 1: Personal Narrative (due in Dropbox on LEARN before class)
- Presentations: What I’ve learned about my writing so far

UNIT 2: ANALYSING RHETORIC

Wednesday, October 7

- “Everything Is an Argument,” by Andrea Lunsford
- “The Contexts, Audiences, and Purposes of Writing,” by Anne Wysocki and Daniel Lynch
- Is everything really an argument?
- Analysis of public arguments
**Friday, October 9**

- Assignment 2: What ________ is arguing (hard copy due in class)
- Workshop

**Week 5**

**Monday, October 12**

*No class (Thanksgiving)*

**Wednesday, October 14**

- Revised assignment 2: What ________ is arguing (hard copy due in class)
- “Strategies,” by Anne Wysocki and Daniel Lynch
- Understanding rhetoric
  - Planning for Project 2
  - Planning ahead for Assignment 3 and Project 3

**Friday, October 16**

*No class—I'm away for an academic conference*

**Week 6**

**Monday, October 19**

- “About Rhetorical Analysis,” by Anne Wysocki and Daniel Lynch
- Analysis of rhetorical analyses

**Wednesday, October 21**

- “Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Adult Writers,” by Nancy Sommers
- Shitty first draft of Project 2: Rhetorical Analysis (hard copy due in class)
- Self-workshop and your revision strategies
  - Midterm feedback
  - Sign up for group conferences
Friday, October 23 (Ashura)

- Second draft of Project 2: Rhetorical Analysis (2 hard copies due in class)
- “Simplicity,” “Clutter,” and “Bits and Pieces,” by William Zinsser
- Self-workshop
  - Brainstorming interview questions

Week 7

Monday, October 26

No class—group conferences instead

Wednesday, October 28

No class—group conferences instead

Friday, October 30

- Third draft of Project 2: Rhetorical Analysis (2 hard copies due in class)
- Workshop

UNIT 3: RHETORIC AND MATH

Week 8

Monday, November 2

- Project 2: Rhetorical Analysis (due in Dropbox on LEARN before class)
- Looking back: What you learned about rhetoric (if we have time)
  - Looking ahead: Using interviews and research to report

Wednesday, November 4

- “Doing Field Research,” by John Ruszkiewicz and Jay Dolmage
- “The Interview: Learning to Ask” and “The Interview: Learning How to Listen,” by Bonnie Stone Sunstein and Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater
- More on research
Friday, November 6

- Assignment 3: Interview findings (hard copy due in class)
- Workshop

Week 9

Monday, November 9

- Revised assignment 3: Interview findings (hard copy due in class)
- “Report,” by John Ruszkiewicz and Jay Dolmage
  - “The Danger of a Single Story” (video on LEARN)
- Analysis of reports

Wednesday, November 11 (Diwali)

- “From Fish to Infinity” and “Rock Groups,” by Steven Strogatz
- Another Steven Strogatz column that catches your eye
- An item that catches your eye in arXiv.org’s math section
- What is math rhetoric?

Friday, November 13

- “Summarizing Sources,” “Paraphrasing Sources,” “Integrating Sources into Your Work,” and “Documenting Sources,” by John Ruszkiewicz and Jay Dolmage
- Shitty first draft of Project 3: Math Rhetoric (hard copy due in class)
- Self-workshop
  - Using primary and secondary sources
  - Sign up for conferences

Week 10

Monday, November 16

- “Sharpening,” by Ken Macrorie
- Second draft of Project 3: Math Rhetoric (2 hard copies due in class)
- Reverse outlines
  - Sharpening our writing
  - Sign up for presentations
English 109: Multiple Choices

Wednesday, November 18

No class—conferences instead

Friday, November 20

No class—conferences instead

Week 11

Monday, November 23

- “The Contexts, Audiences, and Purposes of Writing,” by Anne Wysocki and Daniel Lynch
- Third draft of Project 3: Math Rhetoric (2 hard copies due in class)
- Workshop

Wednesday, November 25 (Guru Nanak’s Birthday)

- Shitty first draft of Assignment 4: Presentations
- Presentations workshop

Friday, November 27

- Project 3: Math Rhetoric (due in Dropbox on LEARN before class)
- Assignment 4: Presentations

Week 12

Monday, November 30

- Assignment 4: Presentations

Wednesday, December 2

- Assignment 4: Presentations

Friday, December 4

- Assignment 4: Presentations and wrapping up the semester!