Contemporary issues in language, writing, and rhetoric

ENGLISH 292
AL 207
RANDY HARRIS

Section 2; Fall 1993
Wednesdays, 1:30-3:30
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Hours: Monday, 9:00-11:00; Tuesday, 1:00-3:00; or whenever you
can catch me.

COURSE EPITOME
Rhetoric, the study of suasion, is a very big topic. This course is a
practical overview of rhetoric, with particular emphases on one of its
aspects, professional writing, and on its principal material, language.
These three subjects—language, writing, and rhetoric—are central
concerns of the Rhetoric and Professional Writing program, and this
course serves in a general way as an introduction to the program.

REQUIRED TEXTS
Hauser, An introduction to rhetorical theory.
Course reader (Kinko’s notes)

RECOMMENDED TEXT
Kollin, Rhetorical grammar: Grammatical choices, rhetorical effects.

REQUIREMENTS
Change the world in 12 weeks (1 December) 20%
Presentation (3, 10 November) 20%
Participation (regularly) 20%
Dialogic journal (every 3 weeks) 20%
Final exam 20%

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<td>22/9</td>
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<td>Manufacturing Consent</td>
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Please have all readings done BEFORE class, and be prepared to DISCUSS them.
CHANGE THE WORLD PROJECT

TOPIC
It depends on how you want to change the world, what route you choose, and how far you go towards your goal. But I advise you (1) to choose a manageable topic, one that can produce some results in the time allowed (if you want to reconcile the Serbs, Croats, and Bosnian Muslims, 12 weeks may not be enough); and (2) to choose a project that engages and challenges your rhetorical mettle for a reasonable part of the term (asking someone to put out their cigarette is a rhetorical act which changes the world, but not a very ambitious one).

WORTH
20% of final grade

REPORT
Double spaced typescript, one side of the page only. Begin the first page, one quarter of the way down, with the title. Number all pages but the first in the top right hand corner. The submission should have at least five sections:
1. The problem (what you want to change).
2. The method (how you tried to change it).
3. The narration (what did you do, what did 'they' do, what else did you do, what else did 'they' do ...).
4. The analysis (how effective was your rhetoric, how effective was 'their' rhetoric).
   • Follow the analysis with notes (if any), then references (if any) on separate pages.
5. All relevant documentation (copies of letters, transcripts of speeches, and so on) in one or more appendixes.

LENGTH
It depends on the documentation required by your project, but the submission should include 4-10 pages of description and analysis (between 1,500 and 3,000 words).

CITATIONS
When referring to the primary documentation, just use appendix letter; for instance, (see Appendix A, "Letter to the editor"). When citing secondary sources (if any), use the same format as Hauser.

TITLE PAGE

for: Randy Harris  
English 292, Section 1

Title

Your name  
Your I.D. number
PRESENTATION

TOPIC  The topic is completely up to you, but it should be an argument. I also strongly advise that you combine the argument with your change-the-world project in some way, to reduce preparation time. For instance, if your project involves getting a city by-law changed, you can argue for changing the by-law. If you are attempting to improve literacy levels, you can try to persuade people to become volunteer teachers.

*Note:* Your presentation should not be a report about your project: “First, I thought we needed a new streetlight on Main and Whatsmadda. Then I went to the city council, ...”

WORTH  20% of final grade.

FORMAT  Stand at the front of the room and talk. Use any props you want, but if you need any equipment (slide projector, overhead projector, VCR, etc.), make sure you have everything arranged ahead of time.

LENGTH  5-10 minutes. The 10 minute mark is absolute: if you're not finished, you will be cut off.

GRADING  The audience (the rest of the class) will evaluate you, on four criteria:

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<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ethos</td>
<td>how believable, sincere, calm, direct, you are.</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathos</td>
<td>how effective you are emotionally.</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logos</td>
<td>how coherent and consistent your argument is.</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall effect</td>
<td>how convincing you are.</td>
<td>55%</td>
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I will also grade you, but will only use that grade in the event of apparent conspiracies.

*Note:* Completing the evaluation sheets is one of your small assignments. Come to the presentations, listen thoughtfully, and evaluate fairly, or you will lose part of your participation grade.
PARTICIPATION

WORTH

20% of final grade.

FORMAT

Contribute to discussions, fulfill small assignments, and cooperate with your peers.

GRADING

For discussion: Everybody begins with a B (7.5/10), and I will use a merit/demerit policy to adjust the grades from there. Merit will be awarded primarily on the quality of participation: asking relevant questions; making relevant observations; complementing or developing someone else’s contribution; and generally taking a constructive part in the class discussions. Quantity of participation is a positive factor to the extent that lots of quality contributions are preferable to a few quality contributions. Demerit will be assessed reluctantly, and only on the basis of repeated instances. The grounds for the demerit system are: absenteeism (you can’t participate if you’re not there); whispering or chatting while other people are contributing (or, especially, while other people were presenting their work); or making lengthy, unfocused comments that draw away from the general thread of discussion. (10%)

For small assignments: Completion of all assignments is an automatic 5% of your final grade in the course; failure to complete all assignments loses you 5%. There is no middle ground. This part of the course is like having a job: do it, or you don’t get paid. (5%)

For cooperation: Some of the assignments will be cooperative: you’ll have to work with others to fulfill them. In this case, your mark, based on my observation, is based on whether you contribute to the group projects. (5%)
DIALOGIC JOURNAL

_If you wish to inflict heartless and malignant punishment on young person, pledge them to keep a journal for a year._
—Mark Twain

**TOPIC**
Use this journal to make observations, form thoughts, express concerns,—about the material you read for class, about class discussions, about events and objects you come across out in the world that engage the issues in the class for you (or, perhaps, that you feel issues in the class _should_ engage, but don’t). Sometimes I will assign specific passages or discourses that I want you to engage; mostly, it’s up to you.

**WORTH**
20% of final grade

**FORMAT**
Pick a notebook, or diary, or whatever, that you feel comfortable writing in, and write in it comfortably. Please try and keep the entries legible, and please leave room for my responses after every entry (leave me about as much space as the entry takes up).

You can compose and submit your journal electronically (to raha@watarts), if you like.

You can also keep a running computer file, if you like, submitting the printouts.

But keep your entries rather free-form. Don’t worry too much about punctuation, spelling, or high-grammar. And certainly don’t think of the your writing as a piece of academic prose. Just capture your observations on the rhetorical, writing, and linguistic issues you think about during the term.

**LENGTH**
Roughly, 300 words per week, —in a single entry, or in several smaller entries.

**GRADING**
In an important sense, the journal is another version of your participation mark. It is a place for collecting observations and ideas about the materials in the course and in your writing-reading-rhetoricizing-linguisticizing life outside the course.

Relevance counts.