English 292: Rhetorical Theory and Criticism
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Office Hours (HH 256): Tuesday 11:30–12:30 and Thursday 5:00–6:00

Calendar Description: This course provides a survey of the multidisciplinary field of rhetorical studies. In addition to introducing key concepts, theoretical frameworks, and critical debates, this course examines the role of rhetoric in a range of academic disciplines and social contexts.

The systematic study of effective communication—the art of rhetoric—dates back at least to the epics of Homer and flourishes today in countless academic disciplines and spheres of social life. In fact, the historical “empire” of rhetoric is so vast that it “digests regimes, religions, and civilizations” (Roland Barthes). This class seeks to introduce students to some of the essential concepts, issues, and controversies in the history and theory of rhetoric by analyzing selections from key texts from antiquity to the present. In addition to demonstrating the relevance of rhetorical theory and criticism to a variety of social, intellectual, and cultural fields (law, politics, philosophy, literature, advertising, etc.), the class explores emerging forms of rhetorical practice made possible by new media technologies, such as propaganda, information warfare, and computational gaming. Ideally, students will leave the class with a firm grasp of the basic concepts of rhetorical theory and a deeper appreciation for rhetoric as an inventive, critical, and multidisciplinary enterprise.

Syllabus

September
7  Administration
12 The Sophistic Revolution: Gorgias, “Encomium of Helen”*
14 The Sophistic Revolution: Aristophanes, Clouds
19 Classical Rhetoric: Aristotle, Rhetoric
21 Classical Rhetoric: Cicero, The Orator
28 The Rhetorical Field: Chaim Perelman, The Realm of Rhetoric; Stanley Fish, “Rhetoric”

October
5 Rhetoric and Epistemology: Kenneth Burke, “Terministic Screens”; Michel Foucault, “The Order of Discourse”
10 No class
17 Rhetoric, Gender, and Feminism: Helene Cixous, “The Laugh of the Medusa”
19 Rhetoric, Gender, and Feminism: Luce Irigaray, “The Power of Discourse and the Subordination of the Feminine”
24 Rhetoric and Propaganda: Jacques Ellul, Propaganda
26 Rhetoric and Propaganda: Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf
31 Rhetoric and Information Warfare: John Arquilla, “Information, Power, and Grand Strategy”

November
7 Rhetoric and Media Studies: Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media
9 Rhetoric and Videogames: Ian Bogost, Persuasive Games
14 Rhetoric, Semiotics, and Popular Culture: Roland Barthes, Mythologies
16 Rhetoric, Semiotics, and Popular Culture: Louis Marin, “Disneyland: A Degenerate Utopia”
21 Rhetoric and Advertising: Edward MacQuarrie, “Figures of Rhetoric in Advertising”
28 Quiz
*Gorgias online: http://myweb.fsu.edu/jjm09f/RhetoricSpring2012/Gorgias%20Encomium%20of%20Helen.pdf

**Grades**
10% Participation
10% Reading Responses
30% Presentation
40% Essay
10% In-class Quiz

**Participation (10%)**
In addition to discussing reading responses, students are expected to contribute to class discussion on a regular basis. This involves raising ideas for discussion, responding to others, asking questions, etc.

**Reading Responses (100 words) (10%)**
For each class, students are required to write a reading response that provides three reasons why the text under discussion for the day is important to the study of rhetoric as you understand it. It need not be a unified paragraph. In addition to demonstrating that you have read and reflected on the texts, responses serve as the basis for informed class discussion. Students will be asked to discuss their responses in class several times throughout the semester. Responses are to be printed and submitted at the end of each class. Late responses will not be accepted. Responses are read but not graded—credit is earned for completing the assignment. Format: 100 words; Times New Roman 12 pt.; double-spaced; Word doc or docx.

**Presentation (1000 words [approx. 4 pp.]) (30%)**
Write an essay in which you analyze one of the texts on the syllabus (you will sign up for a text). This will be read to the class as a formal essay, as it would at a conference. Do not merely summarize the text, as in a book report (although summary and exposition may be part of your essay). Instead, offer an interpretation and argument that demonstrates its significance to the field of rhetorical studies as you understand it. Please be prepared to respond to questions after you have finished reading your essay. This assignment will be graded and returned.

**Due Date**
A hard copy of the essay is to be submitted the same day it is presented in class.

**Format**
1000 words; double-spaced; 12 point; Times New Roman; 1” margins; MS Word doc or docx. Please state the word count of your presentation at the top of the first page.

**Essay (1750 words [approx. 7 pp.]) (40%)**
Write an essay in which you compare and/or contrast any two texts on the syllabus (excluding the text on which you wrote your presentation). Do not merely summarize these works. Instead, isolate a key issue, theme, or problem and offer an interpretation and argument that evaluates their significance to the field of rhetorical studies. Be sure to develop an argument over the course of the whole essay (rather than simply conjoining two distinct papers). In addition, be sure to support your argument with relevant citations from the text. This essay is to be uploaded to the “Essay” section of the LEARN dropbox.

**Due Date**
This essay is due after the end of class and should therefore be uploaded to the “Essay” section of the LEARN Dropbox.

**Format**
1750 words; double-spaced; 12 point; Times New Roman; 1” margins; MS Word doc or docx. Please state the word count of your essay at the top of the first page.
Grading
Essays will be graded according to the following criteria: 1) grammar; 2) style; 3) structure and coherence; 4) content; 5) argumentation, including use of evidence; 6) originality. An “A” range essay will be excellent in most of these areas; a “B” range essay will be good in most of them; a “C” range essay will be adequate in most of them; and a “D” range essay will be inadequate in most of them.

Quiz (10%)
The quiz will ask you to define key terms and answer general questions concerning course content and lectures.

Policies

Attendance
In keeping with the University of Waterloo’s attendance policy, students are “expected to attend all meets” of the course and may be required to “present documentation proving the reasons for non-attendance” (UG Calendar). Students who miss several classes without providing adequate documentation from a physician may, at the discretion of the professor, be penalized 1% per subsequent absence on their final grade.

Late Penalties
Unless an extension has been requested and granted in advance, the professor reserves the right to subtract 5% (per day) from the assignment grade.

Reader
Rhetoric involves the close scrutiny of texts, images and other artifacts. Students are therefore required to purchase and bring the required texts/reader to every class.

Collegiality
Students are expected to be informed, attentive, and collegial in class. Gossiping, note-passing and other types of uncivil behaviour will be discouraged. For the sake of the class as a whole, the professor reserves the right to ask disruptive students to leave the classroom.

Computers and Cell Phone Policy
Please turn off and put away laptop computers, PDAs, and cellular phones in class.

Food
Some students may suffer from food allergies, sensitivities, etc., so please do not bring food to class (drinks are fine).

University of Waterloo Policy on Academic Offences (including plagiarism)
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