Contemporary Rhetoric (ENGL 309C)

Instructor: Dr. Ashley Rose Mehlenbacher
Class hours: 10:00am - 11:20pm, MW
Office hours: 11:30am - 1:30pm, M; & by appointment
Email: ashley.mehlenbacher@uwaterloo.ca
Classroom: Modern Languages (ML), room 354
Office: Hagey Hall, room 146

Course Description

An examination of contemporary rhetorical theory and its relationships to criticism, interdisciplinary studies, and digital applications. We will survey the key authors, concepts, issues, and debates of contemporary rhetoric and place them in a practical context. The course will focus on the work of contemporary rhetoricians such as Richard Weaver, I. A. Richards, Kenneth Burke, Stephen Toulmin, and Chaim Perelman, and will concentrate on contemporary rhetoric at work in culture through power relations, discourse, sexuality, race, media, advertising, and propaganda. Recognizing with Kenneth Burke “how overwhelmingly much of what we mean by ‘reality’ has been built for us through nothing but our symbol systems,” we will examine theories of rhetoric to better understand the pervasiveness of rhetoric in our ways of knowing. Prereq: Level at least 2A.

Learning and Course Objectives

Leaving this course students should be able to:

• Identify key theorists and theoretical movements in contemporary rhetorical theory
• Recall and describe theoretical issues that have emerged in contemporary rhetorical scholarship
• Describe the arguments with which contemporary rhetorical scholarship is concerned
• Apply theoretical frames from contemporary rhetorical scholarship to perform rhetorical criticism

Reading and Resources

You can find all of the readings online. I have provided links to articles, noted which book selections to search through the UW Libraries, and posted a few difficult to find readings on Learn. No textbook for the course.

Reference Texts (optional)


Mere Rhetoric podcast: http://mererhetoric.libsyn.com/
Rhetoricity podcast: https://rhetoricity.libsyn.com/

Required Course Readings


Course Assignments and Requirements

- Research Essay Proposal – 15%; due October 17th
- Mid-term Exam (take home) – 25%; distributed October 17th, due October 24th
- Research Essay – 35%; due November 21st
- Final Exam – 25%; to be scheduled during exam period

Research Essay Proposal

Word count: 500-700 words
References: Identify 3-6 scholarly references beyond what we have read in class.
Citation style: Open, but use one (MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.)
Due: October 17th, 2018
Submit through Learn

You will write a research essay of about 3,000 words for this course. Before beginning the essay, however, you will write a proposal outlining your topic and research plan. As you are now upper-division students, the expectations for your work are higher and in this course you must produce a high quality research paper. However, you likely still need some help determine the best way to frame that research and find resources to support your efforts. By first drafting a proposal, we will have the chance to refine your topic, questions, and sources for your research.

You should consult John Swales’ "Create a Research Space Model" as you prepare your proposal. See: https://www.umass.edu/writingcenter/creating-research-space

In your proposal, you should first outline the topic/issue that you want to study. When you outline a topic you are refining the scope of your research. Then you should identify a gap in the research that you wish to address. Your gap, or in Swales’ terms, “niche,” should be sufficiently well defined that you will be able to address it in a short 3,000 word essay. Also be mindful of the enormous volume of rhetorical scholarship produced before making broad, unfounded claims about what has or has not been studied. Instead, write a measured claim about why the gap you wish to address is important for further study. Finally, you will outline how you plan to “occupy the niche,” again borrowing from Swales, in your research essay.

In your proposal you must also identify some of the scholarly references you might use. You do not need to have read the articles in full at this stage, but rather have read some of their introductions and findings to determine if they are potentially helpful to your research efforts. You should identify more resources than you will use for the final essay as they may prove to be less central to your argument than your initial assessment suggests.
You should also provide a timeline detailing how you plan to complete your work. Work backwards from the final deadline to include your research efforts (how much time will it take you to read an article), your plan for outlining the draft, your first draft, and when you will complete edits. I strongly recommend that you identify peers in the course to provide a peer assessment of your work, and if time permits, we may review your work in class.

**Mid-term Exam (take home)**

A mix of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. Inclusive of material taught up to Oct. 17th. You are responsible for all course readings, videos, podcasts, etc., in the schedule as well as material discussed in the lectures.

**Research Essay**

Word count: 3,000 words  
References: 2-3 scholarly references beyond what we have read in class.  
Citation style: Open, but use one (MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.)  
Due: November 21st, 2018  
Submit through Learn

Your research essay is the largest percentage of your grade and your efforts should reflect that weighting. Your research essay proposal, which you will have completed earlier in the term, is your opportunity to refine your argument and outline your research project before you begin writing.

Your research essay will take the form of rhetorical criticism. You should choose an issue or topic you wish to examine through the lens of rhetorical theory. You may choose from the different areas of scholarship we are studying throughout the term, but you will need to draw from additional scholarship, which you will have identified in your proposal.

It is important that your essay clearly identifies the area of rhetorical scholarship you wish to situate your research. You will also need to make a strong argument for the importance of the topic you have chosen and, crucially, why rhetoric is a useful framework to explore that topic. Your essay should be sufficiently narrow in scope that you have space to provide a detailed analysis of your topic and draw some conclusions about the topic/issue using rhetorical theory.

**Final Exam**

A mix of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. Inclusive of material taught before the mid-term exam and after the mid-term exam. In other words, you’re responsible for what we covered throughout the entire semester. To reiterate, you are responsible for all course readings, videos, podcasts, etc., in the schedule as well as material discussed in the lectures.

**Accommodations & Support**

If you want to talk about an accommodation, please write me so we can meet and discuss your needs. If you can, let me know at the beginning of the term so that we can make arrangements to support you throughout the term. But of course sometimes you don’t know an accommodation would be helpful, or something about your situation changes, and in either case please don’t hesitate to write and we’ll set up a meeting to work out accommodations.

Students may also wish to register with the AccessAbility Services office, located on the first floor of the Needles Hall extension (NH 1401). The AccessAbility Services office 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.
Mental Health Services On Campus
Counselling Services: counselling.services@uwaterloo.ca / 519-888-4567 xt 32655
MATES: one-to-one peer support program offered by Federation of Students (FEDS) and Counselling Services
Health Services Emergency service: located across the creek from Student Life Centre

Off campus, 24/7
Good2Talk: Free confidential help line for post-secondary students. Phone: 1-866-925-5454
Grand River Hospital: Emergency care for mental health crisis. Phone: 519-749-433 ext. 6880
Here 24/7: Mental Health and Crisis Service Team. Phone: 1-844-437-3247
OK2BME: set of support services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning teens in Waterloo. Phone: 519-884-0000 extension 213

Counselling Services may be of assistance and their information is also available online: https://uwaterloo.ca/counselling-services/. If you ever need help finding contact information for these resources you can always come talk to me during office hours or email to set up a time to chat.

The Writing and Communication Centre
The Writing and Communication Centre works with students as they develop their ideas, draft, and revise. Writing and Communication Specialists offer one-on-one support in planning assignments, synthesizing and citing research, organizing papers and reports, designing presentations and e-portfolios, and revising for clarity and coherence.

You can make multiple appointments throughout the term, or drop in at the Library for quick questions or feedback. To book a 50-minute appointment and to see drop-in hours, visit www.uwaterloo.ca/writing-and-communication-centre. Group appointments for team-based projects, presentations, and papers are also available.

Please note that communication specialists guide you to see your work as readers would. They can teach you revising skills and strategies, but will not change or correct your work for you. Please bring hard copies of your assignment instructions and any notes or drafts to your appointment.

Course Policies
Course policies are essentially based on respectful communication and setting clear expectations. If something about the course, be it an assignment or policy, is not clear to you please write me and we will sort the issue. The following information is not just syllabus boilerplate and I hope you will take the time to read it carefully and ask me questions if you’re not sure about something. A syllabus functions as a kind of contract between instructor and student, but more importantly it is a resource and connects you to resources both in the classroom and around campus.

Absences
Missing 5 classes without an excused absence results in a failing grade for the course. If there is some reason you are struggling with attendance, please contact me prior to missing 5 class meetings.

Emergencies and Absences
In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances beyond the instructor’s control. Relevant changes to this course will be posted onto the course website or can be obtained by contacting the instructor via email. You are expected to read your @uwaterloo.ca email on a frequent basis.

Personal emergencies should be communicated to me as soon as possible, but attend first to you and your family’s well-being. Such absences might be related to physical or mental illness. Whatever happens to be your particular situation is not my business and all I need to know is there was a medical emergency. You do not need to provide any details.
Grade Concerns and Incompletes

Should your grades concern you then you must speak with me within the first 3/4 of the term; the last quarter of the term will not provide sufficient time to markedly improve your final grade. Finally, I will not grant an incomplete in the course; if you have concerns about completing your term please write to me as soon as possible.

Missed or Late Work

I will not accept late assignments if you were not granted an extension or faced an emergency situation. If you know you will need an extension, please speak with me at least 48 hours prior to the due date.

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. [Check the Office of Academic Integrity for more information.]

Turnitin.com

Text matching software (Turnitin®) may be used to screen assignments in this course. Turnitin® is used to verify that all materials and sources in assignments are documented. Students’ submissions are stored on a U.S. server, therefore students must be given an alternative (e.g., scaffolded assignment or annotated bibliography), if they are concerned about their privacy and/or security. Students will be given due notice, in the first week of the term and/or at the time assignment details are provided, about arrangements and alternatives for the use of Turnitin in this course. It is the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor if they, in the first week of term or at the time assignment details are provided, wish to submit alternate assignment.

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. For typical penalties check Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties (https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat-general-counsel/policies-procedures-guidelines/guidelines/guidelines-assessment-penalties).

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. When in doubt, please be certain to contact the department’s administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.

Appeals

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.
Contemporary Rhetoric – Fall 2018 Schedule

Schedule subject to change.

You should complete all readings before attending class. You are expected to be active and contribute to discussion, and having completed the readings is required to do so.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Due Dates &amp; Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1 (Sept. 10/12)</td>
<td>Rhetoric—Your definitions</td>
<td>No readings.</td>
<td>Meet with Tyler Black on first day of class. Second day (no class). Complete activity on Learn website by end of day Sept 12.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 2 (Sept. 17/19)</td>
<td>Rhetoric—An Introduction</td>
<td>1) Burton (“What is rhetoric?” and “Content/Form”; 2) Campbell</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 3 (Sept. 24/26)</td>
<td>The Rhetorical Situation</td>
<td>1) Bitzer 2) Vatz 3) Miller</td>
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<td>Week 4 (Oct. 1/3)</td>
<td>Kenneth Burke</td>
<td>1) Burke 2) Heath</td>
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<td>Week 5 (Oct. 8/10)</td>
<td>Fall break</td>
<td>No readings.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 6 (Oct. 15/17)</td>
<td>Fields and Spheres</td>
<td>1) Mere Rhetoric podcast 2) Zarefsky 3) Goodnight</td>
<td><em><strong>Research Essay Proposal Due on Oct. 17th</strong></em> And the Mid-term take home exam will be distributed on October 17th.</td>
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<td>Week 7 (Oct. 22/24)</td>
<td>Environmental Rhetorics</td>
<td>1) Sackey (Podcast) 2) McMurray</td>
<td><em><strong>Mid-term take home exam due October 24th</strong></em></td>
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<td>Week 8 (Oct. 29/31)</td>
<td>Material Rhetorics</td>
<td>1) Gries 2) Graham</td>
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<td>Week 9 (Nov. 5/7)</td>
<td>Sonic Rhetorics</td>
<td>1) Hawk, 2) Fargo Ahern</td>
<td>No class Nov. 7th.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 10 (Nov. 12/14)</td>
<td>Scientific Rhetorics</td>
<td>1) Sidler 2) Fahnestock</td>
<td>***Guest Lecture Devon Moritary on Nov. 12th.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 11 (Nov. 19/21)</td>
<td>Digital Rhetorics; or, Computational Rhetorics</td>
<td>1) Eyman (read Chapter 1); 2) Harris &amp; DiMarco</td>
<td>Final Research Essay Due on Nov. 21.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 12 (Nov. 26/28)</td>
<td>Rhetoric and Media Studies</td>
<td>MacDonald</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 3rd</td>
<td>Optional drop in</td>
<td>No readings.</td>
<td>Extended office hours held in Prof. M’s office, Hagey Hall 146, from 10am-1:30pm.</td>
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