UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

ENGLISH 309C: CONTEMPORARY RHETORICAL THEORY
FALL 2014
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:30-12:50, Hagey Hall 138

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 9:30 -10:15; Thursdays, 9:30-10:15

Aims and outcomes:
This course aims
• to introduce students to fundamental texts in modern rhetorical theory
• to help students understand how the form and nature of public speech in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has changed
• to train students in the critical, rhetorical analysis of basic forms of public, persuasive speech
• to prepare students for advanced work in rhetoric and communication
• to introduce students to basic methods of research in rhetoric

By the end of the course students should
• have a basic grasp of some of the most important ideas and issues in recent rhetorical theory
• be comfortable using some rhetorical terms derived from recent theory
• understand and appreciate the distinctiveness of public, persuasive speech in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries
• be skilled in the critical analysis of public speech
• have basic research skills in rhetorical theory and analysis

Readings:
All the readings, except those from Judith Williamson’s book, are available on-line. If the reading is a journal article, it can be found by going to the library’s collection of e-journals; if it is something else, a .pdf will be available on the course website. Judith Williamson’s Decoding Advertisements is on course reserve at Porter.

LEARN
The class will have a website on LEARN on which announcements, reading links, and other material will be posted. Drop-boxes and discussion boards for the various assignments will be on the site, and I’ll maintain a calendar so you’re aware of deadlines.
Assessment:
You will be assessed by a series of online tasks, a mid-term examination, a group presentation and a final paper, weighted as follows:

- **Reading responses:** 20%
- **Mid-Term Exam:** 20%
- **Group presentation:** 25%
- **Final paper:** 35%

**Reading responses:** Over the course of the term you will be asked to compose 8 reading responses, one of which will be a group response. The individual responses are to be posted on the appropriate discussion board and should consist of: a) a 100-150 word comment on the text, and b) two questions you would like to see discussed in class. Responses will be due by 6:00 am on the day of the relevant class. The group response is worth 6% of the final grade and will discuss the first Burke text. Individual responses are due for the classes on the following dates: September 11, September 18, October 7, October 14, October 21, October 28, November 13. The group response will be due on the morning of September 26.

Responses will be graded on the comprehension of the reading, the sophistication of the response, and the interest and thoughtfulness of the questions asked. After you submit your response, you should have a look at some of the questions other students have posed.

**Mid-term examination:** the mid-term exam will take place on October 16th. It will have a section devoted to the definition of theoretical terms we have discussed and a section in which you will have to discuss issues raised by the theorists we cover in the first weeks of the course.

**Group presentation:** At the end of the section of the course devoted to advertising, we will break the class into groups of 6 students. Each group will also be responsible for a presentation during weeks 8 and 9. Presentations will focus on the analysis of an advertisement, using the tools we’ve worked on in class. Each presentation should last no more than 20 minutes and it should be accompanied by a one-page handout summarizing the analysis. The presentations will be graded on both the quality of the analysis and the quality of the presentation itself. One quarter of the mark for the presentation will be a peer evaluation mark: each member of the group will be graded by the others on the contribution s/he made to the presentation.

**Final paper:** The final paper will be due at noon on Monday, December 15th. It will be devoted either to the rhetorical analysis of a text you choose from a list I'll provide you with or to a particular issue in rhetorical theory. It should be 2500 words long and set out in accord with ordinary scholarly conventions. The essay will be graded on: presentation and correct use of scholarly referencing; clarity and elegance of writing and argument; ability to use the rhetorical theory we have studied correctly and creatively; independence and sophistication of argument. The list of topics will be given out in week 10.
Late work and plagiarism
Final papers submitted late will have 3% deducted for the first day late and 1% for each additional day late. Late reading responses will be penalised 50%. No work will be accepted after December 20th.

Cross-listed course:
Please note that a cross-listed course will count in all respective averages no matter under which rubric it has been taken. For example, a PHIL/PSCI cross-list will count in a Philosophy major average, even if the course was taken under the Political Science rubric.

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.

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.

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.

Other sources of information for students:
Academic Integrity website (Arts)
Academic Integrity Office (uWaterloo)
Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:

Note for students with disabilities:
The AccessAbility Services office, 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 AS office at the beginning of each academic term.
WEEK-BY-WEEK:

Week 1, September 9, 11: Introduction
**Tuesday: The state of rhetoric today**
Introduction, distribution of syllabus, etc.

**Thursday: The fate of rhetoric in modern times**
Reading response due

Week 2, September 16, 18
**Tuesday: Language and rhetoric: Nietzsche**

**Thursday: Language and rhetoric: Nietzsche**
Reading response due

Week 3, September 23, 25: No classes this week.

**Reading response due September 26th.**

During this week each group will prepare a collective response to the Burke reading. Your response should answer two questions: what is the point of rhetoric? How does the modern rhetoric Burke describes differ from the rhetoric of the past (ancient, medieval or Enlightenment)?

Week 4, September 30, October 2
**Tuesday: Burke in theory**

**Thursday: Burke in practice**
Week 5, October 7, 9
Tuesday: Argumentation
Reading response due

Thursday: Argumentation

Week 6, October 14, 16:
Tuesday: Genres of rhetoric
Reading response due

Thursday: Mid-term Examination

Week 7, October 21, 23
Tuesday: Persuading you to buy: the rhetoric of advertising I
Reading response due

Thursday: Persuading you to buy: the rhetoric of advertising II
Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements*, Chapter Two

Week 8, October 28, 30
Tuesday: Persuading you to buy: the rhetoric of advertising III
Reading response due
Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements*, Chapter Three

Thursday: Group presentations

Week 9, November 4, 6
Tuesday: Group presentations
Thursday: Group presentations

Week 10, November 11, 13
Tuesday: Persuading you to die - the rhetoric of nations and peoples

Thursday: The idea of ‘the people’
Reading response due

Week 11, November 18, 20
Tuesday: Political rhetoric
Text TBA

Thursday: The rhetoric of Canada

Week 12, November 25, 27
Tuesday: The rhetoric of Canada
Canadian “Historica Minutes”: a selection

Thursday: The rhetoric of Canada
Canadian “Historica Minutes”: a selection