ENGLISH 409 WRITING FOR SPECIAL PURPOSES

Instructor: Profs. C. Schryer and D. Goodwin
Office: HH 222 / HH 246
Office hrs: Schryer: (Tues: 10-11:30 a.m.; Thurs: 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. or by appt.)
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Course Objectives: After completing this course students should have:

1) a theoretical framework for understanding the reader/writer relationship as it pertains to professional writing, including
2) an understanding of reader-response theory, rhetorical theory, social semiotics, and genre theory;
3. an appreciation of the social contexts within which documents are produced
4) practical professional writing skills, such as the ability to revise and edit, as advertising, journalism, popular fiction, visual design.
5. the ability to function effectively as a member of a research and writing team.

Course Organization: This course consists of a series of lectures, discussion, in-class workshops, and out-of-class workshops. For the first two weeks, all students attend the master lectures given by the two instructors. After that, students will sign up for two modules. Each module runs for approximately 5 weeks each. Students will be offered the following choices:

Week 3-7: either Journalism (Schryer) or Advertising** (Goodwin)

Week 9-13: either Writing Popular Fiction (Schryer) or Visual Rhetoric (Goodwin)

** Students who took Rhetoric of Advertising (Spring 93) with Professor Goodwin cannot enroll in the 409 advertising module.

Course Policies: (1) Each 3 hour class in 409 is equivalent to a week’s lectures in a regular credit course. Therefore attendance in the joint lectures, in-class discussions/workshops, and the out-of-class workshops is mandatory. Group work depends on your contribution: students must inform their group if they cannot attend a meeting, and any student who misses more than one such meeting will need to explain his or her absence to the instructor.
(2) All assignments must be typed; untyped manuscripts will be returned to students ungraded.
(3) All assignments must be submitted on time. Late papers will be penalized - 10% for every day late.

Texts: Required for all students: James E. Porter, Audience and Rhetoric.
Other texts are required depending on your modules.
409 MODULES

MODULE A (WEEK 3-7)

ADVERTISING (Goodwin)

This module will focus on the rhetorical structures of advertising discourse, and, especially, on the persuasive techniques of copywriting. Students will be introduced to a series of theoretical frameworks for analyzing the rhetorical/ideological structures of advertising, as well as to strategies for writing effective copy. Assignments will consist of 1. a take-home examination on the rhetoric of advertising (6 pages, worth 30%) 2. a selection of advertising copy written by the student and an analysis of that copy (15 pages worth 70%).


JOURNALISM (Schryer)

1. A group oral report on the linguistic and rhetorical strategies characteristic of two papers in Ontario (one paper must be the Toronto Sun) as they cover one type of story. Each group member will turn in a 2,000 word comparative, critical analysis of the coverage of one type of story by two papers, one of which must be the Toronto Sun.

2. An exam that will require students to imitate the editorial style or journalistic style of one newspaper in Ontario and justify their stylistic and rhetorical choices.

Fowler, R.  Language in the News
Kennedy, G. Beyond the Inverted Pyramid

MODULE B (WEEK 9-13)

VISUAL RHETORIC AND DESIGN (Goodwin)

This module will focus on visual design, and especially, the rhetorical function of images in professional communication. Students will be introduced to rhetorical theory and social semiotics in order to analyze layout and design. Assignments will consist of 1. a take-home examination on visual rhetoric (6 pages, worth 30%) 2. a group project in professional design (e.g., logos, public relations material, direct mail, technical writing, etc.) and an analysis of that project (15 pages worth 70%).

Required Texts: Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, Reading Images; John Wade, Before & After: How to Design Cool Stuff (2 issues).
WRITING POPULAR FICTION (Schryer)

1. A panel discussion on the history, conventions and linguistic strategies characteristic of one genre of popular fiction. This panel will present an overview of publishing in this genre and will develop some practical guidelines for the rest of the class. Each group member will prepare a separate, critical analysis (2,500 words) of the value system underlying the conventions and linguistic strategies characteristic of their genre.

2. An exam that will require students to imitate the dialogue, plot devices, or descriptive techniques of a particular genre and to justify their choices.

Kubis, Howland *Complete Guide to Writing Fiction and Nonfiction*
Nash, W. *Language in Popular Fiction*