RHETORICAL CRITICISM
COMM 3460—001
Spring 2018

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Office: LNCO 2890
Office Hours: By appointment
Classroom: LNCO 2750
Class Sessions: Wed. 11:50am-1:10pm**

**NOTE: This is a hybrid course with mandatory online participation in place of the Monday class meeting.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This course is an introduction to the analysis of various texts (speeches, advertisements, TV, film, etc.) from multiple rhetorical perspectives. You will learn about relevant theories and rhetorical methodologies by which to critically examine a variety of artifacts. The course attends to both the theory and application of communication criticism; as students learn of the assumptions and approaches that undergird each method of analysis, they will have the opportunity to apply those methods in the analysis of a variety of discourses, including speeches, advertisements, news reports, television programs, films, songs, and so forth.

A heavy emphasis will be placed on writing and creating a highly advanced document, which may serve as a writing sample for each student. Once you take a look at the schedule you will see that it is quite important for you to be writing or brainstorming at all points in the semester. If you are the kind of person who likes to write at the last minute and turn in your paper, this class is probably not for you. Learning to write and review critically-focused essays are two valuable skills that take practice and dedication to hone, so don’t stress about being perfect from the start.

WARNING: Contrary to what a lot of people tend to think, rhetorical criticism or communication criticism is NOT “just basically your opinion,” nor is it centered on whether you like something or not. A good way to avoid this trap is to remember the following helpful definition: Rhetorical criticism is the informed critical engagement with a text that is guided by a theoretical perspective and/or a method of inquiry that attempts to discern implicit culturally, politically, and/or socially relevant meaning.

COURSE GOALS/OBJECTIVES:
At the end of the course, you will be able to:

- Understand and discuss the core concepts of rhetoric, rhetorical criticism, and ideology.
- Identify and explain the features of a variety of rhetorical methods.
- Understand key theories in the field of rhetorical analysis of artifacts.
- Apply rhetorical methods to critically analyze and evaluate artifacts.
- Demonstrate proficiency in writing clear, rational arguments in support of their analyses.
- Become critically engaged with issues of culture and power present in a variety of discourses.
- Develop proficiency in logical, written analysis of discourse.
- Produce a high level piece of writing that demonstrates critical thinking, a clear argument, strong research skills, and clarity.
REQUIRED MATERIALS:
  
  NOTE: Please make sure to purchase/rent the FIFTH [5th] Edition of Foss (while there are *some* similarities between this version and previous editions, the updates/revisions are significant enough to impact your ability to follow along with course readings/discussions)
- Various supplemental readings (PDFs) available on Canvas
- Internet videos via Canvas.

CANVAS:
Internet access and knowledge of how to navigate Canvas ([http://utah.instructure.com/](http://utah.instructure.com/)) are required for the course. Supplemental readings and instructions will be provided on Canvas.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

University and Federal Policies
Links are provided below for various other student rights and policies. It is incumbent on the student to research these policies if particular questions arise. As a matter of courtesy, please consult the instructor for clarification only after having accessed the aforementioned resources.

- Grade Disputes: [http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.php](http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.php)
- Student Privacy: [http://registrar.utah.edu/handbook/ferpa.php](http://registrar.utah.edu/handbook/ferpa.php)
- Student Code: [http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.php](http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.php)
- Academic integrity: [http://www.regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.html](http://www.regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.html)

Academic Misconduct. Academic honesty is required of all students. I take a strong stance on cheating and plagiarism. Students found guilty of academic dishonesty will receive a zero for the assignment and may receive an “E” for the course, as well as face other potential disciplinary action. Plagiarism includes (but is not limited to) intentional submission of someone else’s work without credit, in part or as a whole; misuse of citations to conceal a source; use of other course work in this class; and other similar behaviors. If you are unclear as to what constitutes plagiarism, please meet with me before turning in any assignments. I am happy to discuss with you any of your questions or concerns on the matter. All major assignments in this course are run through Turnitin. Suggestions for avoiding plagiarism and using APA citation style can be found at [http://www.lib.utah.edu/instruction/handouts.html](http://www.lib.utah.edu/instruction/handouts.html).

The Americans with Disabilities Act. The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, (801) 581-5020. CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in an alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.
**Curriculum Accommodations** – Curriculum accommodations take two forms: schedule accommodations and content accommodations.

*Schedule Accommodations* will be provided for those who have a conflict that involves religious/spiritual observances, documented and University-sanctioned activities (including athletic participation demonstrated at the beginning of the semester), and family or medical-related emergencies. If you anticipate any scheduling conflict with this course, please speak with me as soon as possible. In every case, it is the student’s responsibility to arrange alternatives as soon as possible for any assignment, presentation, or examination.

*Content accommodations* will NOT be provided for this course. All assignments, activities, and content are selected to achieve specific pedagogical outcomes and students are expected to read/view all assigned course materials. Given the nature of this course, we will engage difficult, controversial subjects. However, civility and tolerance of diversity are requirements of student conduct in our class. This course asks you to think critically about others’ and your own positions. The University recognizes that students’ sincerely-held core beliefs might make it difficult for students to fulfill some of the requirements of this course. It is the student’s obligation to determine, before the last day to drop courses without penalty, when course requirements conflict with the student’s sincerely-held core beliefs. See the following link for more information about accommodation policies:

**COURSE POLICIES**

*Learning Environment/Classroom Etiquette.* We will be engaged in discussion over complex topics. We all should engage in civilized and responsible behavior in the classroom as well as in online discussions/contexts. Please keep all discussions civil, even as you challenge and debate ideas. Discuss the idea; do not attack the person. I expect our classroom to be a productive place to learn. We are all responsible for fostering an environment open to observing, discussing, and reflecting upon our own and others’ communicative behaviors in order to learn. Thus, each one of us will need to be conscious of our role in providing a place where every course member, given all our differences, will feel and function as part of the course. If at any time or for any reason you feel uncomfortable with the classroom environment, please contact the instructors immediately in order to resolve/improve the situation. Discriminatory comments or behaviors towards others will not be tolerated.

*Personal Electronic Devices.* The use of laptops or tablets to assist with note-taking or referencing course readings is considered a privilege, not a right. If electronic devices become a distraction to you or others (i.e., used during class for purposes other than note-taking or referencing course materials), the instructor may request that you refrain from using personal electronic materials during class to supplement your learning for the remainder of the semester. Were this request made, it would mean you would instead need to bring paper copies of readings to class, find an alternate note-taking method, etc. Cell phones are not to be used at any time during class.

*Student Names & Personal Pronouns.* Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student’s legal name as well as “Preferred first name” (if previously entered by you in the Student Profile section of your CIS account). While CIS refers to this as merely a preference, I will honor you by referring to you with the name and pronoun that feels best for you in class, on papers, exams, group projects, etc. Please advise me of any name or pronoun changes (and update CIS) so I can help create a learning environment in which you, your name, and your pronoun will be respected.
**Assigned Readings.** The assigned readings have been selected for their ability to elucidate the important concepts we cover. As such, I encourage you to read them carefully, take notes, and connect/apply concepts across readings. To ensure that assigned readings are completed before the class period for which they are assigned, you must complete weekly reading checks. This both helps you stay on top of the assigned material, but also provides an opportunity for me to assess and plan our in-person discussions accordingly. Students must read everything thoroughly and come to class prepared to discuss the readings, ask questions to the professor and their fellow classmates, and offer interrogative propositions that advance the flow of discussion.

**Written Work.** All written work MUST be at the college level and conducted in a style corresponding to the rules of the American Psychological Association (APA). The instructor will be judging the quality of your writing. Thus, one should be conscientious of both grammar and sentence structure. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions about writing. I am very happy to help.

**Attendance.** You must attend class to engage in lectures and participate in discussions. Since this is a hybrid course, missing one day of class can be similar to missing an entire week. Students are permitted **two unexcused absences**, after which **ten (10) points will be deducted** from the student’s participation score. Lectures will include material not featured in the readings, and that material will be important to the student in the successful completion of class papers.

This course is based on an understanding that your knowledge and ability in communicating with others will naturally grow by actively engaging in communicative activities and exercises, by offering and accepting thoughtful feedback, and through critical reflection to more fully understand the course concepts. Consequently, this course has an attendance policy. Grades are structured to give you points for attending and engaging in various types of classroom activities. Please see the point-scheme for attendance, as well as the course’s policy on schedule accommodations. Attendance will be taken during every class session. It is your responsibility to inform me if you arrive late to class. Only then will I record your presence that day. It is the instructor’s discretion to determine whether your tardiness results in an absence for the day. If you will need to leave class early (before class is dismissed), you must inform the instructor prior to the beginning of class. Failing to notify me that you will be leaving early may incur an absence for that day.

**Due Dates/Late Work.** All assignments are to be submitted before or on scheduled due dates. **No late work for weekly reading checks will be accepted.** For major written assignments, any late work submitted up to **48 hours** after its original due date will receive a **maximum score of 70%**. For every 24 hours after this time period, assignments will receive an **additional 15% deduction** in score. Students experiencing extreme mitigating circumstances or any emergency that prevents them from turning in assignments must contact me as soon as possible in order to discuss the missed assignment and alternative due date; students must be able to provide documentation that demonstrates why they were unable to turn in an assignment.

**Grade Appeals.** You must wait 24 hours after the assignment is returned before appealing a grade. In addition, all grade appeals must be done within 7 days of the aforementioned return date. If it is possible, see me in person as opposed to emailing me.
Assignments

*More assignment details will be provided via Canvas.

Reading Checks -- 150 points total. These are weekly checks that may comprise of discussion prompt(s), application activities, quizzes, or combination of tasks to assess your understanding of that week’s material before we meet in class on Wednesday. Generally speaking, I am grading you on your ability to engage the material in a thorough and thoughtful manner. If your responses are short or fail to demonstrate that you have done the reading, you will receive less than full credit. I am not as concerned with you being “right” or “wrong” as much as I am interested in you showing the initiative to complete these discussions and not to rush your responses at the last minute on Sunday. Reading checks are due on Mondays by 11:59pm (with the exception of a few Monday holidays).

Short Criticism Papers – 200 points (100 points each) There will be 2 short criticism papers (where you will select an artifact and apply one of the three methods of criticism). Each criticism will employ one of the optional methods for that paper. For the first criticism, students will choose ONE of the following: generic, metaphoric, or narrative criticism. For the second criticism, students will select ONE of the following: Burkean, ideological, or feminist criticism. For these papers, focus primarily on making an argument about the text with just enough contextualization to support your arguments. Support your arguments about the text with ample evidence from the text itself. Each paper will be 4-6 pages long, double-spaced in Times New Roman Font with One-inch Margins.

Literature Review & Criticism Revision Paper – 75 points. For this paper, you will select ONE of your two short criticism papers that you plan to develop into your final paper. This assignment will have two parts. First, you will revise your preliminary analysis from the short criticism paper. Second, you will develop a literature review using relevant scholarly essays and academic citations that justify your method of criticism. Both parts will then be peer reviewed and developed further in preparation for the final paper.

Final Criticism Paper – 150 points. Your final paper in this course will consist of writing a critical essay suitable for presentation among your academic peers. The ultimate judge of a strong criticism is presentation of that criticism to your academic peers, opening yourself up to feedback and counter-argument from them, and ultimately defending and/or refining your take on the artifact under consideration. This paper will be an expansion on your previous literature and criticism revision paper. Using your peer feedback as well as my comments on the earlier criticism and literature review, you will develop a better introduction, embed it more thoroughly in the appropriate scholarly literature, offer a more detailed social and methodological contextualization, a lucid and thorough reading of the artifact, and a stronger discussion of the implications of your criticism in the conclusion. The final paper should be between 13 and 15 pages, double-spaced in Times New Roman Font, with One-inch Margins.

Group Discussion Facilitations – 50 points. For this assignment, you will work with a small group of your classmates to develop and facilitate class discussion on one of the types of criticisms covered in the class. When it is your turn to facilitate class, you will submit a brief outline/summary of the readings, highlighting key aspects/components of the criticism method. Briefs must also include a brainstorm of 3-5 potential artifacts that could be appropriate for that type of criticism as well as 2-3 discussion questions/prompts for the class to consider.
Blog Post Assignment – 50 points. In addition to academic writing, there will also be a blog post assignment to help students gain experience writing for non-academic, public audiences. For this assignment, you will develop a blog post pertaining to the topic of your final papers (https://comm3460.wordpress.com/).

Peer Review Final Paper Drafts – 25 points. You will peer review one of your classmate’s final paper drafts. You will be given instructions and a rubric regarding how to review your partner’s work well and give helpful advice. The higher quality the peer reviews, the higher quality the work in the class.

Participation, Attendance, & Class Engagement – 50 points. I will keep a record of attendance and will use your level and quality of class engagement to determine this score.

Total: 750 Points

Grade Scale:
93-100% = A   90-92% = A-   87-89% = B+   83-86% = B   80-82% = B-   77-79% = C+
73-76% = C   70-72% = C-   67-69% = D+   63-66% = D   60-62% = D-   Below 60% = E

**PLEASE NOTE: I do not curve, bump up, or otherwise modify individual or class grades. You should keep track of your scores throughout the semester and speak with one of us as soon as possible if you have any concerns at any point during the course.**