



ENG 323: Writing in the Rhetorical Tradition

Christopher B. Berg

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| Course Logistics | |
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| Instructor Info | Course Info |
| Office: T-G116-A Phone: 513.7967 Office Hrs: M 1-2, H 1-2 | Room: Tompkins 126 Days: Mon, Wed, Fri Time: 10:15-11:05 |
| e-mail: cbberg@unity.ncsu.edu | |
| Course Website: courses.ncsu.edu/eng323/lec/001 | |

Course Description & Objectives

Rhetoric stands against two important studies in the liberal arts: criticism and philosophy. Whereas criticism involves the consumption of pre-written texts, conventionally called literature, rhetoric calls for the production of texts of all sorts. Even literary criticism is a branch of rhetoric, because any statement about literature must persuade someone to count as significant. Philosophers seek to prove their statements, and have resisted rhetoric's emphasis on probability and relativism since Plato. But as long as philosophers make their arguments for a specific group of people (and there is no other kind) in a specific environment (and there is no other kind), they, too, are practicing a branch of rhetoric.

This course is designed to enrich the education of English majors and other students by helping them to become more persuasive writers and to learn a set of concepts and principles for reflecting on and analyzing their own and others' writing. Successful students will

- ◆ become familiar with the basic rhetorical principles in the arts of invention, arrangement, style, and presentation
- ◆ apply those principles to the analysis of persuasive discourse
- ◆ apply those principles to their own writing for a variety of audiences and purposes

In addition, this course is an opportunity to develop personal and professional skills that are useful for any writer. Students should show

- ◆ willingness to take initiative and go beyond minimum requirements
- ◆ ability to work both independently and in small groups
- ◆ willingness to contribute to the success of your colleagues
- ◆ commitment to professionalism, including producing polished work, meeting deadlines consistently, and adhering to requirements and guidelines

Organization

This course will be organized around a contemporary political issue of your choosing, and divided into two parts. In the first part, you will be expected to learn a number of the key concepts and strategies that inform rhetoric, and apply them to speeches, commercials, and debates related to

your political issue or campaign. During this portion of the course, which will culminate in a two-part midterm exam (which will come prior to the “midterm exam period”), you will choose the discourse community around which your work for the rest of the semester will be based.

During the second portion of this course, you will complete several more assignments exploring a range of rhetorical activities, including a dialogue, and a parody, both related to your chosen political issue. You will also complete a larger project that will ask you to showcase (orally and in writing) your practical understanding of rhetorical concepts by analyzing and rewriting an artifact from your chosen political issue so that it appeals to a different audience. The course will culminate in a comprehensive final exam.

Throughout this course, you will maintain a portfolio of rhetorical concepts and applications.

Course Materials

Required Text: Sharon Crowley & Debra Hawhee - *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students*, 4th Ed. New York: Pearson Longman, 2008. • ISBN: 0-205-57443-2 • Price: \$78.00 (New), \$62.40 (Used)

Optional Text: Patricia Bizzell & Bruce Herzberg (Eds.) *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings From Classical Times to the Present*. 2nd Ed. Boston: Bedford St. Martin’s, 2001. • ISBN: 0-312-14839-9 • Price: \$69.40 (new), \$41.98 (used)

Five 2-pocket folders - One for the portfolio and one each for the main projects.

A number of electronic reserves.

Course Policies

Attendance

This course will deal with concepts that are largely unfamiliar to you, yet which will play a significant role in your mastery of the field. In addition to lecture material, class discussion will play a key role in your learning. Thus, attendance is mandatory, but you are allowed to miss four class periods without penalty. Your four absences include both excused and unexcused absences. If you miss a fifth class, you will lose two letter grades from your final total. If you miss a sixth class, you will receive an F for the semester.

Assignments & Grading

For papers and presentations, your grade will be based upon a rubric discussed in class, based upon the criteria established by the assignment sheet and those that you should expect (as juniors) by this point in your academic career. For detailed information about each project, you should visit the course website to view and download assignment sheets.

Project Folders - While working on each project, you will be asked to bring drafts, paragraphs, outlines, etc. to class in your project folder. Each

| Assignments & Grading | |
|-------------------------|-----|
| Discourse Comm. Rept. | 10% |
| Dialogue | 10% |
| Parody | 10% |
| Repurposing an Argument | 15% |
| Midterm Exam | 15% |
| Final Exam | 20% |
| Portfolio | 10% |
| Participation | 10% |

project will have its own folder: all materials you gather, including all notes and all drafts (peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed), must be handed in with the final draft of each assignment in the project folder. Failure to hand in any of the associated materials will result in loss of points.

Projects

Report on a Discourse Community - This assignment asks you to choose a discourse community (also known as an interpretive or rhetorical community) to give you practice in identifying the groups that will be at the heart of the rest of your writing projects. This first project asks you to identify a community and describe some of its features.

Dialogue - This project will ask you to dramatize two of the perspectives related to your chosen issue. This dialogue will not be *descriptive* (the variety used to advance a story), but rather *didactic*. Didactic dialogue, which emphasizes ideas, is used as an end in itself in instruction, propaganda, and philosophical discourse: the participants may be imaginary characters, portrayals of real people, or portrayals of literary or historical characters that you associate with your issue.

Parody - Ultimately, parody serves a critical function: it must first identify a characteristic stylistic habit or mannerism and then make it comically visible, rather than simply deconstructing it. Through this, it can serve both a normative critical function and as a contribution to stylistic evolution (Dentith). Parody works by juxtaposition, addition, omission, condensation, and disjunction of the original structure or content of the work it parodies. Unlike satire, parody must adopt certain features of its target as a part of itself.

This assignment asks you to parody a discursive artifact deriving from your chosen issue. It takes two parts. First, you will analyze the prose style of a figure who is deeply involved with your issue in a brief (750 word) essay, using the tools and ideas discussed in class from the readings. Second, you will write a 500-750 word parody of that style. Along with your two-part essay, you will submit a sample of the prose you are holding up to parodic criticism.

Repurposing an Argument - You will use concepts from class to briefly analyze an artifact from your political issue, criticize it, and then rewrite it for a specific audience (identified in the introduction to your rewrite). The purpose of these papers is not editorial, that is, I do not want you to “correct” the artifact; rather, you are to use the papers to demonstrate your understanding of rhetorical appeals by generating an “alternative” edition of the original artifact that is aimed at a different audience.

Portfolio - Throughout this semester, you will encounter ideas and theories that are foreign to you, that spark your interest, or that you feel may remain important in future classes. The purposes of the portfolio assignment are manifold. First, it will help both of us track your understanding of concepts pertinent to the course material. Second, it will help you reinforce concepts with which you may have difficulty, those which you find particularly interesting, or simply those you feel deserve more thought, providing you with an opportunity to research and discuss the topic in an informal document, the chance to “think in writing.” Finally, it will serve as a study guide for our two exams.

| Grade Scale | |
|-------------|--------|
| A+ | 97-100 |
| A | 93-96 |
| A- | 90-92 |
| B+ | 87-89 |
| B | 83-86 |
| B- | 80-82 |
| C+ | 77-79 |
| C | 73-76 |
| C- | 70-72 |
| D+ | 67-69 |
| D | 63-66 |
| D- | 60-62 |
| F | < 60 |

Participation

Participation is crucial in this class because we rely on one another for feedback on our writing and thinking processes. Class participation means more than how much you say in class; it's your effort to be present—both in mind and body—in our discussions. Homework, class exercises, and quizzes will be included in your participation grade. Your grade will also reflect your attendance, preparation, and the quality of your contributions to our class work. Accordingly, class participation will be graded as follows:

C range:

- ◆ Arrive on time.
- ◆ Be ready to discuss readings when called on.
- ◆ Be prepared with the textbooks, reserve material, written homework, and/or memory storage device in class.
- ◆ Listen respectfully.
- ◆ Engage actively and productively in group work, peer review, and other in-class activities.

B range - To earn a B-range participation grade, you must consistently fulfill requirements 1-5 and:

- ◆ Volunteer questions or points of interest from readings to generate discussion.
- ◆ Willingly offer ideas in class; make sure your contributions are topical and thoughtful.

A range - To earn an A-range participation grade, you must consistently fulfill the above 7 criteria and:

- ◆ Show leadership in class discussion (break uncomfortable silences; respond to open-ended questions; challenge received opinion; ask difficult questions).
- ◆ Respond to other students' ideas (not just mine) by asking questions or building on their points.

You will receive a failing participation grade if you are excessively and/or frequently tardy, you are unprepared for class, you disrupt class work, and/or you are occupied with activities other than those related to class.

Academic Integrity

Student cheating, which includes several types of academic dishonesty such as collusion and plagiarism, will be prosecuted. In a course such as this, in which you must repurpose an argument and parody the discourse of another, plagiarism is more related to intellectual dishonesty than to unintentional or careless similarity to the words of another. In short, if you hand in work that is not yours, you will get no credit for it.

Late & Incomplete Work

Assignments are due by the **beginning** of class on the due date. Late assignments due to excused absences will not be penalized, if they are submitted two class periods after you return to class, except for those assignments with a long-term due date on the course calendar, which you must submit to me prior to class either via e-mail or under my door. Late assignments will lose one letter grade per calendar day. Technological issues, such as client or server-side e-mail problems, disk malfunction, printer concerns, etc. are unacceptable reasons for late work: save frequently and make backups.

If you earn an F on the take-home portion of the mid-term exam, or on a significant assignment in the portfolio, you will be given the chance to rewrite once, with a letter-grade penalty. If you do not rewrite or otherwise remedy an F or an INC by the end of the semester, you will fail the semester. If you miss the in-class portion of the mid-term exam without an excused absence, you will earn an F for that part of the test.

Class Cancellation

In accordance with the student senate resolution, I will email you at least 45 minutes prior to the start of class in the event class is canceled. This resolution does not apply to canceled classes on the course calendar or when the university closes the university due to adverse weather. In the case of a personal emergency, or one in which I cannot reach a computer, I'll be sure to phone the English department and ask that a sign be posted.

Disability Services

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with verifiable disabilities. In order to take advantage of available accommodations, students must register with Disability Services for Students at 1900 Student Health Center, Campus Box 7509, 515-7653. Learn more at

http://www.ncsu.edu/provost/offices/affirm_action/dss/