

Communication Studies 455
Rhetorical Criticism and Theory
11:10 – 12:00 Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays
LA 302

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Office Hours: 10:00 – 11:00 Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and by appointment.

Course Description

The study of rhetorical criticism and theory begins with the understanding that as human beings, we use language and other symbols to shape the world in which we live. Rhetorical theory allows us to explore how symbols function and rhetorical criticism is one of the processes through which we assess specific symbolic acts. In this course you will learn about contemporary approaches to rhetorical criticism and theory. Specific methods to be covered include Neo-Aristotelian, cluster, pentadic, metaphoric, narrative, generic, and ideological criticism. You will be required to participate in class discussions, co-lead one essay discussion, write two relatively short papers which will lead to a final, substantive essay, and present your research to the class. Preliminary criteria for each are outlined below.

Required Reading

Foss, S. K. (2009) Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration & Practice, (4th Edition). Long Grove, IL: Waveland.

Lunsford, A. A. (2005). The Everyday Writer, (3rd Edition). Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.

A note about The Everyday Writer: Although I do not assign readings from this book you will be held accountable for much of the material contained in it, including the sections titled "Usage and Style" and "APA Style."

Packet available at the UC Bookstore.

Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct includes cheating, plagiarizing, and deliberately interfering with the work of others. Plagiarizing means representing the work of someone else (such as another student or an author of a book or an article) as your own. If you use the ideas or words of someone else in a paper, you must cite the source of the original information. See Lunsford's The Everyday Writer for a thorough discussion of plagiarism and how to avoid it. Following university regulations, cheating and plagiarism will be penalized with a failing grade in this course.

Grades

Grades will be based on evaluation of student performance on the following assignments:

Quizzes and Participation Questions	50 points
Essay Discussion	50 points
Project Proposal	50 points
Paper 1:	100 points
Paper 2:	100 points
Research Project:	200 points
Total:	550 points

A=92% and up; A- = 91-90%; B+ = 88-89%; B = 82-87%; B- = 80 - 81%; C+ = 78 -79 %; C = 72 - 77%; C- = 70 - 71%; D+ = 68 - 69%; D = 62 - 67%; D- = 60 - 61%; F 59% and below.

Description of Assignments:

Quizzes and Participation Questions

Completing the assigned readings will be key to your success in the course. As such, although I will not be giving formal exams, I will sometimes administer quizzes or short participation questions designed to test your understanding of the assigned readings and/or your grasp of the artifacts under study. The quizzes/participation questions, along with your overall participation, will count for 50 points in the class. You should be prepared to complete quizzes/participation questions on a regular basis. Dates of quizzes/questions will not be announced.

Participation

This course will be run as a seminar, as such, students will be expected to come to class ready to discuss the assigned readings and participate in the analysis of artifacts. To be good participants, it is essential that you read the assigned material critically and actively.

Essay Discussion

One of the best ways to learn how to write a piece of rhetorical criticism is to examine the work of others. We will be reading both student and professional essays for each unit of analysis; each of you will be asked to co-lead the discussion of one essay. Potential essays are marked with an asterisk in the schedule. Specific guidelines will be provided and essay assignments will be made later in the semester.

Project Proposal

On October 7 you will submit your project proposal. This will include a discussion of the artifact you will use for analysis in both papers and your research project. In the proposal you should describe your artifact, justify your choice (e.g., why is this an appropriate artifact for analysis? What do you hope to learn through examining it?) and provide contextual information (e.g., when and where did the artifact appear? Who observed/heard/read it? Who delivered/wrote/created it?).

Papers

Over the course of the semester you will write and submit two critiques of your chosen artifact. Your first paper, due at the beginning of class on October 26, will utilize neo-Aristotelian, cluster, or pentadic analysis; your second paper, due at the beginning of class on November 23, will utilize narrative, metaphoric, or ideographic analysis. Ideally, one or both of these critiques will serve as the basis for your final research project.

Research project

Your final research project will constitute a complete piece of rhetorical criticism, including an introduction, theoretical overview, contextual section, rhetorical analysis, and conclusions. Each student will present her or his research to the class during the final week of classes or during our scheduled finals period. The final essay is due Wednesday, December 16, at 8:00 a.m.

Schedule

M 8-31	Introduction to the Course
W 9-2	The Nature of Rhetorical Criticism Read: Text, Chapter 1
F 9-4	Doing Rhetorical Criticism Read: Text, Chapter 2
M 9-7	Labor Day Holiday – no class
W 9-9	Doing Rhetorical Criticism Read: Packet, Obama, “Address to Joint Session of Congress”
F 9-11	Doing Rhetorical Criticism
M 9-14	Doing Rhetorical Criticism
W 9-16	Neo-Aristotelian Criticism Read: Text, Chapter 3; Text, Chapter 3 Sample Essay, Hill, “Conventional Wisdom – Traditional Form – The President’s Message of November 3, 1969;” Text, Chapter 3 Artifact, Nixon, “Vietnamization”
F 9-18	Neo-Aristotelian Criticism, continued Read: Packet, Campbell, “Critique, an Exercise in the Rhetoric of Mythical America”
M 9-21	Neo-Aristotelian Criticism, continued

- W 9-23 Burkean Criticism
Read:
Text, Chapter 4
- F 9-25 Burkean Criticism, continued
Read:
Text, Chapter 4 Sample Essay, Elliott, “A Cluster Analysis of Enron’s Code of Ethics”*
- M 9-28 Cluster Criticism, continued
Read:
Packet, Marston and Rockwell, “Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s ‘The Yellow Wallpaper’: Rhetorical Subversion in Feminist Literature”*
Packet, Kennedy, “Speech to Greater Houston Ministerial Association”
- W 9-30 Cluster Criticism, continued
- F 10-2 Cluster Criticism, continued
- M 10-5 Pentadic Criticism
Read:
Text, Chapter 11
Text, Sample Essay, Ling, “A Pentadic Analysis of Senator Edward Kennedy’s Address to the People of Massachusetts July 25, 1969”*
Packet, Tonn, Endress, and Diamond, “Hunting and Heritage on Trial: A Dramatistic Debate Over Tragedy, Tradition, and Territory”*
- W 10-7 Pentadic Criticism, continued
Read:
Packet, Jindal
Project Proposals Due!
- F 10-9 Pentadic Criticism, continued
- M 10-12 Pentadic Criticism, continued
- W 10-14 Narrative Criticism
Read:
Text, Chapter 10

- F 10-16 Narrative Criticism
Read:
 Packet, Lewis, “Telling America’s Story: Narrative Form and the Reagan Presidency”*
- M 10-19 Narrative Criticism
Read:
 Packet, “The ‘Checkers’ Speech”
- W 10-21 Narrative Criticism
- F 10-23 Narrative Criticism
- M 10-26 Metaphoric Criticism
Read:
 Text, Chapter 8
 Packet, Osborn, “Archetypal Metaphor in Rhetoric: The Light-Dark Family”
First Paper Due!
- W 10-28 Metaphoric Criticism, continued
Read:
 Packet, Cuomo, “Keynote Address”
- F 10-30 Metaphoric Criticism, continued
- M 11-2 Ideological Criticism
Read:
 Text, Chapter 7
 Packet, McGee, “The Ideograph: A Link Between Rhetoric and Ideology”
 Packet, Hayden, “Revitalizing the Debate between <Life> and <Choice>: The 2004 March for Women’s Lives”*
- W 11-4 Ideological Criticism
Read:
 Packet, Obama, “Remarks by the President on a New Beginning”
- F 11-6 Ideological Criticism, continued
- M 11-9 Ideological Criticism, continued
- W 11-11 Veteran’s Day – No Class
- F 11-13 National Communication Association convention – No Class

- M 11-16 Generic Criticism
Read:
Text, Chapter 6
Text, Sample Essay, Gunn, “The Rhetoric of Exorcism: George W. Bush and the Return of Political Demonology”*
- W 11-18 Generic Criticism, continued
Read:
Palin, “Governor Sarah Palin at the RNC”
- F 11-20 Generic Criticism, continued
- M 11-23 Generic Criticism, continued
Second Paper Due!
- W 11-25 Thanksgiving Holiday
- F 11-27 Thanksgiving Holiday
- M 11-30 No Class – writing day
- W 12-2 No Class – writing day
- F 12-4 No Class – writing day
- M 12-7 Paper Presentations
- W 12-9 Paper Presentations
- F 12-11 Paper Presentations

Wednesday, December 16 Paper Presentations (Final period – 8:00 – 10:00)
Final papers due at the beginning of the class period!

Please Note: The deadline to drop classes is October 12. After that date you may drop this class only if you meet certain criteria (see your university catalog). Incompletes will be given only in emergencies and only with my prior consent. If you foresee having difficulty finishing the course, come speak with me immediately.