

CA 424/524: Rhetorical Criticism
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Course Description

This course provides an overview of rhetorical criticism. Rhetorical criticism is the art of providing judgments on rhetorical artifacts such as speeches, film, literature, music, or art. I expect that you have already taken CA 422/522, Rhetorical Theory. The material that you learned in that course will be essential as you begin to put theory into practice.

This course has two primary goals. At the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Apply rhetorical theory in critiquing rhetorical artifacts.
- Construct and evaluate rhetorical criticism.

These goals will be assessed in several ways. Students will build their critical skills through the process of revision and peer review. The proposal and context assignments provide a base on which to begin the study by providing an orientation to the text. Students will work through multiple drafts of their paper, knocking off the rough edges until they have crafted an engaging work of criticism that illuminates our understanding of the artifact. Through the process of peer review, they will learn to provide thoughtful critiques of others' work and will, in turn, gain valuable critiques of their own work. Through participation in classroom discussion of methods of rhetorical criticism, students will begin to craft their own critical method.

I expect that each student will come to class prepared to discuss the readings for the day. According to the University of South Alabama's Academic Policies and Procedures, "Each hour of lecture usually requires two hours of outside preparation. Thus, a student carrying sixteen semester hours should be prepared to spend at least 48 hours in class and study per week."

Required Texts

The required readings will be available through the library's online course reserves.

Suggested Text

Because this is a writing intensive course, I strongly recommend that you purchase a writing guide. Here is my recommendation:

Strunk, William, and E. B. White. *The Elements of Style*. 4th ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1999.

I would also recommend investing in a style guide, such as APA, MLA, or Chicago, if you have not already done so. An important part of scholarly writing is accurately and consistently citing your sources.

Class Climate

The questions that we will grapple with have no easy answers. There will be points where you may disagree with someone else. This is appropriate and, to some degree, desirable. However, respect for others in the class is an essential component of this class. Arguments should be made in a spirit of inquiry rather than as personal attacks. For more on University of South Alabama's policy regarding Academic Disruption, see *The Lowdown*.

Attendance Policy

This is a senior/graduate level course, so I assume that by now you recognize the value of regular class attendance. This course relies heavily on in-class discussion. Excessive absences will negatively impact your participation grade in this course. If you are not present, you are not able to participate and it is impossible to make up the discussion. You get three absences free—no questions asked. However, after these absences, each absence will decrease your final grade by 5 points (half a letter grade), so use them wisely. In addition, there may be in-class activities, such as the peer editing sessions, that are impossible to make up. If you are absent, please do not email me asking, "What did I miss?" You missed 75 minutes of discussion and perhaps an assignment. Make friends with your classmates and get the notes from them and/or come to my office hours.

Academic Honesty

From the Student Academic Conduct Policies: "Any dishonesty related to academic work or records constitutes academic misconduct including, but not limited to, activities such as giving or receiving unauthorized aid in tests and examinations, improperly obtaining a copy of an examination, plagiarism, misrepresentation of information, or altering transcripts or university records. . . . Penalties may range from the loss of credit for a particular assignment to dismissal from the University" (*The Lowdown*, p. 249). In short, don't do it. I don't like to bust students for plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty but I will. It isn't fair to others and it isn't fair to yourself.

Here is the policy set forth by the Department of Communication:

Standards of academic conduct are set forth in the Student Academic Conduct Policy. By registering at the university, you have acknowledged your awareness of the Academic Conduct Policy, and you are obliged to become familiar with your rights and responsibilities as defined by the code. Please see *The Lowdown* for the complete **Student Academic Conduct Policy**.

Each instance of academic dishonesty will be reported to the chair of the department. The student involved will receive written notification describing the alleged violation and the recommended

penalty, along with a copy of the policy. The written notification will inform the student that if it is determined that previous incident(s) of Academic Misconduct have occurred, an additional or higher level charge may be brought.

The student involved has ten (10) Class days from receipt of the written notification to submit a written response to the instructor and request a conference with the department chair and the instructor.

Assignments

Note: Contrary to most of my classes, I wish to receive all of your assignments by email. I will respond by email as well, using the markup feature in Word to make comments and ask questions of you in the text. Thus, for the purposes of this class, you will definitely want to check your USA email regularly.

Proposal: Provide a 2-3 page paper describing the artifact you wish to examine and explaining why it is worthy of consideration. In other words, what makes it interesting from a rhetorical standpoint? You may also wish to explain what you personally bring to the analysis. Provide a bibliography in a standard format (APA, MLA, Chicago). **This paper is due on January 26.** I know that this is early but the other assignments hinge on you choosing a text. The earlier you decide on an object for analysis the more time you have to write about it. If you have trouble deciding, talk to me during office hours.

Discussion of Context: In 2-3 pages, provide the historical, political, and/or social context for this particular artifact. Also provide the scholarly context as well. Has anyone else written about this artifact? Is there some scholarly discussion that you will be entering? Provide a bibliography in a standard format (APA, MLA, Chicago). **This paper is due on February 9.**

First Draft: At this point, you should have a solid working draft of your paper. This should be a relatively clean draft, so make sure you spell check it and have your references in order. You may have some theoretical issues to work out but it should be essentially complete. Think of this as the kind of paper that you would turn in as a final paper for a typical class. **This paper is due on March 8.**

Peer Editing Assignment: One valuable aspect of scholarly publishing is the framework of peer review. Most scholarly journals and conferences are peer reviewed. In this assignment, you will receive the papers of two of your colleagues and you will supply two of your colleagues a copy of your paper. I have scheduled it such that you will have had time to consider my comments on your first draft and make appropriate changes. It is in your interest to give your colleagues the cleanest draft you can. It is up to you and your reviewers how to supply the paper, whether in hard copy or by email. However, at that time **I will also need a copy of the paper that will be under review by email on April 3.** The reviewer will then, for each paper, write up a two page document describing the strengths and weaknesses of the essay. The point of this review process is to help the writer create a stronger essay, so be honest in your assessment. Regardless of how you supply the critique, **I will expect a copy in my email on April 10.**

Final Draft: This is it. At this point, you should have the best essay you can do in the time that we have available and it should be at a level of quality that you could submit it to a conference for presentation. The paper should be between 10-15 pages long. That said, my assessment will have less to do with quantity and more to do with quality. The lower bound suggests that it would be difficult to do justice to any artifact worth studying in less than 10 double-spaced pages. **The paper is due May 3 by 5PM.** In addition to the paper itself, I will also require a brief explanation of how you addressed the concerns of the reviewers.

Note on Final Paper for Graduate Students: I encourage graduate students to write a paper that could be incorporated into their theses. However, if this is not practical, they should write a research paper that would be of appropriate quality to be submitted to a scholarly conference. Students should discuss their paper with me early in the course so we can identify appropriate outside readings that will facilitate their research. The final paper should be approximately 20-25 pages (with a maximum of 25 pages). As with the undergraduates, **the paper is due May 3 by 5PM** and I will also require a brief explanation of how you addressed the concerns of the reviewers.

Final Exam for Graduate Students: Because we no longer have comprehensive exams, you will have a comprehensive exam-like question that you will answer that stands in for that assessment. This will be done on the last day of class.

Participation: Participation is more than simply showing up. In order for you to succeed in this class it is imperative that you come prepared, having read the assignments for the day and ready to discuss them.

Assessment for Interpersonal/Rhetoric Track (Undergraduates): There will be no final exam for the undergraduates in this course; the final paper will serve that purpose. However, because this is the capstone course for the Communication Studies track, you will need to complete an assessment for the track. This will not affect your grade, but will be used to assess the curriculum.

Grading Scale

There are a total of 100 points available in this course:

Proposal: 10

Discussion of Context: 10

First Draft: 15

Peer Editing Assignment: 15

Final Draft: 30

Participation: 20 (**for graduates, this will be the comprehensive exam question**)

A=90-100; B=80-89.99; C=70-79.99; D=60-69.99; F=below 60

Late work will receive half credit at most.

Statement Regarding Students with Disabilities

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, students with bona fide disabilities will be afforded reasonable accommodation. The Office of Special Student Services will certify a disability and advise faculty members of reasonable accommodations.

If you have a specific disability that qualifies you for academic accommodations, please notify the instructor/professor and provide certification from Special Student Services. (OSSS is located at the corner of Jaguar Drive and Old Shell Road, 5828 Old Shell Road, phone – 460-7212).

Keep in mind that OSSS prohibits me from making any retroactive accommodations, so if you will need special accommodations please talk to me as soon as possible. Moreover, I can make no accommodations unless you are registered with OSSS.

Statement on Diversity

The Department of Communication is committed to preparing students to work in a diverse society. As such, our classes will include lectures and activities which promote an awareness of and sensitivity towards differences of race, ethnicity, national origin, culture, sexual orientation, religion, age and disabilities. Such an environment will contribute to the growth and development of each member of the class, as it will encourage students to embrace diversity as a positive aspect of learning and scholarship.

A Note on my Teaching Philosophy

I believe that every student in my class has the ability to succeed in this course. My goal is to create a comfortable environment in which you can explore and improve your ability to think critically and skillfully present your ideas to an audience. I do not “give” grades; students earn grades—no one is entitled to get an “A” in a class unless they earn it. I cannot grade on effort—I must grade what you actually do. My job is to push students to do their best and to then exceed that standard. I recognize that this is futile unless I also provide the support and assistance that each student needs to excel. Therefore, I provide office hours and expect students to use them and am generally available through email. I assume that attaining a university degree is your first priority. If this is not the case, it is less likely that you will excel. Some of you are here because you want to get a better job. I believe that education should do much more than job training, but if you see it as job training, at least take it seriously. Recognize that you will probably be required to work 40 hours a week (or more) from 8am until 5pm. If you are chronically late, they fire you. If you do not do your work, they fire you. If you drop the ball, you probably will not get a raise, they may fire you, and in some cases legal action may be taken against you. Bottom line—you do your part to excel and I will be there to help you reach that goal.

Reading Schedule

Week 1: What is Rhetorical Criticism?

- 1/17 Ivie, Robert L. "The Social Relevance of Rhetorical Scholarship." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81, no. 2 (1995): 138.
- 1/19 Black, Edwin. "A Note on Theory and Practice in Rhetorical Criticism." *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 44, no. 4 (1980): 331-36.
- Campbell, Karlyn Kohrs. "Criticism Ephemeral and Enduring." *Speech Teacher* 23, no. 1 (1974): 9-14.
- Hunt, Steven B. "An Essay on Publishing Standards for Rhetorical Criticism." *Communication Studies* 54, no. 3 (2003): 378-384.

Week 2: A Brief History of the Discipline

- 1/24 Wichelns, Herbert A. "The Literary Criticism of Oratory." In *Studies in Rhetoric and Public Speaking, in Honor of James Albert Winans*, edited by Alexander Magnus Drummond, 181-216. New York: Russell & Russell, 1962.
- 1/26 Black, Edwin. "The Second Persona." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 56, no. 2 (1970): 111-19.
- Wrage, Ernest J. "Public Address: A Study in Social and Intellectual History." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 33, no. 4 (1947): 451-57.

Proposal Due

Week 3: Text and Context

- 1/31 McGee, Michael Calvin. "Text, Context, and the Fragmentation of Contemporary Culture." *Western Journal of Communication* 54, no. 3 (1990): 274-89.
- 2/2 Lucas, Stephen. "The Renaissance of American Public Address: Text and Context in Rhetorical Criticism." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 74 (1988): 241-260.

Week 4: The Practice of Rhetorical Criticism

- 2/7 Black, Edwin. "On Objectivity and Politics in Criticism." *American Communication Journal* 4, no. 1 (2000): <http://www1.appstate.edu/orgs/acjournal/holdings/vol4/iss1/special/black.htm>
- Reid, Loren D. "The Perils of Rhetorical Criticism." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 30, no. 4 (1944): 416-22.
- 2/9 Leff, Michael, and Andrew Sachs. "Words the Most Like Things: Iconicity and the Rhetorical Text." *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 54, no. 3 (1990): 252-73.

Context Paper Due

Week 5: The Practice of Rhetorical Criticism

- 2/14 Leff, Michael C. "Interpretation and the Art of the Rhetorical Critic." *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 44, no. 4 (1980): 337-49.
- 2/16 Black, Edwin. "Gettysburg and Silence." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 80, no. 1 (1994): 21-36.

Week 6: Form and Content

- 2/21 **Mardi Gras: No Class**
- 2/23 Fulkerson, Richard P. "The Public Letter as a Rhetorical Form: Structure, Logic, and Style in King's 'Letter from Birmingham Jail.'" *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 65, no. 2 (1979): 121-36.

Week 7: Creating and Critiquing Reality

- 2/28 Benson, Thomas W. "Another Shooting in Cowtown." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 67, no. 4 (1981): 347-406.
- 3/1 Charland, Maurice. "Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the *Peuple Quebecois*." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73, no. 2 (1987): 133-50.

Week 8: The Practice of Rhetorical Criticism

- 3/6 Benson, Thomas W. "Rhetoric and Autobiography: The Case of Malcolm X." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 60, no. 1 (1974): 1-13.
- 3/8 Campbell, John Angus. "Darwin and the *Origin of Species*: The Rhetorical Ancestry of an Idea." *Speech Monographs* 37, no. 1 (1970): 1-14.
- Leff, Michael. "Things Made by Words: Reflections on Textual Criticism." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 78 (1992): 223-31.
- First Draft Due**

Week 9: Spring Break

- 3/13 **Spring Break: No Class**
- 3/15 **Spring Break: No Class**

Week 10: Revise and Resubmit

- 3/20 Blair, Carole, Marsha S. Jeppeson, and Enrico Pucci, Jr. "Public Memorializing in Postmodernity: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial as Prototype." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 77, no. 3 (1991): 263-288.

3/22 Samples of Responses to Journal Submissions for Discussion.

Week 11: Queer and Feminist Criticism

3/27 Morris III, Charles. E. "Pink Herring & the Fourth Persona: J. Edgar Hoover's Sex Crime Panic." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88, no. 2 (2002): 228-244.

3/29 Zaeske, Susan. "Signatures of Citizenship: The Rhetoric of Women's Antislavery Petitions." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88, no. 2 (2002): 147-68.

Week 12: Feminist Criticism

4/3 Dow, Bonnie J. "Feminism, Miss America, and Media Mythology." *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 6, no. 1 (2003): 127-49.

Peer Review Exchange

4/5 Campbell, Karlyn Kohrs. "Stanton's 'The Solitude of Self': A Rationale for Feminism." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 66, no. 3 (1980): 304-12.

Tonn, Mari Boor. "Miss America Contesters and Contestants: Discourse About Social 'Also-Rans.'" *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 6, no. 1 (2003): 150-60.

Week 13: The Practice of Rhetorical Criticism

4/10 **Peer Review Workshop**

4/12 Lucaites, John Louis, and Celeste Michelle Condit, "Reconstructing <Equality>: Culturetypal and CounterCultural Rhetorics in the Martyred Black Vision." *Communication Monographs* 57 no. 1 (1990): 5-24.

(I will be at the convention of the Southern States Communication Association)

Week 14: Criticism of Public Artifacts

4/17 Lucas, Stephen E. "The Stylistic Artistry of the Declaration of Independence" *Prologue: Quarterly of the National Archives*, 22 (1990): 25-43. (Available at http://www.archives.gov/national-archivesexperience/charters/declaration_style.html)

4/19 Hogan, J. Michael. "Managing Dissent in the Catholic Church: A Reinterpretation of the Pastoral Letter on War and Peace." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 75, no. 4 (1989): 400-15.

Week 15: What Are We Doing Anyway?

- 4/24 Baskerville, Barnet. "Must We All be Rhetorical Critics?" *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 63, no. 2 (1977): 107-16.
Hart, Roderick P. Theory-Building and Rhetorical Criticism: An Informal Statement of Opinion. *Central States Speech Journal* 27 (1976): 70-77.
- 4/26 Darsey, James. "Must We All Be Rhetorical Theorists? An Anti-Democratic Inquiry." *Western Journal of Communication* 58, no. 3 (1994): 164-181.

Week 16: What Are We Doing Anyway? Conclusion

- 5/1 Kuypers, Jim A. "Must We All Be Political Activists?" *American Communication Journal* 4, no. 1 (2000): <http://www1.appstate.edu/orgs/acjournal/holdings/vol4/iss1/special/kuypers.htm>
- 5/3 **Final Papers Due**
Department Track Assessment (Undergraduates Only)
Comprehensive Exam Question (Graduates Only)

Regarding Changes in Course Requirements

Since all classes do not progress at the same rate, the instructor may wish to modify the above requirements or their timing as circumstances dictate. For example, the instructor may wish to change the number and frequency of exams, or the number and sequence of assignments. However, the students must be given adequate notification. Moreover, there may be non-typical classes for which these requirements are not strictly applicable in each instance and may need modification. If such modification is needed, it must be in writing and conform to the spirit of this policy statement.