



## **COMM 3333 Rhetorical Criticism**

St. Edward's University • Department of  
Communication

Sections 01 & 02 • Fleck 111  
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Office Hours: Monday & Wednesday 1:00 – 3:00  
& by appointment

### **REQUIRED MATERIALS:**

Foss, Sonja K. *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration & Practice, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition*. Long Grove, Illinois: Waveland Press, 2009.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

The primary purpose of this class is to develop your critical abilities and sensibilities as a scholar of rhetoric. Our coursework will acquaint you with several approaches to rhetorical criticism, survey some of the landmark pieces of criticism produced in the field, and develop your own skills as a critic through the application of critical methods of analysis to selected rhetorical artifacts. By the end of the course you should be able to adapt any of several approaches to the practice of criticism and produce a well-written and well-argued scholarly analysis. Class discussions are designed to allow you to practice civil argument about the content of our class readings, critical approaches, and conclusions drawn by you and your classmates. Lively discussion based on thorough preparation and attentive reading is encouraged and expected.

### **COURSE POLICIES**

#### **Attendance**

Attendance at each class is required. Each time you are absent from class counts as one absence. If you arrive more than 10 minutes late to class, you will be marked absent for that day. After your second absence, your final grade will be reduced by three (3) percentage points for each additional absence. Accruing more than six (6) unexcused absences (including the two (2) free absences you receive) will result in Withdrawal or Failure of the class.

After the second week of class, it is your responsibility to sign the roll sheet each class period. Be sure to do so, as this is the official record of your attendance in class.

If you have a valid and unavoidable reason for missing class, you may submit a completed *Excused Absence Request* along with a two page (at least 500 words) chapter summary / discussion for the

material you missed. The request form is available on Blackboard under Course Documents. A separate request form and additional chapter summary / discussion must be submitted for each absence. You will also need to provide me with proper documentation for your absence (such as a doctor's note, a hospitalization record, a university excuse, or an athletic excuse). For your request to be considered, all documentation must be turned in to me no more than two-weeks from your return to class or the final class day of the semester, whichever comes first. After review of your request I will determine whether the excuse will be granted.

If you are involved in athletics or another school-sanctioned activity that requires you to miss this class, please give me appropriate supporting material signed by the sponsor. Please underline or highlight the specific dates that involve this class. If changes occur throughout the semester after you have given me a schedule, please keep me updated.

I reserve the right to "WA" a student for excessive absences. Please note that this does not mean that I will automatically "WA" you if you risk failing the class. It is your responsibility to initiate drop procedures if you are in danger of failing this class.

### **Academic Integrity**

Academic dishonesty includes cheating on exams as well as plagiarizing (presenting another's work as your own). Cheating comes in all different shades—ranging from blatant copying off another's exam/bringing a 'cheat sheet' to class to more subtle forms of 'borrowing' a few ideas and not citing your sources—all of which will be treated with the same level of seriousness in this class. The St. Edward's University Undergraduate Bulletin and the Student Handbook state that a student who is dishonest in any work may receive the maximum penalty of a mark of F for that course. Withdrawal from a course is not allowed when an F in the course for academic dishonesty has been imposed. Students caught committing academic dishonesty in this course will be subject to the full range of penalties as described in the Undergraduate Bulletin and in the Student Handbook.

### **Courtesy**

*Cell phones:* As a courtesy to your teacher and to your classmates, please make sure at the beginning of each class period that your cell phones are silenced. Any texting during class will result in you being counted absent for the day.

*Laptops:* You may use a laptop to take notes in class. However, in-class laptop usage is restricted to taking notes about this particular class. Writing papers for other classes, surfing the Internet, checking email, visiting Facebook, or other such distractions are prohibited. Using your laptop for anything other than taking notes can be distracting for your classmates and detrimental to your grade. Improper usage of your laptop will result in you being counted as absent for that day and asked not to use your laptop during future class sessions.

*Tardiness:* If you are late to class on a presentation day, and a speaker has already begun his/her presentation, please wait until the speaker is finished before entering the room.

### **Email Policy**

I check email once per day, usually in the afternoon, and I will get back with you as soon as possible. Please note that I do not return email over the weekend.

## Special Accommodations

If you have a medical, psychiatric or learning disability and require accommodations in this class, please let me know early in the semester or as soon as you are eligible. You will first need to provide documentation of your disability to the Student Disability Services Office located in Moody Hall 155 in Academic Planning and Support Services.

## Grades

My hope is that you will focus on learning rather than grades in this class. Although a good GPA is admirable, it is by no means the focus of education. The Job Outlook Survey conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) ranked GPA as number 17 of the top 20 qualities employers find important in a candidate. Interestingly, the most important quality to potential employers is communications skills!

There is no such thing as an “A Student,” and it is not my responsibility to maintain your 4.0 GPA, or to make sure you achieve a certain GPA for a scholarship or organization—those responsibilities are yours. That said, if you are not doing as well as you would like in class, please don’t hesitate to come talk to me so that we can discuss how you might improve your performance on the remaining assignments. I am happy to discuss study tips, explain assignments and grading criteria, or simply help you understand key course concepts. My goal is to be fair to everyone in the class, which means I will hold everyone to the same standards.

### Letter Grade Equivalents

A+ = 100	A = 95	A- = 92
B+ = 88	B = 85	B- = 82
C+ = 78	C = 75	C- = 72
D+ = 68	D = 65	D- = 62
F = 50		

### Course Grading Scale

A	90-100
B	80-89
C	70-79
D	60-69
F	Below 60

## ASSIGNMENTS & SCORING

Assignment	Weight	Record Your Grade	Multiply by	Assignment Total
Rhetorical Analysis	20%		x 2.0	
Literature Review	10%		x 1.0	
Oral Presentation	10%		x 1.0	
Quizzes	10%		x 1.0	
Participation	5%		x 0.5	
Article Discussion Leader	15%		x 1.5	
Midterm Exam	15%		x 1.5	
Final Exam	15%		x 1.5	
			<b>Total Points</b>	
			<b>Divide by 1000</b>	

Keeping track of your grade? You can get a good idea what your course grade is by using the chart provided above. Just fill in the grades as you receive them. Multiply each grade by the number listed in the “Multiply by” column and record the total. Numeric equivalents for letter grades are listed above under “Grading Scale.” Total up all of your multiplied assignments and divide by 1000, this will give you your course grade. You can use this chart anytime during the semester to find your current grade by dividing by the total points possible at that time instead of 1000. Please note that the matrix does not take into account absences so that is something you should also keep track of below.

Absences	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Subtract</b>	0	0	-3	-6	-9	-12	F
<b>Record</b>							

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

All assignments must be typed or word-processed and turned in on time. Late work will result in a 10% grade reduction for each day it is late. All assignments must be turned in as hard copies and must also be submitted through blackboard to turnitin. For each assignment there is a link underneath the Assignments tab that allows you to submit it to turnitin. Simply select the correct link and upload your file. Assignments must be submitted to turnitin before the beginning of the class period when they are due. Hard copies must be stapled and ready at the beginning of the period.

### **RHETORICAL ANALYSIS PAPER**

You will prepare a major, article-length rhetorical analysis of a single text or group of texts. You will conduct a close textual analysis, situated in whatever contexts (theoretical, situational, historical) seem appropriate to support your interpretive work. The three components below, the proposal, literature review, and oral presentation also concern work you will be doing for this paper.

Composing the research proposal and literature review will help keep you on track for producing a well-written final paper. You will be learning various techniques used to produce rhetorical analysis throughout the course. You may choose from one of these methods or develop a hybrid method to inform your analysis.

Before you begin writing your paper you will need to submit and receive approval for your research proposal. This brief 1-2 page proposal will posit your artifact of analysis, central questions, significance, critical procedures and methods that you are likely to explore within your final rhetorical analysis paper.

It is imperative that your analysis paper follows proper formatting requirements. You may choose to use the most recent MLA or APA format, but be consistent, if you choose one, stick with it throughout. Online sources and style guides can provide you with the proper format for any citation you may encounter. Your paper must use in-text parenthetical citation and you must provide a proper cover page, abstract and bibliography. Grammar and spelling within your analysis should be free from error. Papers should be 10-12 pages in length, double-spaced, 12 point non-fixed width font, with 1-inch margins. Note that the cover page and bibliography are in addition to the 10-12 pages of well-written analysis.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Early in the semester you will choose an artifact to critique throughout the semester. In the literature review, you will discuss relevant scholarly literature as it relates to your subject matter, method, genre or author. Here you will discuss related research and show how it informs your particular reading of your artifact. You may wish to agree with, argue against, or adapt research as you begin to develop your critical understanding of the way your artifact creates meaning. Your rhetorical analysis proposal must have been approved for you to be allowed to submit the literature review. Literature reviews should be between 3 and 4 pages in length.

### **ORAL PRESENTATION**

During the final weeks of the semester you will present your rhetorical analysis paper to the class. This is an oral presentation and just reading sections of your paper aloud does not fulfill the

requirements. You should present your paper to the class as if you were presenting a work at a scholarly conference. You may incorporate a PowerPoint presentation, visual aids or play an audio or video clip of your artifact if you like. Please limit any A/V to less than 2 minutes. PowerPoint presentations should be uploaded to Blackboard. Total presentation time should run 6-7 minutes.

### **PARTICIPATION & READING QUIZZES**

Participation, including discussion and debate of concepts and analysis, is imperative for a course of this nature to succeed. Each student is expected to actively engage the subject matter by being well prepared for each class period and by offering substantive observations and insights related to the material. A brief 5 question quiz will be given at the beginning of each class period when an article reading is assigned. These questions are designed to ensure that each student has read the material and is prepared for an informed discussion. Some rather obvious quiz material includes: the authors, their method, their artifacts, their findings, important terminology, and the implications for rhetoric. There may also be a few in-class writing assignments to help you develop your critical skills and apply the methods we have discussed.

### **ARTICLE DISCUSSION LEADER**

Each student will be responsible for leading a class discussion on one of the Blackboard Articles listed on the syllabus. You will be paired up with one or more of your peers and will be responsible for conducting the class on your assigned day. Your responsibilities include (1) introducing and presenting the article and situating it within a particular context; (2) preparing relevant discussion questions and (3) leading the class in the discussion of those questions.

As a discussion leader, you should prepare yourself by conducting additional research on the article, author, method and subject matter. This research will allow you to relate your article into a broader discussion. You will be in charge of conducting the class for at least 1 hour without my intervention or help. If you have questions about the material, please ask them before class begins.

Most groups choose to incorporate a PowerPoint presentation. If so, please upload your PowerPoint file to Blackboard and bring a backup copy via flash drive, EdShare, or email.

### **Grading Criteria:**

1. Quality of the discussion questions
  - Your questions should encourage class discussion (avoid close-ended, yes/no type questions).
  - Your questions should encourage reflection on the class material and aim to get the class to apply course concepts.
2. Level of preparation & knowledge of the article
3. Ability to work together with your assigned peer
4. Ability to solicit class participation and facilitate discussion
5. Professional leadership

### **MIDTERM & FINAL EXAMS**

Exams will be comprised of short answer, matching, and essay questions and cover readings from our textbook, assigned articles, class discussions and lectures.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### Week 1

T	1/14	Introduction to the Course	
R	1/16	What is Rhetoric? What is Criticism?	Chapter 1

### Week 2

T	1/21	Doing Rhetorical Criticism Selections from Aristotle's <i>On Rhetoric</i>	Chapter 2 Bb Aristotle
R	1/23	The Rhetorical Analysis Paper	

### Week 3

T	1/28	Neo Aristotelian Criticism	Chapter 3
R	1/30	Assigned Article & Discussion "Lincoln at Cooper Union: A Rationale for Neo-Classical Criticism"	Bb Mohrmann & Leff

### Week 4

T	2/04	Cluster Criticism <b>Rhetorical Analysis Proposal Due</b>	Chapter 4
R	2/06	Assigned Articles & Discussion "The Bear in the Back Yard: Myth, Ideology & Victimage Ritual..."	Bb Corcoran

### Week 5

T	2/11	Fantasy-Theme Criticism	Chapter 5
R	2/13	Assigned Article & Discussion "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision: Rhetorical Criticism of Social Reality"	Bb Bormann

### Week 6

T	2/18	Feminist Criticism	Foss Supplement Bb
R	2/20	Assigned Articles & Discussion "Hegemony, Feminist Criticism and the Mary Tyler Moore Show"	Bb Dow

### Week 7

T	2/25	Generic Criticism <b>Literature Review Due</b>	Chapter 6
R	2/27	Assigned Article & Discussion "They Spoke in Defense of Themselves: On Generic Criticism of Apologia"	Bb Ware & Linkugel

### Week 8

T	3/04	<b>Midterm Exam</b>	
R	3/06	Narrative Criticism Reading: "Entering the Stream: A Call for Life in the Moment in <i>Wings of Desire</i> "	Chapter 9 Bb Butler

**Week 9**

T 3/11 **No Class – Spring Break!**  
 R 3/13 **No Class – Spring Break!**

**Week 10**

T 3/18 Ideological Criticism Chapter 7  
 R 3/20 Assigned Article & Discussion Bb  
 “The Culture of Science and the Rhetoric of Scientism: From Francis Lessl  
 Bacon to the Darwin Fish”

**Week 11**

T 3/25 Metaphoric & Mythic Criticism Chapter 8  
 R 3/27 Assigned Articles & Discussion Bb  
 “Evolution of ‘The New Frontier’ in *Alien* & *Aliens*: Patriarchal Rushing  
 Co-optation of the Feminine Archetype”

**Week 12**

T 4/01 Generative Criticism Chapter 11  
 R 4/03 Assigned Article(s) & Discussion Bb  
 “Gettysburg and Silence” Black

**Week 13**

T 4/08 Pentadic Criticism Chapter 10  
 Reading: Bb  
 “Presidential Motives for War” Ivie  
 R 4/10 Postmodern Criticism  
 Reading: Bb  
 “Medicine, Rhetoric, and Euthanasia: A Case Study in the Workings of Hyde  
 a Postmodern Discourse”

**Week 14**

T 4/15 **Peer Review of Analysis Papers**  
 R 4/17 **Easter Break – Class will not meet**

**Week 15**

T 4/22 **Final Exam**  
 R 4/24 **Rhetorical Analysis Paper Due**  
**Paper Presentations**

**Week 16**

T 4/29 **Paper Presentations**  
 R 5/01 **Paper Presentations**  
 Course Evaluations