**RHE 309S: Critical Reading and Persuasive Writing**

**Spring 2008—Course Goals and Guidelines**

**Instructor Info:**

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Office Hours: T/Th after class-12:30 or by appointment

Location: FAC 16

**Goals:**

Success in a rhetoric class does not entail memorization of content so much as the mastery of certain skills, skills that will inevitably prove useful in any college classroom that requires research, critical reading, and argumentative writing. Upon passing this course, you ought to be able to effectively perform the following tasks:

* Identify, evaluate, construct, and organize effective arguments
* Read texts and images critically
* Understand public writing
* Conduct research and document sources
* Produce a clear, supple style adaptable to a variety of rhetorical situations
* Edit and proofread your own and others prose

**College Writing vs. High School Writing:**

Though reading and writing were obviously abilities that you developed in high school, in RHE 309S, you will be developing them for heightened insight and sophistication. College writing differs from high school writing in the following ways:

*The Audience for College Writing—*the purpose of your writing is engagement in public discourse on current topics through a prose style that appeals to a broad audience rather than prose that is written to merely please the teacher. As such, you can never take for granted that the audience knows something that was discussed in class or stated in an assigned reading.

*Argumentation vs.* *Self Expression*—one of the more difficult balances to achieve in this class is the ability to argue passionately without making every paper about you. You will need to learn to substitute statements that begin with “I think, I feel, I believe” with developed arguments that defend the conclusions you’ve made from evidence.

*Format*—many of you have been beaten over the head with the “5 paragraph paper” format in preparation for the AP exam. While an excellent place to start , at a certain point, the 5 paragraph structure becomes more of an encumbrance, particularly for 5-7 page papers, in which each paragraph would have to be excessively long. In order to write effectively for this class, you will need to adapt some of these basic structural principles to the needs of the specific assignment.

*Revision, revision, revision*—if you took the AP English Comp. exam, you’re accustomed to a form of high-pressure timed writing that really bears little resemblance to any type of writing you will have to do in real life. Timed writing gives you little opportunity to premeditate or revise your piece. Often neglected and underappreciated by college freshman, revision (not simply proofreading) will be an essential part of this course, as you will be expected to produce each major paper twice. More on this later.

**Workload:**

Since we will be covering 14 weeks worth of material in 9 weeks, you are going to have to be efficient and timely in the way you approach homework. You can expect between 15 and 30 pages of reading per night and roughly 5 pages of writing per week give or take. Furthermore, because college students are expected to self-motivate and self-discipline, I will not be staying on top of you to make sure that you are staying on task. **I may, however, start giving reading quizzes if I suspect that the readings are being ignored.** Falling behind early can prove fatal under these conditions. If you’re not convinced, see my policy on late papers.

**Attendance** :

Per the universal policy of the Department of Rhetoric and Writing, you are allowed six absences in a M-Th class. On the seventh absence, you fail the course, so it is recommended that you use your allotted six wisely. The good news is that there is no penalty for the six class sessions that you miss as long as that’s all you miss. There are no excused absences except for University approved religious holidays. It is the student’s responsibility to turn in any work due before an absence and to obtain notes from a classmate after the fact. If you have questions about the attendance policy, please see me or feel free to ask the DRW office in Parlin 3.

**Tardies:**

You will be considered tardy if you arrive 10 minutes after class has started. Three tardies will count as an absence.

**Late Papers:**

Papers are due in class. Period. Papers are considered late at the end of the class period during which they are due. I will deduct one letter grade per class day that a paper is late.

**E-mail:**

I will not accept assignments sent to me by email unless this method of submission has been approved by me beforehand. Furthermore, even in these cases, it is your responsibility to ensure that the attachment has reached me in a readable format. Papers that do not reach me in readable condition by the given deadline are considered late. If you are unable to attend class on the day an assignment is due, you are better off asking a classmate to bring it in for you.

Additionally, email is the best way to get in touch with me outside of class, and I will use it frequently to send reminders and notices of changes. Please check the email account you list on your First Day Survey at least once a day.

**Grammar:**

Despite whatever impressions you may have gotten from English teachers past, I do not sit up at night thinking about the subjunctive, and I am likely to forgive a comma splice or sentence fragment here and there so long as it doesn’t make my task as a reader tortuous. I have no official procedure for grading grammar mistakes (1 point off for every missing comma!) other than saying that if your paper does not make sense or is difficult to read, you will lose points in categories on my rubric ranging from organization to clarity to editing in addition to being responsible for your instructor overdosing on non-prescription headache meds. Reference guides like *The Little Penguin Handbook* are highly useful resources that you are likely to consult throughout your college career.

**Citations:**

For research based projects, all sources need to be cited using MLA format, and parenthetical citations for all quotes and paraphrases must be included along with a Works Cited page at the end of the document. Papers with an average of 2 missing citations per paragraph will automatically receive a failing grade and are eligible for academic dishonesty hearings, since the line between forgetfulness and deliberate plagiarism is often quite fuzzy (see below). Papers without a Works Cited will be reduced a full letter grade.

**Academic Dishonesty**

Don’t mess with this stuff. During the first week of class, you will read and sign the Department of Rhetoric and Writing’s official policy on plagiarism. If you have any questions about it, please do not hesitate to ask, as misunderstandings are probably the Number One reason we hold academic dishonesty hearings. Unfortunately, the consequences are no less dire even if your intent was pure. Furthermore, if you are unsure about citation procedures, please please please check your handbook or go to the UWC.

**Grade Distribution:**

Short Assignments 20%

Essay 1.1 Advisory (what you would get if it really counted)

Essay 1.2 15%

Essay 2.1 15%

Essay 2.2 15%

Essay 3.1 15%

Essay 3.2 15%

Oral Presentation 5%

Numeric grades are rounded to the nearest whole number and reported as A, B, C, D, or F (no + or -). There are no “curves” (in the traditional sense) in this grading method, and I have no plans to offer extra credit at this point in time.

**The Undergraduate Writing Center**

The UWC is a resource available to you free of charge. Highly trained graduate and undergraduate consultants are available to assist you at any stage of the writing process from brainstorming to final editing. They also have numerous books and handouts available on grammar, format, and citation form. Many of the consultants are teaching or have taught RHE 306 and 309. The location is FAC 211. Hours are M-Th, 9:00am – 8:00pm and Friday, 9:00am – 3:00pm. We accept walk-ins, but appointments can drastically reduce wait times. Call 232-2730 to reserve a time. You cannot meet with a UWC consultant if your paper is due in two hours or less.