**RHE 309K: Rhetoric of Makeovers**

**Spring 2009—Course Goals and Guidelines**

**Instructor Info:**

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Office Hours: Thursdays, 9:00-12:00am

Location: Café area near Starbucks in the Union

**Description and Goals:**

RHE 309K is a course in argumentation focused through the lens of a chosen topic, in our case the rhetoric of makeovers. Makeover shows, which are ubiquitous on television, from *Extreme Makeover:Home Edition* to *What Not to Wear* contain some of the most recognizable and basic forms of argumentation in the entertainment industry. Indeed, we can (and will) identify all parts of the rhetorical triangle in any given episode. Furthermore, makeover shows usually argue for something that we, in our current culture of consumption, take for granted—that there is a relationship between our internal selves, our identities and the objects we consume, whether it’s a second-hand t-shirt or a designer sofa. We consume products in order to express ourselves, reflect our personalities, to make us happier, or to disguise some inadequacy. In other words, we can talk about conspicuous consumption itself as a rhetorical practice.

The primary (and really only) method of evaluation in this class will be through written assignments. You will produce three major essays, two of which will be submitted in three phases: Rough Draft (for peer review), First Final Draft (for a grade), Second Final Draft (for another grade). The final project will have a multimedia component that will be presented during the final week of class. You will also be responsible for a number of short written assignments (2-3 pages) designed to prepare you for the major papers.

Essay 1 (1500-2000 words)—Perform a rhetorical analysis of a reality makeover show (analysis)

Essay 2 (1500-2000 words)—Make an argument about contemporary conspicuous consumption (analysis/argumentation)

Final Project (multimedia project)—Propose a makeover (proposal argument)

**Required Texts:**

*Everything’s an Argument, 4th ed.*

*George Bernard Shaw’s Plays* (the only play we will be reading is *Pygmalion*, so if you already have this play in

another anthology, you are welcome to use it)

*Sister Carrie*, Theodore Dreiser

**Grade Distribution:**

Short Assignments 25%

Peer Review Participation 5%

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

Essay 1.2 15%

Essay 2.1 10%

Essay 2.2 15%

Final Project (revision optional) 20%

SPURS Participation 10%

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.

**Peer Review:**

Peer review is mandatory for Essays 1 & 2. All papers will be peer reviewed AND submitted for grades via the pbwiki website that I have set up. Use of the website will be demonstrated in class, and instructions for peer reviewing papers are available on the Home page. In order to receive full credit for participation, you must upload your draft and comment on two other drafts by the deadline.

**SPURS:**

This section of RHE 309K has been selected for participation in the SPURS program, a very special and highly rewarding opportunity. SPURS pairs college writing classes with an AP English class in a Texas high school (ours is Beaumont Central). You will be mentoring at least one student via email and will help evaluate the essays they write as part of this program. In addition, the high school students will be making the journey all the way to UT in order to attend our class on a date we will hopefully set in the next couple of weeks. Because SPURS is so important to me and to the Department of Rhetoric and Writing, your participation will count for 10% of your final grade. This should be a free major paper grade for everyone. In order to receive full credit you must do ALL of the following:

* Communicate with your SPURS partner(s) on the SPURS website three times during the semester
* Peer review your partner(s)’s essay
* Attend class on the day of our partnering school’s campus visit

Lapses or failures on the part of your SPURS partner(s), such as missing the peer review deadline, will not count against you.

**Attendance** :

Per the policy of the Department of Rhetoric and Writing, you are allowed four absences in a T/Th class. On the fifth absence, you fail the course, so it is recommended that you use your allotted four wisely. The good news is that there is no penalty for the four 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 to be submitted online by midnight on date indicated on the syllabus. There are no grade penalties for submitting a late paper. However, I only grade papers on specific days (Saturday-Monday), and I only grade in batches. I regard the due dates listed on the syllabus as a contract with you, the student. If you meet your end of the bargain, then I can promise that all papers submitted on Thursday will be returned the following Tuesday. Furthermore, for Essays 1 and 2, I will conference with you one-on-one about your performance on the assignment and revision strategies. However, if you submit a paper late, then I am not obligated to return your paper to you until the next time I grade. By submitting a paper late, you waive your right to a conference about your paper during the allotted week. Furthermore, since you will be receiving feedback on the first draft late, it is likely that you will be behind on the final draft. In other words, if you get behind by more than a couple of days at the beginning of the semester on a major assignment, not only will you tax the good will of your instructor, you may never catch up and find yourself scrambling to complete everything as the pace picks up mid and late-semester

**Extenuating Circumstances:**

Despite your best intentions of coming to every single class and turning in every paper on time, circumstances often get in the way. In a course that demands so much writing, getting behind on a single assignment can be fatal, so it is in your best interest to stick to the due dates on the syllabus. If, however, extenuating circumstances arise in the form of a major technology failure, family emergency, or major illness, we may be able to negotiate a way for you to make up the work. Those extensions, however, are entirely at my discretion, not yours. Your circumstances, where possible, ought to be brought to my attention ahead of time, and the new schedule we establish must be taken seriously. You may not submit a paper whenever you feel like it and then claim extenuating circumstances.

**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.

**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.