

ENGL 6166/MALS 6000: Rhetorical Theory

Spring 2017

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Class: Fretwell 202, Mondays 6:30 – 9:15 pm
Office hours: Mon. & Wed. 1:30 – 3:25 pm (and by appt.)

Course Description and Purpose

The course surveys a variety of Western perspectives on language and discourse from ancient Greece to postmodernity. Texts of European rhetoric theorize the West's beliefs about the nature and importance of speech and writing, the production and substance of knowledge, the arts of communication, and the social practices as well as institutions (schools, family, religion, government, etc.) that language "articulates." To help us explore and situate how foundational and later major thinkers of Western civilization formulated and presented their ways of understanding concepts, such as good, evil, love, courage, and even varieties of European "common sense," through discourse, we will read Plato's *Phaedrus* and *Gorgias*, Aristotle's *On Rhetoric*, St. Augustine's *On Christian Doctrine*, Descartes' *Discourse on Method*, Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication on the Rights of Women*, Nietzsche's *Use and Abuse of History*, Barthes' *Mythologies*, Derrida's *Positions*, Lyotard's *Postmodern Condition*, and shorter readings from Umberto Eco, Jean Baudrillard, Nietzsche, and Jameson. This theory intensive course aims to privilege readings of "primary" texts in an attempt to read with the above major figures. Critiquing the above all-male, Eurocentric canon is greatly encouraged and an assumed goal for the course.

Texts and Materials

Required: [Plato. *Phaedrus*.](#)
[Plato. *Gorgias*.](#)
[Aristotle. *On Rhetoric*.](#) I prefer the George Kennedy translation: Aristotle. *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*. 2nd ed. Trans. George A. Kennedy. Oxford, UP: 2007. {978-0195305098}
[St. Augustine. *On Christian Doctrine \(Rhetoric\)*.](#)
[Descartes, Rene. *Discourse on Method*.](#)
[Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*.](#)
Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Use and Abuse of History*.
Barthes, Roland. (1972). *Mythologies*.
Derrida, Jacques. (1981). *Positions*. Trans. Alan Bass. Univ. of Chicago Press.
Lyotard, Jean Francois. (1984). *The Postmodern Condition*. Univ. of Chicago Press.
Richards, Jennifer. (2008). *Rhetoric*. Routledge. [Available through Atkins](#).
Selected Readings on Canvas

Expectations

I expect students to be prepared when they come to class. **There is quite a bit of reading in this course, but it's manageable if you plan your school-work-life needs. Again, there is quite a bit of reading in this course.** Have the readings completed for the class meeting prior to coming to class and post a reflection on [Canvas](#) (weekly) after class. This is a graduate-level seminar that demands active, critical engagement with the texts. Although one's tastes and convictions, often mistaken as "opinions," are appropriate for personal ways of knowing, we will emphasize identifying (as accurately as possible) the author's meaning before rushing to evaluative comments on a work. Our personal experiences will help guide us in this endeavor by offering examples from school, work, media, life—our unique experiences—which we may use to enhance our understanding of a figure's work. In other words, our experiences should help us (re)think about a figure's work in ways that enhance our understanding. Although we shouldn't be too eager to uncritically consume or "buy into" a figure's ideas, we also shouldn't allow our experiences (in other words, biases) to shut us off from exploring a figure's work with an open (critically aware) mind. I expect you to point to specific passages in our discussions. Be ready to do so every class period.

Work Requirements

Students in this course are expected to be able to compose unified, coherent documents nearly free of mechanical, logical, or structural errors. Student should also strive for writing clear and concise prose. The ability to read advanced college-level

texts critically is also a requirement. I will provide additional requirements on the class website. The final exam period will be used as a presentation day for students' to present their rhetoric/al projects. Time (limits) will be based on enrollment. Our final exam day is Monday, May 8, 2017 from 6:30-9:15 pm. Please let me know ASAP if there are any other exam conflicts with your schedules.

Assignments and Grading Policy

Assignments	pts.	Grading Scale
Midterm Min-Rhetorical Analysis	100	A= 90 – 100
Rhetoric/al Project	200	B= 80 – 89
Leading Class Discussion	100	C= 70 – 79
Rhetoric/al Project Presentation	100	D= 60 – 69
Canvas Posts	250	F= Below 60
Participation	250	
Total	1000	

Definition of A, B, C, D, and F Grades

Remember, your final grade is a combination of the five assignment areas above. An 'A' means your work was excellent—not mediocre, average, or just good. A 'B' means your work was good—not quite excellent but definitely above average and thoughtful. A 'C' means your work was barely adequate enough to satisfy the assignment—showing a lack of effort or thought for the assignment guidelines. A 'D' or 'F' usually means assignments were late, missing, or incomplete—often this work does not demonstrate appropriate college-level work for a 6000-level course.

Late Work

An assignment is due at the beginning of the class for which it was assigned. Honestly, there is no excuse for assignments being late in a 6000-level class, but I have a policy anyway: All late work will reduce the assignment by 10% (an entire letter grade) for each class period it is late. Late Canvas posts will not be accepted. If you will not or cannot be in class on the day a paper assignment is due, you should make arrangements to get the paper to me via another student, turn it in early, or put it in my mailbox. I will not accept assignments attached to e-mails. Please discuss any problems you may have regarding attendance or late work before class if at all possible. Remember, you are responsible for making up all work missed. Something I've learned from past semesters is that if you don't turn things in on time early in the semester, you end up not turning other things in on time (or at all). Do your best to get all your work in to me on time. If you are absent, get the information from another student. Do not expect me to e-mail the class notes to you. Of course, never e-mail me and ask, "so...like, Dr. Toscano, man...did we...like...you know...do anything the other day in class?"

Participation

This is not a drill-and-skill type of course. I expect everyone to be involved in class discussions, which are extremely important for critical thinking. You must contribute to class discussions. Twenty-five percent (25%) of your grade is based on participation.

Please see me ASAP if you're concerned about your participation grade because you're shy or if you don't understand these requirements. Telling me at the end of April that you didn't participate because you're the quiet type or because you didn't understand what "thoughtful" meant will be too late. Even worse, e-mailing me after the semester is over to complain that participation isn't a "valid" class assignment is too late. The purpose of discussions is for students to have control over their own learning and to reinforce critical thinking generally and dialogic exchange of ideas specifically. I am willing to provide a quasi-alternative to supplement a student's participation grade, but please note that discussion, which allows speakers to exchange ideas, is an extremely important component of critical thinking. One alternative is to do class reflections you post online. Please discuss this alternative with me early in the semester...like today!

Attendance

I will take attendance every day. It is very important that you attend every class in order to keep up with the work and reading. Your grade will be lowered after missing 2 classes. Your final grade will be lowered by a full letter grade for each day missed beyond 2 absences. After 4 absences you will receive a failing grade for the course. Please make an effort to come to every class on time. Don't just skip class because you feel you have two "free" days. Save your absences for emergencies. There are no such things as excused absences. Only students participating in UNCC sponsored activities (with the proper documentation) will not be penalized for missing class. I will ask you to request a meeting with the Dean of Students if you have situations that you feel should allow you an exception to missing more than 2 classes. Cars break down, parking is limited, students get sick, and traffic is brutal, but class still happens. Your participation may also be lowered for excessive tardiness.

Important Dates and Administrative Information

The syllabus schedule on the last two pages has important dates for readings, tests, and exams. Students are responsible for not only knowing course deadlines but also knowing UNC Charlotte deadlines (drop/add, billing, vacation, etc.). Please visit the following link for the registrar's calendar: <http://registrar.uncc.edu/calendar>.

Academic Integrity

All UNC Charlotte students have the responsibility to be familiar with and to observe the requirements of *The UNC Charlotte Code of Student Academic Integrity*. This Code forbids cheating, fabrication, or falsification of information, multiple submission of academic work, plagiarism, abuse of academic materials (such as Library books on reserve), and complicity in academic dishonesty (helping others to violate the Code). Any further specific requirements or permission regarding academic integrity in this course will be stated by the instructor, and are also binding on the students in this course. Students who violate the Code can be punished to the extent of being permanently expelled from UNC Charlotte and having this fact recorded on their official transcripts. The normal penalty is zero credit on the work involving dishonesty and further substantial reduction of the course grade. In almost all cases, the course grade is reduced to "F." If you do not have a copy of the Code, you can view it on **UNC Charlotte's Academic Integrity** website at <http://integrity.uncc.edu/>. Standards of academic integrity will be enforced in this course. Students are expected to report cases of academic dishonesty they become aware of to the course instructor who is responsible for dealing with them.

If you try to pass off any work in full or part as your own without proper credit being given to the original source—you will receive an 'F' in this course.

In addition to the above identification of Academic Dishonesty, students should be aware of technology-mediated concerns related to Academic Integrity. The Oxford English Dictionary defines "integrity" as "The condition of having no part or element taken away or wanting; undivided or unbroken state; material wholeness, completeness, entirety." A second definition states that integrity means "The condition of not being marred or violated; unimpaired or uncorrupted condition; original perfect state; soundness." Therefore, anything that draws students' attention away from course activities and goals is a violation of academic integrity because it corrupts the soundness and condition of learning. For instance, engaging in critical thinking/awareness is a sound, perfect state activity for this course; on the other hand, devoting attention to facebook, texting/messaging, non-class-related Web surfing or e-mailing, etc. violates or corrupts the learning goals of this course. Although we may point to the Internet in general and social media sites specifically in our discussions of 21st-Century communication, engrossing oneself in them during class to "catch up with friends" divides your attention and may be distracting to members of this class. This violation is as serious as plagiarism and will result in an 'F' in this course. This syllabus section is your warning. Yes, it is obvious when you are using laptops and handheld devices to take notes or when you use them to corrupt the learning environment.

You will also receive an 'F' in the course for other academic integrity violations. Do not expect another warning—this is it. Please see me if you need further clarification regarding cheating, fabrication or falsification of information, multiple submission of academic work, plagiarism, or complicity in academic dishonesty. Again, so there's no confusion, you will most likely fail the course if you violate any part of the academic integrity code.

Statement of Academic Freedom

I strongly encourage students to use class as a place for free inquiry and intellectual growth. Although we as a class will not always agree or be comfortable with the views of others, every student has the right to his or her own tastes and convictions. I promise to be fair and always support your right to look at the world from your own position, but I encourage all students to branch out and consider multiple perspectives. If you think texts have single, objectively reasoned meanings...well, you're about to get a radical new perspective in this course. Our biases filter our interpretations of the world around us. Family, culture, media, law, religion, etc. influence how we perceive the world. Your perspectives might be similar to those close to you, but your worldview isn't universally held. **I will not tolerate any harassment or abuse (emotional or physical) or any instance where others adversely affect students' learning. Remember, harassment isn't just verbal—making harassing or abusive posts won't be tolerated.**

A Note to Students from UNC Charlotte's English Department, Statement on Diversity (April 2009)

The English Department strives to create an academic climate that respects people of varied cultural backgrounds and life experiences. As a community of scholars and teachers who study language, literature, and writing, we are committed to nurturing intellectual and aesthetic diversity. In all our activities, we invite participation by diverse groups, including, but not limited to, those who define themselves in the following terms: race and ethnicity; gender; political orientation; sexual orientation; special health needs; age; religion; country of origin; and socio-economic status. Finally, by fostering multiple perspectives in our coursework, we can help our students prepare to participate in our increasingly diverse society, as well as in the global community.

The Department of English is committed to the centrality of writing in our curriculum.

Instructional Modifications

Students who have a condition that may impair their ability to complete assignments or otherwise satisfy course criteria are encouraged to meet with professionals to identify, discuss, and document any feasible instructional modifications or accommodations. Please inform me about circumstances as soon as possible. I don't need specifics, but I do need to know what accommodations to make. For information and assistance, contact the Disabilities Resource Center:

<http://ds.uncc.edu/>.

Inclement Weather/Building Issues

Some buildings can have HVAC problems. Occasionally, the powers that be close buildings and classes are canceled because it is too brutally hot to remain inside. If a building related "issue" cancels class, continue to keep up with the class webpage, readings, and [Canvas](#) posts. The library has lots of space and many computers. We'll pick up where we left off on the syllabus when we return to class. This also goes for inclement weather.

Right to Make Changes

I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus when necessary to meet learning objectives, to compensate for missed classes, or to make our lives easier.

Schedule for Readings and Assignments (have readings and assignments done before class)

January 9	Introduction to the Course. Say Hello. Go over the syllabus. Asimov, Issac. "Cult of Ignorance" on Canvas
January 16*	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day—University Closed

*January 16th: Big day for the semester:

- Last day to register. If you're not registered, you will not be allowed to continue in the course.
- Last day to submit a grade replacement request.
- 2nd Cancellation for non-payment at 11:59 pm (all deadlines are 11:59 pm).

January 23	Plato. <i>Phaedrus</i> . http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/phaedrus.html
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January 30	Plato. <i>Gorgias</i> . http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/gorgias.html Gorgias, "Encomium of Helen" (also in Kennedy's Translation of <i>On Rhetoric</i>)
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February 6*	Aristotle. <i>On Rhetoric</i> . Book 1 http://rhetoric.eserver.org/aristotle/oneindex.html
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*February 6th: Deadline to apply for May 2017 graduation

February 13	Aristotle. <i>On Rhetoric</i> . Book 2 http://rhetoric.eserver.org/aristotle/twoindex.html Aristotle. <i>On Rhetoric</i> . Book 3 http://rhetoric.eserver.org/aristotle/threeindex.html Richards, <i>Rhetoric</i> , pp. 1-63
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February 20	St. Augustine, <i>On Christian Rhetoric</i> http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/jod/augustine/ddc.html
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February 27	Midterm Mini-Rhetorical Analysis Descartes, Rene. <i>Discourse on Method</i> . Hugo, Victor. [selection from <i>Les Miserables</i>] Vol. 2, Bk. 1, CH. XVII: http://www.gutenberg.org/files/135/135-h/135-h.htm#link2HCH0087 Vol. 2, Bk. 1, CH. XVIII: http://www.gutenberg.org/files/135/135-h/135-h.htm#link2HCH0088 -and- Vol 5., Bk. 1, CH. V: http://www.gutenberg.org/files/135/135-h/135-h.htm#link2HCH0303 Vol 5., Bk. 1, CH. XX: http://www.gutenberg.org/files/135/135-h/135-h.htm#link2HCH0318
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March 4th – March 12th: No Class—Spring Break

March 13	Wollstonecraft, Mary. <i>A Vindication of the Rights of Women</i> . http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/3420/pg3420.html Richards, <i>Rhetoric</i> , pp. 64-113
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March 20*	Barthes, <i>Mythologies</i>
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*March 21st: Last day to withdraw from a course or courses; [grade subject to new Withdrawal Policy](#).

March 27	Nietzsche, <i>Use and Abuse of History</i> . Nietzsche, [Select pages from <i>Writings from the Late Notebooks</i> , pp. 1-28] (on Canvas)
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*March 27th: Registration for Summer and Fall 2017 begins

April 3	Derrida, Jacques. <i>Positions</i> . Kandell, Jonathan. (2004). " Jacques Derrida, Abstruse Theorist, Dies at 74. " <i>New York Times</i> .
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April 10	Lyotard, Jean-Francois. <i>The Postmodern Condition</i> .
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April 17	Eco, Umberto. "Travels in Hyperreality" (on Canvas) Baudrillard, Jean. "Simulacra and Simulation" (on Canvas)
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April 24	Jameson, Fredric. "The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism " (on Canvas)
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May 1	Rhetoric/al Projects Due Richards, <i>Rhetoric</i> , pp. 114-179
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May 8	Final Exam—Presentations Unless we have to change it, please come during the regular class time, 6:30-9:15 pm http://registrar.uncc.edu/sites/registrar.uncc.edu/files/media/Spring%202017%20FE%20Table.pdf
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Commencement May 12th and 13th