

English 3503-01: Rhetoric & Composition

Fall 2019 | The University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma
MWF 12:20-1:20 PM | Davis Hall 203

Instructor: Dr. Ben Wetherbee
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Office Hours: MWF 9:05-10:05 AM, 1:25-2:25 PM
TR 12:30-1:30 PM
by appointment

RHETORIC may be defined as the faculty of observing in any case the available means of persuasion.

- Aristotle, the *Rhetoric*

MEN SEEK for vocabularies that will be faithful *reflections* of reality. To this end, they must develop vocabularies that are *selections* of reality. And any selection of reality must, in certain circumstances, function as a *deflection* of reality.

- Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives*

THAT'S just empty rhetoric!

- every TV pundit who ever rhetorically disavowed rhetoric

Course Description and Goals

This class offers a thoroughgoing introduction to the study of rhetoric, defined approximately as the use of language and other symbol systems for persuasive ends. We will work through the basic concepts of classical (Ancient Greco-Roman) rhetoric – many of them adumbrated in Aristotle's treatise on that topic – and apply these ideas to the modern study of politics, poetics, and other fields of discourse. You'll emerge as savvy students and practitioners of rhetoric who can analyze an audience, debunk a manipulator, and impress your friends with terms like *topos* and *antimetabole*.

Because rhetorical texts inundate us daily, and because the study of rhetoric is largely personal and subjective, we all stand to learn from each other's insights. Accordingly, day-to-day participation in class is vital.

Broadly speaking, this course works toward the following outcomes. Students will:

- demonstrate familiarity with the elements of rhetorical theory, including ideas from

classical rhetoric and their application to modern discourse.

- demonstrate an understanding of how rhetoric intersects with and informs other disciplines, such as poetics (literature), communication, politics, science, and religion.
- cultivate the vocabulary and analytic tools to analyze and critique rhetorical texts – written, spoken, visual, and multimodal.
- demonstrate the research and writing skills necessary to engage with the academic discipline of rhetorical studies.
- demonstrate the practical knowledge of how to analyze audiences and integrate effective appeals and stylistic figures into your own compositions.

Required Texts and Materials

- Sharon Crowley and Debra Hawhee, *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students* (5th ed.; Pearson; ISBN: 0205175481).

- Aristotle, *The Rhetoric and Poetics of Aristotle* (Modern Library College Ed.; 0075546027).
- Readings and resources accessible on Canvas. Please bring paper or e-copies (on your laptop, tablet, etc.) of assigned online readings to class.
- A writing utensil and paper, which should be brought to every class.

Overview of Required Work

Major writing assignments. Three major essay assignments – two short papers and one longer final research/analysis essay – will allow you to apply concepts from the course in depth while engaging subject matter you find personally interesting and relevant. Individual prompts will detail the purpose and scope of each major assignment. Unless otherwise specified, major papers will be due apply at the beginning of class, printed in MLA format.

Late papers will be docked **one full letter grade** per weekday past the due date, so please turn them in on time. Papers turned in after class on the due date will be docked half a letter grade. Extensions are negotiable on a case-by-case basis.

Midterm exam. The midterm exam will cover ideas and vocabulary from readings from the first half of the schedule. Its bulk will comprise short-answer questions asking you to apply conceptual vocabulary we have discussed in class. Prior to the exam, I'll distribute a study guide; we'll spend a full class period reviewing its contents. You may consult one two-sided page of hand-written notes during the exam period.

Note that there is **no final exam** for this class, only a self-directed final research paper.

Response papers. A total of five short response papers (1-2 pp. each, double-spaced, submitted in hardcopy) should extend concepts and ideas from class to the world of rhetorical texts that surround us – anything from op-eds to *Rick and Morty* to the latest presidential tweet. These should be short, sweet, *specific* rhetorical analyses that apply, extend, or challenge the conceptual vocabulary from class via texts you find interesting and relevant. Eight possible due dates are listed. Turn in five papers; skip three of your choice. Alternatively, if you submit more than five, I'll throw out the lowest grades and keep the five best.

Other work. Other work will include leading a short discussion about your research, participating in class conversations, and, of course, keeping up with assigned readings. Unless otherwise specified, all readings are mandatory.

Canvas

You will need to access our course website on Canvas using your USAO login credentials. Canvas will house grade information, assignment prompts, links to external resources, and PDF copies readings outside our print course texts.

Attendance

This is a small class, and the input of each individual member matters a great deal. Attendance, therefore, is crucial. That said, I understand the turmoil and unpredictability of college life, so you are allowed **five** unexcused absences. Every unexcused absence thereafter will cost **two percent-age points** of your final grade.

Grading Distribution

Major writing assignments

Final research/analysis paper	25%
“Analyzing a Fragment” paper	15%
“Audience and Imitation” paper	15%

Exam

Midterm Exam	15%
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Minor assignments

Response papers	15%
Student-led discussion	5%

Participation

Term-long participation	10%
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A: ≥ 90%	C: 70-79%	F: ≤ 59%
B: 80-89%	D: 60-69%	

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism occurs when a writer attempts to pass off the words or ideas of someone else as her/his own. I don't expect it to be an issue in this class, but deliberate and malicious plagiarism will automatically fail you and possibly bring further repercussions to your academic record – so just don't do it. That said, don't overstress about *accidentally* plagiarizing. Be careful, and it won't happen. And as always, contact me if you have questions.

Disabilities Resources

Students with disabilities or conditions (physical or mental) that could affect class performance should

meet with me to identify and discuss possible modifications. I want to help you succeed.

Also, note that disability services are available at the Student Center Room 305, or online:

<https://usao.edu/current-students/services/disability-services>

Library and Student Success Center

The Nash Library and the USAO Student Success Center are valuable resources to this course. More information about each is available online:

<https://library.usao.edu/home>
<https://usao.edu/student-success-center>

Technology and Social Media Policy

You may bring laptops, tablets and smartphones to class. I encourage the use of electronics toward writing and research *pertinent to class* – but only insofar as they contribute to class and avoid distracting from it.

Important Note

Things change: weather happens, people get sick, and schedules and curricula sometimes evolve. I reserve the right to alter the content of this syllabus as the term progresses. You reserve the right to contact me with questions or concerns about the syllabus. I will take such queries seriously.

In the event of significant changes to the syllabus and/or schedule, a revised version will be available on Canvas.

Rhetoric & Composition Term Schedule

ENGL 3503-01 | Fall 2019

MWF 12:20-1:20 pm | Davis Hall 203

Dr. Ben Wetherbee | bwetherbee@usao.edu



Reading due before class



Writing assignment due in class



Student-led discussion in class

ARCS *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students*, 5th ed.

RPA *The Rhetoric and Poetics of Aristotle*

AUGUST

F	23	First Day: Introductions
M	26	RHETORICAL FOUNDATIONS ... Newstock, "How to Think Like Shakespeare" (Canvas) <i>ARCS</i> ch. 1 (1-36)
W	28	Corbett, Introduction (<i>RPA</i> v-xxvi) Aristotle, <i>Rhetoric</i> bk. 1 ch. 1-3 (<i>RPA</i> 19-34)
F	30	Aristotle, <i>Rhetoric</i> bk. 1 ch. 4-15 (<i>RPA</i> 34-90)

SEPTEMBER

M	2	NO CLASS – Labor Day
W	4	<i>ARCS</i> ch. 2 (37-55)
F	6	Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation" (Canvas) Vatz, "The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation" (Canvas) Response paper #1 due
M	9	<i>ARCS</i> ch. 4 (88-117) Aristotle, <i>Rhetoric</i> bk. 2 ch. 18-26 (<i>RPA</i> 128-64)
W	11	<i>ARCS</i> ch. 3 (56-87)
F	13	<i>ARCS</i> ch. 5 (118-45) Response paper #2 due
M	16	Burke, from <i>A Rhetoric of Motives</i> (Canvas) Conley, "What Jokes Can Tell Us about Arguments" (Canvas)
W	18	<i>ARCS</i> ch. 6 (146-69)
F	20	<i>ARCS</i> ch. 7 (170-99) Response paper #3 due
M	23	RHETORIC & POLITICS Weaver, "Ultimate Terms in Contemporary Rhetoric" (Canvas) Bush, 9/11 address (Canvas)
W	25	Lakoff and Johnson, from <i>Metaphors We Live By</i> (Canvas)
F	27	Mercieca, "Dangerous Demagogues and Weaponized Communication" (Canvas) Response paper #4 due
M	30	Gordon, "Cult of Misinformation" (Canvas)

OCTOBER

W	2	 Bring in essay drafts for in-class workshop
F	4	 “Analyzing a Fragment” Essay Due
M	7	RHETORIC & POETICS  Aristotle, <i>Poetics</i> (RPA 223-66)
W	9	 Burke, “Rhetoric and Poetics” (Canvas)  Booth, from <i>The Rhetoric of Fiction</i> (Canvas)
F	11	 Jackson, “The Lottery” (Canvas)  Joyce, “Araby” (Canvas)
M	14	 Morrison, “Recitatif” (Canvas)  Response paper #5 due
W	16	No readings -- Exam prep
F	18	NO CLASS – Fall Break
M	21	 Midterm Exam
W	23	VISUAL, MULTIMODAL, & DIGITAL RHETORIC  Barthes, “The Rhetoric of the Image” (Canvas)  Birdsell & Groarke, “Toward a Theory of Visual Argument” (Canvas)  Marchand & Meffre, “The Ruins of Detroit” (Canvas)
F	25	 Wetherbee, “Picking Up the Fragments of the 2012 Election” (Canvas)  Response paper #6 due
M	28	RHETORICS OF SCIENCE & RELIGION  Campbell, “The Polemical Mr. Darwin” (Canvas)  Darwin, from <i>On the Origin of Species</i> (Canvas)
W	30	 Ceccarelli, “Manufactured Scientific Controversy” (Canvas)

NOVEMBER

F	1	 Lessl, “The Priestley Voice” (Canvas)  Sagan, from <i>Cosmos</i> (Canvas)  Response paper #7 due
M	4	STYLE & COMPOSITION  ARCS ch. 10 (250-300)  King, “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (Canvas)
W	6	 Aristotle, <i>Rhetoric</i> bk. 3 ch. 1-12 (RPA 164-99)
F	8	 Fahnestock, from <i>Rhetorical Figures in Science</i> (Canvas)  Response paper #8 due
M	11	 Lanham, “The Uses of Obscurity” (Canvas)  Orwell, “Politics and the English Language” (Canvas)
W	13	 Bring in essay drafts for in-class workshop

F	15	 “Audience and Imitation” Assignment Due
M	18	 Capps, “The Enthymematic Connotations of Trump’s God and Devil Terms” (Canvas)
W	20	 Student-led discussions on final projects
F	22	 Student-led discussions on final projects
M	25	 Student-led discussions on final projects
W	27	NO CLASS – Thanksgiving Break
F	29	

DECEMBER

M	2	NO CLASS – Study Day
R	5	<p>Final exam period: Thursday, Dec. 4, 11:30 AM – 1:30 PM</p> <p>No formal exam!</p> <p> (if needed) Student-led discussions on final projects</p> <p> Final Paper Due</p>