COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to provide a general introduction to methods of rhetorical criticism. We’ll start the course by considering the nature of rhetorical criticism, the scope of rhetoric, and some classical sources. The majority of the course will be organized by method. We’ll start our tour with a discussion of neo-Aristotelianism and the revival of interest in rhetoric at the start of the 20th century. Other modern methods of rhetorical criticism will follow—pentadic, cluster, metaphor, feminist, ideological, linguistic discourse analysis, narrative, and genre. Issues and questions of interest to rhetorical theorists and practitioners will also be covered—e.g. the relationship between language and reality; the rhetorical situation; speech, writing, and multimedia; the writing process; authorship and the second persona; intertextuality; constitutive rhetoric; and so on.

This course is organized as a graduate seminar. Discussion will be our primary in-class activity, and thus the success of the course will be our collective responsibility. You are expected to read and prepare for class diligently, participate actively and thoughtfully in class discussions, and assume the role of discussion leader when appropriate. You can expect me to come to class prepared, ready to engage the readings and the issues raised in them.

By the end of the course, you should be able to select, apply, combine, and evaluate a variety of methods of rhetorical criticism in the context of your own research projects. As such, the course aims to foster critical thinking about the relationships among rhetoric, texts, and society.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Purchase the books from the campus bookstore. If they are not yet available at the bookstore and are not due to be delivered to the bookstore by the end of the second week of classes, then you should purchase them from an online bookseller (e.g. amazon.com) immediately.

In addition to the required books, there are a number of required supplemental readings. These readings are available on e-reserve (see link below) and may also be available on the course website (see class notes). Print out these supplemental readings, read them carefully, and bring them to class on the days assigned.

**COURSE MATERIALS ONLINE**

Course materials: [http://www.faculty.english.ttu.edu/zdenek/courses/5362](http://www.faculty.english.ttu.edu/zdenek/courses/5362). Required supplemental readings are on e-reserve: go to [http://library.ttu.edu/ul/](http://library.ttu.edu/ul/), click “Course/E-Reserve,” and search by instructor (i.e. Zdenek).

**GRADING**

Your final course grade will be determined according to the table below, using the standard curve of 90-100% = A; 80-89.9% = B; 70-79.9% = C; 60-69.9% = D; 0-59.9% = F. Under no circumstances will grades be rounded up.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSIGNMENT</th>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Responses</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roundtable Session</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short Annotated Bibliography</td>
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<td>Seminar Paper</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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**ASSIGNMENTS**

**Reading responses**

*Selecting an artifact.* You will select one artifact to study, share, and write about for the duration of the semester (due in week 2). Because you will be analyzing the same artifact multiple times over the course of the semester, and writing about the same artifact in each of your reading responses, you will need to choose your artifact carefully. (*To repeat: you will analyze the same artifact in every reading response.*) We will talk in class about what counts as a rhetorical artifact (for now, see Foss pp. 12-13). Here are some loose guidelines:

1. The artifact should be chosen with an eye to the methods of rhetorical criticism we will be discussing this semester. Prior to selecting your artifact, you should read/skim Foss’s overview of each method. The ideal artifact should potentially speak to these various methods. In other words, the artifact should be complex and rich enough to allow you to interpret it in a number of ways and to apply it to a number of different methods of criticism.

2. The artifact you choose can be a single unit (e.g. a videotaped speech) or a set of closely related artifacts (e.g. a small number of scenes from the same movie, a collection of discussion group posts, a set of closely related websites, etc.)

3. The artifact should be easily shared with other members of the class during class time. Because we will be discussing your artifact in class, you will want to choose an artifact that can be shared
with others easily. This does not mean that the artifact needs to be short (if it’s discursive) or brief (if it’s non-discursive, like a movie clip), but it does mean that you should choose an artifact that can be described relatively easily for others. Don’t choose a book or a movie (too long, potentially too obscure), but think about how your artifact can encourage class discussion. You want to choose an artifact or set of artifacts that other members of the class can comment on insightfully.

4. The artifact should reflect your own research interests and possibly feed into your final seminar paper.
5. The artifact should be approved in advance by the instructor (optional but highly recommended). If you’re having difficulty finding or choosing an artifact, please arrange to speak with me immediately.

Writing. Respond to the reading assignments in tightly focused, single-spaced, typewritten essays. Each response should be in the range of 500-750 words. See the course schedule for due dates and topics. In general, you will write one reading response for each method of rhetorical criticism covered on the schedule. Put your name, the date, and a descriptive title at the top of the first page. Each of your responses should do all of the following (in this order):

1. Address a question, concern, or problem of interest to you,
2. Synthesize the readings into themes or topics that will enable you to explore this question or issue, and
3. Apply the readings to the artifact you selected in week 2

You will want to demonstrate in your reading responses that you have read all the assigned readings. But more importantly you will want to show in your writing that you have read critically and carefully, that you have given thought to the questions and issues raised in the readings, and that you have considered how the readings speak to each other and to your artifact. Approximately 1/3 of each of your responses should be devoted to an application of the readings to your chosen artifact. Email the response to me (sean.zdenek@ttu.edu) as a Word attachment before class on the due date and bring a copy to class. I plan to gather the responses together and send them to the whole class via email.

Roundtable session
Lead the class in a roundtable-style discussion of one method of rhetorical criticism and one artifact chosen specifically for this discussion. The goal of the roundtable is to give the class an opportunity to discuss as a group how we might apply a particular method to an artifact. As leader, you will bring to class an artifact (or small set of closely related artifacts) that we have not discussed before and that no member of the class (yourself included) has selected as his/her reading response artifact. As leader, you will also prepare an exercise (and bring hard copies of it) for the class to complete in small groups. The exercise should encourage groups to apply the method under discussion that day or week to the artifact. The leader will start the session by giving us a short summary of the method under discussion (3-5 minutes). Then, the leader will pass out copies of the exercise to small groups, review directions for completing the exercise, and serve as instructor by monitoring and managing the group’s discussions (10 minutes). Following small group discussion, the leader will host a short de-briefing session in which groups report to the leader and the class as a whole on their responses to the exercise (another 10 minutes). Finally, the leader will sum-up the roundtable by highlighting (possibly with the help of the LCD projector or whiteboard) the groups’ responses in the context of the method’s highlights.

Short annotated bibliography
The purpose of this assignment is to research an area of rhetorical criticism in preparation for writing the final seminar paper. The annotated bibliography assignment will allow you to explore an area of interest
within the context of the course (e.g. feminist rhetorical criticism, esp. as it intersects technology studies). The requirements are:

1. The annotated bibliography topic should be framed as a question of interest within the context of rhetorical studies.
2. The annotated bibliography should include at least 10 entries.
3. Each entry should be a peer-reviewed journal article. Aim for well-known journals in the field of English studies (and especially in technical communication and rhetoric). See me if you have questions about journal quality.
4. At least 6/10 entries should be no older than five years.
5. Each annotation should be at least 200 words in length.
6. Each annotation should describe, in sufficient detail, the article’s research question, methodology, findings/argument, and support.
7. Each annotation should conclude with a brief assessment of the quality of the source being annotated and/or its applicability to your research.

When submitting your annotated bib, please also include copies of the sources you annotated.

Seminar paper
Plan and execute a seminar paper that explores a question of interest within the context of the course. The final product should be of superior quality, suitable for presentation at a regional or national conference. Your paper should blend theory and application. MA students’ papers should be in the range of 13-15 pages in length (double-spaced); doctoral students’ papers should be in the range of 18-22 pages in length (double-spaced). Your paper should serve as the culmination of your work over the semester.

COURSE POLICIES

- Be prepared for class by doing the assigned reading and writing in advance
- Be on time for class
- Expect to attend every class meeting. The success of the course depends upon your regular attendance. If you are absent more than three (3) times, your final course grade will be reduced 3% for each absence after three. Six or more absences will warrant a failing grade in the course. In general, I do not excuse absences.
- See me during the first two weeks of class to discuss your special needs or ADA accommodations, if any
- Expect to participate actively in class discussions
- Respect the views of others
- Always cite your sources in your writing – i.e. do not plagiarize. See me immediately if you have questions about the university’s policy on plagiarism. (See p. 49 of the University Catalog for the official policy on academic integrity.)
- Submit your work on time. Late work is penalized 10% per day. Assignments more than five days late will not be accepted.
- Feel free to discuss course questions and concerns with me during office hours, by appointment, or via email. I will do my best to respond to your email queries within 24 hours, except during weekends and holidays.