Rhetorical
Analysis

English 5362 • Thurs 6-7:30 p.m. CDT • Texas Tech MOO • Summer 2005

Description

This course is designed as a general introduction to methods of rhetorical criticism. We’ll start the course with a consideration of 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 traditional (classical) criticism and the revival of interest in rhetoric in the early 20th century. Other modern methods of rhetorical criticism will follow—metaphor, dramatic form criticism, feminist, ideological, linguistic discourse analysis, narrative, framing, 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; the writing process; authorship and the second persona; intertextuality; constitutive rhetoric; and so on.

This course is organized as a graduate seminar, even though we will not be meeting face-to-face. Discussion will be our primary in-class (i.e. in-MOO) activity, and thus the success of the course will be our collective responsibility. You are expected to read and prepare for MOO sessions 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. We will supplement our MOO sessions with lively asynchronous discussions on WebCT.

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 an online bookseller (e.g. amazon.com) or from the campus bookstore.


In addition to the required books, there are a number of required supplemental readings. These readings will be available on course e-reserve at the TTU library (http://www.library.ttu.edu/ul, then click “Course/E-Reserve”). Print out these supplemental readings, read them carefully, and bring them to class on the days assigned.
Course website, WebCT, MOO, & office hours info

- The course website contains class notes, the course schedule, and other info: http://www.faculty.english.ttu.edu/zdenek/courses/5362/summer05/. If changes need to be made to the course schedule, you will find an updated version on the course website.
- A WebCT site has been created for this course: http://www.webct.ttu.edu. We will be using the discussion board feature on WebCT to discuss the readings. Login using your eraider username and password. If you don’t see the course listed after you log in, let me know and I’ll add you to the WebCT roster for the course.
- This course meets every Thursday at 6 p.m. CDT in the English Department MOO room for this course: http://moo.engl.ttu.edu:7000/.
- I will only be available virtually during my office hours (Thursdays 4-6 p.m. CDT and by appointment). To meet with me during my office hours, send a Yahoo instant message to: seanzdenek. I will not be holding office hours on campus this summer.

Grading

Your final course grade will be calculated 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 or down.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSIGNMENT</th>
<th>VALUE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rhetorical artifact</td>
<td>See below</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading responses</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roundtable session</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOO appetizers</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seminar paper</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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Assignments

Reading responses

*Selecting a rhetorical artifact.* You will select one rhetorical artifact to study, share, and write about for the duration of the semester. 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*.) Here are some loose guidelines:

- 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 Kuypers’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.
- The artifact you choose can be a single unit (e.g. a transcribed speech) or a set of closely related artifacts (e.g. a small set of scenes from the same movie, a collection of discussion group posts, a set of closely related websites, etc.)
- The artifact should be easily shared with other members of the class. Don’t choose something that you think might be too obscure. It should be scanned/digitized if it’s not originally available in
computer format. 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 will be understood relatively easily by others. Don’t choose a book or a movie (too long, potentially too obscure). Instead, think about how your artifact can foster class discussion. You want to choose an artifact or set of artifacts that other members of the class can comment on insightfully.
• The artifact should reflect your own research interests and possibly feed into your final seminar paper (and later, into your thesis or dissertation).
• 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 talk with me immediately.

Because I am asking you to select your rhetorical artifact before class begins, I want to encourage you to speak with me (e.g. over email) prior to the start of the semester to get my feedback on the artifact you are thinking about using.

Writing. Respond to the reading assignments in tightly focused posts to the WebCT discussion board. Each response should be in the range of 600-750 words, and should be posted at least two hours before our MOO meeting so that I can read them before class and we can talk about them during class. See the course schedule for due dates and topics. Each of your posts should have a descriptive title in the subject line (as opposed to “Response 1”). The content of your posts 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 (at least 1/2 of your response)
3. Apply the readings to your rhetorical artifact (at least 1/4 of your response)
4. Discuss briefly how your response relates to at least two other WebCT posts for that week. (If you are the first person posting in a given week, relate your post to two other posts from previous weeks.)
5. Optional but encouraged: Respond to one or more replies to your post(s) from a previous week. (It may be easier to respond to a reply to your post in a separate message, and I encourage you to post additional messages as necessary.)

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 1/4 of each of your responses should be devoted to an application of the readings to your chosen artifact. Post your response to the WebCT discussion board. Ideally, the WebCT board should resemble a lively discussion about the issues raised in the readings and in the MOO.

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 the MOO 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 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 (e.g. in the form of a paragraph prepared in advance). Then, the leader will go over the directions for completing the exercise, make sure everyone understands the directions, divide the class into groups of three or four, and direct each group to meet in separate rooms to work on the exercise. The roundtable leader will monitor and manage each group’s discussions (10 minutes). Following
small group discussion, the leader will host a short, whole class de-briefing session in which groups report to
the leader and the class as a whole their responses to the exercise (another 10 minutes). Finally, the leader will
sum-up the roundtable by highlighting/summarizing the groups’ responses and how they relate to the
affordances of the critical method in question.

MOO appetizers
To facilitate MOO discussions, you will be assigned one discussion question on the Monday before the
Thursday MOO session. You should write your response to your discussion question in advance of our MOO
session. Your response should take the form of a tightly focused position statement (3-5 sentences) that you
can simply copy and paste into the MOO. You should also be ready to explain your position. Ideally, each
question (and your response) should facilitate class discussion. Depending on the number of students enrolled
in the course, you may or may not be assigned a discussion question (i.e. MOO appetizer) every week.
Students will be assigned to questions on a rotating basis (i.e. the same student will not be assigned to
question #1 every week).

The student assigned to question #1 each week will be responsible for providing a clean transcript of the
MOO session. A transcript is created automatically of course, but it will be the job of one student each week
to untangle the discussion threads and provide a more ordered, cleaned-up account of our MOO interactions.
The final transcript should be posted to WebCT.

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. It should also be based on outside research. 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.
- Submit all required assignments to be eligible for a passing grade.
- Be on time for class.
- Expect to attend every MOO meeting. The success of the course depends upon your regular
  attendance. If you are absent more than one (1) time, your final course grade will be reduced 3% for
  each absence after one. Three or more absences will warrant a failing grade in the course. I do not
  excuse absences.
- Talk with me during the first two weeks of class to discuss your special needs or ADA
  accommodations, if any.
- Expect to participate actively in MOO and WebCT discussions.
- Respect the views of others.
- Do not plagiarize. Your work must be your own. If you borrow words or ideas from another writer,
you need to make it explicit (through proper citation) that the words/ideas in question are not your
own. If you use someone else’s paper as your own (e.g. a paper found on the Internet), you are in
violation of the University’s policy on academic integrity (p. 49 of the University Catalog). Please
keep in mind that the penalty for plagiarism can be severe. See me immediately if you have questions
about the University’s policy on plagiarism.
- Submit your work on time. Assignments should be submitted as email attachments to the instructor
  (sean.zdenek@ttu.edu). 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 my virtual office hours (on Yahoo IM), by appointment (on Yahoo IM or in the MOO), or via email. I will do my best to respond to your email queries within 24 hours, except during weekends and holidays. My Yahoo account name is: seanzdenek. Please note that I will not be checking the messages on my office phone on a regular basis. If you want a quick reply (or a reply at all), you’re better off sending me an email or looking for me on Yahoo IM during office hours.