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WRIT 201.01: College Writing II

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WRIT 201 / College Writing II: Rhetoric and American Cultures
Navigating the Rhetoric of Truth

**prerequisite C or better in 101 or direct placement into WRIT 201*

Instructor: Kylie Westerlind

Office: COR 258

Office Hours: Tuesdays/Thursdays, 8am-9:20am

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Classroom: LA 202

Meeting days/time: Tuesdays/Thursdays, 9:30am-10:50am

“**Rhetoric** is the faculty of discovering, in a given instance, the available means of *persuasion*.” -
Aristotle

“**Rhetoric** is language at play—language plus. It is what persuades and cajoles, inspires and bamboozles, thrills and misdirects. It causes criminals to be convicted, and then frees those criminals on appeal. It causes governments to rise and fall, best men to be ever after shunned by their friends’ brides, and perfectly sensible adults to march with steady purpose toward machine guns...It is made of ringing truths and vital declarations. It is a way in which our shared assumptions and understandings are applied to new situations, and the language of history is channeled, revitalized, and given fresh power in each successive age.” -Sam Leith

Course Description: “It’s just rhetoric.”

When you hear the word “rhetoric,” what definitions come to mind? For many people, rhetoric is a term that aims to degrade language; it is seen as synonymous with “empty” speech. For many, rhetoric seems to be a tool used solely by politicians with agendas and rigid beliefs who aim to spur controversial ideas and movements. But the study of rhetoric is more complicated than examining “empty” speeches by politicians; it is equally an art of argument, but rhetoric is also devoted to the practice of questioning, examining, understanding, and (often we will find) persuading an audience.

Rhetoric is not simply empty speech. The opposite is true: words *are* action and the more control you have over them, the more power they can give you. We will focus on the way traditional rhetorical structures are still powerful in contemporary American culture, how years of controlled and directed language have **shaped our concepts and ideas of how to be in the world and thus inadvertently affect our varied perceptions of truth**. In this class, you will have the unique opportunity to study arguments as a reader and enact those practices as a writer. Throughout the semester we will pursue these questions: *How is an author positioning their self within a broader cultural conversation? How can I resist my initial assumptions in order to make room for nuanced and complex understanding of a topic, situation, and/or text? How can we move beyond discussion of (potentially) empty words and move towards comprehending essential truths and values?*

Part of this work will involve committed research and dedicated analysis toward extrapolating rhetoric from different mediums in culture, which can include visual art, video clips, advertisements, music videos, and graphics. We will examine, with acute attention, not only what messages are being transmitted to the culture but also how those messages work and if they are (in)effective.

Much of your work in this class will involve different kinds of collaboration, including small group workshops and discussions that will take place in class. Because writing development is an important process that takes place over time across different writing situations, **all WRIT 201 classes use portfolio evaluation as a primary means of evaluation.** By the end of the semester you should be able to accurately and subtly assess a given rhetorical situation and make effective rhetorical choices based on your assessment in order to write a graceful, convincing, beautifully written argument.

Respect within the Community

It is imperative that you treat your peers with as much respect as you expect from them. I expect this course to be a supportive and respectful environment where everyone feels comfortable speaking without fear of being put down or embarrassed. If you fail to respect your classmates your grade will be affected.

In this course we will be discussing socially debated and, sometimes, conflict-laden issues. We will work as a class to create an environment that allows each member to share their ideas. This does not mean we have to agree with other's perspectives. Part of your educational experience is learning that you will disagree, sometimes radically, with people and that honest discussion is a way to learn to respect and value those disagreements.

Required Course Texts:

- *College Writing II: Rhetoric and American Cultures* (available at the UM bookstore only)
- Outside readings accessible through Moodle

Other Course Materials

- notebook for in-class writing
- a folder for misc. class materials/handouts
- a folder or binder for your final portfolio

General Class Expectations:

- All reading assignments will be completed by the assigned date.
- All writing assignments must be turned in on time.
- **All major assignments must be typed. Please use 12 point Times New Roman font, double-space, and 1 inch margins on all sides.**
- All homework must be typed.
- Attend class.
- Actively, vocally, and appropriately participate in class discussions.
- Any individual assignments (including requests for conferences) will be completed by the assigned date.

WRIT 201 is an Intermediate Writing Course. The university learning outcomes include:

- Use writing to learn and synthesize new concepts
- Formulate and express opinions and ideas in writing
- Compose written documents that are appropriate for a given audience or purpose
- Revise written work based on constructive feedback
- Find, evaluate, and use information effectively
- Begin to use discipline-specific writing conventions
- Demonstrate appropriate English language usage

WRIT 201 Required Elements

I encourage you to talk with me at any time to better understand my comments or to discuss your overall progress and success in the class.

Grading -- you must earn a C- in this class to be awarded credit

Participation (includes mid-term response):	35%
Final Portfolio:	65%

****you must turn in your portfolio and complete all major essays by their deadlines in order to receive credit for this course.****

A Note on Participation:

Participation is a crucial step in forming thoughts and opinions and translating them to the page. Therefore, vocal participation in class (both in large and small group discussions) make up a significant portion of your grade. Speaking up in class can be frightening, spontaneous, and at times impossible, but take the risk and challenge yourself to speak up. This is a supportive community! Your contribution will encourage others to join the conversation. If you don't have a fully formed thought in mind, that's fine, go ahead and pose a question to the group. If discussion lags, I will have to step in and lecture, and trust me, none of us want me to stand in front of the room for an hour lecturing! Don't make me lecture. Please.

Grading Policy:

Students enrolled in WRIT 201 are graded by the traditional letter grade A, B, C, D, F or are given NC for no credit. The NC grade does not affect grade point average. It is reserved for students who have worked unusually hard, attended class regularly and completed all assignments, but whose skills are not at a passing level at the end of the semester.

Major Assignments

Expect to write four essays and make major revisions over the course of the semester, in addition to other short writing assignments in and out of class. I will give you a detailed assignment sheet as we begin each of these major assignments.

You will have the chance to develop all of your major projects through a process of inquiry and drafting. You'll compose papers in and out of class, alone and with your small group. All inquiry projects must be completed for you to pass the course. I will respond to these projects with written comments focused on suggestions for revision, but I will also mark them using a system to help you know where you stand on a specific project.

Major Inquiry Projects:

Assignment #1: Rhetorical Analysis

Assignment #2: Researched Personal Essay: Establishing a Sense of Place

Assignment #3: Synthesis of a Profile

Assignment #4: Cover Letter

Final Portfolio (includes polished drafts of the above MAs! This is due 12/6, the last day of class)

Evaluation of Assignments

You will receive comments from me on short assignments and homework. These are not “graded” in the way that you may be used to previously (no A, B, or C marks). These short assignments and homework you turn in should follow the guidelines assigned to them (**page/word count, sincere engagement with and answering the prompt**) and if you do these basic things, you will get credit for the assignment. If you do not follow the basic things (read again: meeting the page/word count, or just simply engaging with and answering the prompt), I will sound the alarm, meaning that you are falling off track in terms of meeting the participation grade in the class. It’s pretty simple. Show me that you care about the topic of the day and give the assignment part of your time to engage with it well. I can tell when you don’t care. It’s not fun for either of us.

As far as major inquiry project drafts, they will receive comments and evaluation based on this system:

On track (abbrev: *OT*): A project with an “OT” generally meets its rhetorical goals in terms of purpose, genre, and writing situation without need for extensive revision; however, there will likely be many small revisions to make. Written comments will elaborate on what works well, what needs work, and where the draft can go for focused revision.

Major changes required (*M*): A project with an “M” meets basic requirements but needs significant revision and stronger understanding of rhetorical decision-making. Written comments will elaborate on what works well, what needs work, and where I see the draft’s options for major revision.

Unsatisfactory (*U*): A project with a “U” does not meet basic standards and requires extensive development and attention. An unsatisfactory submission may be incomplete or inappropriate to the assignment. Such a submission may receive a request for immediate rewrite within a week in order to receive further comments.

*if an assignment is shorter than the page requirement or missing required number of sources, it will not receive comments from me.

Attendance

If you miss the first two classes, you will need to drop the course on Cyberbear and enroll in another semester. This is university policy and the reasoning behind it is that important groundwork for the semester is put in place in the first few class meetings. Students without that foundational framework are better served by taking the course when they can give it the attention it deserves.

More than two absences from a TR class will compromise your grade. 5 or more absences from a TR class will result in a failing grade. Here’s the breakdown.

- 3rd absence: final grade drops one letter grade (for example, A drops to B)
- 4th absence: final grade drops two letter grades (for example, A drops to C)
- 5th absence: final grade is an F

Here's the reasoning behind the attendance policy. Without attending class, you cannot perform your role as a student involved in learning, planning, inventing, drafting; discussing reading and writing; learning and practicing rhetorical moves and concepts; or collaborating with your instructor and classmates. Required University events will be excused if you provide appropriate documentation. Personal situations inevitably arise that make it impossible for you to make it to class. Remember, however, that's why a few absences are allowed; please reserve those for emergencies.

If you must miss class, *you are responsible* for obtaining any handouts or assignments for the class. Make sure you talk with me in *advance* if you are worried about meeting a deadline or missing a class. Also, do not commit the cardinal sin of emailing me and asking if you will/did miss anything "important." Instead, ask to meet with me in office hours, and I will gladly catch you up to speed.

Late Work.

Your work needs to be typed, printed, and in class with you to be considered "on time."

- ★ Late or handwritten homework does not receive credit.
- ★ **Emailed assignments are considered late.**
- ★ Late formal essays are unacceptable. They will receive no revision comments from me.
- ★ If you miss class, the homework is due the next class period; homework will be marked late unless your absence is excused.
- ★ You are always welcome to complete assignments early if you will be missing class.

Academic Conduct.

You must abide by the rules for academic conduct described in the Student Conduct Code. If you have any questions about when and how to avoid academic dishonesty, particularly plagiarism, please review the Conduct Code and talk with your instructor. The Council of Writing Program Administrators describes plagiarism as follows: "plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else's language, ideas or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source." Academic honesty is highly valued in the University community and acts of plagiarism will not be tolerated.

Plagiarism Policy.

If I suspect that something a student has written has been plagiarized, in full or in part, intentionally or unintentionally, I take the following actions:

- I alert the student of areas of the text that are suspicious
- the student receives no credit on the paper, pending failure, and it is up to him/her to prove that he/she turned in original work
- each student is asked to provide me with hard copies of the research she/he used in writing the paper
- if the student cannot provide documentation of her/his research, the student will fail the paper

*these measures are also put into action when a paper is poorly cited. When a student brings his/her research to me I use the time to talk with them about citation and make sure that they understand how and when to cite in the future.

In the case that the student is unable to provide evidence of his/her original work, or in the case that I have evidence that the student has intentionally plagiarized his/her work:

- the student will automatically fail the given assignment
- the student may fail the course unless, at my discretion, I offer alternative assignments and/or conditions
- I may pursue a plagiarism citation unless, at my discretion, I offer alternative assignments and/or conditions
- the student may receive alternate assignments, etc. to avoid failure. In this instance, all conditions must be met. I need to see evidence of excellent work and effort, and work must be completed on time.
- all other previously established conditions in the class (i.e. attendance, participation, homework grades, etc.) still stand and can still cause a student to fail the course
- in the case of blatant or egregious offenses, I will not negotiate against course failure and will pursue a University Citation of Plagiarism

Students with Disabilities.

Qualified students with disabilities will receive appropriate accommodations in this course. Please speak with me privately after class or in my office. Please be prepared to provide a letter from your DSS Coordinator.

Participation in University Assessment.

This course requires an electronic submission of an assignment stripped of your personal information to be used for educational research and assessment of the writing program. Your papers will be stored in a database. This assessment in no way affects either your grade or your progression at the university.

Portfolio Grade Descriptors for WRIT 201

A Superior portfolios will demonstrate initiative and rhetorical sophistication that go beyond the requirements. A portfolio at this level is composed of well-edited texts representing different writing situations and genres that consistently show a clear, connected sense of audience, purpose and development. The writer is able to analyze his or her own writing, reflect on it, and revise accordingly. The portfolio takes risks that work.

B Strong portfolios meet their rhetorical goals in terms of purpose, genre, and writing situation without need for further major revisions of purpose, evidence, audience, or style/ mechanics. The writer is able to reflect on his or her own writing and make some choices about revision. The writer takes risks, although they may not all be successful.

C Consistent portfolios meet the basic requirements, yet the writing would benefit from further revisions of purpose, evidence, audience, or writing style/mechanics (or some combination) and a stronger understanding of rhetorical decision-making involved in different writing situations and genres. The writer composes across tasks at varying levels of success with some superficial revision.

The writer has taken some risks in writing and exhibits some style.

D Weak portfolios do not fully meet the basic evaluative standards. Most texts are brief and underdeveloped. These texts show a composing process that is not yet elaborated or reflective of rhetorical understanding related to composing in different genres and for a range of writing situations. Texts generally require extensive revisions to purpose, development, audience, and/ or style and mechanics.

F Unacceptable portfolios exhibit pervasive problems with purpose, development, audience, or style/ mechanics that interfere with meaning and readers' understanding. Unacceptable portfolios are often incomplete. A portfolio will also earn an F if it does not represent the writer's original work.

Participation Grade Descriptors for WRIT 201

A Superior participation shows initiative and excellence in written and verbal work. The student helps to create more effective discussions and workshops through his/her verbal, electronic, and written contributions. Reading and writing assignments are always completed on time and with attention to detail. In workshop or conferences, suggestions to group members are tactful, thorough, specific, and often provide other student writers with a new perspective or insight.

B Strong participation demonstrates active engagement in written and verbal work. The student plays an active role in the classroom but does not always add new insight to the discussion at hand. Reading and writing assignments are always completed on time and with attention to detail. In workshop or conferences, suggestions to group members are tactful, specific, and helpful.

C Satisfactory participation demonstrates consistent, satisfactory written and verbal work. Overall, the student is prepared for class, completes assigned readings and writings, and contributes to small group workshops and large class discussions. Reading and writing assignments are completed on time. In workshop or conferences, suggestions to group members are tactful and prompt, but could benefit from more attentive reading and/or specific detail when giving comments.

D Weak participation demonstrates inconsistent written and verbal work. The student may be late to class, unprepared for class, and may contribute infrequently or unproductively to classroom discussions or small group workshops. Reading and writing assignments are not turned in or are insufficient. In workshops or conferences, suggestions to group members may be missing, disrespectful, or far too brief and general to be of help.

F Unacceptable participation shows ineffectual written and verbal work. The student may be excessively late to class, regularly unprepared, and not able to contribute to classroom discussions or small group workshops. This student may be disruptive in class. Reading and writing assignments are regularly not turned in or are insufficient. In workshops or conferences, the student has a pattern of missing, being completely unprepared, or being disruptive.