

RHETORICAL CRITICISM

CMST 3300

ANDREW C. JONES

COURSE DESCRIPTION

CMST 3300 Rhetorical Criticism (3) Prereq.: 2060. History and practice of criticism as a means of inquiry in rhetorical studies. Theoretical and methodological underpinnings of major schools of criticism examined.

This course introduces students to the tools of rhetorical criticism, tools that equip us to see human activities and their results clearly, and to record these observations precisely. More importantly, as Edwin Black might suggest, this course seeks to equip students with the ability to transcend perception and make judgments, judgments for which reasons can be given, reasons that may gain the agreement of rational people. Reducing that to two words, this course is about balancing “formula” and “surprise.” Though there are elements of formula in any set of techniques, approaches, or methodologies the danger comes in subjugating technique, approach, and method to formula: it would be like setting your car on “cruise control” and climbing into the back seat for a snooze! Like your “cruise control,” formula is a tool that keeps you at a set speed, but you need to keep steering so that you can adjust your settings to the conditions of the road. However, the journey is more than the speed at which you travel, there are also the thousand little surprises: both the pleasant ones that lead you through a happy detour, and the unpleasant ones that cause you to swerve or backtrack a few miles. A large part of rhetorical criticism is learning to adjust to the surprises that your object of inquiry offers, those that cause you to rethink your initial judgments, or find new reasons to gain the support of other people. This course should help you learn to use your cruise control responsibly, as a tool, and help you cope with the detours, both pleasant and unpleasant, of your road trip through rhetorical criticism.

COURSE AIMS

As a result of this course, students should be able to:

1. **Identify** the history and techniques of rhetorical criticism as a means of identifying and unmasking persuasive public symbols and political language.
2. **Examine** the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of Genre, Narrative, “Aristotelian,” Dramatistic, and Movement schools of criticism.
3. **Apply** these techniques and methods in critiquing symbols employed in the building of social movements, campaigns, and communities.
4. **Synthesize** new knowledge through the rhetorical critique of an object of inquiry.

ASSIGNMENTS

- **5 Method “Quotation” Outlines:** At the beginning of the semester you will select five methods, and at the beginning of the week we discuss that method you will turn in a single page outline of the method using only quotations from the Kuypers text.
 - The purpose of this assignment is to show that you can **identify** how a given method works, in accordance with the first aim of the course.
- **3 Method Applications:** At the beginning of the semester I will ask you to pick a music video that you really like. For three of the Method Outlines you complete, I want you to apply the method to your music video and give a short presentation (5 slides and two pages of typed notes, which you will submit to me) telling the class what you were *surprised* to learn about your music video.
 - The purpose of this assignment is to show that you can **examine** the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of a school of criticism by reaching beyond cookie cutter results or mechanical application, in accordance with the second aim of the course.
- **1 Mid-Term Exam:** 50 questions, multiple choice, scantron.

- The purpose of this exam is to show that you can **identify** the history of rhetorical criticism in accordance with the first aim of the course.
- **1 Mid-Semester Paper:** This is the first draft of your final paper. This should be an 8-10-page exploration of your chosen topic in which you explore the context of your object of analysis. You should consider what you, as a critic, have to offer through a critique of your object of analysis, and you should begin to consider what techniques or methods your object of analysis suggests. Finally, you should consider how you would overcome the potential pitfalls of the techniques and methods you are considering.
 - The purpose of this assignment is to **apply** techniques and methods in critiquing symbols of social movements, campaigns, and communities, in accordance with the third aim of the course.
- **1 Final Paper:** This is the final draft of your paper. This should be a 12-15-page paper that applies a technique or methodology from the course to an object of analysis.
 - The purpose of this assignment is to apply techniques and methods from the course to an object of analysis, creating new knowledge through synthesis of technique/method and object of analysis.
- **1 Final Exam:** 50 questions, multiple choice, scantron.
 - The purpose of this exam is to show that you can **identify** the history of rhetorical criticism

REQUIRED TEXT

Kuypers, Jim A. ed. *Rhetorical Criticism: Perspectives in Action*. New York: Lexington, 2009.
ISBN: 978-0-7391-2774-2

The benefit of this text is that the authors offer an explanation, an example, and a critique of their work; so one sees how an approach is “meant” to work, how it works in practice, and how it doesn’t quite work. This emphasizes the artistry of rhetorical criticism, showing that the critic is more than a mechanical process of applying a method to an artifact and generating a result.

COURSE POLICIES

The Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitations Act of 1973:

The Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitations Act of 1973 states: “If you have a disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please see a coordinator in the Office of Disability Affairs (112 Johnston Hall) so that such accommodations can be arranged.” After you receive the accommodation letters, please meet with me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations.

Late Work:

Late work will be assessed a penalty of no less than 12% off the assignment.

Grading Scale:

- 50.00-59.5%: failure to indicate acceptable achievement (F)
- 60.00-69.5%: indicates minimally acceptable achievement (D)
- 70.00-79.5%: indicates acceptable mastery of material (C)
- 80.00-89.5%: indicates good mastery of material (B)
- 90.00-100.00%: indicates distinguished mastery the material (A)

Office Hours:

M-W-F 3:30-5:30, and by appointment.

I will only discuss grades with students if they make an appointment with me 24 hours in advance, and I will not accept appointments to discuss an assignment until after grade sheets have been returned (you have to wait at least 24 hours after receiving a grade before talking to me).

The only exception to this policy is in the case of typographical errors, which I can handle via email (for example, if I give you 90/100 and accidentally mark your assignment grade as "B"). Please bear in mind that a grade is my professional evaluation of submitted work. While I understand that circumstances beyond your control can interfere with the quality of your work, I can only evaluate the work you submit.

Extra Credit:

There is no extra credit available for this course. However, I will take digitally submitted handwritten notes, attendance, and in-class activities into consideration for any student that is within .5% of the next highest grade.

Plagiarism:

Please see the Student Code of Conduct (an excerpt of which appears below):

6. Plagiarism is defined as the lack of citation or the unacknowledged inclusion of someone else's words, structure, ideas, or data. When a Student submits work as his/her own that includes the words, structure, ideas, or data of others, the source of this information must be acknowledged through complete, accurate, and specific references, and, if verbatim statements are included, through quotation marks as well. Failure to identify any source (including interviews, surveys, etc.), published in any medium (including on the internet) or unpublished, from which words, structure, ideas, or data have been taken, constitutes plagiarism; Plagiarism also includes:
 - 6a. Falsifying or fabricating any information or citation in any academic exercise, work, speech, thesis, dissertation, test, or examination.
 - 6b. Submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructors; (from the [Student Code of Conduct](#) section 8.1.6)

Participation:

I measure your participation through a variety of activities including: attendance, quizzes, note-checks, peer reviews, and contribution to class discussions. These will be graded using a simple three part scale (0/7/10) where:

- 0 = no submission/unexcused absence
- 7 = something submitted/tardy
- 10 = activity completed/present

PS-22 address valid reasons for absences:

“Class attendance is the responsibility of the student. The student is expected to attend all classes. A student who finds it necessary to miss class assumes responsibility for making up examinations, obtaining lecture notes, and otherwise compensating for what may have been missed. The course instructor will determine the validity of a student's reason(s) for absences and will assist those students who have valid reasons. Valid reasons for absences include:

1. Illness
2. Serious family emergency
3. Special curricular requirements such as judging trips or field trips
4. Court-imposed legal obligations such as subpoenas or jury duty
5. Military obligations
6. Serious weather conditions
7. Religious observances.
8. Participation in varsity athletic competitions or university musical events

The student is responsible for providing reasonable advance notification and appropriate documentation of the reason for the absence.”

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK:	DATE:	PREPARE/READ BEFORE COMING TO CLASS:
1		<i>Introduction to the course</i>
	8/25	Topic: What is this class?
	8/27	Topic: Why should I take this class?
	8/29	Read: Foreword and Chapter 1 (14)
2		<i>Orientation [20]</i>
	9/1	Labor Day: no class
	9/3	Read: Chapter 2 (16)
	9/5	Read: Chapter 3 (4)
3		<i>Aristotelian Criticism [44]</i>
	9/8	Read: Chapters 4 & 5 (30) —Due: chapter 4-6 outlines
	9/10	Read: Chapter 6 (14)
	9/12	Due: chapter 4-6 presentations
4		<i>Literary Criticism [40]</i>
	9/15	Read: Chapter 7 (20)—Due: chapter 7-9 outlines
	9/17	Read: Chapter 8 (20)
	9/18	Due: chapter 7-9 presentations
5		<i>Literary Criticism (cont'd) & Burkian Criticism [48]</i>
	9/22	Read: Chapter 9 (26)—Due: chapter 10-11 outlines
	9/24	Read: Chapter 10 (22)
	9/26	Due: chapter 10-11 presentations
6		<i>Burkian Criticism [16]</i>
	9/29	Read: Chapter 11 (16)
	10/1	Topic: How do I outline an argument?
	10/3	Fall Holiday: no class
7		<i>Mid-Semester Paper</i>
	10/6	Topic: How do I revise a draft?
	10/8	Topic: How do I polish a paper?
	10/10	Due: Mid-Semester Paper (8-10 pages, to be graded WITHOUT MERCY)
8		<i>Mid Term</i>
	10/13	Topic: What have we learned so far?
	10/15	Topic: What do I need to know for this exam?
	10/17	Due: Mid-Term Exam (50Q scantron, unless otherwise negotiated)
9		<i>—Recovery—</i>
	10/20	Topic: From “classical” criticism
	10/22	Topic: To “modern” criticism
	10/24	Topic: Coping with “Mid Semester” grades
10		<i>Lens Criticism [50]</i>
	10/27	Read: Chapter 12 (24)—Due: chapter 12-14 outlines
	10/29	Read: Chapter 13 (26)
	10/31	Due: chapter 12-14 presentations
11		<i>Lens (cont'd) & Critical/Cultural Criticism [54]</i>
	11/3	Read: Chapter 14 (26)—Due: chapter 15-17 outlines
	11/5	Read: Chapter 15 (28)
	11/7	Topic: Final Paper Checkup
12		<i>Critical/Cultural Criticism [56]</i>

	11/10	Read: Chapter 16 (36)
	11/12	Read: Chapter 17 (20)
	11/14	Due: chapter 15-17 presentations
13		<i>"Other" Criticism [36]</i>
	11/17	Read: Chapter 18 (22)—Due: chapter 18-19 outlines
	11/19	Read: Chapter 19 (12)
	11/21	NCA: no class
14		<i>"Other" (cont'd)</i>
	11/24	Due: chapter 18-19 presentations
	11/26	Thanksgiving Holiday: no class
	11/28	Thanksgiving Holiday: no class
15		<i>Final Paper</i>
	12/1	Topic: How do I get 15 pages out of this!?!?!?
	12/3	Topic: I am going to fail! I'll lose my funding! My family will disown me!
	12/5	Due: Final Paper (12-15 pages)
F		Final Exam (50Q scantron, unless otherwise negotiated)