**CMST 3300: Rhetorical Criticism**

Dr. Ashley Mack

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**Meeting day and time:** ONLINE

**Office hours:**  Available by appointment to chat via phone

*"There are these two young fish swimming along and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says "Morning, boys. How's the water?" And the two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and goes "What the hell is water?”"*

*David Foster Wallace*

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

In this course, students will reflect on the various ways in which messages do rhetorical (persuasive) work and will develop a more critical (analytical and evaluative) stance from which to read and engage with persuasive messages in the world. Rhetorical criticism is a practice where critics (you) analyze communication artifacts (texts, speeches, televisions programs, films, social media campaigns, social movements, spaces and places, monuments, images, etc…) and unpack not only what the artifact is saying and what persuasive work it is doing, but also perhaps what it reveals about strategies, interests, and power dynamics at work in public life and culture. We will also examine the relationship between rhetorical theories, methods, and the practice of criticism.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Upon completion of the course, each student will:

1. Identify, analyze, and evaluate the rhetorical dimensions of public messages (visual, oral and written).
2. Exhibit facility with several different strategies for analyzing rhetorical texts.
3. Demonstrate knowledge of the basic principles that guide the writing of a rhetorical criticism paper.
4. Appreciate the value of rhetorical criticism as social criticism.

**COURSE FORMAT**

This course occurs entirely online. Our primary course website is here on Moodle. We will also make use of YouTube, and various other websites to create a dynamic and interactive course environment. Because this is an online course, it is required that you visit Moodle and check your email regularly for updates. You must have access to a consistent internet connection throughout the duration of the course.

This course is organized into weekly units. Each unit addresses a method of rhetorical criticism. On Monday of most weeks, you will find the following on Moodle under that week’s unit heading:

1. A video lecture from me (I may also direct you to additional content or websites I want you to read)
2. Weekly readings
3. A weekly engagement assignment (e.g. quiz, discussion prompt, etc.) that is due Friday by 5pm CST
4. Directions for how to complete that week’s writing assignment. There will be an accompanying submission link. This is due Friday by 5pm CST.

***Weekly Schedule (for most weeks, there are some exceptions… see the course schedule)***

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| --- | --- |
| **Monday** | **Friday by 5pm CST** |
| \*Lecture / Readings Available | \*Weekly Engagement assignment must be completed  \*Weekly written assignment must be submitted |

This course, by nature, requires a significant amount of written work. We will not necessarily have formalized discussions each week to “count” your engagement. Instead, each week you are tasked with producing written critiques and completing engagement assignments. You will engage classmates through critique based assignments to enable engagement in an online environment.

**REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS**

***Course Textbook:***

Hart, Roderick P. and Suzanne Daughton. *Modern Rhetorical Criticism,* 3rd Ed. Boston: Pearson, 2005.

***Other required items:***

* Other readings/materials/videos will be posted online through Moodle
* Access to and competency with online search engines and university libraries is essential for success in this course
* Consistent and reliable internet connection

**ASSIGNMENTS**

**Grade Scale**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Letter Grade** | **Point Range Needed** |
| A+ | 98-100% |
| A | 92-97.9% |
| A- | 90-91.9% |
| B+ | 88-89.9% |
| B | 82-87.9% |
| B- | 80-81.9% |
| C+ | 78-79.9% |
| C | 72-77.9% |
| C- | 70-71.9% |
| D+ | 68-69.9% |
| D | 62-67.9% |
| D- | 60-61.9% |
| F | 0-59% |

**Assignment Weights**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ASSIGNMENT | Points |
| Weekly writing assignments | 60 points each x 10 = 600 total |
| Rhetorical Criticism | 200 |
| Peer Review | 70 |
| Weekly Engagement | 10 points each x 13 = 130 total |
| TOTAL | 1000 |

**Assignment Descriptions**

**Weekly Engagement (10 points each x 13 = 130 total)**

Each week in this class I will post a video lecture and an accompanying quiz or activity for you to complete to get weekly engagement credit. This may be a simple quiz to cover that week’s lecture content, or I might ask you to respond to an item or participate in a discussion with your classmates. Please see each unit for instructions. You cannot complete weekly engagement assignments early and they cannot be made up late.

**Weekly Writing Assignments (60 points each x 10 = 600 points total)**

Throughout the semester, you will hone your skills of rhetorical criticism through persistent critical engagement with communication artifacts. Except for the first writing assignment (the fake news analysis), each week you will write a 2-3 page essay analyzing an artifact of your choosing using the method of criticism discussed during that unit.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Assignment** | **Due Date** | **Points** |
| **Situational Analysis** | 9/8 | 60 |
| **Fake News Analysis** | 9/15 | 60 |
| **Descriptive Analysis** | 9/22 | 60 |
| **Language Analysis** | 9/29 | 60 |
| **Form Analysis** | 10/6 | 60 |
| **Role Analysis** | 10/13 | 60 |
| **Narrative Analysis** | 10/20 | 60 |
| **Cultural Analysis** | 10/27 | 60 |
| **Visual Analysis** | 11/3 | 60 |
| **Ideological Analysis** | 11/10 | 60 |

**Final Paper (270 points total)**

At the end of the semester, you will choose one method of rhetorical criticism we have discussed and write an extended 10-12 page essay critiquing a chosen artifact. Please follow the detailed instructions on Moodle. This can be an extension of one of your weekly writing assignments.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Assignment** | **Due Date** | **Points** |
| **Rhetorical Criticism Essay Draft** | 11/17 | *You will not be able to turn in your final criticism or complete the peer review assignment if you miss this deadline or turn in an incomplete draft* |
| **Peer Review** | 12/1 | 70 |
| **Rhetorical Criticism Essay Final** | 12/8 | 200 |

**COURSE POLICIES**

**Communication Environment**

This course is entirely online. We will have ample opportunity to engage over text and through Moodle. Therefore, we have to be aware of our communication in this precarious context. Think about how you communicate to your instructor and classmates in person and via digital communication.

We will sometimes engage in difficult discussions about important topics that individuals may have polarized opinions about. We will be approaching all material, topics, and content from an academic perspective and for the purpose of understanding communication practices better. Just because we watch or read something, should not reflect that your classmates or I are promoting it. Instead, we should approach all content as resources for deliberation and discussion.

The success of this course depends on productive interactions generated between all of us. I do expect you to participate actively discussions when we have them, share your ideas and opinions, comment on and assess those of your fellow classmates. Disagreement is the fuel of democracy. However, I do demand that everyone treat each other with respect. Ridicule or disrespect of any sort will not be tolerated.

***When texting or emailing in general:***

* Be aware that even though we are communicating via online text, this is still a professional and collegial environment.
* Remember that tone is not always easily ascertained through textual communication. Make efforts to make your tone clear to your recipients and also as a recipient make an effort to not presume or project tone onto your colleagues.
* Disrespectful/flippant communication and inappropriate content will not be tolerated.

***Communicating with me:***

If you have questions that are relevant to the course (clarifications on assignments, due dates, information, etc…) please feel free to engage with me informally through email, text message, or ask questions via the Office Hours chat on Moodle during scheduled times.

**E-mail:** [ashleymack@lsu.edu](mailto:ashleymack@lsu.edu)

**Cell phone**: 504-322-8999

**Office Hours chat:** Thursdays from 10am-12pm (link available through Moodle, you can also come to my office in Coates 132.

**Please allow 24 hours for a response. While I try to make myself available as much as possible, do not expect that because this is an online class I am available 24 hours a day. I will not respond to an email or text between 6pm and 9am on weeknights or at all on the weekends. Also, please do not text me on my cell phone during these times.**

If you have issues regarding your individual performance on assignments, you must contact me formally through e-mail. I will not respond to text messages regarding grades or performance. When communicating with me via e-mail, please follow these guidelines.

* + - Address me professionally (ex: “Hello, Dr. Mack”)
    - Please sign your name (I might think [LSUcutiepie@gmail.com](mailto:LSUcutiepie@gmail.com) is spam and delete it).
    - Check your grammar.
    - Remember tone is harder to make out in e-mail. Assume a polite and professional tone, and my response will be the same.
    - Make sure to include any necessary background information needed for me to “make sense” of what you are e-mailing about. Also, make sure to be clear (just like in an essay) of what you want out of the e-mail.
    - Do not text me from your phone in all caps, or in broken English. Always use proper punctuation, complete spellings, etc...
    - Courtesy in this class gives most people 24 hours to respond to e-mail. I will not assume you will get an e-mail in less time; don’t assume I will either. Weekends may take longer.
    - If you fail to follow these guidelines, I will not answer your e-mail.
    - If you are appealing a grade, please see the formal grade appeal policy outlined in the syllabus.

**Late Work**

Sometimes life just happens and you are unable to turn in an assignment on time (maybe you are stressed out, overwhelmed by other assignments in other classes, got drunk the night before and slept through your alarm, etc…). I will accept late work, but with a penalty. If you can’t make an assignment deadline, you can turn the assignment in for **increasingly fewer points** throughout that day, up **until 11:59pm CST**. After that point, work will be accepted within the following week for the **maximum grade of a C** (see below for extenuating circumstances). After 7 days, late work will no longer be accepted for credit. (Life happens, but not without consequences.)

***Extenuating circumstances:*** I reserve the right to accept late work without penalty when a student has provided **proper documentation** of a university sanctioned emergency or conflict that has inhibited them from turning in an assignment on time. University sanctioned emergencies or conflicts include:

* family death/emergency
* debilitating or contagious sickness
* religious observance
* serious weather conditions
* varsity athletic competition
* sanctioned curricular requirements with documentation
* court-imposed legal obligations

For more information on university policy on student absences, see <https://sites01.lsu.edu/wp/policiesprocedures/policies-procedures/22/>

**Video Production & Editing**

This course requires that you produce and edit video content. This may be a new endeavor for you as a student, but it is a vocabulary and skill that will be incredibly useful in your professional lives. Studies suggest that 80% of people communicate visually in the internet age, and honing this skill in your classes in college is necessary. If you have never used video editing software, this is your opportunity to hone these skills! I am here to help. Please plan ahead and do not start work on these projects the night before they are due. You record and edit your submission on your own device and upload it to the weekly forum.

*Other Video Editing Programs*

While there are many programs available for editing that you can purchase. There are free programs available to you that are incredible proficient for the purposes of these assignments.

* If you have a Mac computer, Apple provides free software in iMovie. iMovie comes installed on every Mac computer and is user friendly.
* If you have a computer that operates on Windows, Windows Movie Maker comes for free with your operating system. Other available options are Wondershare Filmora, Lightworks, and Shotcut, to name a few.

**Quality of Written Work**

Take pride in the quality of your work in this class. Written work must be spell-checked, grammar-checked, and proofread: The quality of your writing will affect your grade.

All written work must be typed in 12-point font, double-spaced, 1-inch margins, with a clear heading up at the top. Your name must be included. A bibliography of works cited in an accepted citation style (MLA, APA, or Chicago Style) must accompany all work.

**Grade Discussions and Appeals**

If you would like to speak with me about an exam, assignment, final grade, or any other graded material you must come to my office and speak with me face-to-face or schedule a video conference appointment during my office hours. If you cannot come to my office hours, I will gladly schedule an appointment that works with your schedule.

If you wish to appeal a grade on an assignment or seek a change in your grade, you must submit a written letter requesting to appeal your grade within 7 days of receiving the grade/feedback, and you must follow the procedure I outline below*. I will not casually discuss the specifics of grades over e-mail due to FERPA (a federal law designed to protect your privacy).*

***Grade Appeal Procedure:***

* Wait at least 24 hours after receiving your grade and feedback before setting up an appointment with me and submitting your written grade appeal. This grace period ensures that you have time to carefully read and consider the feedback.
* After reading my feedback, submit a written appeal through e-mail that identifies the specific issue in question (i.e. exam question, etc.) and explains the specific and well-supported reasons you believe the grade should be changed. Some thoughts on these appeals:
  + Please refer to any class materials that support your rationale for a change.
  + Focus less on explaining that you deserve a certain grade (i.e. “I came to every class and deserve an A”), and more on proving that you accomplished specific objectives on this specific assignment that you were not given the appropriate credit for (i.e. “You state in my feedback that I did not appropriately meet X grading criteria. However, according to lecture and the assignment description, we were expected to do Y, see pages 5-7 of my assignment where you can see I meet this criteria by doing Z.”).
  + Make sure to cite specific instances from your assignment to provide support for your claims.
  + Please attach to the email a graded copy of the assignment in question (i.e. exam, etc.) and any additional evidence to support your claims.
* The written appeal should be submitted at least 24 hours prior to the appointment you have scheduled with me. During this meeting, we will review your appeal.
* After meeting with you, I may wish to contemplate the matter. In any case, I will decide within two school days whether to change or uphold the grade.
* I will provide you with a written justification of my decision through Moodle (see comments on the graded item in question).
* Remember, you can only submit a grade appeal within one week (7 days) of the grade’s issue. Grade appeals will not be considered after that “statute of limitations” has expired.
* If we cannot come to an agreement, you are welcome to follow the formal grade appeal procedure as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct.

**Academic Misconduct**

Don’t plagiarize. Any student found to have turned in material not their own (either downloaded from the internet or written by another student) will immediately be reported to the Dean of Students. You can find the official LSU policies on plagiarism here: <http://www.lib.lsu.edu/instruction/plagiarism2.html> .**Your work would be considered as plagiarism in part or entirely if it involves any of the following:**

* Submitting work that was written by someone other than you (an online source, a friend, etc.).
* Submitting work in which you use the ideas, metaphors or reasoning style of another, but do not cite that source and/or place that source in your list of references. Simply rewording a sentence does not make work your own.
* Submitting work in which you “cut and paste” or use the exact words of a source and you do not put the words within quotation marks, use footnotes or in-text citations, and place the source in your list of references.
* Submitting work that you have written together with a friend as if it was solely your own intellectual property.
* Submitting work that you wrote verbatim for another class.

**Students with Disabilities**

Louisiana State University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. The syllabus is available in alternate formats upon request. If you are seeking accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act, you are required to register with Disability Services in 115 Johnston Hall. Their phone number is 225-578-5919 and website is [www.lsu.edu/disability](http://www.lsu.edu/disability). To receive academic accommodations for this class, please obtain the proper Disability Services forms and meet with me at the beginning of the semester.

**Majoring in Communication Studies**

Business leaders and other professionals recognize the importance of developing communication skills and analysis. Alan Greenspan, for example, stated, “To succeed, you will soon learn, as I did, the importance of a solid foundation in the basics of education – literacy, both verbal and numerical, and communication skills.” We hope this course contributes to your success.

To learn more about communication, you may want to major or minor in the Department of Communication Studies. The program explores how people sustain and change, experience, and make sense of the world through symbolic action. Students develop conceptual skills to analyze written, oral, and visual messages. Students gain practical experience in such areas such as public speaking, group decision-making, performance, and film. Such skills are elemental to careers in business, government, law, social services, and the arts.

*A major in Communication Studies requires 36 hours including 12 hours of core classes and 12 hours at the 3000 or 4000 level. A minor requires 15 hours with one core class and 6 hours at the 3000 level or above.*

More information is available at [www.lsu.edu/cmst](https://email.lsu.edu/exchweb/bin/redir.asp?URL=http://www.lsu.edu/cmst) or by contacting our undergraduate advisor Mr. Kent Filbel ([kfilli@lsu.edu](mailto:kfilli@lsu.edu)), whose hours are posted at his office, 135 Coates Hall

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

***Course format:*** This course is organized into weekly units. Each week, you will be able to access a video lecture from me, a weekly writing assignment, and a weekly engagement assignment. There are a few weeks where there are exceptions to this (see schedule below). You will be responsible for completing the readings, watching the lecture, and completing the accompanying weekly assignments by Friday at 5pm CST of each unit.

***Please Note:*** You are responsible for all readings and watching all lectures. The syllabus is provisional and is subject to revision as necessary. Additional readings may be assigned from time to time, and/or assigned readings may be omitted.

M = Moodle

H&D = Modern Rhetorical Criticism Textbook

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Unit** | **Readings/Presentations** | **Assignments Due by Friday at 5pm CST** |
| 8/21-24 | ***One: Course Introduction*** |  | \*Engagement Assignment 1 |
| 8/28-9/1 | ***Two: What is rhetorical criticism?*** | H&D ch. 1, 2 & 4 | \*Engagement Assignment 2 |
| 9/4-8 | ***Three: The Rhetorical Situation*** | H&D ch. 3 & 10  M – Bitzer  M – Leff | \*Engagement Assignment 3  \*Situation Analysis |
| 9/11-15 | ***Four: Basics of Argument & Evidence*** | H&D ch. 5 | \*Engagement Assignment 4  \*Fake News Analysis |
| 9/18-22 | ***Five: Descriptive Analysis*** | M – Campbell & Burkholder | \*Engagement Assignment 5  \*Descriptive Analysis |
| 9/25-29 | ***Six: Language & Lexicon*** | H&D ch. 7 & 8  M – Ivie (1974) | \*Engagement Assignment 6  \*Language Analysis |
| 10/2-6 | ***Seven: Form & Genre*** | H&D ch. 6  M – Gunn (2004)  M – Campbell & Jameson | \*Engagement Assignment 7  \*Form Analysis |
| 10/9-13 | ***Eight: Constitutive Analysis*** | H&D ch. 10  M – Charland (1987) | \*Engagement Assignment 8  \*Role Analysis |
| 10/16-20 | ***Nine: Dramatic & Mythic Criticism*** | H&D ch. 12  M – Ott & Aokii  M - Burke | \*Engagement Assignment 9  \*Narrative Criticism |
| 10/19-10/22 | ***Fall Break*** | | |
| 10/23-27 | ***Ten: Cultural & Historical Criticism*** | H&D ch. 11  M – Dickinson, Ott & Aoki (2002) | \*Engagement Assignment 10  \*Cultural Criticism |
| 10/30-11/3 | ***Eleven: Iconography & Visual Criticism*** | H&D ch. 9  M – Hariman & Lucaites 2002 | \*Engagement Assignment 11  \*Visual Criticism |
| 11/6-10 | ***Twelve: Ideological Criticism*** | H&D ch. 13 & 14  M – McCann (2007) | \*Engagement Assignment 12  \*Ideological Criticism |
| 11/13-17 | ***Thirteen: Writing Strategies*** |  | \*Engagement Assignment 13  \*Rhetorical Criticism Draft |
| 11/20-24 | ***Thanksgiving Break*** | | |
| 11/27-12/1 | ***Thirteen: Course Wrap Up*** |  | \*Peer Review |
| 12/8 | ***Finals Week*** |  | \*Rhetorical Criticism Final Draft |