Writing and Rhetoric

Writing 150

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Course Description:

This is a course on college-level writing including reading, research, argumentation, and rhetorical analysis. This section of Writing 150 will pay particular attention to the ways arguments work within a discourse community, and how personal experience can lend itself to creating a persuasive point of view. This section is structured around the personal essay as a focused topic area, and will require extensive reading, writing, and research.

Required Texts:

McInelly, Brett C. and Brian Jackson, eds. Writing and Rhetoric. Plymouth, MI: Hayden-McNeil, 2014.

Doyle, Brian, The Wet Engine.

Online Essays, as selected by instructor.

Other required Materials for this course:

something to write with in class, such as a bound notebook or laptop

access to a printer for printing papers, additional course readings, and the multimodal assignment.

A positive attitude and a willingness to work.

What this Class will do for you:

Some people mistakenly assume that writing is a basic skill that you “learn” or “take care of” once and for all, either by passing a timed test or taking a first year writing course. The reality is that writing is more like learning to play an instrument: you get better with deliberate practice—the kind of practice that takes guts and brains and hours and focus and feedback. Just as learning to play an instrument gives you the power to perform for and with others, learning to write convincing and graceful prose gives you power in your personal, professional, and public life through rhetoric, or the art of persuasion. And anyone can become a better writer.

In Writing 150 you begin your apprenticeship to become an effective writer by learning how a writer thinks and what a writer does when faced with rhetorical opportunities. The most important habit you will take away from this course is the habit of mindful writing in response to new writing tasks. Such mindful writing is what distinguishes expert writers from novice writers.

If you decide to give everything you’ve got to this course you will develop habits of rhetorical thinking that will help you write well in other classes, in your job, and in any part of your life that requires writing arguments effectively, and with style. In short, this could be one of the most useful classes you will take in college.

By the end of this course you should be able to:

1. Identify, analyze, and use rhetoric responsible to compose arguments in a variety of genres for specific audiences and purposes;

2. Critically read texts including;

analyzing how a text functions in a specific situation, community, or public;

analyzing the nuances of language (diction, figures of speech, tone, etc.);

identifying and evaluating the elements of an argument—claims, reasons, assumptions, and ethical, emotional, and logical appeals.

identifying how personal experience can lend itself to persuasive argumentation

3. Write coherent and unified texts (effective introductions, clear thesis, supporting details, transitions, and strong conclusions) using a flexible and effective writing process, including prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing.

4. Use style—diction, figurative language, tone, grammar, punctuation, spelling, mechanics—genre, conventions, and document design correctly and for rhetorical effect.

5. Navigate the library to locate primary and secondary sources, evaluate the appropriateness and credibility of those sources, and effectively incorporate and accurately document outside sources in a research based essay.

6. Understand and appreciate arguments different from—even contrary to—your own.

What You will do for this class:

Good writers are good rhetors (or persuasive communicators) who understand how to make effective arguments for different audiences to achieve various purposes. For this course you will have four major writing tasks, each posing a unique rhetorical challenge (see the Writing and Rhetoric supplemental guide for more details):

Papers: Personal Literacy Essay (2-4 pages); Opinion Editorial (3-5 pages); Rhetorical Analysis (4-6 pages); Research Essay (8-10 pages). For each paper you will submit a portfolio of your writing process. The portfolio will include the following items in the following order:

a reflective statement

the final draft of the paper

the draft that was peer evaluated, along with the evaluative worksheet

the initial draft (for the research essay, which is double the points, students will do an annotated bibliography of included sources.)

Required Format for Papers

 Writing 150 papers should be submitted according to MLA guidelines.

Personal Literacy Essay: For your first assignment you will be required to respond to two essays with intersecting themes, tying in personal experience as a way of bridging the gap between the texts. After reading a transcript of a forum called The Literate Family, given by Professor Douglas Thayer, as well as the essay The Amateur Family, by Michael Chabon. You will be asked to reflect on how you have been affected by specific language use within your family, and what the consequences of this exposure to certain types of communication has been on your personal beliefs and assumptions.

Opinion Editorial: Your assignment will be to write a persuasive essay to the BYU community about anything on your mind this semester. This assignment challenges you to make a brief but compelling argument with a specific audience in mind. To prepare to write this paper you will need to read opinion editorials from national, local, and university sources to get a sense of the conversation on topics that interest you, and include your own personal experiences that make the issue compelling to you.

Rhetorical Analysis: After you make your own argument you will analyze someone else’s using a rhetorical vocabulary we will develop in class. For this assignment your audience is our class, a new collective of public intellectuals concerned about rhetoric and how personal experience intersects with public issues. Your job is to evaluate an argument and tell the rest of the class, in writing, whether the argument is convincing and why. You will select an article from Perspectives on New Media to analyze. Think of your audience as composed of intelligent, concerned citizens with a vested interest in the issue addressed in the article you analyze.

Researched Essay: American philosopher John Dewey argued that one of the most pressing public problems we face is the barrier between expert knowledge and effective communication. In your third paper, you will attempt to correct that problem by writing an argument backed by compelling evidence based on research, contrasted and compared to your own personal experiences. Your audience will depend on the topic you choose to essay about.

Multimodal Argument: So much of what we read and write includes “modes” other than alphabetic writing—video, audio, images, hyperlinks, infographics, animations, charts, and graphs. For this last writing task you will work in groups to compose a multimodal text made not only in words but in other modes as well. For this final project your audience will be the BYU community.

In addition to these major projects you will complete minor writing assignments such as response papers, reflective essays, and in-class rush-writes. Some of these you will turn in, and some you will keep as exercises for the major essays.

 Assessment Measures

In order to pass this class you must do all of the assigned work, in and out of the classroom, including reading, as well as the informal writing, drafting, peer critiques, and instructor conferences as well as participating in class discussions and group work. You will not be graded on inborn talent as a writer, but rather on your willingness to learn, to revise your own work, and to help your classmates improve their own. If you are unsatisfied with your scores on any papers you may revise and resubmit your paper to be re-graded. You will be required to turn in the revised copy, the previously graded copy, and a letter explaining the changes that you made and why those changes merit a better grade on the assignment. To have the opportunity to revise you will need to have visited the writing center before the original due date of your paper.

All English 150 students have five mandatory assignments; the three papers, the multi-modal assignment, and the final. If you are missing any one of these assignments you will automatically fail the class. This is not my policy, but BYU policy: there will be no exceptions. Turning in something is better than nothing. If there are serious problems let me know and we can work something out.

Late Assignments

The three major papers will be due in class the day listed in the syllabus. If there is a problem with this date an alternative should be worked out with me before the due date. After the due date they will receive a 10% deduction per day. Many daily assignments cannot be made up. If there are extenuating circumstances please talk to me throughout the semester- I am willing to work with you if you keep me informed.

Extra Credit

I would prefer that you focus your time and energy on your assignments rather than extra credit. However the writing center is an excellent resource for receiving help with your writing. If you meet with a tutor at the writing center you will receive 5 extra credit points, maximum 5 points per paper. Make sure they email me letting me know when you attended and who you met with.

1000 points possible Pts.

Personal Literacy Essay 100

Opinion Editorial Paper 100

Rhetorical Analysis Paper 100

Researched Essay Paper 300

Multi-Module Assignment 100

Library Tour and Test 20

Final Exam 100

Style Academy 50

Final Portfolio 50

(Meeting with instructors,twitter,

 journal, Miscellaneous)

Participation 80

Daily Participation: (80 points) Since we do in-class writing and peer-review workshopping, your attendance is essential for your success. We need everyone, everyday. However, I know there may be days you will have to miss. You will have two unexcused absences, no questions asked. After that for every unexcused absence your final grade will drop by one letter grade. (from an A to an A-, ect.) If you need to miss class, or are sick please email me to let me know, and then contact a classmate to see what you have missed. If you miss class the day a paper is due you are responsible for getting it to me by the time it is due. If you miss a peer review it will be your responsibility to meet with classmates outside of class and conduct a peer review. A skipped out of class conference with me also counts as an absence. You will receive points for every day you attend class, participate in the discussion, complete the reading assignments, and adequately prepare to contribute to the class.

Reading: Yep, this is a class that requires reading as well as writing. If you are like many students you will be tempted to cut corners by not reading what I have assigned. However, I promise that if you read with me you will learn how to use effective rhetoric. Come to class prepared. Exercise effective reading strategies by pre-reading, reading, and post-reading; by making notes in the margins and circling key terms, by asking yourself questions like, “what’s the main point?” “How would I summarize this?” “What does this author want me to think, feel, or do?” “How is the author doing what they are doing?” “What are the consequences for me?” “How is the author making his or her point?” “Is this author persuading me, as their audience, to their point of view?” Sometimes I will ask you to come to class with something written about what we have read.

Exercise Journal: You will use a writing journal to complete response assignments to critical readings, discussion prompts, and rhetorical exercises. These journals will be turned in with your portfolio.

Reflection: Writing, as I said above, requires deliberate practice, which in turn requires you to be mindful of what you are trying to accomplish and how you are doing. (This mindfulness is called Metacognition-that means “thinking about thinking.”) For each major assignment I will have you write reflectively at least three times—once right after receiving the writing task, once when you receive feedback from me and from your peers, and once when you turn in the final draft. The reflections will be brief and informal, but they are essential if you want to develop habits of mind that will help you in future writing tasks. Since I want you to take these reflections seriously I will only give full credit to those who write thoughtful and specific responses.

Twitter: An important aspect of any kind of dialogue is taking note of the world around you. You will be expected to post an observation, opinion, or a response to a prompt to twitter at least twice a week using the tag #byuwriting150. I will follow you on Twitter and track your tweets. You will include a record of your tweets with your final portfolio. (note: no credit will be given for 26 tweets done the week before finals. This is meant to be an ongoing dialogue throughout the semester. Read what your fellow students have to say, and contribute to the discussion. You will occasionally be asked to respond to another’s tweet. Do so promptly and respectfully.)

Library Tour and Test: (20 points) Library Research Skills Tutorial and Test.

You will need to take the Library Audio Tour and Test and complete the Library Research Skills Tutorial and Test, before the Issues paper is begun. These resources can be obtained in the LRC on the 4th floor of the library. A few class periods are devoted to in-library research sessions; more information will be provided in class.

Conferences: You will have the opportunity to meet one on one with your instructor (me) during every unit. Come prepared with a writing goal or question, (we will discuss this in class) as well as any class questions you may have.

Peer Evaluations: Each of your four major assignments will be peer reviewed, and you will do the same for another student. Come prepared, be thoughtful, and respect the opinions of others. A major component of rhetoric is expressing opinions and persuading others to see your point of view. We will be looking at how other students have used their own personal experience as well as traditional rhetorical conventions, and whether they are successful; not on the validity of their actual stance. (This can be very helpful if you take full advantage of it. Do as good a job for other students as you want them to do for you.) Participating in peer review will make you a better reader and writer. It will also give you experience at giving and receiving feedback. Peer review makes the writing experience a social exchange. Effective peer review is part of your grade, and I will review the comments you provide for other writers.

Style Academy: (50 points) BYU recently launched a new website with video tutorials and exercises on writing fundamentals and style, http://styleacademy.byu.edu/. To encourage you to advance in your syntactic and stylistic sophistication we will periodically complete style academy exercises and assignments. When I assign a Style Academy tutorial, please watch the video-they’re short- and do the exercise at the end of the video and bring them to class. All Style Academy exercises, like all informal writing, is due at the beginning of class. I won’t accept them late.

Final Portfolio: (50 points)

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Copy of tweets for the semester

Final copy of each paper

Copy of your exercise journal

2 examples of your best peer review commentary.

Final short reflection on how this course has changed your approach to writing.

Link to one youtube clip demonstrating a rhetorical appeal.

Google Drive: To make collaboration and access easier we will use Google Drive for our peer review and for turning in major papers. Please get a google account before the semester starts. I will create a shared folder for the class, and then each student can create folders and documents within the class folder to produce an online portfolio of your work. For each major writing task you will create a folder with at least three drafts of each paper: a draft for peers to comment on, a draft for me to comment on, and a final draft to be graded (revision drafts can go in there as well). You will also include reflective writing in these portfolios. The final portfolio will also be created in these folders. At the start of the semester I will have you sign a FERPA release that lets us comment on your writing in Google Drive. However, to respect your privacy, my comments and final grades will be given to you in hard copy in class.

Late Writing: Writing assignments are due at the beginning of class on their due dates unless otherwise specified. Each day a major paper is late your score will drop 10%. An absence is no excuse for late work. Although due dates are somewhat arbitrary they are a part of life. If you write everyday you will stay on track for all due dates. I do not accept informal assignments late.

Final Exam:

The exam is mandatory. Please do not purchase plane tickets home, or plan on leaving for any reason before this date. If there is a conflict let me know as soon as possible.

Please Don’t Fail:

Writing 150 students are required to complete the five mandatory assignments: Opinion Editorial, Rhetorical Analysis of an essay, Multi-Modal Assignment, Researched Essay paper, and the Final. If you do not complete any one of these assignments you will automatically fail! Please don’t fail! If you feel like you have already read this, you did. It is important!

Course Policies:

Attendance Policy

You are allowed three “free” absences. Use them well (or don’t use them at all). After that each unexcused absence will lower your overall grade by 1/2 a letter grade. Your contribution is important to our class, and it is important to attend. Use your absences wisely. That being said, if you have an emergency, let me know. I am reasonable. If you need to be excused from class, contact me at least 24 hours before the intended class date.

Important Things to Keep in Mind

Computer issues are not an excuse for late work. Save your work in at least three different places (consider using an online service like google drive or dropbox that can be accessed from multiple computers) and in three different formats.

If you need to be excused from class, contact me at least 24 hours before the intended class date.

You are responsible for checking the schedule on Learning Suite to know what reading assignments and other assignments are due. I do not always have time to remind you of everything. Please be responsible. Ignorance is not an excuse for a missing assignment.

Classroom Behavior

No distracting food is allowed whilst the class is in session (Eat your fruit snacks and granola bars quietly). Beverages are ok.

The use of any electronic device for recreational purposes is prohibited in class. If student uses either cell phone, laptop, or other electronic media (i.e. ipod, ipad) instructor reserves the right to require that the student leave the classroom In that event, the student is automatically considered absent, thus his/her assignment is considered not turned in for that class period.

If your cell phone goes off in class, I will make you answer it and tell the caller (it’s always your mother) that you are in the middle of class, that everyone is listening to you right now, and that you will have to call them back. So, please turn off your phone.

Email Correspondence

Email is the best way to get in touch with me during non class hours. If you need to contact me you can do so at spottedpen@gmail.com.

Email will be read between the hours of 8 am – 5 pm from Monday to Friday. Please allow at least 24 hours for a response (although it is usually much sooner).

I will respond to email sent over the weekend at my earliest convenience.

I expect students to use professional language and tone in all communications with me, including in emails (netiquette).

Visiting During Office Hours

Students with questions or concerns are encouraged to come see me in my office during the hours listed above. If you are unable to come during those hours, you may set up an appointment with me via email or brief after-class conversation. Please notify me ASAP if you are unable to keep your appointment.

Useful Websites:

BYU Writing Center–http://english.byu.edu/writingcenter/

Library Instruction–http://sites.lib.byu.edu/instruction/

MLA online resource–http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/resdoc5e/

Rhetorical Conventions–http://rhetoric.byu.edu

BYU Learning Suite-https://learningsuite.byu.edu

BYU Style Academy-http://styleacademy.byu.edu

Honor Code

In keeping with the principles of the BYU Honor Code, students are expected to be honest in all of their academic work. Academic honesty means, most fundamentally, that any work you present as your own must in fact be your own work and not that of another. Violations of this principle may result in a failing grade in the course and additional disciplinary action by the university. Students are also expected to adhere to the Dress and Grooming Standards. Adherence demonstrates respect for yourself and others and ensures an effective learning and working environment. It is the university’s expectation that each student will abide by all Honor Code standards. Please call the Honor Code Office at 422-2847 if you have questions about those standards.

Preventing Sexual Discrimination or Harassment

Sexual discrimination or harassment (including student-to-student harassment) is prohibited both by the law and by Brigham Young University policy. If you feel you are being subjected to sexual discrimination or harassment, please bring your concerns to the professor. Alternatively, you may lodge a complaint with the Equal Employment Office (D-240C ASB) or with the Honor Code Office (4440).

Students with Disabilities

If you have a disability that may affect your performance in this course, please contact the office of Services for Students with Disabilities (1520 WSC). This office can evaluate your disability and assist the professor in arranging for reasonable accommodations.

Plagiarism

Intentional plagiarism is a form of intellectual theft that violates widely recognized principles of academic integrity as well as the Honor Code. Such plagiarism may subject the student to appropriate disciplinary action administered through the university Honor Code Office, in addition to academic sanctions that may be applied by an instructor. Inadvertent plagiarism, whereas not in violation of the Honor Code, is nevertheless a form of intellectual carelessness that is unacceptable in the academic community. Plagiarism of any kind is completely contrary to the established practices of higher education, where all members of the university are expected to acknowledge the original intellectual work of others that is included in one's own work. In some cases, plagiarism may also involve violations of copyright law.

Schedule: We will make adjustments to the schedule as needed. Stay tuned, and check the Content page under Learning Suite frequently.