Rhetoric and Writing Studies 305W: Writing in Various Settings
Spring, 2015

Instructor: Janet Tempelton
Meeting Times: TTh 11:00-12:15
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Prerequisites:

All RWS 305W students must have satisfactory completion of RWS 100 and RWS 200 or the equivalent. RWS 305W students must also have completed the WPA with a score of 8 or 9 or RWS 280 with a grade of “C” or better.

Required Textbooks:


Course Description:

“Rhetoric may be defined as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion.” Aristotle, Rhetoric

RWS 305W students learn to respond not just to academic tasks but a wider variety of genres and settings that require diverse research methods and writing styles. The course also contains a metacognitive component in which students learn to reflect on and evaluate the effectiveness of their own writing style(s) within rhetorical contexts. This course meets the upper division writing requirement for students who complete the class with a grade of “C” or better.

Student Learning Outcomes:

In RWS 305W students learn to respond not just to academic tasks but a wider variety of genres and settings that require diverse research methods and writing styles. The course also asks students to reflect on and evaluate the effectiveness of their own writing style(s) within rhetorical contexts.

Rhetorical Knowledge

RWS 305W will help students identify, analyze, and respond in writing to various rhetorical situations. Students will learn how to:
• Identify individual discourse communities and find and analyze their characteristic texts, evaluate their credibility and principles, and apply relevant aspects of their information to other contexts and arguments
• Analyze the details of a wide variety of writing situations (textual elements such as tone, evidence, organizational patterns, diction, even visuals) according to the author’s purpose as well as the audience’s needs and tastes
• Respond effectively in writing to issues and arguments raised in a variety of disciplinary, popular, and professional texts and/or contexts
• Produce effective arguments from a variety of disciplinary, popular, and professional contexts

Critical Thinking and Reading Strategies

RWS 305W will provide students with strategies to understand the function of reading and writing in cultural, academic, and professional communities. Students will learn how to

• Actively read texts using a variety of reading strategies such as annotation, visual organizers, questioning, and discussion
• Identify how a writer uses rhetorical strategies in various genres of writing
• Interpret, analyze, and evaluate demanding texts
• Apply critical thinking skills and reading strategies to evaluate their own writing and the writing of fellow students
• Reflect on their own progress as a working writer in relation to critical thinking and reading strategies

Writing Processes

RWS 305W will strengthen students’ awareness of and abilities to use writing processes effectively. Students will learn how to

• Develop flexible strategies for creating, revising, and editing texts
• Critique their own and others’ texts
• Write with an awareness of audience and purpose

Knowledge of Conventions

RWS 305W will provide students with strategies to identify, analyze, and apply the writing conventions of different discourse communities and to write effectively within those communities. Students will learn to

• Identify how discourse communities employ particular strategies for conveying, researching, evaluating, and presenting information
• Analyze and choose the appropriate conventions for a range of audience expectations
• Integrate a variety of appropriate sources into their writings in a way that accurately reflects the writer’s meaning and purpose
• Document sources appropriately
• Sustain reasonable correctness in grammar and mechanics to perform well in a variety of writing contexts and professional settings
Attitudes, Values, and Preparation for Life Beyond the University

RWS 305W reflects the values of a liberal arts education, namely, to

- Work collaboratively and cooperatively to achieve defined goals
- Respect the diverse points of view that characterize our multi-cultural classroom community
- Critically analyze a variety of texts produced for public and individual readers
- Participate confidently in public discussion on issues of importance to the workplace and the community
- Address issues in writing

Definitions

- Discourse Community: “A site or social group defined by special kinds of speech and writing, the boundaries and character of which are determined by the communicative practices as well as the social sentiments, shared norms, and cultural values of the members” (Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition: Communication from Ancient Times to the Information Age 194).

- Genre: “A type of spoken or written discourse, recognized as conventional by members of an intellectual community, that draws together certain substantive and stylistic features in response to a recurrent rhetorical situation” (Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Con: Communication from Ancient Times to the Information Age 279).

Course Requirements:

- Four assignments, including one rhetorical analysis, one evaluative essay, one resume and cover letter or statement of purpose, and one professional essay. First drafts and revisions will be required, and the assignment grade will be lowered one full grade if a first draft is not included.
- Selected readings from the course texts and handouts.
- Reading quizzes on assigned readings and one group presentation.
- Homework and in-class work.
- Class participation in small group activities, class discussions, and writing workshops.

Grade Breakdown:

Each assignment will receive a letter grade based on the quality of work it contains. (The value of the letter grades corresponds to the recommended values in the SDSU catalogue. For example, “A” is equivalent to 4.0, “A-” to 3.7, “B+” is 3.3, “B” is 3.0, etc.) Participation will also be assigned a letter grade that takes into consideration both your attendance and your level of involvement in class discussions and group work. Your final grade will be determined by weighting those letter grades as follows:
• Assignment 1, Rhetorical Analysis: 25%
• Assignment 2, Evaluative Essay: 25%
• Assignments 3 and 4, Personal and Professional Writing*: 30%
• Reading Quizzes/Presentation: 10%
• Participation: 10%

*Note that Assignments 3 and 4 will be submitted in one professional writing portfolio.

Policies:

Late work: You may use one “Get Out of Jail Free” option, which allows you to turn in one of the first two projects one class period late without any penalty. Once the option has been used, no late work will be accepted. Note that the “Get Out of Jail Free” card may not be used with the final portfolio; it must be completed on time. All assignments are due during the class period and must be turned in as hard copies. No email submissions will be accepted.

Graded papers: Papers are generally graded and returned to you within an average of two weeks. At times the turn-around time may be shorter and on occasion it may be longer, depending on the amount of commentary I find it necessary to include on the returned papers. Note that students who use their Get Out of Jail Free option will not get their papers back at the same time as students who turned their papers in on time.

Attendance: No more than two absences, eitherexcused or unexcused, are allowed without penalty during the session. Absences beyond this will be reflected in a lower participation grade—clearly you cannot participate if you have not attended. The higher number of absences, the greater effect there will be on the participation portion of your grade, and it is possible to receive a failing grade in the participation part of your overall grade based on lack of attendance. Note that students who leave during class will be marked absent.

Cell phones: Please be sure cell phones are turned off and put away before entering class. Students who are attending to their cell phones during class, or who get up and leave class to answer cell phones, will be marked absent. Clearly, you are not here participating in class if you are attending to your cell phone.

E-mail: This course is not taught via e-mail. If you miss class, please come see me during office hours to discuss what you missed. I cannot teach a class via e-mail. Also, it is not necessary to notify me if you will be missing class on a particular day, though if something has come up that will result in you missing several classes you will want to let me know. Finally, I do not respond to e-mails at night or on weekends.

Special arrangements: If you are registered with Disabled Students Services and require special arrangements to be made in order to accommodate your learning needs, I am
happy to work with you in conjunction with DSS. Please let me know of your situation so that we can work together to ensure you have every opportunity to do your best work in this class.

Student athletes: If you are a student athlete with away games scheduled during the semester, please let me know by the end of the first week of class, and present me with a copy of your team travel schedule. I am aware of your multiple obligations as student athletes, and we will make appropriate scheduling arrangements—this may include turning assignments in early.

Plagiarism: According to the policy file, “Plagiarism shall be defined as the act of incorporating ideas, words, or specific substance of another, whether purchased, borrowed, or otherwise obtained, and submitting same to the university as one’s own work to fulfill academic requirements without giving credit to the appropriate source. Plagiarism shall include, but not be limited to: a.) submitting work either in part or in whole completed by another; b.) omitting footnotes for ideas, statements, facts, or conclusions that belong to another; c.) omitting quotation marks when quoting directly from another; d.) close and lengthy paraphrasing of the writings of another.” Plagiarism is a breach of academic codes of conduct. Refer to the General Catalog for the potential consequences of plagiarism, which may include failing the course and/or possible expulsion from the university.