Course Syllabus Fall 2012, San Diego State University
Rhetoric and Writing Studies 200, Section 35: The Rhetoric of Written Argument in Context: “Choosing Happiness?”

Instructor: Jason Parker
Email: Jparker2@mail.sdsu.edu
Class Location: College Square (CSQ) 204
Class Time: MW 2:00 – 3:15 p.m.
Office: Adams Humanities 3160
Office Hours: TTh 4 – 6:30 p.m.

General Education Capacities/Goals & RWS Learning Outcomes:
RWS 200 is one of several courses in the area of general education defined as “Communication and Critical Thinking.” Focusing particularly on argument, this course emphasizes four essential general education capacities: the ability to 1) construct, analyze and communicate argument, 2) contextualize phenomena, 3) negotiate differences, and 4) apply theoretical models to the real world. This course advances general education by helping students understand the general function of writing, speaking, visual texts, and thinking within the context of the university at large, rather than within specific disciplines. In addition to featuring the basic rules and conventions governing composition and presentation, RWS 200 establishes intellectual frameworks and analytical tools that help students explore, construct, critique, and integrate sophisticated texts.

Within this framework of four general capacities, the course realizes four closely related subsidiary goals. These goals focus on helping students:
1. Craft well-reasoned arguments for specific audiences;
2. Analyze a variety of texts commonly encountered in the academic setting;
3. Situate discourse within social, generic, cultural, and historic contexts; and
4. Assess the relative strengths of arguments and supporting evidence.

Our student learning outcomes for RWS 200 are closely aligned with these goals and capacities, and they reflect the program’s overall objective of helping students attain “essential skills that underlie all university education.”

Course Description:
RWS 200 builds on the argument analysis skills taught in RWS 100, with a greater focus on the context of arguments, particularly their historical and cultural settings, their relationship to other arguments, and their relationship to current times. In RWS 200, rather than analyze texts as self-contained artifacts, we will investigate the ways in which texts represent an integral part of culture and how they are influenced by societal forces. We will learn how to recover and reconstruct the cultural context surrounding a specific text and the “conversations” that a piece of discourse participated in. In your own writing, you will learn to join an ongoing conversation by taking the context of your topic into consideration in order to create the most effective text for a given rhetorical situation. Additionally, this course focuses on technological and visual literacy and will engage you in exploring the rhetorical uses and effects of technology and images. You will have opportunities to apply your understanding of the power and possibilities of technology and images to the projects you submit for evaluation. The goal here is to help you develop a deeper understanding of the intersections between rhetoric, visual literacy, and technology in an age when technology is continually reshaping opportunities for interacting with complex disciplines and diverse communities.

Texts and Materials:
Required Texts:
4. Materials placed on reserve at the SDSU Library Course Reserves.
5. A collegiate level dictionary and/or thesaurus (or at least an appropriate app).
6. Your favorite composition notebook for in-class writing, notetaking, and other activities.
7. Throughout the semester, students will be required to download and/or print out copies of articles or other materials from Internet web sites and Blackboard. I do not anticipate this additional cost to exceed $15.

Course Objectives:
The following four outcomes describe the three major writing projects for the course. Students will be able to:
1. Construct an account of an argument and identify elements of context embedded in it, the clues that show what the argument is responding to, both in the sense of what has come before it and in the sense that it is written for an
Students are expected to fulfill the following requirements in this course:

Course Policies and Requirements:

1. Writing Projects (lengths vary, typically between 6 – 9 pages). Each of these three major assignments will address at least one of the first four Course Objectives. The Writing Process will be utilized to complete these assignments and consists of several steps: completing research and developing a preliminary thesis, prewriting to determine knowledge and generate ideas for composition, composing an initial draft, providing written responses to other students’ and your own drafts and to other students’ critiques of your drafts, establishing a plan for revising the initial draft, revising the initial draft, and editing and proofreading the revision before submitting it for grading. These assignments should be submitted on time in a hard copy (unless an electronic copy is requested by the instructor) and should follow MLA guidelines for format and style. Timely completion of drafts and active participation in workshops are expected and comprise a percentage of students’ grades for these three major assignments.

2. Short Writing Assignments. A considerable portion of the writing expected of students will have to be completed outside class; these assignments will ask students to complete reading responses, perform critical analyses of texts, participate in discussion boards, respond to probing questions, etc.). Many of these assignments will be submitted electronically through Blackboard, usually via the discussion boards. Consequently, they do not need to follow MLA guidelines for format and style. There will be between 10 and 15 of these assignments throughout the semester. The grade for these short writing assignments will be determined by the quantity of assignments completed on time as well as the quality of the content of your responses.

3. Attendance. No more than three absences are allowed during the semester. Additional absences will diminish a student’s overall final grade by 1.5% per absence. In addition, please arrive to class on time, which starts promptly on the hour. Students who arrive fewer than five minutes late will be considered tardy; each tardy constitutes one-half absence. Students more than five minutes late will be considered absent. And, once this semester, all students will conference with the instructor during class time or office hours; attending this conference is a mandatory component of the course.

4. Preparation. You should always have read the assigned material and completed any written work before coming to class. Since many of our texts are intended for a collegiate audience, being fully prepared may mean reading some texts more than once to assure that you are ready for discussing and writing about issues concerning decision making. An
absence from the previous class does not excuse you from being prepared for class. It is your responsibility to find out what you missed from another student.

5. **Participation/Group Work.** Our class will be largely discussion based, and I expect you to be willing to contribute your ideas and questions regularly. Frequently, I will also separate students into small groups for discussion and collaborative learning activities. I expect that you will always be respectful of your fellow students and that you will inform me if you feel that there is a problem with your group dynamic. Students who do not participate in class activities may be considered absent.

6. **Due Dates.** All writing assignments (the three major writing projects as well as short writing assignments) must be submitted the date they are due and at the beginning of the class period. However, there are occasions on which I will ask students to submit assignments electronically (usually through Turnitin.com, which is available on Blackboard). Reading assignments must also be completed before the due dates, as many in-class writing assignments will be based upon the assigned readings, and productive class discussions will depend upon careful readings and annotations of each article.

7. **Extension.** This is every student’s best friend. Call it a “get out of jail free card,” an effective counter to the occasional computer blue screen of death or untimely demise of a print cartridge, or whatever you will, but one time this semester, for one of the first three writing projects, you may turn in the final draft of that writing project up to one class session late. This extension does not apply to any other minor writing assignments or to the Final Exam.

8. **Revision of a Writing Project.** Although students will revise writing projects as part of the writing process, sometimes after submitting a project for final grading, students are not satisfied with their work and/or the grade received. Consequently, students are permitted to conduct a post-final grading revision of only one of the first two Writing Projects and submit it for re-grading if the following conditions are met: (1) a complete final draft of the writing project was submitted on time and (2) the grade for the final draft was C+ or lower. The revision is due during the final week of the semester (the week before Finals Week); however, this revision can be completed before this deadline. Students are strongly encouraged to meet with the instructor to discuss recommendations and strategies for revising a writing project. The average of the grades for the final draft and the revised draft will constitute the grade received. Because of end-of-term time constraints, students do not have the option to revise Writing Project 3 or the Final Exam.

9. **Cheating and Plagiarism.** Cheating shall be defined as the act of obtaining or attempting to obtain credit for academic work by the use of dishonest, deceptive, or fraudulent means. Plagiarism shall be defined as the act of incorporating ideas, words, or specific substance of another, whether purchased, borrowed, or otherwise obtained, and submitting the same to the University as one’s own work to fulfill academic requirements without giving credit to the appropriate source. In your writing you must give credit through quotation marks, footnotes, and complete citations if you use someone else’s ideas or works. The minimum consequence for cheating and/or plagiarism in this course is a score of zero on the assignment. More significant consequences, including reporting the cheating and/or plagiarism to the appropriate University offices, may be imposed. Needless to say, the best policy is to always turn in only your own work. If you have questions concerning plagiarism and citing sources, please ask me directly.

10. **Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities.** In accordance with University policy, students with verified disabilities should discuss with me within the first two weeks of class any sanctioned academic adjustments required for successful completion of this course. Written verification of the disability may be required. For more information about services available to students with disabilities, please contact SDS at (619) 594-6473.

11. **Policy on Absence for Religious Observation and University Events.** By the end of the second week of classes, students should notify the instructor of an affected course of planned absences for religious observances. Instructors shall reasonably accommodate students who notify them in advance of planned absences for religious observances. Similar accommodations can be provided for students involved in University activities including intercollegiate athletics. Within the first two weeks of class, student athletes are responsible for notifying instructors of required absences for participation in events. Instructors shall reasonably accommodate students’ required absences from class.

12. **Blackboard.** Blackboard is a course content and management system hosted on the Internet. Your instructor uses Blackboard for several different purposes:
   a. Post important course information and documents (like this syllabus);
   b. Make announcements;
   c. Provide copies of prompts for writing assignments;
   d. List homework assignments and host discussion boards;
   e. Inform students about their grades;
   f. Communicate with students via e-mail and other media.

Please become accustomed to checking Blackboard a few times each week for new information about our class. One additional important thing concerning the instructor’s use of Blackboard: it is designed to complement and enhance student-instructor relations, not replace real-life interactions between students or between students and their instructor. Some students believe that Blackboard has eliminated certain in-class activities, especially taking notes during class. It is important to realize that lecture materials will not be posted on Blackboard; also know that
lecture materials are generally outlines and are expanded upon by instructors and students during class meetings. If you do not take notes during class, you will miss important information.

You may reach blackboard at https://blackboard.sdsu.edu. You will need your Red ID and password to log on.

13. **E-mail policies.** Please have you current and most regularly checked e-mail address on WebPortal, for when I e-mail students from Blackboard, the program uses this address. Also, when you send the instructor an e-mail, please identify the course and section number in the “Subject” heading. Finally, unless requested, assignments should not be e-mailed to the instruction unless prior arrangements are made.

14. **Classroom Etiquette.** Informed disagreement over ideas and issues is one of the hallmarks of the academic world. Couple this with the multitudinous components that comprise our individual identities (class, gender, race/ethnicity, religion and spirituality, culture, social values, and political ideologies for starters) and it is easy to understand how disagreement can emerge within the classroom, whether actual or virtual. Nonetheless, critical discussions in our course should be conducted in a courteous and respectful manner.

15. **Electronic Devices.** Keitai (mobiles) and other electronic devices should be silenced before class meetings begin. Although laptops and smart technology certainly have a place in the classroom, please acknowledge that such devices can distract other members of the course and can be the cause of distracted participation in your own self. Consequently, the instructor reserves the right to ask students who use electronic devices to stow them for the duration of class or use them within specific areas of the classroom.

16. **Changes to the Course Syllabus.** The course syllabus is subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances. Any changes will be announced during class, and a revised version of the course syllabus will be posted on Blackboard.

**Grading and Assignments:**

In order that the assignment of grades truly reflects the student’s achievement in courses, the integrity of the academic program, and the integrity of departments or schools and instructors, grades shall genuinely distinguish between high and low levels of achievement.... Instructors shall use all grades from A through F to distinguish among levels of academic accomplishment. The grade for average undergraduate achievement shall be C...

Undergraduate grades shall be: A, outstanding achievement—an excellent essay going above and beyond the assignment requirements. It is thoughtful, intelligent, and original; B praise-worthy performance—a very good essay going above and beyond the assignment requirements.; C satisfactory performance, the most common undergraduate grade—an essay that fulfills the assignment requirements; D, minimally passing—a vague and/or poorly written essay that may also demonstrate a lack of understanding of the reading and/or assignment; and F, failing—an essay that is seriously flawed, showing a serious lack of understanding of the reading and the assignment.

Assignments that are not submitted on time and activities requiring in-class participation that are missed receive a score of 0.

**Breakdown of Grades for the Entire Semester:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing Assignment 1 (Articulating an Argument and Examining Its Context)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Assignment 2 (Researching Elements of Context and Examining Multiple Arguments as a Context for Reading)</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Assignment 3 (Reading an Argument in Its Contemporary Context)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam (Comprehensive Final Exam)</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Assignments (Dis. Boards, Homework, Quizzes, Participation, Conferences, Etc.)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Important Dates for the Fall 2012 Semester:**

- September 3—Labor Day, Holiday, Campus Closed
- September 10—Final day to drop classes. No drops allowed after 11:59 p.m. on this date.
- September 12—Final day to add classes or change grading basis. No schedule adjustments allowed after 11:59 p.m.
- November 12—Veterans' Day, Holiday, Campus Closed.
- November 22 & 23—Thanksgiving Break, Campus Closed.
- December 7—Final day of classes before final examinations.
- December 8-15—Finals Week
- December 12—Final Exam for RWS 200-35 from 1 – 3 p.m.

**Due Dates for the Major Writing Assignments:** These will be announced at a later date. However, typically students have approximately 4 - 5 weeks to complete each of the major writing assignments.

**Course Schedule and Readings:** The Course Schedule will be updated periodically and posted on Blackboard.