Rhetoric and Writing Studies 200 – Spring 2013
Rhetoric of Argument in Context

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Office Hours: Monday 5:30-6:30 Thursday 3:30-4:30
Other days and times available by appointment

Also—information for this course is available through Blackboard

PREREQUISITE: Rhetoric and Writing 100 or the equivalent.

COURSE GOALS
RWS 200 is the second semester of our lower division rhetoric program. This may be your first rhetoric course at SDSU or you may already have begun with RWS 100. This course builds on understanding the elements of argument by expanding to include more consideration of the assumptions and ways of thinking that “surround” the arguments being studied.

General Education Capacities/Goals & RWS Learning Outcomes
Our Learning Outcomes Reflect the Goals and Capacities of the General Education Program. 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 reflect the program’s overall objective of helping students attain “essential skills that underlie all university education.”

LEARNING OUTCOMES
- articulate what key terms, definitions, concepts, statements of a problem or issue are established by a text; investigate and articulate how an argument is positioned—based on certain kinds of assumptions, located in a way of thinking and representing issues from a point of view;
- Discern elements of context embedded in arguments, 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 audience in a particular time and place; examine a writer’s language in relation to audience, context and community;
- follow avenues of investigation that are opened by noticing elements of context; research those elements and show how one’s understanding of the argument is developed, changed, or evolved by looking into its context;
- given the common concerns of two or more arguments, discuss how the claims of these arguments modify, complicate or qualify one another;
• work with multiples sources in a paper, deciding what to include and what to exclude, choosing an effective structure, and creating significant relationships among sources;
• describe their own papers and reflect on how they wrote them; differentiate between the content of their texts and the language and rhetorical strategies they employ;
• revise their own work effectively, re-reading previous work and re-envisioning it in the light of reflection, feedback, further reading and new sources of information;

COURSE MATERIALS
REQUIRED TEXTS
➢ Occasional readings linked to Blackboard and “More to Say” (a blog)
  When reading from these texts are due, they need to be printed out or brought on a laptop or tablet.

SUGGESTED TEXTS
➢ A college level dictionary

OTHER MATERIALS
➢ Lined paper for writing in class
➢ Bluebooks for in-class essay

COURSE WORK
For all assigned readings, you should come to class having already thought about the main claim(s) being made and how it is supported in the text. Course work will include the analysis of a variety of texts, research projects, and, of course, a great deal of writing.

Writing Projects (650 points)—three developed writing projects, the first two worth 200 points (including pre-work) and the third worth 250 points.
The four assignment types that make up the work of RWS 200 will be achieved in six formal writing projects – three developed writing projects and three corresponding pre-writing projects.

Developed Writing Projects
The first paper will be an exploration/analysis of the context clues in a specific text. In particular, the emphasis will be on considering how a writer’s intended audience factors into the style of his/her argument. The second assignment will explore context as the variety of arguments about the same topic. Finally, you will enter into the conversation yourself, by considering the current “cultural conversation” based on a contemporary issue. A list of evaluation criteria will be provided with each assignment. The first two papers may be revised for an improved grade if you have met all draft due dates and attended the small group workshop with a full draft.

Pre-writing projects
These assignments are designed as pre-work for the larger writing projects. For this reason, it’s important to meet deadlines. Work turned in after the due date will receive half credit (maximum). Specific guidelines will be given for each assignment. No revisions.

In-Class Essay (100 points)
The in-class essay evaluates students' abilities to analyze a writer’s rhetorical strategies and craft an organized response in a timed setting.
Connections Writings (75 points—three short papers each worth 25 points.)
Short writing assignments written both in and outside of class to help find personal connections to assigned readings and topics. Out of class assignments must be typed (double-spaced). Evaluation criteria for these papers will be handed out separately.

Quizzes (75 points)
Quizzes may be given any day in class and will not necessarily be announced. They will be designed to evaluate careful reading and/or understanding of information presented in class and range in points from 10-25 points. Quizzes will generally cover readings due for the class meeting they precede; however, I may also ask questions referring to previous reading assignments. Obviously quizzes presented on Blackboard are open book, but in class quizzes will not be. You may, however, use handwritten notes that you bring in (on paper—not in the book itself). Missed quizzes may not be taken late, but one make up assignment will be offered late in the semester. (Note: for in-class quizzes – you must attend the entire class session to receive credit for the quiz.)

Class Participation (100 points)
Class Participation essentially means being actively engaged with the work of the course. A perfect score of 100 for class participation would mean you attended every class with all work due for that day (this includes having the course text or other assigned materials), received “Outstanding” on all credit/no credit work, and contributed positively in all small group work. But an “A” doesn’t mean perfection. It means most of the time, you meet these standards.

Small Group Workshops
Students will work in groups throughout the semester, helping each other in all stages of the writing project. Informal small group work will always include notes to be turned in to me. The formal small group workshops preceding two of the Developed Writing Projects are considered particularly important. Missing the workshop or being more than a few minutes late mean the loss of 30 points, as well as losing the opportunity to revise your paper after it is graded.

Informal In-Class Writing* Most class meetings will begin with a student generated freewriting topic. Bringing in a topic counts positively toward Class Participation. Additionally, writing a response to class responses can be turned in for extra credit. (Instructions for this assignment are posted under “Course Information.”) Informal writing will frequently be assigned in class.

Conferences
I may schedule appointments for in-class conferences. Please feel free to schedule a conference with me at any time.

*Credit/No Credit assignments include informal writing (both in-class and homework) and quizzes. These assignments will receive either a ✓ for Satisfactory Credit, a ❌- for No Credit, or ✓+ for Outstanding work.

Extra Credit
Extra Credit is offered to those students doing C or better work in the course and meeting attendance requirements. These assignments are evaluated Credit/No Credit and most do not add specific points to your overall point total. However, receiving satisfactory or better evaluations on the majority of these assignments can raise a final course grade by a third (for instance, from a B to a B+). More information will be given out during the semester. Most extra credit for this course will involve outside research. Outside research assignments will always require a brief presentation to the class about your findings.

NOTE: Extra credit assignments are always optional—be sure to put forward your best effort if you choose to do them.

COURSE POLICIES
Absences
When I am grading work for this course, I look for thoughtful independent work with the assigned texts and evidence that you are aware of the work we are doing in class. Writing papers for this course is an active process...
and much of the work we do in class is specifically to help you be successful with your writing projects. It’s almost impossible to make up what you miss. You are welcome to come to my office hours, of course, but we can’t recreate the class there. Similarly, I can’t recreate class via email, so I urge you to come as often as you can. Missing two or fewer classes counts positively toward your Class Participation grade. Of course, almost everyone misses class sometimes. You may miss four classes without any negative consequence to your class participation score. Missing more than five class meetings, for any reason, will lower your class participation grade 25 points for each absence. Important: I frequently hand out reading materials, give assignments, and make changes to the course calendar in class. You are responsible for getting this information from another student when you are absent. Finally, being present means that you are engaged with class activities. I reserve the right to mark as “absent” students who engage in any non-class activities during class time. Being consistently late or frequently leaving early may also lower this portion of your grade.

Cell phones/laptops/tablet

Laptops and tablets are great to have in class for note taking, online readings, and especially, looking up information during class discussions. However, it’s easy to become distracted. As an experiment this semester, I am allowing the use of all technology during class time. However, if your use of a device is distracting to other students or to me, I will ask you to stop for the day. If it happens more than once, I’ll ask you to stop using it in class for the semester.

Late or Missed Work

Work is considered on time when turned in at the beginning of class, in class, on the day that it is due. Late work may take longer to be returned. Work may not be submitted by email unless specific arrangements have been made ahead of time. (Be sure to check your scores on Blackboard. At the end of the semester, if you have an assignment (ungraded) missing, it will be subject to late work policies.)

Writing Projects: Fifteen (15) points off for each class meeting past the due date.

Pre-writing Assignments: maximum half credit for pre-writing assignments turned in past the deadline

Connections Writing: One assignment may be turned in one class meeting late without penalty. Further late assignments, or assignments turned in more than one class meeting late, will receive no credit.

Quizzes: there is no makeup for missed quizzes.

Revisions

Revising is an essential part of the writing process. Revisions are allowed and encouraged the first two developed papers, as long as you have been present at class workshops and have met all required due dates (including pre-work assignments). Revising for an improved grade means significant change (revisioning, not editing). If you choose to revise an essay you must make an appointment to see me before you begin. These appointments must be scheduled within two weeks of the day the paper is returned. At our meeting, you will be given a revision form. No revisions will be accepted without this form. The last day to turn in revisions to meet with me to discuss a revision is May 2nd, the last day to turn in a revision is May 8th.

Turnitin

Turnitin is a Blackboard feature which can be used as both a teaching tool and a plagiarism deterrent. (See SDSU’s plagiarism policy below.) You will be turning in major papers through Turnitin via Blackboard. This program can also be help with drafts, so you can easily see how you are working with outside texts. These features will be discussed in class. Instructions for how to upload your work are on Blackboard under “Course Information.”

A few notes about plagiarism:

(From SDSU Policy File IV-D-3) “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, whether it be a paragraph, sentence, or part thereof; (d) close and lengthy paraphrasing of the writings of another; ... (f) submitting as one's own work papers purchased from research companies.”

The minimum consequence for plagiarism in this course is a score of zero on the assignment. SDSU policy requires the reporting of any academic dishonesty to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities. Needless to say, the best policy is to always turn in only your own work. As noted above, I may use turnitin.com as a teaching tool, but I may also use it as a means of determining plagiarism if I have specific concerns about submitted work.

**GRADING**

Total points possible for this course = 1000.

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**LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND GENERAL ASSIGNMENT TYPES FOR RWS 200**

Assignment Types: the following four outcomes describe the four main writing projects or "assignment types" 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 audience in a particular time and place; examine a writer's language in relation to audience, context and community;
2. follow avenues of investigation that are opened by noticing elements of context; research those elements and show how one's understanding of the argument is developed, changed, or evolved by looking into its context;
3. given the common concerns of two or more arguments, discuss how the claims of these arguments modify, complicate or qualify one another;
4. consider their contemporary, current life as the context within which they are reading the arguments assigned in the class; position themselves in relation to these arguments and additional ones they have researched in order to make an argument; draw on available key terms, concepts or frameworks of analysis to help shape the argument.

Outcomes across the semester: the following points describe outcomes to work on throughout the semester, to be attained over the 15 weeks. Students will be able to:

1. Building on the work done in RWS 100, students will be able to: articulate what argument a text is making; describe the work that is done by each section of the argument; describe elements of the argument—claims, methods of development, kinds of evidence, persuasive appeals; translate an argument into their own words;
2. understand and incorporate all aspects of the writing process—including prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and proofreading;
3. articulate what key terms, definitions, concepts, statements of a problem or issue are established by a text;
4. investigate and articulate how an argument is positioned—based on certain kinds of assumptions, located in a way of thinking and representing issues from a point of view;
5. work with multiples sources in a paper, deciding what to include and what to exclude, choosing an effective structure, and creating significant relationships among sources;
6. analyze and assess arguments made by visual texts; incorporate visual images into their documents;
7. craft a cohesive paper, and use effective metadiscourse to articulate the project of the paper and guide a reader through it;
8. describe their own papers and reflect on how they wrote them; differentiate between the content of their texts and the language and rhetorical strategies they employ;
9. assign significance to the arguments they read;
10. revise their own work effectively, re-reading previous work and re-envisioning it in the light of reflection, feedback, further reading and new sources of information;
11. edit their writing for the grammar and usage conventions appropriate to the project.