The Background and Benefits of this Course:

An important part of a university education is learning how to identify and think critically about the many different types of argument you encounter in life. Being able to critically evaluate texts and respond in writing to important public issues is an important part of citizenship in a democracy.

This course is designed to improve your ability to interpret, analyze and produce writing in a variety of disciplinary, professional and public contexts. We will examine the styles, genres and forms of argument that characterize academic, professional and popular texts. The course will look at how to model the rhetorical dimensions of different kinds of discourse, understand the rhetorical strategies drawn on, and examine the way issues of community, context and genre influence the production of texts. RWS 305 compares academic, popular and professional texts, analyzes the way arguments function in different contexts, and describes criteria for evaluating different kinds of argument.

We will read a set of articles that focus mostly on the media, and in particular how public policy issues are represented in the media. We will use these articles to explore ways of interpreting, analyzing and producing written arguments. The course invites students to see argumentation as an integral component of public life, as a form of inquiry, and as a way of conversing with other writers and community members. The class requires you to practice writing regularly, to write in a variety of contexts, and to address diverse audiences.

Required Texts and Materials:

- Three-ring journal binder
- Collegiate dictionary
- Access to a computer
- Course webpage for Readings: [http://tylerthompson.pbworks.com](http://tylerthompson.pbworks.com)
- Readings will also be given out in class
RWS 305 Course Activity Requirements:

1) **Readings**: To be completed according to the dates specified in the syllabus. If necessary, look up definitions of words unfamiliar to you.

2) **Reading Responses**: As you read each article, you should make notes. You can discuss passages you don’t understand, things you agree or disagree with, or styles of expression you admire or dislike. You can talk about connections you see with other readings you’ve done in this course, or other courses, or with contexts outside school. You can respond to other students’ responses (but no flame wars please).

   *Keep your response to about three paragraphs. Don’t worry too much about spelling or format, but **DO NOT simply summarize the text**. Post your response under the appropriate reading response link on the course home page. Reading responses are due when you see (RR) on the schedule, and should be posted the night before the class we actually discuss the text. The responses you do over the course of the semester will count as a large part of the participation grade (they will be evaluated on whether they are sufficiently numerous and extensive, and show some serious reflection.) I will look for improvements in the way you interpret arguments, and in your use of the categories and criteria discussed in the class for the analysis of arguments.*

3) **Attendance**: Discussion and in-class work are central to this course, and attendance is important. If you miss more than 3 classes one full grade (A to B, etc.) will be deducted from your final class grade. I assume that everyone comes to class to participate in that day’s activities. If you are working on other classes, reading newspapers, magazines, arrive late etc., I will count you as absent that day.

4) **In-class writing exercises and tests**: From time to time I will set short writing assignments and quizzes to be done in-class. These exercises will test your understanding of the concepts we are discussing in class, as well as the content of the articles we read. These assignments will count for half of your participation grade, or 10% of the overall grade.

5) **Formal Writing Assignments**: You will do three formal writing assignments. Note that you must complete all 3 writing assignments to pass the course.

6) **Participation**: Participation, in-class work, peer review work, and assorted short writing exercises will count for 100 points.

**ASSIGNMENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argument Sketch (Due Feb. 3)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Paper and Resume (Due Feb. 24)</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fallacies/Demagoguery Presentation and Paper (Due Mar. 24)</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Writing Assignment (Due April 14)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Final Paper (Due Last Day of Class)** | 300
---|---
**Exercises and Tests (Random)** | 100
**Reading Responses and Participation (TBD)** | 150
**Total:** | 1000

*All assignments, percentages, & due dates are subject to change at the instructor's discretion*

**Assignment Format:** all papers must be typed and double spaced, using standard margins, 12 pt type size and regular spacing. Include your name, the date and the assignment title. Make sure you hand in a copy of your assignment, NOT the original.

**Where to hand assignments in:** give them to me in class. If this isn't possible for some reason (e.g. sickness) email me the assignment before class with the valid excuse.

**Late Penalties:** late assignments are not accepted.

**Plagiarism:** don’t even think about it. Plagiarism will result in an automatic fail. I use the turnitin.com service, along with plagiarism detection software to check all papers.

**Problems:** see me. If the contact hours specified clash with your classes/work, we can work out an alternative time to meet. E-mail is often the best way to get in contact with me.

**Using Additional Texts:** Many of the articles we will read will have clear links between them – some directly criticize each other, some draw on each other as support, and some engage with the general theoretical positions held by other authors. As you come to figure out your own position with respect to the arguments we will read, you may want to locate supplementary articles from the web, library, or newspaper. Depending on which issues you choose to focus on when working on your analysis and final paper, you may find that you wish to use texts other than those we read in the class. Thus you may want to keep an eye out for articles or newspaper reports that relate to a topic area you are interested in, and start making notes on media experiences that you think could be useful.

**General Notes:** Classes will consist of some lectures, but will be largely oriented around in-class discussion and activities. I hope that our class sessions will be lively and interactive. Everyone will be asked to lead discussion on an article at some point. I expect you to be critically engaged with the positions taken in the texts we read, and with the positions of your classmates. However, I also expect you to be respectful and courteous to others in the classroom.

I may sometimes copy and share your papers (anonymously) with the class to use as examples of an effectively written essay or as sample texts on which to make revisions, so please avoid subjects you would not feel comfortable sharing with your classmates.

**Email Reminders:** I will send you email from time-to-time. Please make sure your email address works. If you send me a message, include your name (superstud@aol.com isn’t very informative.) If you change your email address, make sure you enter your new address in the SDSU e-Services WebPortal at https://sunspot.sdsu.edu/e-services/. This will update your blackboard address also.
Changes to the Syllabus: I will sometimes need to make a few changes to the syllabus as the class progresses. If this happens I will provide you with an updated syllabus.

Class Grading Breakdown:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Total Points</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Total Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>925-1000</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>725-764</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>895-924</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>695-724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>865-894</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>665-694</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>825-864</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>625-664</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>795-824</td>
<td>D-</td>
<td>595-624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>765-794</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>0-594</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Student Responsibilities:

1. Be self-motivated;
2. Be able to keep track of assignments;
3. Have a positive attitude and a willingness to do the work;
4. Ask questions and/or come see me when you don’t understand something;
5. Have the reading/writing done for class;
6. Make a positive contribution to class discussions;
7. Be able to work in a group for small assignments and larger ones;
8. Be prepared to write in and out of class;
9. Share your writing in class or on discussion board;
10. For every one hour of class, schedule at least two to three hours for homework and studying.

PLEASE REGISTER TO VOTE:

If you are not registered to vote, please register online today: tinyurl.com/reg2voteonline. Please choose the vote-by-mail option.

“*I saw that the best thing I could do was get hold of a dictionary—to study, to learn some words...I suppose it was inevitable that as my word-base broadened, I could for the first time pick up a book and read and now begin to understand what the book was saying. Anyone who has read a great deal can imagine the new world that opened.*”

– Malcolm X