RWS 100 The Rhetoric of Written Argument  
Sections 77 & 91  
Spring 2015

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Office: SH 120C  
Office Hrs: TTH 11:00-12:00 and W 3:00-3:50 and by appt.  
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Required Texts and Materials:
Readings will be provided electronically. It is your responsibility to download and print them for class discussions. Access to a reliable computer and printer

COURSE DESCRIPTION
RWS100, The Rhetoric of Written Argument, satisfies the composition component of the university requirement in Communication and Critical Thinking. The course introduces writing and reading as critical inquiry and is designed to help students successfully undertake writing projects that have the depths and complexity of university level work.

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 100 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: craft well-reasoned arguments for specific audiences; analyze a variety of texts commonly encountered in the academic setting; situate discourse within social, generic, cultural, and historic contexts; and assess the relative strengths of arguments and supporting evidence.

More specifically, the course will develop four very different writing projects: a) project one emphasizes producing an account and evaluating an argument; b) project two focuses on the construction of an argument; c) project three emphasizes gathering, managing, and using outside sources to evaluate a text; d) project four emphasizes identifying rhetorical strategies used in a text, examining why they were chosen, and evaluating the relative strengths and weaknesses of these strategies.
My teaching philosophy for this course is based on the assumption that students will have to engage actively in arguments of all kinds in their private lives, the academic environment, their communities, and their jobs and professions. I believe that it is imperative for them to master the art of structuring, expressing, and defending their own opinions in this modern world that offers a multitude of perspectives on almost any given issue.

**STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES**
The student learning outcomes for RWS 100 are closely aligned with the General Education Capacities and Goals and reflect the program’s overall objective of helping students attain “essential skills that underlie all university education.” The following points describe outcomes to be achieved by the end of the semester. Students will be able to:

1. Decipher and articulate an author’s argument;
2. Analyze an author’s specific rhetorical strategy in a given text;
3. Identify claims and supports, types of appeals, and evidence in written arguments;
4. Translate an argument into their own words distinguishing between paraphrasing and summarizing;
5. Incorporate short summaries and paraphrases texts into own writing to support and extend own ideas;
6. Evaluate written and visual arguments;
7. Apply the Toulmin Model of argument to analyze and construct arguments;
8. Carry out small, focused research tasks to find information that helps clarify, illustrate, extend, or complicate a written argument;
9. Become aware of and be able to explain rhetorical strategies of different authors;
10. Summarize short arguments or claims in order to formulate and develop counter-claims;
11. Use concepts from one argument as a framework for understanding and writing about another;
12. Use collaborative and social aspects of the writing process by critiquing peer’s texts and discussing own writing;
13. Format simple manuscript and cite sources accurately;
14. Understand the consequences of plagiarism;
15. Edit own writing for grammar, mechanics, and usage.

**GRADING POLICIES**
Following is a passage from the San Diego State University Policy File (2000) regarding grading. “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; **B**, praise-worthy performance; **C**, satisfactory performance—the most common undergraduate grade; **D**, minimally passing; and **F**, failing.

**Grading Formula**
- Assignment #1 5%
- Assignment #2 5%
- Assignment #3 10%
- Assignment #4 15%
- Assignment #5 10%
- Assignment #6 15%
- Final 15%
- Journal Entries 5%
- Reading Quizzes 10%
- Participation to Discussions Based on the Assigned Readings 10%

As indicated above, you individual grades will represent percentages of the final grade.

**Your final grade** will be based on a total of 100 points.

**ESSAY ASSIGNMENTS AND HOMEWORK**
Essay assignments will not be accepted if not typed. They should be edited and proofread, and therefore, should contain a minimum of elementary errors. A paper submitted with an excess of elementary errors will be returned to you as incomplete and penalized. Please format your work with adequate margins (one inch), use standard font (black, 11 or 12 point), and double-space it. Make sure each assignment has, in a visible location, your name, the date the assignment is due, and the name of the assignment. *Please refer to your Keys for Writers, Chapter 3 on MLA. At the end of the chapter, there is a sample MLA essay.*

Only papers that receive a C- or below can be rewritten and resubmitted in one week, for up to 5 more points.

All assignments should be submitted on time. For each class session an assignment is late, 5% of the point value will be deducted. Normally, I will not accept late work unless the student has previously discussed the situation with me and obtained my permission.

Save all the material because at the end of the semester you might be required to submit a formal portfolio with everything you have produced during the course.

**JOURNAL ENTRIES**
A set of very brief comments about current issues will be collected during that entire semester. The texts will be hand-written in class; they will express one opinion and show a little support for it. These comments will also serve as participation tests; the students who will be absent will not be allowed to make the comments up. The sum of the comments will represent 5% of the final grade.
BLACKBOARD
I will use the **blackboard** site as a communication device for all of us. Detailed instructions for your assignments – the prompts, useful handouts, and other miscellaneous information will be posted on the site, and you are expected to print these and bring them to class.

PLAGIARISM
Plagiarism is presenting someone else’s words, phrases, ideas, or concepts as if they were your own. In your writing you must always give credit through quotation marks, footnotes, and complete citations if you use someone else’s words or ideas. Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course. If you use material from a printed source without citation or you copy another student’s work, you will fail the assignment and most likely fail the entire course. The incident will also go on record with the Associate Dean of Students of your college, and you could face academic probation, suspension, or even expulsion. See the SDSU General Catalogue for the complete University Policy on plagiarism.

CLASSROOM PARTICIPATION
Students are expected to **read the assigned selections and bring a printed copy to** class so that they can participate fully in class discussions and activities. **10 % of the final grade will be assigned for participation to discussions as follows:** Never heard this person’s voice (50 points and under /F); Spoke only when addressed (65 points/D range); Made rare comment about assigned topics (75 points/C range); Spoke often but not always on the topic (85 points/B range); Spoke all the time and contributed interesting insights (90-100 points/A range). We will treat each other with respect and courtesy.

ABSENCES
You will get no points only for attendance, but for every non-motivated absence after 2, your grade will be lowered by 3 points. It is your responsibility to catch up with the work you are missing when absent. **IF YOU ARE ABSENT** you are still responsible for knowing what was covered in class, what the homework is, and when it is due. Choose one or two colleagues to fill you in and provide the information you will need.

Except for very unusual circumstances, there are no “excused” absences. You may use your 2 "allowed" absences for anything you want, but then, if you get the flu or a flat tire on the way to class, and you have already used up your absences, you will lose points. If you feel you have a “very unusual” circumstance, please talk to me!

LATENESS
Lateness to class is disruptive and disrespectful to other students and the instructor. To discourage this, I will subtract 2 points from your grade for systematic lateness.

SPECIAL NEEDS
Students with special needs who may need academic accommodations should discuss options with me the first two weeks of class. It is the students’ responsibility to make the necessary arrangements with the Disabled Student Services at (619) 594-6473. To avoid any delay in the receipt of the accommodations, they should contact Student Disability
Services as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that I cannot provide accommodations based upon disability until I have received an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services. Your cooperation is appreciated.

**POLICY ON ABSENCE FOR RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE AND UNIVERSITY EVENTS**
By the end of the second week of classes, students should notify the instructors of affected courses of planned absences for religious observance.

**SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS**

**Section I. The Structure of the Argument**

8/25. Introduction: Blame game

Reading for the next class: "The Ways We Lie" by Stephanie Ericsson

8/27. Teaching Concept: Reading as a Critical Thinking Tool
   Discussion: How to Use Different Reading Strategies
   Group Work: Extract main ideas.
Reading for the next class: "A Desired Epidemic: Obesity and the Food Industry" by Deborah Cohen

9/1. Teaching Concept: Paraphrase vs. summary
   Discussion: Analyze the assigned reading.
   Writing Workshop: Exercise to distinguish between what is said and what is done in a text.
Homework for the next class: Summarize the assigned text. (Assignment # 1; see prompts on BB; 5%)

9/8. Teaching Concept: Recognizing Arguments
   Discussion: Argument is everywhere!
   Group Work: Read and analyze short arguments: poems, ads, etc.)
Reading for the next class: Letters to the Editor - On Marijuana

9/10. Teaching Concept: Types of Appeals
   Discussion: What makes a good argument?
   Group Work: Analyze short arguments and compare them.

Homework for the next class: Choose one good and one bad sample and explain your thinking. (Assignment # 2; 5%)
Reading for the next class: Living in the Shadow http://www.signonsandiego.com/shadows

9/15. Teaching Concept: Digital Literacy
   Discussion: Are interactive texts more effective?
9/17. Teaching Concept: Types of Appeals I (Pathos)
   Group Work: Find claims in the assigned texts and identify their supports.

9/22. Teaching Concept: Types of Appeals II (Ethos & Pathos)
   Group Work: Identify strategies that develop credibility for the author and generate emotions.
   Homework for the next class: Select three examples of appeals from the reading and explain how they work. (Assignment # 3; 10%)
   Reading for the next class: "A Christian View of War" by Oliver Thomas

9/24. Teaching Concept: Note Taking as a Critical Thinking Skill
   Discussion: Analyze the assigned reading and compare annotations.

9/29. Teaching Concept: How to Formulate an Analytical Claim
   Critical Reading: "What Would Jesus Do?"
   Reading for the next class: "Waste Not: The Facts About Indirect Potable Reuse" by J. Parker
   Assignment # 4: Argument Analysis - Producing an Account and Evaluating an Argument (Due 10/13; 15 %). The project emphasizes identifying the main claims of a text, analyzing the way in which the elements of the text support the argument, and evaluating the effectiveness of the argument for the intended audience.

10/31. Teaching Concept: Collaborative Writing
   Group Work: Discuss the assigned reading and develop your notes for the argument analysis.

10/6. Teaching Concept: Evaluating the Effectiveness of an Argument
   Writing Workshop: Develop your outline.

10/8. Teaching Concept: Collaborative Writing
   Writing Workshop: Peer-review Section 4 of your rough drafts.
   Reading for the next class: "Public Thinking," (p 66-72) (excerpt from Smarter than You Think: How Technology is Changing Our Minds for the Better by Clive Thompson)

Section II. Collecting and Managing Information

10/13. Teaching Concept: What is a good source?
   Discussion: Analyze assigned readings.
   Readings for the next class: "Why Designer Babies Won’t Happen Soon" by Stephen Pinker; and "Designer Babies and Other Fairy Tales" by Maureen Freely

10/15. Teaching Concept: Predictability
   Discussion: Analyze the assigned reading.
10/20. Teaching Concept: Movies as Arguments
   Discussion: Do movies have to take a stand?

10/22. Teaching Concept: Movies as Sources of Inspiration
   Discussion: How much are we influenced by movies?

**Section III. Constructing the Argument**

10/27. Teaching Concept: Writing the Argument - Toulmin Model
   Group Work: Exercises
   Homework for the next class: Design 2 outlines of arguments following the Toulmin model. (Assignment # 5; 10%)

10/29. Teaching Statement: Constructing the Thesis Statement
   Writing Workshop: Work on your notes.

   Assignment # 6: Argument Paper - Craft an argument on an issue that was discussed in class (Due 11/19; 15%).

11/3. Teaching Concept: Writing the introductory paragraph.
   Writing Workshop: Develop your drafts.

11/5. Teaching Concept: Strategies for Paragraph Development
   Writing Workshop: Expand your notes.

11/10. Teaching Concept: Audience
   Group Work: Adapt a text for a different audience.

11/12. Teaching Concept: Concluding
   Group Work: Exercises

11/17. Teaching Concept: Collaborative Writing
   Writing Workshop: Peer-review of your drafts.

**Section IV. Reading in New Contexts**

11/19. Teaching Concept: Expanding the List of Rhetorical Strategies
   Group Work: Identify the best strategies to compose specific texts.
   Reading for the next class: "From Stone Age to Phone Age" by Barbara Ehrenreich; and "Exposed Toes" by Diane Riva.

11/24. Teaching Concept: Division & Classification
   Discussion: Analyze assigned readings focusing on rhetorical moves.
   Reading for the next class: "Beer? Hot Dogs? Steroids" by Charles Krauthammer; "On Teenagers and Tattoos" by Andres Martin.
Assignment #7 / Final – Analyzing and Evaluating Rhetorical Strategies (Due date 12/10; 15%). This project emphasizes identifying rhetorical strategies used in a text, examining why they were chosen, and evaluating the relative strengths and weaknesses of these strategies.

12/1. Teaching Concept: Thinking of the Author's Purpose
   Discussion: Analyze assigned readings focusing on rhetorical moves.

12/3. Teaching Concept: Writing an Evaluation.
   Group Work: Discuss assigned reading and generate ideas for paper.


12/10. Writing Workshop: Develop your rough drafts.