RWS 101 – Section 5: Rhetoric of Written Argument

Instructor: Julie Harris  
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Class Meeting Times: TTH 8:00 am – 9:15 am  
Office Hours: SH-108A Tues 9:30am-11:30am and by appointment

WHAT IS THIS COURSE ABOUT?
An understanding of argument is central to academic literacy, critical thinking, and professional and civic life. This course provides instruction and practice in reading and writing expository, analytical, and argumentative essays. It emphasizes textual analysis, writing analytically, logical reasoning, research techniques, information literacy, and documentation. This class includes drafting, revising, and editing written work.

REQUIRED MATERIALS
1. **Consistent Internet access:** We will be using Blackboard and the Internet to access readings, schedules, videos, and other online content for this class.
2. **RWS 101 Course Reader:** Available at CalCopy under “Harris”
4. **A folder** to store your graded work.

For MLA style guide information, you are encouraged to refer to the Purdue Owl website:  
[https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/)

*You will be expected to bring any course materials up for discussion to class. Failure to do so may result in lost participation points.*

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

**Tutoring:** Out-of-class tutoring sessions are **required** of every student enrolled in RWS 101 according to university policy. You will be required to meet with the tutor 5 times this semester to discuss readings, homework, essay drafts, etc. Sometimes I will stipulate the content of the meeting, sometimes you will be able to choose what to discuss with the tutor. You will need to be prepared with a specific topic to discuss with the tutor and you will turn in a short write-up of each session you attend. I will be keeping track of attendance at these meetings.

**Essays:** You will write four formal essays in this course. One or two drafts of each essay may be required before the paper is turned in. For each draft, you may be required to attend a conference with me or the class tutor to discuss the draft and/or participate in peer editing.

Essays should be formatted in MLA style. They must be double-spaced with standard (1-inch) margins and 12 point, Times New Roman font. Essay grades will be calculated in part by taking into account the completion of each step required in the assignment, including drafts, conferencing and/or editing, and evaluation of the final draft. All steps of the writing process are essential for successful writing. As such, failure to participate fully in the draft and review process will result in a lower grade. This can include an incomplete first draft, lack of participation in editing and/or conferencing, or an inadequate revision of the final paper (i.e. few changes made from the original draft). A more specific grading breakdown for each essay will be handed out with the essay prompts.
ALL drafts, including the initial drafts commented on by me or by your peers and the final drafts of each paper turned into me, should be saved until the end of the semester.

Readings: You will be responsible for readings selected from the course materials throughout the semester. These readings will be in your book, on Blackboard, or as handouts. Please bring a hard copy of every reading to class the day it is up for discussion.

Homework and In-Class Assignments: There will often be homework writing assignments, Blackboard discussion assignments, short quizzes, and/or short, in-class writings. A description of expectations, points, format, and due date will be given with each assignment. These assignments should all be saved until the end of the semester (except for any discussion board assignments).

Group Discussions and Presentations: You will occasionally be asked to participate in group discussions or do in-class group work. You may also be asked to make presentations individually or as a group. In-class group work will often be graded on the scale of in-class assignments. Grading descriptions for any presentations will be presented with the presentation assignment.

Participation: Participation will be assessed by class discussions, group activities, and attendance.

Attendance: Coming to class every day is essential for learning the material in this class—more than 2 absences will result in a lower attendance grade. Your attendance grade is calculated by adding up the classes you attended and turning that into a letter grade by dividing the number of classes you attended by the total number of classes. So, if you have 4 absences out of 29 total classes, you will receive a B. Students who leave during class without clearing it with me first will be marked absent. Simply showing up for class, however, will not be enough. Everyone should also participate in class discussion. If you are absent, you are still responsible for knowing the material covered in class, what the homework is, and when it is due. I suggest you exchange contact information with one or two of your classmates. In addition, check Blackboard regularly for updates.

GRADE BREAKDOWN
Final essays will receive a letter grade. Homework and in-class assignments will be graded on a points system outlined on each individual assignment. Points will be assessed based on the strength and thoughtfulness of the analysis and/or response. Assignments graded as Complete/Incomplete will be graded with points and will receive either a 0 or a 3. Quizzes will be worth one point for each question on the quiz. Participation will be assessed by participation in class discussions, group activities, and attendance. Your final grade will be determined as follows:

| Essay 1: 10% | Tutoring: 10% |
| Essay 2: 15% | Homework and In-Class Assignments: 15% |
| Essay 3: 20% | Participation: 10% |
| Essay 4: 20% |

Grading Scale

| 97-100 A+ | 97-89 B+ | 77-79 C+ | 67-69 D+ | 0-59 F |
| 93-96 A | 83-86 B | 73-76 C | 63-66 D |
| 90-92 A- | 80-82 B- | 70-72 C- | 60-62 D- |
POLICIES

Plagiarism: All work in this course must be original. Plagiarism will result in serious consequences including grade reduction, failure in the class, or expulsion from the college. For more information on the university cheating and plagiarism policy, please visit: http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/dept/senate/policy/pfacademics.html. SDSU’s library also has an excellent tutorial on how to avoid plagiarism.

Late Work: Managing your time to meet a deadline is an essential skill in academics and in the professional world. Work is due in class on the stated due date. Homework: Homework assignments can be turned in one class period late for partial credit. They won’t be accepted after that. If you know you will be absent, talk to me in advance about arrangements for your homework. Quizzes: Quizzes cannot be made up if you are late or absent. Essays: You will turn in both a hard copy and a copy online, but you must turn it in both ways to get full credit. After the deadline for essays, late work will cause your total essay grade to be lowered half a letter grade each class period it is late. This means that if you turn in a first draft one day late and the final essay in one day late, the highest grade possible will be a B+. No essays will be accepted more than one week late.

The fourth essay may not be turned in late, since it is due on the final exam day.

If you have a situation which will prevent you from turning in work on the scheduled due date, please talk to me about it two class periods or more in advance so that we can work out a solution. Note: this may require that you turn in work early.

I will not accept emailed work. An arrangement for an absence may involve a copy of the assignment emailed, but this has to be approved through me and a hard copy will always be required as well.

Turnitin: Some assignments may require that you submit a copy on Turnitin. The online copy should be turned in before class on the day it is due, as you will be unable to turn it in during class.

Blackboard: Please check Blackboard and your email account listed on Blackboard regularly for updates. This is where I will email you, where urgent announcements will be made, where you will post on discussion board assignments, and where some course material not included in the course reader will be posted. You will also be able to access assignment sheets, schedules, and the syllabus on Blackboard.

Hard Copies: All hard copies of assignments are due during the class period of the due date.

Electronic Devices: Cell phones must be kept off or on silent during class. If you have an emergency that requires that you wait for a phone call, let me know before class. Laptops, Kindles, iPads, etc. are also not allowed. Because we will be interacting in group discussion often, the use of these devices is distracting. Students who feel they need to use laptops are encouraged to discuss the specific need with me in advance. If you are in class listening to music, texting, etc. I will mark you absent.

Office Hours: I encourage all students to attend office hours, especially if you have any questions or concerns about reading, writing, rhetoric, and/or the structure or requirements of the course. If you cannot attend office hours, we can try to work out an appointment when we are both available.

Email: I encourage you to email me with any questions you have or if you have any problems. Although this is the digital age, I am unfortunately not available to answer emails at all hours. Please allow 24 hours for replies. If you have questions about an assignment the day before it is due, please email no later than 6:00 pm the day before if you would like a response before the next day. If you want me to look at an essay draft, please bring it to office hours rather than sending it over email. If you have a
question over a paragraph or short section, you can send it to me in the body of an email (no attachments please) and I will send it back with my comments.

Course Tutoring & Writing Help: In addition to our RWS fellow, RWS tutors are available to help you with your writing. Tutors are located in Love Library. Contact the department of Rhetoric and Writing Studies at (619) 594-6515 for more information on drop-in tutoring hours. I’m committed to helping you develop as a writer. If you have questions or would like additional assistance with class concepts or projects, please drop in at any time during my office hours or make an appointment to speak with me.

Disabled Students: If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Student Disability Services at (619) 594-6373. To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you should contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that accommodations based upon disability cannot be provided until you have presented your instructor with an accommodation letter from Student disability Services. Your cooperation is appreciated. SDS staff are available in the Calpulli Center in Suite 3101.

Student-Athletes: While exceptions will not be made for attendance, assignment deadlines, or exams, I’m happy to work with all student-athletes in conjunction with Student-Athlete Support Services (SASS) to help you excel in this course. For more information on SASS’s academic advising and tutoring services, please call (619) 594-4743.

Class Etiquette: Since this is a discussion-based class, it is vital that you listen and speak respectfully to others at all times. I encourage you to express your thoughts and ideas, but keep in mind that a good discussion is built on a thoughtful sharing of ideas, not harsh reaction.

If you are disruptive during class you will be asked to leave, counted absent for that day, and will not receive points for any in-class work done that day.

We will be looking at many arguments this semester that will present views or opinions which you may or may not agree with. Remember that this class is focused on the argument rather than the opinion or idea expressed by the author; whether you agree or disagree with the author is not at issue, but rather whether the author’s opinion or idea is well argued. Remember that an opinion you disagree with may be well argued and an opinion you agree with may be poorly argued and vice versa. Our job is to analyze and discuss how the argument is working or not working.
General Education Capacities/Goals & RWS Learning Outcomes

Our Learning Outcomes Reflect the Goals and Capacities of the General Education Program. RWS 100 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 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:
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 100 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.”

Assignment Types: the following four outcomes describe the four main writing projects or "assignment types" for the course. Students will be able to:
1. Describe and analyze an author’s argument, claims, project, support and rhetorical strategies.
2. Construct an account of an author’s project and argument and carry out small, focused research tasks to find information that helps clarify, illustrate, extend or complicate that argument; use appropriate reference materials, including a dictionary, in order to clarify their understanding of an argument.
3. Analyze and evaluate an author’s project and argument and explain rhetorical strategies that this author—and by extension other writers—uses to engage readers in thinking about her argument.
4. Assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of multiple assigned texts, including discussion of rhetorical strategies, supporting evidence, audience, and text structure.

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:
5. describe elements of an argument—claims, methods of development, kinds of evidence, persuasive appeals; annotate the work that is done by each section of a written argument;
6. analyze and assess the relative strengths of arguments and supporting evidence
7. use all aspects of the writing process—including prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and proofreading;
8. choose effective structures for their writing, acknowledging that different purposes, contexts and audiences call for different structures; understand the relationship between a text’s ideas and its structure;
9. identify devices an author has used to create cohesion or to carry the reader through the text; use metadiscourse to signal the project of a paper, and guide a reader from one idea to the next in their writing;
10. effectively select material from written arguments, contextualize it, and comment on it in their writing;
11. determine when and where a source was published, who wrote it and whether it was reprinted or edited; understand that texts are written in and respond to particular contexts, communities or cultures; examine the vocabulary choices a writer makes and how they are related to context, community or culture, audience or purpose;
12. craft well-reasoned arguments for specific audiences
13. respond in writing to ideas drawn from various cultures and disciplines, using the activity of writing to clarify and improve their understanding of an argument;
14. analyze and assess arguments made by visual texts; incorporate visual images into their documents;
15. edit their writing for the grammar and usage conventions appropriate to each writing situation;
16. assign significance to the arguments that they read;
17. reflect on how they wrote their papers, and revise arguments and findings based on critical reflection.

STUDENT RESOURCES
Academic Advising Center SSW 1551 | 594-6668
Counseling and Psychological Services Calpulli 4401 | 594-5220 | 888-724-7240 (after hours)
Student Disability Services Calpulli 3101 | 594-6473
Student Health Services Calpulli | 594-5281
Public Safety 594-1991 | 9-1-1 (emergency)
Public Safety Escorts 594-6659
Schedule 101 – Section 5: First Two Weeks

Please note that the following may change, as dates and topics may shift as the semester continues. I will always inform you ahead of time of any changes. Check Blackboard often for updated schedule information.

All homework and reading assignments listed under a date are due on that date.

Note: You will receive a schedule for each unit before that unit begins.

**Week 1-2: Introduction to Rhetorical Concepts**

**Week 1**

**Tuesday, 8/25:** Syllabus, Introductions

**Thursday, 8/27:** What is Rhetoric? Introduction to Rhetorical Concepts; PACES

*Homework due:* CR: “Rhetorical Concepts” (2); “The Rhetorical Situation” (4); “PACES” (3); “Context” (15-18)

**Week 2**

**Tuesday, 9/1:** Introduction to Rhetorical Strategies, Hierarchy of Claims, Reading Strategies

*Homework due:* CR: “Introduction to Rhetorical Strategies” (23-28) “Aristolean Appeals” (13-14); “Questions to ask the Text Before You Read” and “Questions to Ask Any Text” (5-7)

**Thursday, 9/3:** Charting a Text, Applying Rhetorical Concepts to “War and Wisdom”

*Homework due:* CR: “Charting a Text” (9-12) “I know what it says, but what does it do?” – Articulating What a Text Does” (8); Kristof, “War and Wisdom” (handout)