Office: Storm Hall 112C  
Office hours: by appointment  
Email: jjsager2002@yahoo.com (preferred form of communication)

Prerequisites
To enroll in RWS 200 students must have satisfied the English Placement Test and Writing Competency requirements and completed any one of the following: RWS 100, Africana Studies 120, Chicana and Chicano Studies 111B, or Linguistics 100.

Description
RWS 200 is one of the most important courses you will complete in college. The skills you will learn in this class are applicable to almost every other class you will take in the future. In a practical sense, employers rank reading, writing, and critical thinking as some of the most essential skills job applicants should have. Understanding rhetoric (the study, uses, and effects of written, spoken and visual language) in its various modes, recognizing and employing rhetorical strategies, as well as learning how to organize your thoughts about rhetoric on paper and on PowerPoint, are skills that should enhance various aspects of your life, namely the following: selecting the best possible candidate for president, senator, mayor, etc., and casting your vote for or against a proposition; convincing others to consider your point of view about an issue; resisting the temptation to buy everything you see advertised or believing everything you see on TV or film, hear on the radio, or read in print; using your power of words to woo women/men!
These are just a few of the ways in which RWS can enhance your life.

By the end of the semester, you should not only be able to write and revise papers addressing complex questions regarding rhetorical arguments in context effectively, use source materials responsibly, and make sound decisions about structure, cohesion, and conventions of correctness, but also you should be able to translate these scholarly skills into job skills and even life skills.

This class of academic and professional writing, reading, and critical thinking emphasizes using multiple sources, finding relationships among them, and generating analytical responses to them through writing. The class will also give attention to decisions about structure, cohesion, and rhetorical conventions.

What makes my class unique from other professors’ and lecturers’ RWS 200 courses is that we will analyze the rhetoric of visual argument in films, along with the rhetoric of written arguments. This does not mean that my course is somehow easier than other RWS 200 courses because we “just watch movies.” In fact, this course is just as challenging as any other RWS 200 course offered at State. As RWS Professor Richard Boyd, who created the first RWS 200 course at SDSU devoted entirely to documentary films, explained, the focus of this course will be the following: “Through a close ‘reading’ of a selection of documentaries and other films, we will work toward a more complex understanding of what it means to seek the ‘truth’ through argument and how that
task can be both enabled and impeded by the various contexts of argument.”

**RWS 200 Student Learning Outcomes**

**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;
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.”

**RWS 200 Student Learning Outcomes**

The following four outcomes describe the four major writing projects of “assignment types” for the course. Students will be able to:

1. 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 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. Use concepts and arguments from one text as a context for understanding, evaluating and writing about another;
3. Given the common concerns of two or more arguments, discuss how the claims of these arguments modify, complicate, or qualify one another; consider how major positions advanced in these texts relate to each other and evaluate the persuasiveness of these positions.
4. Consider your contemporary life as the context within which you are reading a group of arguments; position yourself in relation to ongoing research and discussion in order to
make an argument and “join the conversation.” Evaluate source texts so as to create a space for an original contribution.

The following points describe outcomes to work on throughout the semester:

5. Building on the work done in RWS 100, you 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 such as claims, methods of development, kinds of evidence, persuasive appeals, and translate an argument into your own words;

6. Articulate what key terms, definitions, concepts, statements of a problem or issue are established by a text;

7. 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;

8. Work with multiple sources in a paper, deciding what to include and what to exclude, choosing an effective structure, and creating significant relationships among sources;

9. Evaluate the relationships among multiple positions (including strengths and weakness) with respect to audience, avoiding simplistic judgments and demonstrating, where appropriate, how the preponderance of the evidence supports specific positions over others.

10. Understand and incorporate all aspects of the writing process – including prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and proofreading;

11. Craft a cohesive paper, and use effective metadiscourse to guide a reader through it;

12. Describe your own papers and reflect on how you wrote them; differentiate between the content of your texts and the language and rhetorical strategies you employ;

13. Revise your own work effectively, re-reading previous work and re-envisioning it in the light of reflection, feedback, further reading, and new sources of information;

14. Edit your writing for the grammar and usage conventions appropriate to the project.

**Course Materials**

Required:
None (all texts will be available electronically online either on Blackboard or online; “hard copies” are complimentary

Recommended/Optional:
Keys for Writers: A Brief Handbook by Ann Raimes (preferably the latest edition, but earlier editions will suffice)

**Film Choices for Projects** (some of which are in the Love Library Media Center)


**Bowling for Columbine** (2002). Dir. Michael Moore. (iTunes, Netflix, Amazon, Media Center)

**The Celluloid Closet** (1995). Dir. Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman. (iTunes, Amazon, Media Center)

**The Cove** (2009). Dir. Louie Psihovos. (iTunes, Amazon, Media Center)

**Fed Up** (2014). Dir. Stephanie Soechtig. (iTunes, Amazon)

**Food, Inc.** (2008). Dir. Robert Kenner. (iTunes, Hulu, Amazon, Media Center)

**Grizzly Man** (2005). Dir. Werner Herzog. (iTunes, Amazon, Media Center)
Hoop Dreams (1989). Dir. Steve James. (iTunes, Netflix, Amazon, Media Center)
An Inconvenient Truth (2006). Dir. Davis Guggenheim. (iTunes, Amazon, Media Center)
The Interrupters (2011). Dir. Steve James. (iTunes, Amazon, PBS: 
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/interrupters/)
Murderball (2005). Dir. Henry Alex Rubin and Dana Adam Shapiro. (Media Center, Documentary Lovers: 
http://documentarylovers.com/film/murderball/)
Roger & Me (1989). Dir. Michael Moore. (iTunes, Amazon, Media Center)
Shut Up and Sing (2006). Dir. Barbara Kopple and Cecilia Peck. (iTunes, Amazon, Media Center)
Stevie (2003). Dir. Steve James. (iTunes, Hulu, Amazon, Media Center)
Super Size Me (2003). Dir. Morgan Spurlock. (iTunes, Hulu, Amazon, Media Center)
The Thin Blue Line (1988). Dir. Errol Morris. (iTunes, Netflix, Amazon, Media Center)
Tupac: Resurrection (2003). Dir. Lauren Lazin. (Media Center, Documentary Lovers: 
http://documentarylovers.com/film/tupac-resurrection/)

Course Content
In this course, you will do the following:
Journal
Sentence skills test
Rhetorical précis
Careful readings of texts, both print and visual
Extensive research
Writing workshops of projects in small groups
PowerPoint or Google Docs presentations

Save Your Work
Do not throw any of your work away because it may be used for help in revising future assignments and for the final, in which you will reflect on the work you have done this semester.

Format
We will be using MLA format for all papers. All assignments must be typed in a Times New Roman 12 point font, double-spaced, with 1 inch margins. Include a double-spaced heading on the upper left corner with the following information: Your name, My Name (Lecturer Sager), Class/Section # (RWS 200/section number), Date (22 January 2016). Also include a header with your last name and page numbers on the upper right corner of every page, and provide a title centered on the first page.

Tutoring
Free tutoring is also available in the Writing Center, which is located in Love Library, Room LLA 1103, near the checkout counter. Consult the website for more info:
http://writingcenter.sdsu.edu/index.html

Group Work
Much of this class is a workshop, in which we all participate in class discussions and writing projects. You are expected to contribute to the group discussion and may volunteer occasionally to be a spokesperson or to do an individual presentation. Just as you would be expected to show up on time and prepared for your job, you are also expected to show up on time and prepared for
group discussions in this class. Do not rely on your classmates to do your work for you.

Do not expect me to spoon-feed you answers, either. I don’t want you simply to cooperate, regurgitate, and graduate. Instead, work with your classmates and me to arrive at new and often exciting conclusions. Please remember that the classroom should be a safe and challenging learning environment and a forum for you to work through your thoughts and issues with the texts, as well as for you to listen to new diverse ideas of your peers and myself.

We may constructively criticize the readings and one another’s papers. Do not take comments as a personal attack on you but as helpful hints about ways to improve your writing skills. When you are evaluating another person’s paper, please be thorough and helpful.

We may generate discussions in class that could get heated. Remember that contentious discussions are often much more interesting than a simple consensus. That is what democracy is all about. Regardless of your own personal opinions about race, religion, political persuasion, sexual orientation, etc., please be courteous and respectful of each other. That includes refraining from talking when someone has the floor. If you are unable to accept this responsibility of being respectful of your classmates and of me, then this course is not the place for you and you may be asked to leave.

**Classroom Conduct**

During class time, please stay focused. Turn off your cell phones, don’t text message, don’t check your Facebook wall/timeline, don’t eat food (Unless you have brought enough for all of us to enjoy!), and don’t read the newspaper or distract yourself with extraneous materials.

If you must leave the classroom for some reason, there’s no need to interrupt the discussion to ask my permission; just give me a nod and quietly go.

**Late Work**

No unexcused late work is accepted. All work will be turned in electronically by the time our class session begins. If you must miss class for some important reason, you may upload your work early (during the class session before it is due, for instance). Please don’t miss the days your papers are due and are scheduled to be workshopped. Those are the most important days of the semester for my students.

Please do not wait until the day your assignment is due to type it. Make sure that you save your work constantly, both on your hard drive and to a flash drive or disk, to be safe. Computer and parking or traffic problems are not valid excuses for late work.

If you have a valid health emergency, in which you are hospitalized or are contagious, please let me know and bring me a doctor’s note or some form of documentation to verify your condition.

If you have a problem with meeting deadlines, you need to address that issue now and get over it in order to succeed in my class. Meeting deadlines is an integral part of your grade, just as it is or will be in your job. Even if you are a strong writer, if you do not turn in your work on time, your grade will match your effort level and time management skills. Late papers receive zero credit. I have
very little patience for “flakes.”

**Personal Responsibility**
Please understand that enrolling in an RWS class does not mean that you should expect me as your teacher to be solely responsible for your unique learning experience. I will do my utmost to ensure that you do improve your writing abilities and leave my class better equipped to handle future courses and job requirements. The best part of my job (and I love my job) is watching students grow. However, just as I give my teaching everything I’ve got, you must also put forth a great deal of effort to achieve the goals you set for yourself (not just the ones I set for you). Furthermore, you must also take responsibility if you fail to meet the demands of the course, rather than blaming this on other factors.

If I can help you to learn better, please make an appointment with me ASAP (I enjoy meeting one-on-one with students), and together we will come up with a strategy for your success that will satisfy us both. You may not love this course, but you will learn from it what you put into it and receive from it.

Don’t just disappear. If you’re having a crisis, open up, and we’ll discuss options.

**Absences and Tardiness**
If you miss more than 3 class sessions or consistently come to class late you will find it difficult to satisfy the requirements of this course. No late work is accepted, so when you come to class late or miss work completely you receive zero credit. Computer and parking or traffic problems are not valid excuses for tardiness or absences.

**Plagiarism**
Plagiarism is defined as using another person’s work or ideas without giving proper credit. Don’t even think about it! It is a serious offense with serious consequences, and it is simply unnecessary and cowardly. If you copy someone else’s paper or use someone else’s words or ideas without citing them, you will be heavily penalized, which means you will receive an F for the course, I will report you both my dean and the judicial committee, and you could be expelled. If you borrow another’s ideas you must cite him/her both within your paper in parenthetical citations and after it in a “Works Cited” page. If you quote someone, you must put quotation marks around his/her words, in order to distinguish them from your own words and ideas. Make sure that you carefully cite all of your sources using proper MLA format. Please consult my handouts on MLA format, Keys for Writers, or the MLA Handbook for more information.

Bottom line: Take pride in your own work, your own ideas. That’s *Aztec pride*, folks: every assignment, every test, every essay! Ethos! Even if you receive a low grade for your work, at least it’s *your work*! Grow. Improve. You can thank me later once you realize how much this class actually helped you. 😊

**Blackboard**
Course materials for this class are available on Blackboard, and I will be communicating with you through that program. Please make sure your e-mail address on Blackboard is current. If you miss important announcements because your account is not up to date, that is entirely your problem and
you must attend to it or endure the consequences (missed work, lower grades, your classmates and me thinking you’re a flake, etc.).

To access Blackboard, go to www.blackboard.sdsu.edu and click on "user login." Enter your user name and password, and then find RWS 200 on your list of courses. When you click on the link to that class and access it, then look on the left hand corner to find the syllabus, assignments, course documents, etc.

**Turn It In**
All essays must be submitted to Turn It In, a plagiarism detection site on Blackboard, before they will receive official grades. Submissions are due on the same date your particular workshop group turns in their essays and these reports count toward your grade.

**Special Accommodations**
I encourage students with disabilities who may need extra help in this class, those observing religious holidays that conflict with class sessions, athletes *(Go, Aztecs!)* who may be out of town for games that conflict with class sessions, and others who need extra attention to notify me in the first two weeks of the semester so that reasonable accommodations may be implemented as soon as possible.

**Final Examinations**
There is no required final in this class.

**Grading**
You will be evaluated in this class with letter grades and points. You will play an active role in determining what grade you will get at the end of the semester by how often you come to class, how prepared you are, how well you meet deadlines, and how much effort you are willing to put into the assignments.

Projects 1, 2, 3, and 4 are all worth 100 points. The journal, rhetorical précis, and the four rough drafts are worth a total of 30 points. All of the other work, including the contract, sentence-skills test, group work, workshop participation, and checking feedback on Turn It In submissions, are worth a total of 70 points.

Your letter grades are usually worth the following points:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-/B+</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+/A-</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-/C+</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I will be entering grades on Blackboard in the Gradebook section. To compute your final grade manually, either add up all of your points and divide them by a total of 500, or add up all of your number grades and divide them by 5.

For a final grade of “A-” (90.0-92.9%) or “A” (93.0 and above), you
Complete all work on time according to the prompt criteria with evaluations of mostly A grades.
Revise work several times, showing significant effort with each draft.
Produce written work that is consistently exceptional or show dramatic growth in writing.
Actively participate in class discussion and group work.
Try not to miss any class sessions.
Do not come to class late.
Attend all tutoring appointments with your RWS Fellow.

For a final grade of “B-” (80.0-82.9%), “B” (83.0-86.9%), or “B+” (87-89.9%), you
Complete all work on time according to the prompt criteria with evaluations of mostly B grades.
Revise work several times, showing effort with each draft.
Produce written work that is consistently above average or show significant growth in writing.
Actively participate in class discussion and group work.
Try not to miss any class sessions.
Do not come to class late.
Attend all tutoring appointments with your RWS Fellow.

For a final grade of “C-” (70.0-72.9%), “C” (73.0-76.9%), or C+ (77.0-79.9%), you
Complete all writing on time according to the prompt criteria with evaluations of mostly C grades.
Revise work minimally.
Produce acceptable written work of average quality, at times predictable, showing little growth in writing.
Participate in class discussion and group work.
Have no more than 3 absences.
Do not come to class late.

For a final grade of “D-” (60.0-62.9%), “D” (63.0-66.9%), or “D+” (67.0-69.9%), you
Do not complete every assignment and do not follow the prompt criteria well, receiving mostly D grades.
Rarely revise work or revise minimally.
Produce unacceptable work of below average quality with unclear ideas and little or no textual support.
Do not participate actively in class discussion and group work.
Have no more than 3 absences.
Occasionally come to class late.

For a final grade of “F” (59.9% and below), you
Fail to meet even the minimal standards described for the “D” student.
Do not complete every assignment.
Rarely, if ever, revise work or revise minimally.
Produce unacceptable work of below average quality with unclear ideas and little or no textual support.
Do not participate actively in class discussion and group work.
Have more than 3 absences.
Consistently come to class late.
Plagiarize an assignment.

*** Note: If you consistently come to class late or skip sessions altogether, thus missing much of the work in this class, it is possible that you will receive a low grade, even if the work you do is strong and meets some of the criteria described for high grades.

**Student/Lecturer Contract**

The purpose of this contract is to show that we both understand and agree to the rules of the course.
Please sign and date below (or give me a verbal agreement in class). I understand that:

No late work will be accepted, and failure to turn in work on time will lower my grade.

Chronic absences and tardiness will lower my grade since class discussions, group work, and in-class assignments cannot be made up.

Failure to participate in designated peer workshop sessions and failure to check feedback my lecturer leaves on my rough drafts will lower my grade.

Projects are due whether I attend class on the due date or not. If I miss one project, I probably will not pass this course.

I understand that computer problems, including difficulties with my printer or lost or unsaved documents, do not constitute valid excuses for tardiness, absences, or late work.

I understand that my alarm clock not going off is not a valid excuse for tardiness, absences, or late work.

I understand that parking problems are not valid excuses for tardiness, absences, or late work.

**I will do my own work and not plagiarize. I understand that if I plagiarize, I will receive an F for the course, be reported, and could be expelled from school.**
I will submit all of my out-of-class essays to Turn It In on Blackboard by their due dates.

I will not erase any projects since they will be used throughout the semester to revise other papers and for the final.

I will show my lecturer and other students the respect they deserve at all times. I will respect my audience (the people who read my papers and other projects in this class).

I will take personal responsibility for my own learning experience.

I will turn off my cell phone during class time so as not to distract my classmates or myself.

I will not breeze in to class late or pack up my books before class is over. My lecturer is a college graduate who knows how to tell time.

I will not badger my lecturer about my final grade in this course. I will accept her decision and move on with my life, glowing with my newfound rhetorical knowledge.

I will not just disappear if I have a crisis. I understand that my lecturer is the mother of three kids, and that’s not cool to put any mother (my own or someone else’s) through.

I will not assume that the last comment was intended to reduce me to an infantile state, to insinuate that I am a kid who needs mothering. I know now that it was intended to make me laugh.

I will try my best to learn the difference between effect and affect, its and it’s, and especially lose and loose so as not to be misunderstood or to sound like a pervert.

I will try to have fun this semester despite the fact that this is a required course. I will keep an open mind, allowing the possibility of actually learning something that’s practical and enjoyable before I graduate.

That’s all, folks! Let’s have a great semester of learning!

—Lecturer Sager