RWS 280 - Academic Reading and Writing

Fall 2013
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Office hours: T 10 - 10:50
TH 2:00 – 3:00 p.m.
(by appointment)

Required Texts and Materials:
Reading Packet (on blackboard.sdsu.edu)
Keys for Writers, Ann Raimes
Access to a reliable computer and printer

Course Description:
RWS280 is designed to help students at the upper-division level achieve competency in academic writing. It will introduce them to rhetorical concepts and terminology. It will focus on the purposes of given texts and the rhetorical strategies to achieve those purposes. Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to demonstrate proficiency regarding:

-Rhetorical Knowledge: to recognize that writing is a process of inquiry used both to discover and communicate ideas, to demonstrate facility with basic genres of writing, particularly those related to argument, to apply the concept of rhetorical situations and understand the relationships among writer-audience-subject-context, and to think about the rhetorical strategies in their own writings and discuss their own strengths and difficulties as working writers.

-Critical Thinking and Reading: to apply critical reading strategies to various texts, to analyze the author’s specific rhetorical strategy in a given text, and to evaluate the arguments/claims and supporting material in written texts.

-Writing Process: to develop and use strategies for generating, revising, and editing texts of various types, to summarize and paraphrase different texts, to incorporate others’ texts into their own writing to support and extend their own ideas; to critique their own writing and others’ texts, and to use collaborative and social aspects of the writing process.

-Knowledge of Conventions: to format simple manuscripts, cite sources accurately, define and understand the consequences of plagiarism, and edit their own writing for grammar, mechanics, and usage.

-Attitudes, Values, and Preparation for Life Beyond the University: to develop skills vital to civic life in a democratic society, to display courtesy, work cooperatively, and use critical thinking to evaluate public and private texts.
The course is based on the philosophy that reading, writing, and critical thinking are integrated and mutually dependent processes. It will focus on learning and practicing the strategies necessary to the analysis and construction of written arguments. Attention will be given to paper organization, audience analysis, and style. Special attention will also be given to identifying and taking positions on issues, developing ideas through reasoning and discussion. Students will be required to read assigned texts, write and revise written texts of their own, and discuss both the readings and their writings with other students.

**Grading Policies:**
Your grade will be based on a total of 100 points, as follows:

- Assignment #1 – 15%
- Assignment #2 – 20%
- Assignment #3 – 15%
- Assignment #4 – 10%
- Homework and quizzes – 25%
- Participation to Class Discussions of Assigned Readings – 15%

Total 100%

Following is a passage from the San Diego State University Policy File (2000) regarding grading. I will attempt to follow this grading policy.

“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.”

Thus, 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.

(* Only grades of C or higher will meet the university Upper Division Writing Requirement. Grades of C- and D will give students three units of course credit. However, these grades do not meet the Upper Division Writing Requirement, so students receiving these grades will be required to take RWS 280 again.)

**A**: an outstanding assignment addresses the questions fully and explores the issues thoughtfully. It shows substantial depth, fullness, and complexity of thought. The response demonstrates clear, focused, unified, and coherent organization and is fully developed and detailed. The essay evidences superior control of diction, syntactic variety, and transition but may have a few minor flaws.

**B**: a praise-worthy assignment clearly addresses the questions and explores the issues. It shows some depth and complexity of thought and is effectively organized. The strong essay is well developed, with supporting detail. It demonstrates control of diction, syntactic variety, and transition, though it may have a few flaws.
C: a satisfactory assignment adequately addresses the questions and explores the issues. It shows some clarity of thought but may lack complexity. A competent essay is organized and adequately developed, with some detail. This response demonstrates competent writing, though it will have flaws.

D: a minimally passing assignment may distort or neglect parts of the question. It may be simplistic or stereotyped in thought. It may demonstrate problems in organization. It may use generalizations without supporting detail or detail without generalizations; details may be undeveloped. The weak response shows a pattern of error in language, syntax, and/or mechanics.

F: a failing assignment demonstrates serious problems in one or more of the areas specified by the weak response (D). It may fail in its attempt to discuss the topic, or may be deliberately off-topic. A response in this category is incompletely developed and mechanically inept.

Classroom Participation:
Students are expected to read the assigned selections before class so that they can participate fully in class discussions and activities. 15 % of the final grade will be assigned for participation to discussions as follows: Never heard this person’s voice (0-50 points); Spoke only when addressed (50-70 points); Made rare comments about assigned topics (70-80 points); Spoke often but not always on the topic (80-85 points); Spoke all the time and contributed interesting insights (85-100 points). We will treat each other with respect and courtesy.

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/or penalized. Please format your work with adequate margins (one inch) and a standard font (black, 12 point). Double-space your text, with no additional spaces between paragraphs. Make sure each assignment has in the upper left-hand corner your name, the name of the assignment, and the date the assignment is due. Please refer to your Keys for Writers, Chapter 3 on MLA. At the end of the chapter, there is a sample MLA essay. You’ll also be able to find a model on blackboard - Course Documents.

All assignments should be submitted on time. For each class session an assignment is late, 10% of the point value will be deducted. It is your responsibility to catch up with the work you are missing when absent. Choose a colleague to fill you in and provide the information you will need.

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

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 some else’s words or ideas. Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course. If you use material from a printed source or 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.

**Blackboard:**
I will use the Blackboard site as a communication device for all of us. Detailed instructions for your assignments, useful handouts, and other miscellaneous information will be posted on the site, and you are expected to check it regularly.

**Absences:**
For every absence after 2, your participation grade will be lowered by 2 points.

Except for very unusual circumstances, there are no “excused” absences. 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 absences.

**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 student’s responsibility to make the necessary arrangements with the Disabled Student Services.

**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.

**Student Learning Outcomes:**
1. Develop an effective process of reading for comprehension.
2. Develop an effective writing process—including prewriting, drafting, revision, and self-evaluation.
3. Master the elements of academic texts—particularly argument, genre, audience, context, purpose, and strategies.
4. Articulate in writing key rhetorical concepts.
5. Comprehend the significance of texts to oneself and one’s educational project.

**Student Learning Objectives**
Students will specifically learn to:
- Recognize that writing is a process of inquiry used both to discover and communicate ideas;
- Extract main ideas from texts and reorganize them;
- Analyze an author’s specific rhetorical strategy in a given text;
- Evaluate the arguments/claims and supporting material in written texts;
- Summarize and paraphrase texts;
- Incorporate material from other sources into own writing to support and extend own ideas;
Recognize different types of appeal;
Discern changes in tone and its relationship with meaning;
Engage with texts by expressing own position on issues debated;
Respond to claims extracted from readings by formulating counter-claims and providing original support for them;
Use “language about language;”
Make judgments about effectiveness of an argument by distinguishing between plausibility and probability;
Edit own writing; format simple manuscripts (page margins, appropriate font style and size, paragraph indentation, block style, etc.);
Understand the consequences of plagiarism;
Cite sources accurately;
Use the collaborative and social aspects of the writing process in group discussions;
Demonstrate courtesy and respect when discussing opinions and beliefs that conflict with their own.

Schedule of Assignments

Section 1 – Articulating the Argument

Assignment # 1: Make an account of an academic text’s argument, including elements such as audience/context, purpose, primary claim, evidence, and author (Due 10/8)(15%).

8/27 Introduction to the Course

8/29 Teaching Concept: Study Reading and Critical Reading
Discussion: Identify layers of meaning in the assigned text.
Reading for the next class: From Stone Age to Phone Age by Barbara Ehrenreich

9/3 Teaching Concept: The Structure of Argument
Discussion: Analyze and outline the assigned reading.

9/5 Teaching Concept: Primary Claim
Discussion: Summarize the assigned reading.
Homework for the next class: Write a summary of the assigned text. (5%)
Reading for the next class: A Desired Epidemic: Obesity and the Food Industry by Deborah Cohen

9/10 Teaching Concept: Evidence (Types of)
Discussion: Analyze the assigned reading.
Reading for the next class: Why We Crave Horror Movies by Stephen King

9/12 Teaching Concept: Supporting a Claim
Writing Workshop: In groups of two, design support for a claim.
Homework for the next class: Outline support for five claims. (5%) 
Reading for the next class: Parents should be able to control what kids watch by Leland Y. Yee

9/17 Teaching Concept: Author and Audience
Discussion: Identify the audience in the assigned reading.

9/19 Teaching Concept: The Rhetorical Precis
Writing Workshop: in groups, write and discuss your Precis.
Homework for the next class: Write a rhetorical précis of the assigned text. (5%)
Reading for the next class: Drawing a Line From Movie to Murder by A. O. Scott

9/24 Teaching Concept: Conventions of Academic Writing
Workshop: Mechanics (Citations, Formatting)

9/26 Teaching Concept: Context/Purpose
Critical Reading: Analyze the assigned text and identify its purpose.
Reading for the next class: Science shows no link between games and violence by Karen Sternheimer & Michael D. Gallagher

10/1 Constructing an Account of an Argument
Discussion: Analyze the assigned reading.

10/3 Teaching Concept: Collaborative Writing
Group Work: Discuss your assignment#1.
Reading for the next class: A Christian View of War by Oliver “Buzz” Thomas

Section 2 – Argument Analysis

Assignment # 2: Write an analysis of an academic text’s argument, with particular emphasis on rhetorical strategies and the voices featured in the text (Due 10/31) (20%).

10/8 Teaching Concept: Rhetorical Strategies
Discussion: Analyze the assigned reading and identify logical appeals.

10/10 Teaching Concept: Meta-Discourse
Discussion: Analyze the assigned reading and identify the means of constructing credibility and engaging the audience emotionally.

10/15 Teaching Concept: The Rhetorical Analysis
Reading for the next class: TBA

10/17 Teaching Concept: Constructing the Analytical Claim
Discussion: Analyze the assigned reading
Reading for the next class: And Why It Should Never Be One by Larry C. Johnson.

10/22 Teaching Concept: Identifying Voices/Irony in a Text Discussion: Analyze the assigned text.

Reading for the next class: Torture’s Dirty Secret: It Works by Naomi Klein.

10/24 Teaching Concept: Designing the Argument Analysis Discussion: Analyze the assigned reading.

10/29 Teaching Concept: Collaborative Work Writing Workshop: Discuss Assignment # 2.

Section 3 – Constructing Arguments

Assignment # 3 – An Argument Paper (Due 12/3)(15%).

10/31 Teaching Concept: The Structure of Argument (Toulmin Model) Discussion: What is a good argument?

11/5 Teaching Concept: Backing the Warrants Writing Workshop: Exercises Reading for the next class: The War on Terrorism by Joel Andreas

11/7 Teaching Concept: Visual Arguments – Ads, Cartoons, Narratives Group Activity: Analyze visual arguments.

Homework for next class: Bring a visual argument to class.

11/12 Teaching Concept: The Elements of the Toulmin Model Presentation: Explain elements in chosen visual text.
Homework for next class: Identify **elements of the Toulmin Model** in the visual text you provided. (5%) 

11/14 Teaching Concept: Writing the Thesis Statement. 
Writing Workshop: Exercises 

11/19 Teaching Concept: Beginnings and Endings. 
Writing Workshop: Exercises 

11/21 Teaching Concept: Dealing With a Hostile Audience (Rogerian Argument) 
Writing Workshop: Exercises 

4/26 Teaching Concept: Collaborative Writing 
Writing Workshop: Exercises 

**Reading for the next class: TBA** 

**Section 4 – Engaging With Written Arguments** 

**Assignment # 4:** In a dialog with—or in response to—other texts, explore in writing one’s voice as a writer (10%) (Due date TBA). 

12/3 Teaching Concept: Joining the Conversation- Agreeing and Disagreeing 
Discussion: Analyze the assigned reading. 
Reading for the next class: *Generation Wired* by Emily Listfield 

12/5 Teaching Concept: Constructing Counterclaims 
Discussion: How to support and develop a counter-claim (in four steps). 

12/10 Teaching Concept: Collaborative Writing 
Writing Workshop: Peer Review