Introduction:

In this class, you will learn how to do academic research within the field of rhetoric. You will learn to conduct critical analysis that is situated, careful, and insightful—important characteristics whether you are critiquing an artifact in an academic paper or critiquing discourse in a public letter or post. By the end of the course, you will be able to make your own critical judgments about rhetorical artifacts and be able to effectively communicate those judgments to others.

Course Questions:

Course questions outline our learning goals for the semester. They should also guide your reading and note-taking. By the end of this course, you should be able to answer the following questions:

1) What is rhetoric as a field and what questions do rhetorical critics ask?
2) What makes good rhetorical criticism?
3) How does someone do rhetorical criticism?

Classroom Climate:

Respect: Learning about communication and rhetoric involves risks. We will talk about positions on political and social issues and the ways in which we deliberate about those issues. Try to understand, not judge, other people. Our classroom needs to be a safe place to explore communication contexts and an open place to reconsider our preconceptions of communication, its power, and its use in our everyday lives. This means that everyone should be referred to by the name they prefer, the correct pronunciation of their name, and the pronoun they prefer (like she, ze, he, or they). Please be respectful throughout the course. If you feel uncomfortable, do not hesitate to talk to me privately during office hours.

Online Contexts: In this class, you are asked to be a rhetorical critic in class and online through blog posts. If you are uncomfortable with the online portion of this class, or if you require special considerations, please see me in the first week of class.

Course Assignments:

Exams: There will be two multiple-choice exams. These exams will test your understanding of key course concepts. You will have to define, apply, and critique concepts from the readings, in-class lectures, and in-class discussions.
**Blogs:** The blog assignment gives you the opportunity to practice many different types of rhetorical criticism with many different rhetorical artifacts before you commit to the topic for your final paper. This blog assignment also encourages you all to view rhetorical criticism not just as an academic exercise useful in your other rhetoric classes, but also as an important public activity—one which this class prepares you to fully participate in. Through these blog posts, I hope you come to see yourselves as competent and powerful rhetorical critics, capable of impacting public discourse about important political and cultural issues. To that end, you will be required to upload four blog posts that are between 1,000-1,500 words. These blog posts should be written for a broad, public audience. During class, we will sign up for due-dates for the blog posts. You will post all four of your entries between Week 5 and Week 11.

**Final Paper and Presentation:** Your final paper will be a formal, academic rhetorical criticism. In this paper, you will practice the rhetorical skills you will need in future rhetoric and communication courses. The paper must be 8-10 pages long and may not consider a rhetorical artifact you already considered in your earlier blog posts. You must use at least five sources that are academic and reflect original research. You will not only turn in the written paper to me, but also craft an in-class presentation about your findings. The Final Paper is worth 100 points and the Final presentation is worth 50 points.

**Participation In Class:** You cannot participate meaningfully in class if you were not present in class. What we do in class is not easily replaced by reading the textbook or reading another student’s notes. Students learn from in-class activities, from other students’ contributions during class discussions, from other questions they hear, and from engaging the material for during class each day. Make every possible arrangement to attend all class periods. There will be a sign-in sheet for every class period. If you come to class late, it is your responsibility to make sure you sign your name on the sign-in sheet. Otherwise, you will be counted as absent. My goal is to reward students who engage our course material actively and consistently.

**Warm-Ups:** For time in class to be most useful, you must come to class prepared—that means I expect you to read and engage the assigned material before class. To encourage you to read the material carefully, to help you “re-load” the material into your head for class, and to help you take stock of what was clear and unclear, you will be required to complete a Warm-Up during the first five minutes of class each day. On a piece of paper with your book closed and your notes put away, please complete the following:

1) Summarize one key point or key term from the reading for today. This should be 4-5 sentences long.

2) Write one question that you have about the reading. This may be a question for clarification or a question for discussion.

This assignment will not only help you engage the material fully, it will also help me tailor the class to your particular needs as students, responding to your questions right away. You will be graded on a check-plus, check, and check-minus scale. A check is full credit (1 point), a check-plus is extra-credit (1.25 points), and a check-minus is half-credit (0.5 points).
Exam #1: 100 points
Exam #2: 100 points

**Blogs**

Blog #1: 75 points
Blog #2: 75 points
Blog #3: 75 points
Blog #4: 75 points

**Final Paper**

Final Paper: 100 points
Final Presentation: 50 points

**Participation**

Participation In-Class: 50 points
Warm-Ups: 50 points

Total: 750 points

**Schedule (for course that meets 3 times a week):**

**Part One: Introduction**

**Week 1:**
Introductions and Syllabus
- Complete the introductory questionnaire
What are rhetorical questions? What can they tell us? What can’t they tell us?
- Reading: Campbell and Huxman, Prologue and Chapter 1: A rhetorical Perspective
Relationship between theory, criticism, and practice
- Reading: Herrick, Chapter 1: An Overview of Rhetoric

**Week 2:**
Why does rhetoric matter? Why does rhetorical criticism matter?
- Reading: Zarefsky, “George W. Bush Discovers Rhetoric”
Doing rhetorical criticism
- Reading: Jasinski, “The Status of Theory and Method in Rhetorical Criticism”
Examining the rhetorical act
- Reading: Campbell and Huxman, Chapter 2: The Rhetorical Act

**Part Two: Situating Rhetoric**

**Week 3:**
The Rhetor
- Reading: Palczewski, Ice, and Fritch, Chapter 6: Rhetors
The Audience
- Reading: Palczewski, Ice, and Fritch, Chapter 7: Audiences
Conceptualizing Online Audiences
- Reading: Baym, Chapter 4: Communities and Networks
Week 4:
Historical Context and the Purpose
- Reading: Palczewski, Ice, and Fritch, Chapter 8: Rhetorical Situations

The Medium and Mode
- Reading: Campbell and Huxman, Chapter 13: Understanding the Medium of Transmission

A Medium’s Affordances
- Reading: Baym, Chapter 2: Making New Media Make Sense

Part Three: Key Theoretical Concepts and Examples of Criticism

Week 5:
Introducing the Blog Assignment:
- Reading: Explore these rhetoric blogs
  - Bag News Notes: http://www.bagnewsnotes.com/
  - Rhetorically Speaking: http://rhetoric.commarts.wisc.edu/
  - Silver Tongue Times: http://silvertonguetimes.com/
  - Oratorical Animal: http://oratoricalanimal.typepad.com/
  - PBS Idea Channel: https://www.youtube.com/user/pbsideachannel
- Come to class prepared to answer the question: What makes these blog posts interesting and effective?

The Public Sphere
- Reading: Goodnight, “Personal, Technical, and Public Spheres of Argument”

The Public Sphere in Criticism
- Reading: Asen, Gurke, Solomon, Conners, and Gumm, “‘The Research Says’: Definitions and Uses of a Key Policy Term in Federal Law and Local School Board Deliberations”

Week 6:
Counterpublics
- Reading: Brouwer, Communication As . . .: “Counterpublic”

Counterpublics in Criticism
- Reading: “ACTing UP in Congressional Hearings”

Social Movements
- Reading: Gregg, “The Ego-Function of the Rhetoric of Protest”

Week 7:
Social Movements in Criticism
- Reading: Chavez, “Counter-public Enclaves and Understanding the Function of Rhetoric in Social Movement Coalition-Building”

Social Identity and Constitutive Rhetoric
- Reading: Harwood, Communication As . . . “Social Identity”

Social Identity and Constitutive Rhetoric in Criticism
- Reading: Leff and Utley, “Instrumental and Constitutive Rhetoric in Martin Luther King Jr.’s ‘Letter from Birmingham Jail’”

Week 8:
Midterm Exam (Exam #1)
Images
• Reading: Palczewski, Ice, and Fritch, Chapter 3: Visual Rhetoric
Images in Criticism
• Reading: Yang, “Still Burning: Self-Immolation as Photographic Protest

Week 9:
Ideology
• Reading: McGee, “The ‘Ideograph’: A Link Between Rhetoric and Ideology”
Ideology in Criticism
• Reading: Palczewski, “The male Madonna and the Feminine Uncle Same: Visual Argument, Icons, and Ideographs in 1909 Anti-woman Suffrage Postcards”
Collective Memory
• Reading: Blair, Communication As . . . : “Collective Memory”

Week 10:
Collective Memory in Criticism
• Reading: Hartelius, “‘Leave a Message of Hope or Tribute’: Digital Memorializing as Public Deliberation”
Gender
• Reading: Allen, Difference Matters: Chapter 3: Gender Matters
Gender in Criticism
• Reading: Zaeske, “Signatures of Citizenship: The Rhetoric of Women’s Anti-Slavery Petitions”

Week 11:
Race
• Reading: Martin and Nakayama, Communication As . . . “Raced”
Race in Criticism
• Reading: Terrill, “Unity and Duality in Barack Obama’s ‘A More Perfect Union’”
Belonging and Citizenship Performances
• Reading: Asen, “A Discourse Theory of Citizenship”

Part Three: Final Papers and Presentations

Week 12:
Belonging and Citizenship in Criticism
• Reading: Chavez, Border (In)Securities: Normative and Differential Belonging in LGBTQ and Immigrant Rights Discourse
Design Principles for PowerPoint Presentations
• Reading: Reynolds, Presentation Zen: Chapter 6: Presentation Design: Principles and Techniques
Peer Review Final Paper
• Bring 3 printed copies of your final paper to class. This should be a second or third draft of your paper.
Week 13:
Public Speaking
• Complete the online questionnaire: What two things make you most nervous about public speaking? What two things are you most confident about?

Present Final Papers in Class
• Turn in PowerPoint and Paper

Present Final Papers in Class
• Turn in PowerPoint and Paper

Week 14:
Present Final Papers in Class
• Turn in PowerPoint and Paper

Present Final Papers in Class
• Turn in PowerPoint and Paper

Reflection and Student Evaluations

Final Exam (Exam #2)
Bibliography for Course Readings:


