

Course Syllabus

RHE 309S; Critical Reading and Persuasive Writing

Instructor: Andrew Rechnitz
Unique ID: 45070
Days: MW
Time: 2:00-3:15
Location: FAC 7
Office location: Prufrock's (PCL)
Office hours: M 9:00-2:00, W 3:15-5:15, and by appointment
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Course Description:

When we hear the term “rhetoric” on the news or in casual conversation, it often refers to empty, evasive, or deceptive language that public speakers use to bend a crowd. Framed this way, rhetoric has little (if any) concern for the truth; its only purpose is to win the approval of an audience for personal gain. Indeed, this was Plato’s main criticism of rhetoric, and his thinking has undoubtedly influenced the way many people view the term today. While it would be foolish to deny that people abuse rhetoric for their own self-interests, the original aim of the rhetorical tradition was very different. In fact, rhetoric emerged as a formal study alongside the rise of democracy in Athens, where, for the first time, citizens were able to participate in public forums and were given the opportunity to defend themselves in law courts. Without the skill to speak well in public, these democratic freedoms were largely wasted, so citizens typically hired rhetors to help them discover the available means of persuasion for arguing in a given situation. The process of discovery entailed a study of the cultural attitudes, customs, and beliefs espoused by different communities, an analysis of the specific context in which the speech was to take place, and the acquisition of tactics appropriate for composing arguments that a rational audience might accept.

Our purpose in this course is to continue in the manner of the rhetorical tradition by engaging in public arguments related to some form of democracy. Students might, for example, study public arguments about the effects of social media on emerging democracies, compare arguments on the democratic process in ancient Athens to arguments being made today in the United States, or analyze arguments for and against democracy as a viable form of social organization. To aid in this purpose, throughout the semester we will read and discuss a number of articles related to different aspects of democracy. Additionally, we will refer to Crowley and Hawhee’s *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students* to help guide us in the general practices of textual and contextual rhetorical analysis, scholarly research, invention, arrangement, style and delivery. Finally, we will work through the *progymnasmata* (preliminary exercises) used to teach rhetoric in antiquity, and we will also memorize Antiphon’s *First Tetralogy* for in-class recitations.

Required Materials:

Crowley, Sharon, and Debra Hawhee. *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students*. 5th ed. New York, NY: Pearson/Longman, 2012. Print.

Antiphon and Andocides (The Oratory of Classical Greece). Trans. Michael Gagarin and Douglas M. MacDowell. Austin, TX: The University of Texas at Austin Press, 1998. Print.

Course Website:

Canvas: canvas.utexas.edu

Attendance Policy:

Rhetoric & Writing has established this attendance policy for all RHE courses. Any questions or appeals concerning this policy must be made directly to the department Associate Chair. You are expected to attend class, to arrive on time, to have prepared assigned reading and writing, and to participate in all in-class editing, revising, and discussion sessions. **Should you miss the equivalent of five TTH or MW class sessions or seven MWF sessions this semester, excused or not, you will fail the course.** If you find that an unavoidable problem prevents you from attending class, you should contact your instructor as soon as possible, preferably ahead of time, to let him or her know.

You will not be penalized for missing class on religious holy days. A student who misses classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day should inform the instructor, in writing, well in advance of the absence, so that alternative arrangements can be made to complete work. If you know you will have to miss class(es) for this reason, provide your instructor with the date(s) as early as possible. Please note that the University specifies very few other excused absences (e.g., jury duty).

When you must miss a class, you are responsible for getting notes and assignments from a classmate.

Scholastic Honesty:

Turning in work that is not your own, or any other form of scholastic dishonesty, will result in a major course penalty, possibly failure of the course. This standard applies to *all* drafts and assignments, and a report of the incident will be submitted to the Office of the Dean of Students and filed in your permanent UT record. Under certain circumstances, the Dean of Students will initiate proceedings to expel you from the University. So, take care to read and understand the *Statement on Scholastic Responsibility*, which can be found online at <http://www.utexas.edu/cola/depts/rhetoric/firstyearwriting/plagiarismcollusion.php>. If you have any doubts about your use of sources, ask your instructor for help *before* handing in the assignment.

Students with Disabilities:

Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 512-471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329-3986 (video phone) as soon as possible to request an official letter outlining authorized accommodations. More information is available online at <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd>.

Email Accounts:

Email is an official means of communication at UT-Austin, and your instructor will use this medium to communicate class information. You are therefore required to obtain a UT email account and to check it daily. All students may claim an email address at no cost by going to <http://www.utexas.edu/its/services/email/>.

Emergency Information:

Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside.

Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.

Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class.

In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors.

Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.

Other important Emergency Information: <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/preparedness/>

Coursework and Grading:

I grade using a points scale. The total points possible will be 1000, broken down as follows:

Forum Posts – 200 points (25 points each)

Research Summary 1 – 50 points

Research Summary 2 – 50 points

Research Summary 3 – 100 points

Research Summary 4 – 100 points

Rhetorical Analysis (first submission) – 100 points

Rhetorical Analysis (final submission) – 100 points

Public Argument (first submission) – 100 points

Public Argument (final submission) – 200 points

925–1000 = A

895–924 = A-

865–894 = B+

825–864 = B

795–824 = B-

765–794 = C+

725–764 = C

595–724 = D

Below 595=F

Note: You may revise any major assignment as many times as you would like without penalty; however, each revision must represent a substantial effort to improve the overall quality of the assignment. Simply changing a few words and adding a comma or two is generally insufficient and will preclude future opportunities for revision of the assignment. In addition to making revisions to the assignment itself, each new submission should include a brief paragraph that explains the changes you have made and reflects on how these changes have influenced your writing process.

Schedule:

Week 1

Monday, January 13th

Class: General introductions

Homework: Read Larry Diamond's conference presentation, "[What is Democracy?](#)" and Chapter I of *Ancient Rhetorics*. Compose responses to questions 1-4 in the Rhetorical Activities section. **Post your responses questions 1-4 to the forum page on the Canvas website by midnight on Tuesday.**

Wednesday, January 15th

Class: Discussion of the assigned readings and review of the forum posts.

Homework: Read Gerhard Rempel's "[How Democratic was Athens?](#)"

Week 2

Monday, January 20th

MLK Holiday: No Class

Wednesday, January 22nd

Class: Discussion of the assigned reading and introduction to research summaries (Part I).

Homework: Write a research summary of the Rempel article using only paraphrase.

Week 3

Monday, January 27th

Due: Submit Research Summary #1 to Canvas by the beginning of class (50 pts.)

Class: Introduction to research summaries (Part II)

Homework: Read Donald Kagan's "[Periclean Athens and Modern Democracy](#),"

Wednesday, January 29th

Class: Discussion of the assigned reading.

Homework: Read Chapters II and III of *Ancient Rhetorics*.

Week 4

Monday, February 3rd

Class: Discussion of the assigned chapters.

Homework: Read Matthew Hindman's "[Not the Digital Democracy We Ordered](#)," and listen to his interview on "[Digital Delusion](#)" (you can find the transcript [here](#)). Also, read Micah Sifry's "[Critiquing Matthew Hindman's 'The Myth of Digital Democracy'](#)."

Wednesday, February 5th

Class: Discussion of the assigned readings; locating controversies using library research techniques.

Homework: Write a full research summary of the Kagan article.

Week 5

Monday, February 10th

Due: Submit Research Summary #2 to Canvas by the beginning of class (50 pts.)

Class: Introduction to Antiphon and Universal Education.

Homework: Begin researching a controversial topic related to democracy for your major assignments.

Post 2-3 potential research topics to Canvas by Tuesday at midnight (25 pts.). Also, read Antiphon's *First Tetralogy* and Chapter 12 of *Ancient Rhetorics*.

Wednesday, February 12th

Class: Discussion of the reading and review of the forum posts.

Homework: Memorize the introduction and sections 2.1.1-2.1.3 of Antiphon's *First Tetralogy* for in-class recitations.

Week 6

Monday, February 17th

Class: In-class recitations of the *First Tetralogy*.

Homework: Read pages 118-142 in *Ancient Rhetorics*, and, in addition to the previous material, memorize sections 2.1.4-2.1.5 of the *First Tetralogy*. Also, begin researching for two articles that take

different positions on your topic. These articles must be in conversation with one another—that is, they must generally address the same argument(s) in relation to your chosen controversy. Choose these articles carefully, as they will be the focus of Research Summary #3, Research Summary #4, and the Rhetorical Analysis paper.

Wednesday, February 19th

Class: In-class recitations and discussion of the reading.

Homework: Read pages 146-163 in *Ancient Rhetorics*. Memorize sections 2.1.6-2.1.8 of the *First Tetralogy*. Continue researching for your articles.

Week 7

Monday, February 21st

Class: In-class recitations and discussion of the reading.

Homework: Read pages 170-188 in *Ancient Rhetorics*. Memorize sections 2.1.9-2.1.11 of the *First Tetralogy*.

Wednesday, February 23rd

Class: In-class recitations and discussion of the reading.

Homework: Research summaries.

Week 8

Monday, February 25th

Due: Submit Research Summary #3 and Research Summary #4 to Canvas by the beginning of class (200 pts.)

Class: Discussion of Rhetorical Analysis paper.

Homework: Begin drafting your Rhetorical Analysis paper. Memorize sections 2.2.1-2.2.4 of the *First Tetralogy*.

Wednesday, February 27th

Class: In-class recitations.

Homework: Prepare a complete draft of your Rhetorical Analysis paper and bring 3 copies to class for a peer review.

Week 9

Monday, March 3rd

Class: Peer Review

Homework: Make revisions to your draft. Bring your revised paper to class for first submission. Also, memorize sections 2.2.5-2.2.7 of the *First Tetralogy*.

Wednesday, March 5th

Due: First submission of Rhetorical Analysis paper (150 pts.)

Class: In-class recitations

Homework: Memorize sections 2.2.8-2.3.11 of the *First Tetralogy*.

Week 10

Spring Break

Week 11

Monday, March 17th

Class: In-class recitations.

Homework: Memorize sections 2.4.1-2.4.5 of the *First Tetralogy*.

Wednesday, March 19th

Class: In-class recitations and discussion of the Public Argument paper.

Homework: Finish memorizing the *First Tetralogy*. Begin research for the Public Argument paper.

Week 12

Monday, March 24th

Class: In-class recitations.

Homework: Read Antiphon's *Second Tetralogy*. Continue researching for the Public Argument.

Wednesday, March 26th

Class: Discussion of the reading; antilogy.

Homework: Read Antiphon's *Third Tetralogy*. Continue researching for the Public Argument.

Week 13

Monday, March 31st

Class: Discussion of the reading; imitation and general reflection exercises.

Homework: **Post your imitations and reflections to Canvas by Tuesday at midnight (25pts.)**

Continue researching for the Public Argument.

Wednesday, April 2nd

Class: Review of the forum posts; amplification and compression exercises.

Homework: **Post your amplifications and compressions to Canvas by Sunday at midnight (25pts.)**

Continue researching for the Public Argument.

Week 14

Monday, April 7th

Class: Review of posts; invective and encomium exercises.

Homework: Write a short speech that both supports and attacks a particular position in your controversy.

Post your speech to Canvas by Monday at midnight.

Wednesday, April 9th

Class: review of forum posts; opening paragraphs.

Homework: **Draft an opening paragraph for your Public Argument and post it to Canvas by Sunday at midnight (25 pts.)**

Week 15

Monday, April 14th

Class: Review of opening paragraph posts;

Homework: Write a draft of your Public Argument paper, and bring three copies to class for peer review.

Wednesday, April 16th

Class: Peer Review

Homework: Revise your Public Argument, and submit it to Canvas by the beginning of class on Monday.

Week 16

Monday, April 21st

Due: Public Argument, first submission (100 pts.)

Class: Alternative visions of democracy

Homework: Write a short speech on the futures of democracy. **Post your speech to Canvas by Tuesday at midnight.**

Wednesday, April 23rd

Class: Review of forum posts.

Homework: Read Jacques Ranciere article.

Week 17

Monday, April 28th

Class: Discuss reading.

Homework: Revise Public Arguments.

Wednesday, April 30th

Closing remarks

The submission deadline for revised Research Summaries, the final Rhetorical Analysis Paper, and the final Public Argument Paper is Wednesday, May 14th, at 5:00 pm.