

**English 4346**  
**Contemporary Rhetorical Theory**  
**Spring 2005**  
**Monday/Wednesday, 1:00-2:20 p.m.**  
**LPM 305**

Professor: Dr. Tony Slagle  
Office: 105 Pedreira (Enter through the English lab, and tell the technicians that you are coming to see me)  
Office Hours: Monday/Wednesday 10:00-1:00, 4:00-5:00 and by appointment  
Tel: 764-0000 ext. 4999  
Email: tslagle@earthlink.net

### **Course Description**

Introduction to the history and development of rhetorical theory in the western world with special attention given to the contemporary period.

### **Course Prerequisites**

One of the following: English 3103-3104, or English 3011-3012, or Level 5 on Humanities English Placement Test, or Advanced Placement in English.. High fluency required.

### **Purpose and Approach**

This course introduces, and invites you to practice, various theories and methods of rhetorical theory. Throughout the course, you will be encouraged to think of rhetorical theory as a way to highlight cultural assumptions embodied in the style, word choices, argumentative structures, and even physical layout and visual elements of documents. At the beginning of the term, we will review highlights of the classical rhetorical tradition, and explore ways in which that tradition underlies certain contemporary methods of rhetorical theory. For the rest of the term, we'll examine and discuss a range of contemporary theories.

### **Course Objectives:**

By the end of the course the student will:

1. become familiar with the history and development of rhetorical theory.
2. understand the significance of the rhetorical theory as an important area of study.
3. be able to identify and describe specific contributions of significant theorists and movements to the discipline of rhetoric.

4. compare, contrast, and evaluate the contributions of significant theorists and movements in the history and development of rhetorical theory.
5. be able to discern how rhetoric is an essential element of the human experience.
6. distinguish the role of rhetoric as a significant force in democratic societies.
7. develop an understanding of the ideologies of rhetorical theories and practices.
8. develop/enhance critical thinking skills by considering a range of perspectives on significant cultural/social issues.
9. develop writing skills by writing about rhetorical theories and concepts.
10. develop research skills.

**Textbook:**

Foss, S. K. (2002). *Contemporary perspectives on rhetoric* (3rd ed.). Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.

**Course Requirements**

You are expected to turn in your assignments on the date that they are due. Late assignments will be graded at the discretion of the professor, and will only be accepted with a legitimate excuse.

***Response papers will not be accepted late under any circumstances.***

*Evaluación diferenciada a estudiantes con necesidades especiales.*

Term Paper	25%
Exam #1	20%
Exam #2	20%
Response Papers	20%
Class Participation	15%

*Los estudiantes que reciben servicios de Rehabilitación Vocacional deben comunicarse con el profesor al inicio del semestre para planificar el acomodo razonable y equipo asistivo necesario conforme a las recomendaciones de la Oficina de Asuntos Estudiantes. También aquellos estudiantes con necesidades especiales que requieren de algún tipo de asistencia o acomodo deben comunicarse con el profesor.*

## Description of Assignments

**Response papers** (five): Response papers are short papers (approximately 1-2 pages) formulated in response to the theories/concepts that we will discuss in class. These are due on the first day that we discuss a particular rhetorical theory, and they must be turned in during class time. Absolutely no late response papers will be accepted. The response papers are designed to allow you to incorporate personal responses with thoughtful analysis. In your response papers, you should incorporate specific points, and explain, confront, and/or challenge your reaction(s) to them. In addition to looking for thoughtful reflection, I will be looking for evidence that you grappled with the reading and made every effort to understand it (even if that requires re-reading it).

**Term Paper:** Like the short essay, the term paper will be a rhetorical analysis of an artifact of your own choosing. This paper, however, should be a more in-depth analysis of the artifact. The paper should be approximately 8 pages in long (not including title page and reference page).

Option 1: If you had to characterize the essence of rhetorical theory or the rhetorical approach to communication with one label (a term, a theme, an underlying assumption, a construct, etc.), what would it be? What, in other words, unites all or most of the rhetorical theories that we've covered? Defend your choice.

Option 2: What makes a good rhetorical theory? Devise criteria for the evaluation of a rhetorical theory and argue in support of them. Which theory that we've covered comes the closest to meeting the criteria you've developed.

Option 3: Of all the rhetorical concepts (not theories--I'm looking for a small part of a theory here) we've covered in this course, which seems to you to be the most useful? Defend your selection and your definition of *usefulness*. How do you see yourself possibly using this concept in your future thinking and research?

Option 4: Rhetorical theorists approach communication from different perspectives and to accomplish different goals, but most are concerned with understanding the nature of communication and using this understanding to help us become more effective users of symbols. Use notions suggested by the theorists we've studied to draw up guidelines that the individual who wishes to be a more effective communicator might follow. In other words, translate the major theoretical notions of each theorist or the theorists on which you choose to focus into a practical that the student of communication would find valuable. A good place to begin, in this paper, is by laying out your primary goal for communication. Obviously, the strategies you find useful will depend on what your goal for communication is. Develop your guidelines from a minimum of four of the theorists we've studied.

**Exams:** There will be four essay exams in this course. You may use your book and/or notes for the exams.

**Class Participation:** Each unit includes a “discussion day,” where we will discuss the ideas of the theorist(s) being studied. Come prepared to contribute to our discussion of the material. Participation in discussions is one of the requirements for this course. If you are in class, and appear to have thought about the material ahead of time, you will do well; if you are absent or clearly unprepared, you will not do well.

**A note on readings:** The readings from the textbook are listed. Additional readings will be assigned and will either be in the textbook, or they will be placed on reserve in the Richardson Seminar Room in Pedreira.

Tentative Course Schedule (subject to change)

Date	Topic	Readings
January 19	Introduction to course	
January 24	Introduction to rhetoric	Chapter one
January 26	Introduction to rhetoric	
January 31	I. A. Richards <b>Response paper due</b>	Chapter two
February 2	I. A. Richards	
February 7	Ernesto Grassi <b>Response paper due</b>	Chapter three
February 9	Ernesto Grassi	
February 14	Review for Exam	
February 16	Exam #1 (Intro. to rhetoric, Richards, and Grassi)	
February 21	President’s Day (no class)	
February 23	TBA	
February 28	Çağm Perelman & Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca <b>Response paper due</b>	Chapter 4
March 2	Çağm Perelman & Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca	
March 7	Stephen Toulmin <b>Response paper due</b>	Chapter 5

Date	Topic	Readings
March 9	Stephen Toulmin	
March 14	Review for Exam	
March 16	Exam #2 (Perelman/Olbrechts-Tyteca, & Toulmin)	
March 21	<i>Santa Semana</i>	
March 23	<i>Santa Semana</i>	
March 28	Richard Weaver <b>Response paper due</b>	Chapter 6
March 30	Kenneth Burke <b>Response paper due</b>	Chapter 7
April 4	Kenneth Burke	
April 6	Jürgen Habermas <b>Response paper due</b>	Chapter 8
April 11	bell hooks <b>Response paper due</b>	Chapter 9 (this will be covered on the fourth exam)
April 13	Review for exam	
April 18	José de Diego (no class)	
April 20	Exam #3 (Weaver, Burke, and Habermas)	
April 25	Jean Baudrillard <b>Response paper due</b>	Chapter 10
April 27	Jean Baudrillard	
May 2	Michel Foucault <b>Response paper due</b>	Chapter 11
May 4	Michel Foucault	
May 9	Emerging Perspectives <b>Response paper due</b>	Reserve readings TBA
May 11	Exam #4	
May 16	Term papers due no later than 4:00 p.m.	

TBA=To be announced

### Course Policies

1. Attendance is expected at all classes. Courses in communication require a high degree of class participation and interpersonal interaction. For this reason, students are expected to attend all classes. A strong emphasis will be placed on in-class participation and learning. Under university policy, more than three absences will result in a grade reduction.
2. In the context of this class, “class participation” means coming prepared for class and contributing appropriately to discussions. Contributions can take the form of asking intelligent and useful questions, as well as answering questions thoughtfully. **“Class participation” does not mean merely showing up for class everyday.** Those who show up, but usually come unprepared and who rarely contribute constructively to class discussions are taking from their classmates without giving in return and they will receive no points for class participation.
3. Cheating, plagiarism, or other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in this class. It is not an acceptable defense to claim, “I didn’t know I was plagiarizing,” “I didn’t know what I was doing was plagiarism,” or “I didn’t know that plagiarizing was prohibited.” In an academic environment, plagiarism is one of the most serious offenses a student can commit. **Plagiarism is the intentional or unintentional representation of another person’s ideas as your own.** Plagiarism sometimes confuses students. It is plagiarism to turn in any portion of someone else’s paper, speech, or outline as your own work. It is plagiarism to use any portion of a speech or paper from a “file” of previously used speeches and present it in class as your original work. It is plagiarism to take passages from someone’s work and include it in a speech, paper, or outline without citing the original author. Even if you do not use the exact words that someone else used, **it is plagiarism to use their ideas without giving them credit.** It is a form of academic misconduct to knowingly allow another student to use your work as their own. All material submitted for evaluation must be the original work of the student.
4. Late assignments will only be accepted when you contact me ***before*** the assignment is due, and I will only accept late assignments when you have a legitimate and supportable excuse. In fairness to students who complete their work on time, if I accept your assignment late, you can expect that it will be graded more harshly than if it had been turned in on the date that it was due (because you will have had more time to complete the assignment). You will be penalized ten percentage points (out of 100) for each day a paper is late. Also, when an assignment is late, I will not “make” time to grade it (it will be graded when I have time to do so). In other words, late assignments may take much longer than usual to return to you.

5. Always keep an extra copy of any assignment that you turn in to me (either a hard copy or on a computer disk). While it is extremely rare that I misplace student assignments, keeping an copy will protect you in the event that it happens.