

COMS 321 Rhetorical Discourse  
Summer 2009

Dr. Christie Logan

Office hours: Mondays 5pm - 6pm, Wednesdays noon - 1pm and by appt.

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### **Course Description and Objectives**

This course is designed to help students develop and improve the skills necessary to communicate effectively in writing. You will do more writing than you thought possible. Also, if all goes as planned, you will re-acquaint yourself with the fundamentally creative joy of writing, while developing your unique voice and using it to advocate for what you care about.

By the end of the class you should be able to:

- understand how to use sources of relevant information
- gather and synthesize information
- analyze issues and select and evaluate evidence
- build sound arguments, and refute unsound arguments
- analyze audiences and adapt messages to them
- organize material into clear, coherent patterns appropriate to an audience and a subject
- use language clearly and appropriately
- use the proper mechanics of writing

### **Required Texts**

- Lunsford & Ruskiewicz, Everything's an Argument, 4th ed. Bedford Books, 2006. ISBN-10: 0312447493
- Diana Hacker, A Writer's Reference, 6th ed. Bedford Books, 2007. ISBN-10: 0312471661
- Online: Kathy Dabbour's Communication Studies Research website  
<http://library.csun.edu/kdabbour/comsresearch.html>

### **Course Requirements**

Students will complete a number of formal and informal writing assignments, participate in class discussions and group workshops, deliver oral presentations and conduct peer evaluations. The breakdown is as follows.

There will be in-class writing every class period, employing various styles and modes of writing. In-class writing will comprise 10% of your course grade.

There will be quizzes on the readings throughout the semester. These are worth 15% of your course grade.

There will also be discussions, exercises and workshops every class period. Some of these will be student-led, as assigned. Whether leading or not, you must be in class to complete these assignments. Cumulatively, the extent and quality of your contributions to class activities count for 15% of your course grade .

Formal written assignments are due according to the course schedule. These four papers are linked and cumulative -- that is, they are designed to help you develop your persuasive essay in sequenced stages and phases. All formal writing assignments must be posted on the course newsgroup before class on the day they're due. If these are posted after class begins they will be counted as late and will be docked 1 letter grade for each day - any day, not class day - they are late. These papers will comprise 50% of your course grade.

We will use [WebCT](#) for our course newsgroup and chat rooms. You are automatically registered on WebCT when you register for this course. Log in to the Campus Web Portal and then go to Online Resources (left side of the screen) and click WebCT. To log in to WebCT, use your campus user ID and password (the one you use for SOLAR). WebCT url is: <http://webteach.csun.edu/>

A final exam will be administered in class on July 6. The exam will consist of a Writing Proficiency Exam (WPE) type essay on a topic provided that day. This exam will assess your writing at the end of the course and will give you experience in planning and writing a timed WPE practice exam. Your essay constitutes 10% of your course grade.

**Breakdown of Requirements and Point Values:**

In-class writing *	10%	
Quizzes*	15%	
In-class discussions & workshops*	15%	
Formal written assignments:		
letter to editor	5%	due 6/3
rhetorical analysis	15%	due 6/10
research report	10%	due 6/17
persuasive essay	20%	due 7/1
Final (essay exam)*	10%	

\*Please note that you will need to be in class to complete these assignments. There are no makeups for missed in-class work.

**Grading System:** Individual assignments are graded on a standard 10% scale. Number grades only are recorded for assignments. These add up to a percentage. The final course grade will be plus/minus, determined by course totals as follows:

	87-89 = B+	77-79 = C
100 - 94 = A	84-86 = B	74-76 = C
93 - 90 = A-	80-83 = B-	70-73 = C- etc

My grading criteria? Find them here: **What Grades Mean:**  
<http://www.csun.edu/~vcspc00g/301/grades.html>

**Course Policies:**

Accommodations. Any student who feels that he or she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Please contact the Center on Disabilities in room 110 of Bayramian Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

Attendance and preparation are required. The class is intensive given the compressed 6-week semester of summer session II. There will be no excused absences. Our class time together will be highly interactive and collaborative; and you will be evaluated on the extent and quality of your contributions to class discussions and activities. Note that 40% of your course grade is based on your work in class. There are no makeups for missed in-class assignments.

Recurrent tardiness or leaving class early will be counted as absence, and will negatively affect your final grade even beyond the 40%. If you do miss class, it is your responsibility to get notes on what you missed from a fellow student.

Turn of all electronic devices during class. No cell phones, no texting, no laptops unless you specifically negotiate the use of a laptop with me.

All posted assignments should be typed and in appropriate format [double-spaced, with headers, numbered pages and standard fonts & margins]. For this class, use the Modern Languages Association [MLA] style manual format - see the "MLA" section of Hacker for proper citation and documentation.

You will also be using the Hacker textbook as a resource for correcting your writing problems throughout the semester. You should bring this to every class period so you have it as a reference for peer evaluation of your colleagues' writing as well. As we move through the written assignments, I will give you detailed feedback on what problems you need to address in grammar, syntax, usage and other mechanics. You will then consult Hacker and fix these problems for the next assignment. If I see you making the same mistakes after I've given you feedback, I will significantly reduce your grade on assignments. In some cases, I may invoke the "3 errors" rule -- if I find 3 errors that I've pointed out to you previously, I will not accept the paper and you'll get no credit on that assignment. I don't want to do that, so please work on your technical problems using Hacker on your own.

Due dates are firm. As noted above, papers not posted before class on the day they're due will be docked 1 letter grade for each day late. We can never predict emergencies, breakdowns, illnesses etc. For this reason you should always get an early start on your assignment and never wait until the last minute. Give yourself time to deal with potential problems. Statements such as my computer crashed, the computer lab was closed, I lost my file and the like are not compelling reasons to excuse a late paper.

Academic honesty is expected and required. Academic dishonesty defrauds all those who depend on the integrity of University courses and is a serious offense covered by Section 41301, Title 5 of the California Administrative Code. This section of the Code is published in the University Catalog, Schedule of Classes, and the Student Handbook. Any form of

cheating or plagiarism will not be tolerated. I will submit papers to online plagiarism services if I have any suspicions.

If you are caught cheating or plagiarizing in any form, I will assign you a grade of "F" for the course and file an official complaint with the Dean of Students asking for disciplinary action. **\*\*take note:** If you fail a course because of dishonesty the university will not allow you to retake the course. Because COMS 321 is a core requirement, this means you'll be unable to complete the COMS major. Don't even think it.

Always ask for help when you need it. I am happy to meet with you during office hours or by appointment. Don't hesitate to ask for additional help. And don't wait until you're behind - ask for help as soon as you need it.

Welcome to the class! I'm looking forward to our work together. It will be intense but rewarding -- and this class will improve your chances for success in the major and in your chosen career. Really.

### **Tentative Course Schedule**

I reserve the right to make adjustments in the schedule if warranted. Any changes will be announced in class and/or posted on the course newsgroup.

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| <b>W</b> | <b>5/27</b> | <b>Course Introduction &amp; Overview: discourse and rhetoric</b><br>Discussion of syllabus and course policies<br>introductory writing assignment   |
| <b>M</b> | <b>6/1</b>  | <b>Kinds of Argument; Contexts for Argument</b><br>Reading: Everything's an Argument [EA] - Chapters 1 & 2   |
| <b>W</b> | <b>6/3</b>  | <b>Types of Appeal: Ethos and Logos</b><br>Reading: EA -- Chapters 3 & 4<br>Hacker -- "Composing and Revising"<br><b>DUE: Letter to the Editor</b>   |
| <b>M</b> | <b>6/8</b>  | <b>Rhetorical Analysis</b><br>Reading: EA -- Chapters 5 and 9  |
| <b>W</b> | <b>6/10</b> | <b>Research: Finding and Evaluating Evidence</b><br>Reading: EA -- Chapters 16, 19<br>Hacker -- "Researching"<br>Dabbour -- <a href="http://library.csun.edu/kdabbour/comsresearch.html">http://library.csun.edu/kdabbour/comsresearch.html</a><br><b>DUE: Rhetorical Analysis</b> |
| <b>M</b> | <b>6/15</b> | <b>Research: Integrating and Documenting Data</b><br>Reading: EA -- Chapters 18 & 20<br>Hacker -- "MLA"  |
| <b>W</b> | <b>6/17</b> | <b>Structuring Arguments, Building a Case</b><br>Reading: EA -- Chapters 6, 7 & 8<br><b>DUE: Research Report</b>   |

- M 6/22 Proposals**  
Reading:EA -- Ch's 10 & 11
- W 6/24 Evaluations; Logical Fallacies**  
Reading: EA -- Chapter 17  
**Review of drafts for persuasive essay**
- M 6/29 Language and Style**  
Reading: EA -- Chapters 12 & 13
- W 7/1 Persuasive Presentations**  
Reading: Ch's 14 & 15  
**DUE: Persuasive Essay; Presentations**
- M 7/6 Final (Essay) Exam**