

COMS 430: Rhetorical Criticism

Fall, 2002

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Hours: Mondays, 6:00-7:00; Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:30-12:30
Texts: Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice*, 2nd ed.

COURSE OVERVIEW:

This course concerns the rationale, methods, and applications of rhetorical criticism. The central goal of this course is to improve students' understanding and evaluation of real-world persuasive communication. The lecture and reading materials are divided into two main units. First, we will discuss the general nature of both rhetoric and criticism, providing a basic conceptual framework for the identification and analysis of rhetorical artifacts. Second, we will survey eight contemporary critical approaches: [1] cluster criticism, [2] fantasy-theme criticism, [3] feminist criticism, [4] genre criticism, [5] ideological criticism, [6] metaphoric criticism, [7] narrative criticism, and [8] pentadic criticism.

PAPERS:

There are two papers in this course, both of which are applications of the critical approaches discussed in class. Papers must focus on actual rhetorical discourse, and must clearly describe the critical methods employed in the analysis and evaluation of the selected rhetorical artifact(s). All papers *must* be typed or word processed. Late papers *will not* be accepted. The requirements of the individual papers are as follows:

Paper I: This paper must employ one of the methods discussed in the first half of this course. These methods include: Neo-Aristotelian criticism, cluster criticism, fantasy-theme criticism, feminist criticism, and genre criticism. *Due October 24* [6-8 pages, 20% of class grade]

Paper II: This paper must employ one of the methods discussed in the second half of this course. These methods include: ideological criticism, metaphoric criticism, narrative criticism, and pentadic criticism. *Due December 5* [6-8 pages, 20% of class grade]

PRACTICUM:

In addition to the two written papers, students are required to present one oral criticism to the class. These presentations will be organized according to the various methods discussed in class and will be given on those days designated as practicums on the syllabus. [10-15 minutes, 20% of total class grade]

EXAMINATION:

There will be one examination, given during the final examination period. The examination will require students to select critical methods for various rhetorical artifacts and justify their selection of methods. [20% of class grade]

READING/HOMEWORK:

All reading assignments are due on the date listed on the syllabus. The lecture material in this course is designed to build upon the assigned readings, and therefore, it is imperative that students complete their reading assignments *before* class.

In order to ensure compliance with the reading assignments, there will be a series of ten homework assignments corresponding to chapters 2-11 in the textbook. Homework assignments need not be typed. Individual assignments will be graded on a pass/fail basis. Semester grades for homework will be assigned according to the following schedule:

No failing grades:	A
One failing grade:	B
Two failing grades:	C
Three or more failing grades:	F

All homework assignments are due at the *beginning* of class. Missing and late assignments will be calculated as failing grades. [20% of class grade]

WORKLOAD:

This course is designed according to the standard of the Carnegie unit (and in accordance with C.S.U.N. policy). This standard calls for two hours of outside study per week for each course unit. Thus, in this course, students are expected to devote six hours per week *outside* of class to reading, studying and preparing assignments. Evaluation standards for all coursework will reflect this expectation.

GRADING:

Course grades will be assigned by summing weighted assignment and exam grades. Grades of record will be determined by the following scale:

<i>Class G.P.A.</i>	<i>Grade</i>	<i>Class G.P.A.</i>	<i>Grade</i>
3.75-4.00	A	2.25-2.49	C+
3.50-3.74	A-	1.90-2.24	C
3.25-3.49	B+	1.60-1.89	C-
2.75-3.24	B	0.90-1.59	D
2.50-2.74	B-	0.00-0.89	F

CITIZENSHIP AND PARTICIPATION:

Although the grading scale reflects the determination of grades under typical circumstances, the instructor reserves the right to adjust grades—*both up and down*—based upon the subjective assessment of elements such as citizenship, participation, diligence, and improvement in class performance, among others.

Students are expected to be *good citizens* and *active learners*. This entails: coming to class on time and prepared, asking for clarification when needed, answering questions asked by the instructor and other students, handing in all assignments, respecting the opinions of others, and doing your best work at all times. Students who do not contribute to class beyond their own assignments should expect some reduction in their class grade.

ACADEMIC HONESTY:

All students are responsible for understanding and following campus policies of academic honesty as described in the schedule of classes and C.S.U.N. catalog. Students violating standards of academic honesty will be penalized by a failing grade in the course and/or university disciplinary action.

SYLLABUS

<u>Date:</u>	<u>Reading/ Assignments*:</u>	<u>Course Outline:</u>
8/29	Ch.1	I. Introduction to rhetorical theory and criticism.
9/3		A. The nature of rhetoric.
		1. Defining rhetoric.
		2. A model of rhetorical transaction.
9/5	Ch. 2	B. The nature of rhetorical criticism.
9/10		1. The critical process.
9/12	Ch. 3	2. Selecting rhetorical artifacts for analysis.
	criticism.	C. The traditional model: Neo-Aristotelian
9/17	Practicum	
9/19	Ch. 4	II. Contemporary critical approaches.
9/24	Practicum	A. Cluster criticism.
9/26	Ch. 5	B. Fantasy-theme criticism.
10/1	Practicum	C. Feminist criticism.
10/3	Ch. 6	D. Genre criticism.
10/8	Practicum	
10/10	Ch. 7	
10/15	Practicum	
10/17	Paper workshop	
10/24	Paper I	
10/29	Paper evaluation	
10/31	Ch. 8	E. Ideological criticism.
11/5	Practicum	F. Metaphoric criticism.
11/7	Ch. 9	G. Narrative criticism.
11/12	Practicum	H. Pentadic criticism.
11/14	Ch. 10	
11/19	Practicum	
11/26	Ch. 11	
12/3	Practicum	
12/5	Paper II	
12/10	Final Exam [3:00]	

* All reading assignments are from Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice*, 2nd ed.