

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

COMM 367-20W Spring 2019

T/Th, 1:00-2:15 Corboy 204

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Office Hours: 9-11, T/Th, Lewis Tower 900

Course Description:

This course prepares students to identify distinct moments of human communication as practical texts. That is, texts that aim to perform a particular kind of discursive work for a particular audience in a particular moment. Students will discover what makes criticism practical and productive, different modes of engaging discourse for analysis, the criteria by which rigorous criticism abides, and the skills to communicate that critical insight to others.

Course Objectives:

- Understand how rhetoric constructs, maintains, and challenges social reality,
- Understand and analyze the interactions between texts and contexts,
- Identify a range of methods for the study of rhetorical texts, with emphasis on primarily verbal texts,
- Understand that rhetorical method is a heuristic vocabulary that enables more critical and self-reflexive analysis of a text, and
- Be self-reflexive about your own rhetorical skills by applying the concepts learned in class to your own practices.
- Understand and use APA or MLA rules for writing formal academic papers.

Course Readings

Available on Sakai

Course Website:

Our Sakai space is where we will post information on COMM 367 online. It will also act as a community space where you can share your own interests and draw the class's attention to items of interest. So, check it often for course updates and other information.

You are expected to ask questions and seek out information needed to fulfill the course requirements as an active learner. Additionally, seeking out technical skills to solve new media problems is a key element in this class (and a transferable skillset beyond our classroom). Depending on how you build your own responses to assignments, you may need to seek out more sophisticated technical skills. Your investment in your own learning outcomes will show.

Attendance/Participation/Professionalism

This course covers a wide range of material and we have a lot of work to do together. First off (and so important), attendance is foundational. Making it to class on time and being present for the lectures, assignments, and discussions is essential to your success in COMM 367 and a sign of mutual respect. Second, teamwork is a central aspect of our daily class life, so please come prepared to talk about the readings and issues of the day. Both the professor and your peers will be supporting and evaluating your participation throughout the semester. You are responsible to one another in fulfilling our shared course objectives that include in-depth participation and discussion grounded in the assigned material you will read before our class meetings.

Attendance counts as part of professionalism. Documentation for university-authorized absences must be cleared with the professor in advance. It is your responsibility to ask classmates for

announcements you may have missed by arriving late. In the case of severe illness, death in the family, or religious holiday, the professor will help you find ways to make up the work.

In the unfortunate event that you fall ill, especially with a contagious ailment, please aid in preventing the spread of infection by not coming to class. Rather, submit the official documentation you are able to provide the professor when you are healthy and able to come to class.

Deadlines/Professionalism

Assignments are due on the dates indicated in the syllabus schedule below by paper and email at the beginning of class unless otherwise specified. It is the responsibility of the student to manage any scheduling conflicts with the course or missed time. I will not grant extensions except in the direst of circumstances and under no circumstances will I grant an extension within 24 hours of a due date. So please plan your semester ahead of time. As the old adage goes: *Plan your work. Then work your plan!* Missed deadlines will be assessed a deduction of one third of a letter grade per day (e.g. from A- to B+ for 1 day late). The penalty for lateness begins immediately after class on the due date.

All assignments must be completed in order to pass the course.

Student Meetings

I have regular drop-in office hours as indicated on the syllabus. You can also reach me via email to make an appointment to meet in person at my office. Missing a mutually agreed-upon meeting with me will negatively impact the professionalism component of your grade. Always follow through on your appointments, as they are for your benefit.

Grading:

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|---|---------|
| • Unit 1 Assignment (Evaluating Criticism) | 75 pts |
| • Unit 1 Assignment Peer Feedback | 25 pts |
| • Unit 2 Assignment (Trope Safari) | 100 pts |
| • Unit 2 Assignment Peer Feedback | 25 pts |
| • Unit 3 Assignment (Criticism Prospectus) | 150 pts |
| • Unit 3 Assignment Peer Feedback | 50 pts |
| • Research Paper | 250 pts |
| • Unit 4 Assignment (Finding Mainstream Examples) | 75 pts |
| • In-Class Activities and Professionalism | 150 pts |
| • Final Impromptu Rhetorical Criticism | 100 pts |

*All assignments must be completed in order to pass the course.

*All assignments must be submitted on time or marks will be deducted.

ASSIGNMENTS

Unit 1 Assignment (Evaluating Criticism, 75 pts)

By the end of Unit 1, you should have a good sense of how rhetorical criticism operates as a kind of rigorous method and how rhetorical criticism yields useful insights. In an effort to track your comprehension of those two operations and to give you an opportunity to establish a baseline for your scholarly writing, the first assignment asks you to locate a piece of rhetorical criticism (with instructor guidance if you wish) and provide a synopsis of the piece of criticism. How does it accomplish Zarefsky's simple formulation of "what's going on here?" and "what about it?" How does it meet Jasinski's criteria for criticism? This first assignment also functions as a component of a literature review for your larger research project.

Tasks:

- Identify a piece of rhetorical criticism related to a text, discourse, or topic that interests you.

- Evaluate the methodological rigor of the piece.
- Review the piece's insights and how it establishes critical value
- Account for what the piece provides you in terms of context and what questions remain to be asked
- Produce a clear and concise review of literature free from writing errors somewhere between 500 and 600 words
- The assignment is due January, 29th, typed and with copies for the instructor and other class members, unless otherwise noted

Unit 1 Assignment (Peer Feedback, 25 pts)

One way to improve our knowledge of critical method and our ability to produce clear writing is to reflect on critical practice and writing practice. In class on January 29th, we will workshop our classmates' Unit 1 assignments for both clarity and substance. Each student will provide corrections and comments, and a worksheet will be filled out by you documenting your contributions to your peers and an assessment of your peers' feedback for your project.

Unit 2 Assignment (Trobe Safari, 100 pts)

You are asked to identify a text (speech, discourse, conversation, etc.) that you can evaluate for its use of rhetorical devices to develop meaning and advance its practical ends. Once you've identified your text, you are asked to develop an account of the rhetorical maneuvers used in the text and how those maneuvers develop a particular and practical kind of meaning.

Tasks:

- Identify a text that advances the kinds of rhetorical practices you investigated in Unit 1 (when possible)
- Establish why the text is important (Think Zarefsky's what's going on here and what about it)
- Evaluate the rhetorical device(s) in the text that are intriguing
- Explain how those devices might advance the practical ends of the text
- Produce a clear and concise criticism of the tropological maneuvers of the text, free from writing errors, somewhere between 600 and 1000 words
- The assignment is due February, 12th, typed and with copies for the instructor and other class members, unless otherwise noted

Unit 2 Assignment Peer Feedback (25 pts)

One way to improve our knowledge of critical method and our ability to produce clear writing is to reflect on critical practice and writing practice. In class on February 12th, we will workshop our classmates' Unit 2 assignments for both clarity and substance. Each student will provide corrections and comments, and a worksheet will be filled out by you documenting your contributions to your peers and an assessment of your peers' feedback for your project.

Unit 3 Assignment (Criticism Prospectus, 150 pts)

You've identified an extant example of rhetorical criticism and found a new rhetorical text in that discursive arena. The next challenge is to connect existing critical literature to your own rhetorical object to propose a more detailed analysis of a communication practice that is shaping contemporary (or historical) life. The goal here is to demonstrate that there's an informed conversation happening about your chosen text or discourse, and that you've identified an object that makes a meaningful and practical contribution to that broader conversation.

Tasks:

- Identify a central text (this may be your text from the Unit 2 Assignment)

- Identify a scholarly discourse that informs your critique of that text/object (an annotated bibliography of relevant sources informing your critique)
- Specify how you plan to evaluate your text/object with methodological rigor
- Specify why interrogating your text/object will advance our understanding of communication practice (why it matters)
- Produce a plan for critical research (that might serve as an introduction to the final research project) of no more than 750 words.
- The assignment is due March, 14th, typed and with copies for the instructor and other class members, unless otherwise noted

Unit 3 Assignment Peer Feedback (50 pts)

One way to improve our knowledge of critical method and our ability to produce clear writing is to reflect on critical practice and writing practice. In class on March 14th, we will workshop our classmates' Unit 3 assignments for both clarity and substance. The significant difference here is we can provide feedback on how the research program might progress in new and insightful ways. Each student will provide corrections and comments, and a worksheet will be filled out by you documenting your contributions to your peers and an assessment of your peers' feedback for your project.

Research Paper (250 pts)

You are asked to produce an original piece of rhetorical criticism, ideally built off the previous assignments, that minimally answers Zarefsky's simple methodological questions ("what's going on here?" and "What about it?") and ideally satisfies Jasinski's multifaceted account of rhetorical criticism. More importantly, as you pursue those goals, you should demonstrate an ability to connect and ground your criticism in existing scholarly conversations and contexts, cite those supporting discourses appropriately, and coherently communicate your advancement of the practical and scholarly discussion.

Tasks:

- Establish a need for interrogating your identified text
- Connect that interrogation to existing scholarly discussions
- Establish a rigorous account of your critical criteria
- Evaluate your text/object/discourse according to the above criteria
- Explain why that evaluation helps us advance human understanding and communication practice
- Write with clarity and precision
- Demonstrate a command of a scholarly style guide
- Produce a text of 10K and 12K words, citations included, submitted via Sakai's *Turn-It-In* resource

Rewrites

You will be given an opportunity to correct and improve this project and the resultant grade by resubmitting the project by April 15th

Unit 4 Assignment (Finding Mainstream Examples, 75 pts)

In an effort to evaluate your ability to identify exigent texts, you are asked to share examples of criticism that speak to the specific modes of criticism discussed in Unit 4 (Power/Class/Economics-April 2nd, Gender-April 9th, and Race/Ethnicity-April 16th). Send these examples of criticism to the class via Sakai 24 hours prior to the class meeting time. This project will be evaluated on the mere existence of the submissions and the level of engagement the submissions coerce from the class. *You must submit one example for each session to receive credit for this assignment.*

In-Class Activities and Professionalism (150 pts)

Like most Communication courses, this one depends on the active engagement of students to bring new perspectives, voices, and ideas into discussion with core concepts. The first component of this contribution to the learning environment involves showing up on time, all the time (see attendance policy above). The second component is comporting yourself in a professional and courteous manner during course discussions. Disagreement is welcome, disparagement is not. The final component requires making your voice heard and contributions notable by engaging in class discussions.

Final Impromptu Rhetorical Criticism (100 pts)

As a final project, and perhaps a pure evaluation of your ability to produce rigorous and insightful criticism, you will be provided with the raw materials to produce rhetorical insights for a non-traditional communication process. Assuming the course stays on schedule, you'll have the final two weeks of the semester to process these raw materials. You will be given a prompt at the end of the semester and asked to write a rhetorical criticism in the time allotted to the final examination period.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

1/15: Introduction

- Rhetoric, Culture, and Criticism

UNIT 1: What is criticism?

1/17: On method, methodical work, rigor, and attitude

- Zarefesky

1/22 What does good criticism do?

- Jasinski, 125-131
- FDR's 1st Inaugural

1/24 What are the stakes of criticism?

- Jasinski 131-141

1/29 **UNIT 1 ASSIGNMENT (Evaluating criticism)**

UNIT 2: BUILDING BLOCKS OF FORMAL CRITICISM

1/31: In the beginning there was the word...

- Keith and Lundberg on Style
- FDR's 2nd Inaugural

2/5 This class is a metaphor

- Lakoff and Johnson 1 and 2
- FDR's 3rd Inaugural

2/7 Other Tropes of Representation

- Lakoff and Johnson 3 and 4
- Barthes on Wine and Steak

2/12 **UNIT 2 ASSIGNMENT (Trope Safari)**

UNIT 3: FORMAL CRITICISM & ITS DISCONTENTS

2/14 Practical rhetoric and practical criticism

- Keith and Lundberg on Audience and Rhetoric
- Space Speeches (Kennedy and Reagan)

2/19 Form and Reception

- Burke, Information and Form
- Barthes on Wrestling

2/21 When an apology is not an apology, we call it apologia

- Jasinski, on Apologia
- Nixon's Checkers Speech

2/26 Validity and Interpretation

- Lakoff and Johnson 5 and 6

2/28 What is True About Myanmar and Meditation

- Jack Dorsey Meditates and Mediates

3/5-3/7 SPRING BREAK

3/12 Critical Failure: the Negative Critique

- Burke on Debunking

3/14: **UNIT 3 ASSIGNMENT DUE (Prospectus for Rhetorical Criticism)**

UNIT 4: POWER, IDENTITY, & CRITICISM

3/19 Escaping the Isolation of the Text

- Jasinski on Intertextuality

3/21 You Got Your Bass in My Superstructure

- Selections from the Frankfurt School

3/26 **RESEARCH & WRITING TIME**

3/28 **RESEARCH & WRITING TIME**

4/2 The predictability of power

- Klosterman, This is Emo, Not Guilty
- **Bring in Class/Power Criticism**
- **RESEARCH PAPER DUE**

4/4 Feminist Criticism

- Felski, Against Feminist Aesthetics

4/9 Feminist Criticism Considered

- McMillan Cottom, "How We Make Black Girls Grow Up Too Fast."
- **Bring in Feminist Criticism**

4/11 Race and Rhetorical Criticism

- Gates
- hooks

4/16 Race and Criticism Considered

- Read McMillan Cottom "**I was pregnant and in crisis**"
- **Bring in Race/Ethnicity/Marginalized Community Criticism**

4/18 TBD (Choose your own critical adventure)

EASTER

4/23 TBD (Choose your own critical adventure)

4/25 TBD (Choose your own critical adventure)

- **REVISED SECOND SUBMISSION DUE**

FINALS WEEK

Final Project Due Friday May 3rd at 3PM