

English 101B: An Introduction to Rhetoric

No such thing as unrhetorical 'natural' language exists that could be used as a point of reference: language is itself the result of purely rhetorical tricks and devices.

–Friederich Nietzsche

Communication is a moral question: Who is to make more effort, the person sending the message or the person receiving it?

–Umberto Eco

Wednesdays, 01:00-03:50, PAS 3012

Course conductor: Randy Harris, x35362, raha@uwaterloo.ca,
Office hours: Wednesdays, 9:30-10:30, Thursdays, 12:30-2:00

Objectives

The objectives of 101B are the ongoing objectives of liberal arts education generally, and rhetorical education specifically: the enhancement of critical thinking in both the **private sphere** (exercising judgement) and the **public sphere** (engaging society and culture). We will pursue them by building and refining our **facility with rhetoric**. If you do this with energy and focus, you should also gain more understanding of and competence in the ways and means of **communication**.

Course epitome

We are going to answer one question, a rather messy one, but one which should help you define your thinking, your communicating, and your life as both homo sapien and citizen: what, in the name of Sam-I-Am, is rhetoric?

Digital base of operations

For a variety of electronic services, we will be using UW-ACE.

Required

Sellnow, Deanna D. 2009. *The Rhetorical Power of Popular Culture*. Toronto: Sage.

Recommended

Richards, Jennifer. 2008. *Rhetoric*. London: Routledge

Booth, Wayne C. 2004. *The Rhetoric of Rhetoric: The Quest for Effective Communication*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell

Style guide (the English department's official guide for academic writing)

Jane E. Aaron and Murray McArthur. 2006. *The Little, Brown Compact Handbook*. Third Canadian edition. Aaron and McArthur. Toronto: Addison Wesley Longman.

Requirements	worth	due
Take-home midterm exam	25%	23 October
Final exam	25%	tba
Essay	35%	proposal due: 14 October essay due: 2 December
Being rhetorical	15%	all the livelong day

Exams

Midterm

The Midterm will be an analysis of some assigned artifact along specific critical grooves; the artifact and the grooves will be revealed during the 21 October class; your analysis must be digitally submitted by midnight 23 October.

Final

You will have to know both "facts" and "ideas" for this course. To test the former, the final exam will include multiple-choice, true/false, short-answer questions. These facts will come mostly from the the readings. You need to read carefully, take clear, thorough notes, ask any questions that surface, talk to each other; most of all, think about and apply what you read and hear. If you use the information, it will stick. For the "ideas" quotient of 101B, there will be essay questions.

The final exam will cover the entire course.

Being rhetorical

Come to class, contribute to discussions, participate in the development of the course. You need to be engaged in the topics and themes of 101B every time you're in class (and you need to be in class).

Ways to get a good grade: ask **relevant** questions, make **salient** observations, look for and point out **connections** in the material, use the rhetorical concepts we encounter to complain about the unbelievable pressure of having to be rhetorical on demand, ...

Ways to get a mediocre grade: sit in your seat; avoid eye contact with the professor.

Ways to get a poor grade: stay away from class (of course, but also), make long irrelevant commentaries, treat your fellow students with notable disrespect while they are commenting to class, read your e-mail, text your friends and enemies, review the calls on your cell phone, have a sandwich and a thermos of soup, ...

Essay

Your essay grade is the **largest and most important component of your mark**. Start thinking about your essay right away. I'm not kidding. It will not have to be very long (2,750 - 3,250 words), but it will have to be very good. This is a third-year RPW course in the department of English Language and Literature; you should be writing and thinking about rhetorical issues at an advanced level, and you should know how to research and write an academic essay.

I require **digital submission**, in **RTF or PDF only**, by midnight on the due date; this makes the logistics much simpler, and also permits easier screening for originality/plagiarism. (the University of Waterloo utilizes). Use the [Turnitin.com](https://www.turnitin.com) drop box on the UW-ACE course page.

The essay will be a research-based critical analysis. You will have to **go beyond the course readings**, lectures, and discussions.

A critical analysis rhetorically examines a semiotic artifact in the light of some theory or theorist we are studying. A typical artifact for analysis would be an oration, a political or cultural or scientific argument, a novel or play, perhaps an argumentative exchange. But a scene from a movie is perfectly acceptable, too, or a website or a DVD interface, or a podcast, or the poster over your room-mate's bed, even a gum wrapper would work. Remember though, **critical analyses need to be theoretically informed**, so you will have to draw on the concepts and positions explored in the course.

What matters for your **understanding**, and consequently for your grade, is how you develop your analysis: what your examination yields in terms of explaining central aspects of the artifact and/or the framework you adopt, and how you demonstrate that yield (significantly including the research you marshal and deploy, and the cogency of your argument).

A proposal is required. You will need to write up a one-page essay plan and discuss it with me before you write the essay. The proposal should identify the **thesis** you will be arguing (for instance, that *Nip/Tuck* is a Marxist critique of the commodification of beauty, or that Barack Obama's Cairo speech exhibits the classic features of Aristotelian ethos, or that Halo3 is dangerous, in dramatic terms, for the motives it inculcates in its players). You will need to do preliminary **research** on your thesis: on both critical analyses of the artefact and on the theoretical framework you are applying.

My evaluation of the essay (including the proposal) will depend on the soundness, analytical sophistication, research depth, and rhetorical appropriateness of your work, along the following metrics:

Proposal

Articulation of your thesis	3%	
Research outline	4%	
Style and grammar (sentence and paragraph structure, diction, spelling, punctuation, agreement, ...)	3%	10%

Essay

Articulation and framing of your thesis	10%	
Research	20%	
Use of evidence (research and analysis)	20%	90%
Quality of argument	20%	
Style and grammar (as above)	20%	

Notes

Do the readings **before** the assigned class; it is often a good idea to read the assignments after the class as well.

If you have any questions, please make sure you **ask them**.

Schedule		
Date	Topics	Readings
16 September	Rhetoric, the skinny	
23 September	Rhetoric, the phat	RPPC 1 & 2
30 September	Narrative inducements	RPPC 3; Booth (1963)
7 October	Dramatistic inducements	RPPC 4; Burke (1920)
14 October	Power inducements Essay proposal due	RPPC 5; Rose (1995)
21 October	Gender inducements Take-home midterm distributed	RPPC 6; hooks (1985/1996)
28 October	Musical inducements	RPPC 7; EconomistStaff (2008)
4 November	Graphic inducements	RPPC 8
11 November	Video inducements	RPPC 9
18 November	No classes, no office hours this week; use it for essay building	
25 November	In-class artifact analysis	Booth (1964)
2 December	In-class artifact analysis Essay due	

Academic Integrity

Members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. [Check [Academic Integrity at UW](#) for more information.]

The late policy is simple: **don't be**. If personal concerns, including health issues, prevent you from meeting a deadline, contact me ahead of time to make arrangements; if unforeseen circumstances prevent you from meeting a deadline, contact me when you are able and we can work something out. Please note that bad planning, conflict with assignments in other courses, and video-game addictions (to list a few attested reasons offered by students in the past) are not interpretable as personal concerns.

Discipline: You are expected to know what constitutes academic integrity [check [Academic Integrity at UW](#)] to avoid committing an academic offence, and to take responsibility for your actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course instructor, academic advisor, or the undergraduate Associate Dean. For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71, [Student Discipline](#). For typical penalties check [Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties](#).

Appeals: A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70 (Student Petitions and Grievances) (other than a petition) or Policy 71 (Student Discipline) may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to Policy 72 ([Student Appeals](#)).

Grievances: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70, [Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4](#). When in doubt please be certain to contact the department’s administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.

Note for Students with Disabilities: The [Office for Persons with Disabilities](#) (OPD), located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the OPD at the beginning of each academic term.

Digital screening: The University of Waterloo utilizes [Turnitin.com](#).