

ENGL 15: Rhetoric and Composition

Course Description

[ENGL 15](#) is an intensive, rhetorically- and digitally-based experience in reading and writing that will prepare students to both understand the communications that surrounds them and to succeed in their communication efforts. Thus, in this course, we will focus specifically on analyzing verbal and visual texts (our reading) as well as on producing such texts (our writing), always in terms of rhetorical principles. This course will emphasize improving students' rhetorical literacy, critical literacy, and functional literacy, as described in Stuart Selber's concept of multiliteracies (Multiliteracies for a Digital Age).

The goal of [ENGL 15](#), then, is to help students build on what they already know how to do as they become more confident readers and writers in this ever increasingly digital world. Students will become more attuned to their goals as a writer, more aware of the ongoing conversation surrounding chosen topics, and more resourceful in terms of the appropriate delivery of information, the rhetorical appeals at their disposal, and the needs and expectations of their audience. Students will also learn to research and synthesize multiple outside sources in order to support your arguments effectively and ethically. Finally, students will apply these literacies in their compositions in a variety of mediums in order to participate more skillfully in both professional and personal spheres.

Altogether, by the end of the course, students will be able to critically assess the rhetoric of other texts, to develop thoughtfully constructed texts of their own, and to apply these skills to genres that they will encounter both inside and outside the university.

Required Texts and Materials

- Textbook to be determined
- Penn Statements, vol. # (ISBN: #####)
- Digital writing device (laptop, tablet, smartphone with a word processor like Microsoft Word or Google Docs)

Course Objectives

- Students will compose with attention to rhetorical audience, rhetorical purpose, genre, exigence, and context.
- Students will read and communicate rhetorically and critically assess the quality of other texts' arguments.

- Students will perform research and synthesize that research to support an overarching argument.
- Students will provide feedback on peer work to help sustain a constructive classroom environment and to reflect on their own work through evaluating the success of other iterations of the same genre.
- Students will reflect on their rhetorical choices and the outcomes of those choices to defend their pursuit of a successful argument.
- Students will learn how to foster relationships with professionals like professors through such means as office hour conferences.

Requirements

Unit 1

The literacy narrative invites you to examine your literacy in much broader ways than your basic ability to read and write. It helps you imagine your literacy in terms of how you react to and interpret language in particular ways, and how you produce and use language to achieve certain kinds of goals. You will recount a significant literacy event or development in your life. In the broadest sense, this assignment asks you to reflect in some way upon the roles that reading, writing, and community have played in your life-to consider, in other words, how you became the literate person you are now and are still in the process of becoming. This project will introduce the concepts of exigence, audience, genre, context, and telling a story to build an argument for a larger rhetorical purpose.

Unit 2

The ad analysis project gives you a chance to practice some of the skills and concepts we've discussed in class to complete a rhetorical analysis of an advertisement of your choice. Advertisements are always persuasive, in that they have specific designs on their audience for a specific rhetorical purpose. This project will require you to evaluate the success of someone else's argument through their available means of persuasion in their appeals to ethos, pathos, logos, and kairos.

Unit 3

The position project responds to an exigence, an issue of personal or social importance that can be changed. It advances an informed stance regarding this problem and uses research to connect the issue to larger conversations. Through strong evidence and the available means of persuasion, it seeks to persuade its rhetorical audience to change its attitudes and ideas about its subject. In other words, a position paper tells your reader what you think, why you think it, and why they should think so as well. In this project, your role is that of an advocate. You will

present a convincing argument to a rhetorical audience that does not already agree with you. To do so, you must demonstrate that you understand the reasons why people believe differently than you and practice respectful engagement with the various perspectives on your topic. In order to do this, you will practice critical research and citation skills.

Unit 4

The multimodal project will require you to draw upon the analytic, research, and composing skills that you have sharpened over the semester to process, report, and disseminate information about a previous paper topic to an audience via digital multimodal design and delivery. This unit will strengthen your ability to assess the effectiveness of visual and auditory rhetoric and use various softwares to achieve more successful means of multimodal persuasion.

Process Work

Each unit assignment requires your engagement in a cumulative writing process in order to get multiple layers of feedback and thus opportunities to improve your compositions. For each unit, you will develop and submit a collection of process work that includes the following:

1. Pitch: This piece of the process work establishes a specific vision for the project. Here is an opportunity for feedback from the instructor to tailor each envisioned project to the requirements of the assignment.
2. Rough draft: An initial rough draft will be mostly complete, but in need of sharpening and polishing. Here is an opportunity for feedback from the instructor and peers to evaluate room for further improvement, both for content and style.
3. Peer review: The purpose of peer review is two-fold: it enables another set of eyes that is familiar with the goals of the assignment to evaluate how well a project achieves these goals, and it allows for the reviewer to reflect on their own work when assessing a project with similar goals. Here is an opportunity to get detailed feedback to improve the overall quality of the project.
4. Polished draft: After some revising as informed by the multiple layers of feedback, a second, more polished draft will be submitted. Here is an opportunity for the instructor to identify what each project has excelled in.
5. Reflection: Meant to be written alongside the development of the project itself, the reflection represents the thought processes that informed the how and why each project was composed the way it was. In order for each reflection to be as explanatory as possible, an emphasis on concise and specific writing while attempting to be comprehensive in your description is necessary.

In the event that a component of the process work is incomplete, the highest possible grade that a polished draft can achieve will be reduced by a letter grade. For example, if a peer review is incomplete, then the highest grade that the polished draft for that project is a B. However, each polished draft is required in order to pass the course.

Submission

All assignments will be collected electronically through asynchronous submission via Canvas. Every assignment will be due at 11:59 pm EST on the due date. Please do not submit assignments via email; you will be asked to submit them via Canvas.

Extensions and Late Work

You may have an extension on any assignment as long as you ask 24 hours in advance. All late work that is submitted without a requested extension will be reduced by a step down the grading scale for every day it is late. For example, if a polished draft that would have earned a B+ if it was turned in on time is submitted a day late, that polished draft will receive a B.

In the event an extension is requested for a peer review, it will be your responsibility to notify that peer that your review will be submitted later than expected.

Revise and Resubmit

For polished drafts that receive a B- or lower, you may request a revise and resubmit plan. This plan will include an office hour meeting to go over spaces to strengthen your paper and to establish a new deadline for the resubmission. The extension policy applies to revise and resubmits as well. The final polished draft is not eligible for revise and resubmit plans due to when final grades must be submitted.

The final day to meet to establish a revise and resubmit plan is the Friday of Week 13, and the last day to submit revise and resubmits is the Friday of Week 14.

Office Hour Conferences

Office hours are an opportunity to get help to develop and plan upcoming assignments and to receive additional feedback on drafts. You will schedule all office hour conferences via the office hour sign-up sheet on Google Docs. Please sign up for all office hour conferences at least a day in advance, as if no one signs up for a time slot, I will not be in the office. If you are unable to make it to a meeting, simply erase your name from the sheet. If you are unable to meet during my scheduled office hours, please email me with a few proposed times to set up a meeting outside of these hours.

Two office hour conferences are required as part of your participation grade. One meeting must be within the first four weeks of the semester in order to establish specific goals for your writing for the semester. Another can be any time during the semester. Revise and resubmit meetings do count for this requirement. You are welcome to attend office hours as often as you would like after those two required meetings.

Twice in the semester, once in Week 4 and once in Week 13, class will be canceled in order to hold office hour meetings during class time.

Participation

Your success in the course is dependent on your active participation. Active participation can look a lot of ways, and most relevantly for this course it will require being attentive in class, asking questions, completing in-class activities, and engaging with peers and the instructor. Your participation grade will include:

1. First four weeks office hour conference
2. Second office hour conference
3. Completion of daily freewrites
4. Completion of in-class activities

Attendance

Regular attendance is required. University policy ([Policies and Rules, 42-27](#)) states that a student whose absences are excessive “may run the risk of receiving a lower grade or a failing grade,” regardless of their academic performance in the class.

You run that risk if your absences (including excused absences) exceed three class sessions in a MWF-scheduled class/two class sessions in a TTh-scheduled class, with penalties to your final grade increasing with each additional absence. Each additional absence will reduce your final grade by one step down the grading scale.

If your absences exceed nine class sessions in a MWF-scheduled class/six class sessions in a TTh-scheduled class, you should not expect to receive a passing grade.

[Excused absences](#) are appropriate. However, excessive absences—regardless of reason—are unacceptable (see Policies and Rules, 42-27). Students with a (long term) health issue or emergency situation should contact their advisor and [Student Support Services](#) to discuss the situation (including potentially [withdrawal options](#)).

If you know that you will miss a class for a university-sanctioned activity or are forced to miss a class due to an illness/emergency, it is your responsibility to:

- Contact your instructor through Canvas email before missing class (or as soon as possible, in the case of an emergency);
- Include the date of the absence(s) and copies of any supporting (non-medical) paperwork (e.g., an excuse form); and
- Outline the steps you are taking to stay current with materials. Do not ask the instructor what was missed—get class notes and materials from a classmate. Consider using an office hours visit to review missed materials as soon as it is safe and practical to do so.

Note: Even if absent, you are still responsible for the timely submission of writing projects and process work. In-class writings/activities cannot be made up, regardless of the reason for the absence.

You should retain a record of all absences, contact emails, and supporting paperwork. At the end of the semester, the optional Reflective Memoir short assignment will give you the opportunity to explain any absences using this information, which may/may not reduce a penalty for excessive absences.

Assignments

Final grades will be assessed according to a weighted scale. Completion of all four polished drafts is required to pass the course.

- Memoir polished draft: 15%
- Rhetorical analysis polished draft: 15%
- Position polished draft: 15%
- Multimodal project polished draft: 15%
- Peer reviews: 20% (5% each)
- Engagement assignments: 10%
- Participation: 10%

All course assignments will be graded using the specific grading criteria established in the attached assignment sheets.

Grading

The Program in Writing and Rhetoric uses the 4.0 scale when calculating grades. Because Canvas can only calculate grades using a 100-point scale, your instructor will use percentages equivalent to the 4.0 scale when entering project and participation grades in the Canvas Gradebook.

Letter Grade	Grade Equivalent	Grade Equivalents as Percentages of 4.0 for the Canvas Gradebook
A	4.0	100
A-	3.67	91.75
B+	3.33	83.25
B	3.0	75
B-	2.67	66.75
C+	2.33	58.25
C	2.0	50
C-	1.67	41.75
D+	1.33	33.25
D	1.0	25
D-	0.67	16.75
F	0.00	0

Peer Review and Engagement Grading

For small assignments like pitches, this class uses a simplified grading system as follows:

Grade	Percentage	Criteria
✓ +	100%	The submission correctly and completely addressed the assignment.
✓	66%	The submission correctly addressed the assignment, but it might be missing something.
✓ -	33%	The submission attempted the assignment, but it was missing multiple components and/or did not correctly address the components it did attempt.
0	0%	The submission was not turned in.

Final Grade Scales

The PWR uses midpoints between grade equivalents as cutoffs for final grades. For example, 3.835 is the midpoint between 4.0 (A) and 3.67 (A-). Your instructor will use percentages equivalent to the 4.0 scale when determining final grades in the Canvas Gradebook.

Letter Grade	Midpoint Cutoff on the 4.0 Scale	Midpoint Cutoffs as Percentages for the Canvas Gradebook
A	3.835-4.0	95.875-100
A-	3.5-3.834	87.5-95.874
B+	3.165-3.49	79.125-87.49
B	2.835-3.164	70.875-79.124
B-	2.5-2.834	62.5-70.874
C+	2.165-2.49	54.125-62.49
C	1.5-2.164	37.5-54.124
D	0.5-1.49	12.5-37.49
F	0.049	0.12.49

Submissions to *Penn Statements*

To submit your work to *Penn Statements*, visit the [*Penn Statements*](#) website. There you will find the most updated submission guidelines. Each student may only submit one project, so if you would like to submit, please choose your strongest project.