QUEER RHETORICS
WRTG 3020-024, Fall 2006
MWF 2:00–2:50 PM, ECON 16
Course Description and Policies

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Instructor: Charles Doersch
Office: ENVD 1B30D
Phone: Office: (303) 735-4664
E-mail: bergbock@aol.com (best one to use)
        charles.doersch@colorado.edu
Office Hours: 10:00 –10:50 AM

COURSE OVERVIEW:

Queer Rhetorics is a reading- and writing-intensive seminar/workshop. The premise of any workshop class is that we learn how to write well by writing. In this class, we will immerse ourselves in the ideas that come from or reflect on GLBT experience, which will provide the context for our practice to become more effective and adept writers. During the semester we will survey various rhetorical contexts for queer issues occurring in a variety of media engaging such topics as queer history, psychology, theory, coming-out, political activism, academic research, issues of identity, spirituality, etc. We will use this to generate thoughtful discussion and analysis, as well as to help us develop our own voices as writers. [Please note: while you do not have to identify as LGBTIQ etc. to take this class or succeed in it, you do need to maintain an open mind to the intellectual and critical possibilities of queer perspectives.]

In this class you will develop and practice effective writing strategies that will help you discover what you think about a subject, and how to organize your ideas clearly and persuasively. You will work together as a community of writers to practice revision strategies that will help uncover new possibilities in your subjects and refine your writing for your readers. At times, we will use class as a writing workshop, sharing our drafts in small groups to give and receive feedback. At times, we will meet as a seminar, sharing our critical responses to various readings with the class as a whole. We will actively contribute our insights and beliefs to one another, engaging in thoughtful discussion of issues
on which we may not always agree. As we respectfully challenge each other and ourselves, we become more critically accurate readers, thinkers, and writers.

TEXTS:


• A college-level dictionary of your choice.

• Other readings and course materials will be provided in the form of handouts or made available on eReserve.

• Student drafts.

SELF-DIRECTION

Of course, you are responsible for keeping track of schedules and assignments, for knowing your workshop responsibilities and group assignments, for following directions, and for tracking due dates. If you are absent, you are responsible for finding out what you missed and turning in any makeup work.

ATTENDANCE:

Attendance is required. In a seminar/workshop class, your preparation and participation are crucial to your improving and developing as a writer, and to the success of the rest of the class.

You may miss three classes without harm to your grade. There are no “excused absences.” Each absence exceeding three will lower your final grade by one level (for example, B to a B- for four absences; B to a C+ for five absences, etc.). Six or more absences will automatically result in failure of the course without exception.

Arriving late for class negatively affects your participation grade.
If you foresee any attendance conflicts because of religious observance, please notify me during the first week of the semester so that suitable schedule accommodations can be made.

ASSIGNMENTS:

You will be writing one major persuasive research essay and one preparatory Literature Review that will be workshopped, revised, and graded for the course. In addition, you will be writing shorter assignments throughout the semester — some of which will be graded. A regular and required assignment is that you read and make written comments on paper drafts of your classmates (typically distributed in class) in advance of the class. You must come to class ready to comment orally and to hand in written comments done outside of class on the work of your colleagues and to share in their inquiry. Students serve regularly as critical readers whose reflection on drafts submitted by classmates will be a regular feature of the workshop. These critical reflections should be prepared in advance of class and be well organized, cogent, and to the point. They should identify weaknesses and propose possible remedies.

The principal text in the course will be your own writing. Please have duplicated drafts (typed, double-spaced in hard copy, MLA format) ready when due (usually forty-eight hours before they are to be workshopped). Drafts are required, but not graded. They factor into your final essay grade. Please date and number all drafts. If you miss classroom critiques because you do not turn in drafts, your writing will almost certainly suffer. I will not accept final papers that have not been reviewed on a regular basis over the course of the assignment. “First draft” final versions are unacceptable and will receive an “F”. Late papers will not be accepted.

Computer problems do not excuse the failure to prepare. If you are having problems with your personal computer, remember that there are computer labs all over campus. Plan ahead.

GRADING:

All assigned work (including drafts) must be completed to pass the course.

It is difficult to earn an “A” on a paper in this class. Writing is a skill, one that can always be improved. “C” is the dividing line between satisfactory work and unsatisfactory work. “B” demonstrates good work. “A” is outstanding, exceptional, and rare work; it is definitely not the norm.
Because participation is a significant element in grading, it is certainly possible for a student to get a final grade in the class that is higher than the grades received on writing assignments.

*Please note that while almost any essay topic is potentially rich enough to lead you to produce excellent writing, some topics are less likely to lend themselves to the kind of critical analysis and original approaches that are essential for "A" or "B" papers. Make sure you discuss topics with me.

Grading Scale for Papers:

A  Excellent in form, style, and content – original, substantive, insightful, persuasive, clear, and free from mechanical errors.
B  Good, interesting, with above-average thought and expression; no major flaws.
C  Adequate, fulfilling the assignment. Reasonably competent; has a mixture of strengths and weaknesses.
D  Poor in content, form, style, and/or mechanics. Disorganized, unfocused, illogical, confusing, or containing pervasive errors that impair readability.
F  Incoherent, seriously flawed, plagiarized, never turned in, or not turned in on time.

REVISION:

The word "revision" literally means "to see again." Global revision of most writing projects is a requirement for the course, and the extent and success of your revision process comprises part of what your grades are based on. Although I spend a good deal of time writing comments on your papers, it is still your responsibility to read your own work holistically, using my comments, workshop reflections, and what you have learned as a guide, to discover ways to improve the clarity, content, analysis, and style of your papers. It is never adequate to simply fix the specific concerns or problems brought to your attention by your workshop group or me.

PARTICIPATION:

This aspect of your grade reflects your mental attendance. In other words, those students who simply show up will not do well; those who are actively engaged in the course will succeed in this area. This is not a "lecture" course in nature, and you learn rhetorical skills primarily through guided, deliberate practice and participation. Participation includes providing quality written and oral feedback during peer reviews and workshops, asking intelligent and relevant questions during discussions and following presentations, acting professionally and in the
manner of a colleague (meaning participating fully in all class exercises), etc. 
*Arriving late for class negatively affects your participation grade.*

I encourage students to have challenging and critical interactions both with me and with peers, of course within the context of mutual respect.

Grading Scale for Participation:

A Always prepared for class; participates without being called on; criticisms of other student papers show insight, close reading; comments are clear, succinct, and helpful.

B Generally prepared for class; occasionally participates without being called on; criticisms of other student papers demonstrate a good grasp of the course goals; comments generally are clear and helpful.

C Adequately prepared for class; only participates when called on; mastery of the course goals generally is evident, but criticisms of student papers, although somewhat helpful, demonstrate a less-than-thorough reading or understanding of the paper or course goals.

D Less than adequate preparation; usually only participates if called on; criticisms of other student papers demonstrate a casual reading, at best; comments demonstrate a failure to master the course goals.

F Disruptive to class (talking, reading other materials, continual tardiness, etc.); unprepared when called on; unable or unwilling to participate in class discussions.

35% Graded writing assignments
15% Literature Review
20% Persuasive Research Essay
30% Participation (including in-class non-graded assignments, "scribbles & notes," and general participation)

**Plagiarism:**

Uncited, plagiarized material shall be treated as academically dishonest, and the paper will be assigned an “F” as a result. If you are confused as to what constitutes plagiarism, you should review the CU Honor Code on this topic (http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html) as well as the extensive section on the topic in your LB Brief. If you are unclear on this, see the instructor.

Papers submitted by any student, written in part or in whole by someone other than that student, shall be considered to constitute fraud under the University Honor Code, and result in the assignment of an “F” for the entire course and your case reported to the Dean.
WRITING HELP:

Aside from seeing me during office hours, you can visit the Writing Center at Norlin Library Room E156. These are consultants who can provide sound advice at all stages of the writing process. You can schedule individual consultations from Monday–Thursday 10:00 am–7:00 pm, Friday 10:00 am–1:00 pm, and Sunday 4:00 pm–7:00 pm. To make appointments, register at the Writing Center website http://www.colorado.edu/pwr/writingcenter.html or at the Writing Center front desk.

SPECIAL NOTES:

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Students should notify the Counselor for Students with Disabilities at the Disabilities Service Office, Willard 322 (303-492-8671 or http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices).

If English is not your native language, you should let me know the first week of classes so that I can better assist you in the course, advise you about ESL courses, and/or refer you to appropriate services on campus.