Description

Rhetoric is classically defined as the art of persuasion -- the strategies a writer or speaker uses to convey a message to an audience in order to gain their assent to a particular idea, belief, or action. Rhetorical acts, whether spoken or written, are “transactional,” that is, the reader/audience plays an important role in how a particular message is construed and thus how effective or successful the writer has been. Rhetorical acts are also “situational” and “contextual”: they arise in situations where meaning and agreement are not univocal, or universally agreed upon, and who is speaking and who is listening matter as much what is said.

Rhetoric is inextricably linked to power and to civic life. Who gets to determine the prevailing meanings by which we live our lives is one of the primary questions or subjects of this course. Race, class, and gender are three of the most important social categories—or frames of experience—through which we live and act in the world. By examining rhetorics of race, class, and gender through the practical arts of written composition, we will engage in intensive inquiry and critical thinking, the *sine qua non* of higher education.

We will compose and study a great many texts, from popular media and academic research to your own essays to understand how race, class, and gender are constructed and represented in a continual dialectical process of normalization and disruption.

Course Objectives

This course focuses upon rhetorical modes of inquiry you will use in college, in the workplace, and in the civic domain across a full spectrum of persuasive strategies, including analysis and argument. This course reinforces and builds upon skills taught in first-year writing and rhetoric, with a greater emphasis on the rhetorical context: the relationship between writer, reader, subject, and purpose in composing and revising a text. Although this course focuses on race, class, and gender, this topic is not intended to supplement your knowledge in a major. Rather, the topic serves as a means to an end. Through class discussion and workshops, you will engage in dialogue with your peers, working out meaningful theses, testing rhetorical strategies, responding to objections and potential objections, and revising to meet the needs of your audience. Like other instructors of WRTG 3020 courses, I demand a high level of student participation.
Objectives for this course include four key areas: Critical Thinking and its Written Application; The Writing Process; Rhetorical Situation; and Mechanics and Style.

**Critical Thinking and Its Written Application**

You should leave WRTG 3020 able to:

- See writing as a form of personal engagement, demanding an awareness of the inherent power of language and its ability to bring about change.
- Pose a question, problem, or issue at issue.
- Locate and use resources when necessary to exploring a line of inquiry.
- Critically evaluate information sources for credibility, validity, timeliness, and relevance.
- Draw inferences from a body of evidence.
- Distinguish flawed from sound reasoning, and be able to respond to and challenge claims.
- Recognize a thesis or central claim and understand the organic relationship between thesis and support in an essay.
- As a writer, structure and develop points of argument in a coherent order to build a case; as a reader, recognize this structure and development within texts.
- Critique your own works in progress and those of others.
- Recognize that academic and public writing is dialogic, addresses an audience, and anticipates the thinking, the questions, and the possible objections of readers.

**The Writing Process**

As a writer, you should be able to:

- Understand writing as an ongoing process that requires drafting and various strategies for developing, revising and editing texts.
- Understand that revision is informed by critical dialogue.
- See the critical analysis of others’ work as relevant to your own writing.
Rhetorical Situation

You should learn to:

• Exercise rhetorical skills: frame issues, define and defend theses, invent and arrange appeals, answer counterarguments, and contextualize conclusions.

• Value writing as a collaborative dialogue between authors and audiences, critics, and colleagues.

• Make decisions about form, argumentation, and style based on the expectations of different audiences.

• Recognize that a voice or style appropriate to one discipline or rhetorical context might be less appropriate for another.

• Develop "topic"-specific language that is appropriate for the defined audience while also intelligible to a non-expert audience.

Mechanics and Style

You should be able to:

• Convey meaning through concise, highly readable language.

• Apply the conventions of grammar, sentence structure, and other mechanics basic to communication in the English language.

• Develop skills in proofreading.

• Use voice, style, and diction appropriate to the rhetorical context.

• Use paragraph structure and transitional devices to aid the reader in following a complex train of thought.

Textbooks and Readings

• *The Writer’s Help*, a Bedford/St. Martin’s online handbook.
• Academic articles and additional media will be distributed in class or made available through D2L.

Recommended:

• *They Say, I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*, Graff & Birkenstein, 2nd ed.
Writing Assignments and Grading Criteria

• Auto-ethnography (7-10 pages)
A narrative essay in which you draw from personal experience to reflect on a question about race, class, and/or gender as a social construct and discursive practice that produces an identity for the self and others. (20%)

• Critical analysis of an argument (5-8 pages)
An essay in which you rhetorically analyze the representation of race, class, and/or gender in a selected source—an article, editorial, website, magazine, TV show, or other medium—and offer critical commentary. (15%)

• Critical analysis of an academic article (5-8 pages)
An essay in which you summarize the central claim and supporting evidence and reasoning, pose questions about the author’s (hypo)thesis, conclusions, and research methods, and assess the rhetorical effectiveness of the article. (20%)

• Research project on an issue of race, class, or gender. (8-15 pages)
An essay on a problem or question you wish to investigate, locating the question in its broader social and rhetorical context, cite relevant sources of information, and draw tentative conclusions from the data you’ve collected and analyzed. (30%)

• Peer-review of classmate’s research project. (2-3 pages)
A critical review of another student’s research question, supporting evidence, sources, argument, conclusion, and overall style of presentation. (10%)

• A letter to me in which you reflect on your learning in this class. (2 pages)
Given your written work and your participation in class this semester, what have you learned about rhetoric, about race, class and gender, and about yourself as a writer and student? (5%)

Grading Criteria

“A” level work reflects excellence in all areas. An “A” suggests that work is not only thought provoking and structurally polished, but that assignments are completed with a high level of stylistic and critical independence. “A” level work presents the reader with fresh and independent thinking, logical organization, and excellent control over mechanics and style.

“B” level work is very good, well above average. This work explores difficult questions in a way that is creative, critical and thought provoking. “B” level work is critically and organizationally sound, is stylistically competent, and contains few errors.

“C” level work indicates that assignments are completed adequately, meeting minimum requirements. This grade indicates that the work is competent at a college level and that
all aspects of the assignment have been addressed. However, the work may be hindered by a lack of sufficient critical inquiry, organizational clarity, and control over mechanics and style.

“D” level work is substandard at the college-level. It is usually completed in haste and reflects little thought or attention to detail. A “D” indicates that major portions of the assignment are completed poorly.

“F” level work is incomplete or inadequate. An “F” will also be given if plagiarism has occurred.

**Attendance**

If you miss more than four classes, your final grade will drop by one increment for each absence. Please try to contact me ahead of time if you know you must miss a class. If you are absent, contact a classmate for the information and assignments you missed.

**Conferences**

During the course of the semester, we will meet for two, individual, 20-minute conferences to discuss your writing. I sincerely want to know how I can best help you as a writer, how I can help you to achieve what is most important to you. You can help me be a better reader of your work if you prepare questions and concerns about a piece of writing ahead of our conference.

**Writing Center**

If you want additional help with your writing, the Writing Center in Norlin Library is a great place to go to talk about ideas, improve your thesis or essay organization, or just generally work on your writing skills. Check the Writing Center website for more information about hours and services, or request an appointment online at: http://www.colorado.edu/pwr/writingcenter.html.

**Additional University Policies**

**Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is defined as the use of another’s ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgment. Examples of plagiarism include failing to use quotation marks when directly quoting from a source; failing to document distinctive ideas from a source; fabricating or inventing a source; turning in someone else’s work as your own; and copying information from electronic sources. In this course, if you hand in a piece of writing that is plagiarized in full or in part, you will receive a failing grade on that assignment and the F will be factored into your final course grade.
The Honor Code
All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-725-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Other information on the Honor Code can be found at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html and at http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/.

Disabilities
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 (303-492-8671, Willard 322, www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices).

Religious Observances
Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments, or required attendance. In this class, I ask that you contact me at least one week ahead of the date(s) that you will be absent so that we can discuss any assignments/class material that you will miss.

Classroom Behavior
Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. (See policies at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html and at http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code.)

Discrimination and Harassment
The University of Colorado at Boulder policy on Discrimination and Harassment, the University of Colorado policy on Sexual Harassment and the University of Colorado policy on Amorous Relationships apply to all students, staff and faculty. Any student, staff or faculty member who believes s/he has been the subject of discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, sexual
orientation, or veteran status should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. Information about the ODH, the above referenced policies and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be obtained at http://www.colorado.edu/odh.

Schedule

Jan 17-19
Introduction to WRTG 3020.
Introduction to race, class, and gender in a writing and rhetoric course.
Berthoff: “How we construe is how we construct.”
Kittredge: “Interlude”
Assignment: • Write 1-2 page letter to me. What would you like me to know about you as a person, as a student, and as a writer?
• Write a 1-2 page, double-spaced vignette, a story or scene from personal experience that is implicitly or explicitly about race, social class, gender, or sexuality.
Bring two copies to class on Tuesday the 24th, one to workshop and one to hand in.