Syllabus: Conversations on the Law WRTG 3020-002 Spring 2014

Class Meetings: Mon/Wed/Fri 9:00-9:50 am Location: HUMN 370
Lecturer: Gail Georgeson, J.D.; M.A. in Linguistics-TESOL Emphasis
E-mail: Gail.georgeson@colorado.edu (best way to reach me)
Office Phone: 303-735-3058. Office Hours: M/W 10-11:30 and by appointment. Additional hours will be scheduled before major papers and Moot Courts. My office is in the ENVD building on Euclid Ave., in the PWR Department Room 1B50-F. Go downstairs to the basement level of the building and enter through the door that says “Program for Writing and Rhetoric.” Pass the faculty mailboxes on your right, then turn right into the large room with cubicles, then take the second left and I’m in the second cubicle on the left.

Reading Assignments: There is no textbook for this class, but you will be given several reading assignments, many with homework questions, throughout the semester. These will be posted on D2L or handed out in class. If you have any difficulty accessing them on D2L, please email me ASAP. NOTE: Some of the reading assignments, particularly court opinions, may be dense and long, so leave yourself enough time to complete the assignments. Please bring any questions you have about new vocabulary or concepts to class. We will spend a good deal of time early in the semester getting used to “legalese” and you will be quizzed on legal terms and legal argument concepts.

Homework Assignments: You will be assigned homework questions on some of the readings and you are expected to have completed the answers before you come to class. Some assignments will just be collected, others you will be asked to present on during class, and turn them in after class. NOTE: POINTS ARE DEDUCTED FOR LATE HOMEWORK AND NO HANDWRITTEN WORK WILL BE ACCEPTED.

Research Paper: One of your Major Writing Assignments will require you to conduct independent research on a legal topic of interest to you. You will work on your own (with my guidance) to find relevant and timely texts including court cases and law review articles for this assignment. It is the most time consuming and the most heavily weighted writing assignment of the semester.

Writing Resources for Students:
The CU Boulder Writing Center, located in the Norlin Commons (Norlin E111), offers one on one consultations and is an excellent opportunity for you to get feedback and advice on your writing. To make an appointment go to their website: http://www.colorado.edu/pwr/writingcenter.html.

Online Resources:
The Purdue University OWL (on-line writing lab): http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl
Dictionary of Legal Terms: http://thelawdictionary.org
Objectives:

Open to Juniors and Seniors in the College of Arts and Sciences, WRTG 3020 (Topics in Writing) sharpens critical thinking and critical writing skills. The course focuses on rhetorical forms students will use in academia, in the workplace, and in the civic domain, across a full spectrum of persuasive strategies, including analysis and argument. The course reinforces skills taught in first-year writing classes and builds upon them, with a greater emphasis upon the situational quality of writing or upon rhetorical context: the relationship between writer, reader, subject, and purpose in the formation of a text.

Conversations on the Law focuses on developing rhetorical skills particular to the study and practice of law. Students will sharpen their skills in framing relevant issues on actual and simulated legal cases, or in a broader public policy context. Summarizing techniques will be followed up with drafting and revising effective arguments on selected legal and policy issues. The legal topics serve as a means to an end—to create a knowledgeable audience and a context for discussion and writing: a discourse community. In a workshop setting, students engage in a dialogue with their audience, working out meaningful theses, testing rhetorical strategies, responding to objections and potential objections, and revising to meet the needs of their readers. Your instructor demands a high level of student participation and classroom assignments will emphasize each student’s role as both writer and as audience. Specific goals of this course include:

A. Critical Thinking and Its Written Application

- 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 and shape a question 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 description from analysis and argument.
- Distinguish flawed from sound reasoning, and be able to respond to and challenge claims.
- Recognize a thesis, and understand the organic relationship between thesis and support in an essay.
- As writers, structure and develop points of argument in a coherent order to build a case; as readers, recognize this structure and development within texts.
- Critique one’s own works in progress and those of others.
- Recognize that academic and public writing addresses an audience, and anticipates the thinking, the questions, and the possible objections of readers.
B. The Writing Process

- Understand writing as an ongoing process that requires multiple drafts 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 one's own writing.

C. Rhetorical Situation

- 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 from 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.

D. Mechanics and Style

- Convey meaning through concise, precise, highly readable language.
- Apply the rules of grammar, sentence-structure, and other mechanics integral to analytical and persuasive writing.
- Develop skills in proofreading.
- Use voice, style and diction appropriate to the discipline or rhetorical context.
- Use paragraph structure and transitional devices to aid the reader in following even a complex train of thought.

Following are general guidelines on how you will be graded for this class:

- 40% Major Papers
- 20% Attendance and Class Participation
- 20% Homework and Short assignments
- 20% Quizzes

You will receive numerical grades for these assignments out of 100 points. All grades will be posted on our course page on D2L. At the end of the semester your final calculated numeric grade will be converted to a letter grade, which will be your final grade for the course.

Written Work Requirements: ALL ASSIGNMENTS MUST BE TYPED, DOUBLE SPACED AND LONGER PAPERS MUST BE IN MLA FORMAT. You are responsible for bringing in the specified
number of copies when the paper is due, or submitting them electronically, whichever is assigned. You will not receive credit for handwritten work. You will receive grading rubrics for the writing assignments which will give more detail about how your papers will be graded.

**Plagiarism and the CU Honor Code:** Copying work from another student or a source without giving credit to the author is PLAGIARISM and is a violation of the CU Honor Code. Students in this course who plagiarize or who work on (collaborate on) a paper with another student without permission from the instructor will receive academic sanctions. This starts at a grade of 0 for the assignment, and depending on the situation could lead to a failing grade for the entire course. 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, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-735-2273). 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/.

**Attendance Policy:** Because this is a small seminar class, your attendance and classroom participation including writing workshops are REQUIRED and points will be deducted from your grade for missing classes and workshops. I allow for 3 absences, after which points are deducted from your grade, and I reserve the right to fail any student who has excessive absences.

**Policy on use of electronics in the classroom:** Use of any electronic devices such as cell phones and I-Pods for any use other than class work is not allowed in the classroom and will result in a lower Participation grade. Laptops and I-Pads used for in class activities are allowed with the instructor’s permission.

**Students with Disabilities:** If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to your instructor a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner (for exam accommodations provide your letter at least one week prior to the exam) so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or by e-mail at dsinfo@colorado.edu. If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see Temporary Injuries under Quick Links at Disability Services website and discuss your needs with your professor.

**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. If you are planning to be absent due to a religious observance, you must email the instructor at least one class period before the absence and explain what the religious holiday or observance is
that requires you to be absent. If you give the instructor this advance notice, your absence will not count towards your allowed three absences. If you do not give advance notice of this observance, your absence will be counted towards your three allowed absences. See full details of the CU religious observance policy at [http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html](http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html).

**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. All students are prohibited from causing a disruption in the classroom, and if they do cause a disruption, the instructor has the authority to ask the student to leave the classroom, and will report the student to the Judicial Affairs Office and to the Assistant/Associate Dean of the College. "Disruption," as applied to the academic setting, means behavior that a reasonable faculty member would view as interfering with normal academic functions. Examples include, but are not limited to: persistently speaking without being recognized or interrupting other speakers; behavior that distracts the class from the subject matter or discussion; or in extreme cases, physical threats, harassing behavior or personal insults, or refusal to comply with faculty direction. Civil expression of disagreement with the course instructor, during times when the instructor permits discussion, is not in itself disruptive behavior and is not prohibited.

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, color, culture, religion, creed, politics, veteran’s status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and gender expression, age, disability, 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](http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html) and at [http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code](http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code).

**Discrimination and Harassment:** The University of Colorado Boulder (CU-Boulder) is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment. The University of Colorado does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status in admission and access to, and treatment and employment in, its educational programs and activities (Regent Law, Article 10, amended 11/8/2001). CU-Boulder will not tolerate acts of discrimination or harassment based upon Protected Classes or related retaliation against or by any employee or student. For purposes of this CU-Boulder policy, "Protected Classes" refers to race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or veteran status. Individuals who believe they have been discriminated against should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Student Conduct (OSC) 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://hr.colorado.edu/dh/](http://hr.colorado.edu/dh/).
Assignment Schedule

This schedule is tentative and I will try to give ample advance notice of any changes. You are responsible for completing all assignments even if you are absent. Points will be deducted for late assignments.

Assignments/Topics Covered

Week 1

Jan. 13  Introduction/Review Syllabus

Jan. 15  Review Case Study; discuss factual versus legal issues.

Jan. 17  Syllabus Quiz. Continue with Case Study discussion.

Week 2

(*No Class Monday Jan. 20)

Jan. 22  Homework #1 Due: Questionnaire/Reflection on Legal Writing piece. Discuss Homework #2: Factual and Legal Issues Case Study.

Jan. 24  Discuss Rhetorical Analysis: Write a Rhetorical Analysis of an Editorial. Bring draft to class next week for writers workshop.

Week 3

Jan. 27  DUE: Homework #2 Case Study.

Jan. 31  DUE: Draft RA for Workshop.

Week 4

Feb 3  Discussion of legal versus policy arguments; Introduction to legal sources, Law Review and Journal articles; Case Law surrounding an Issue. Begin discussion of legal issues on Gun Control. Definition of legal terms and concepts.


Feb. 7  Homework Questions on Malcolm Article Introduction Due.
Week 5

Feb. 10  **Homework:** Questions on Malcolm Article *Parts I-IV* Due. Discussion of Supreme Court’s *Heller* decision on constitutionality of D.C. handgun law. Presentations on Malcolm article/Heller case.

Week 6

Feb. 17  **Quiz on Legal Reasoning and Heller case.**
Feb. 19  Begin fact pattern and legal issues for Moot Court. **Roles for Moot Court #1 on Gun Control assigned.**

Week 7

Feb. 26  Judges work on questions for oral argument; lawyers continue to draft briefs
Feb. 28  **Briefs for both sides due by email to your Court by 11:59 pm.**

Week 8

March 3  **DUE:** Judges’ questions for oral argument must be emailed to Gail by 11:59 pm.
March 5  **Court #1 Oral Argument.**
March 7  **Court #2 Oral Argument.**

Week 9

March 10  Judges only attend class – deliberations on opinions.

***Extra Credit Opportunity:** On March 11 at 3:30 the CU Law School is hosting the annual Rothberger Moot Court Competition in the Wittemyer Courtroom at the Law School. If you attend and write a one page reflection, you will get extra credit.


March 14  Judges’ Opinions on Moot Court #1 Due; present to class (both courts).
Week 10

March 17  DUE: Email Gail your topic for Legal Research Analysis paper. List of 3 sources including name and credentials of the author, title of piece and publisher of each source.

March 19:  Workshop on writing legal research analysis paper.


****Spring Break March 24-30 ******

Week 11

March 31:  Workshop on Legal Analysis Papers. Bring drafts or laptops to class.

April 2:  Workshop Continues on papers.

April 4:  Legal Analysis Research Paper Due by 11:59 pm on turnitin.com  Begin Moot Court #2 on Affirmative Action. Admissions Committee Activity.

Week 12

April 7:  Moot Court prep; review fact pattern and legal issues; Lawyer teams work on briefs; Review current case law on Affirmative Action.

Week 13

April 14  Lawyers only attend class. Briefs DUE by email to Gail by 11:59 pm.

April 16  Judges discuss questions to ask at oral argument. Judges’ Questions due by email to Gail by 11:59 pm. Lawyers strategize oral arguments.

April 18  Final Prep for Oral Arguments.

Week 14

April 21  Oral Argument for Court 1 held in Wolf Law courtroom.

April 23  Oral Argument for Court 2 held in Wolf Law courtroom.

April 25  Judges only attend class for deliberations/ divide up writing of opinion.
Week 15

April 28  Judges meet to finalize opinion. Written Opinion due by email to Gail at 11:59 pm. Discuss Moot Court Reflection Paper.

April 30  Judges present opinions (both courts) to class.

May 2  Last day of class. Final Moot Court Reflection/Analysis due.

There is no final exam.