Syllabus: Conversations on the Law WRTG 3020 Spring 2015

Class Times and Locations:
Section 008: MWF 10:00-10:50 am Location: MUEN E113
Section 031: MWF 2:00-2:50 pm Location: MUEN E114

Lecturer: Gail Georgeson, J.D.; M.A. in Linguistics-TESOL Emphasis
E-mail: Gail.georgeson@colorado.edu (best way to reach me)
Office Hours: M/W 11-12:30 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 1B27-E. 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. 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.

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

Digital Modalities and Tools we will use in this Course include:
• Laptops in the classroom for writing workshops
• Email for Peer Reviews and for submitting and getting feedback on papers from the instructor
• Online Research conducted by students for all writing assignments
• Google Docs used for coordinating brief and opinion writing
• Turnitin.com used for students to submit papers and the instructor to review papers for originality and proper citations
• Online Videos will be reviewed of actual Federal Court arguments on the issues we are preparing in Moot Courts
• **Students’ oral arguments will be videotaped** in the law school courtroom, and we will review them for purposes of self-critique (available on **YouTube**)

**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 as based on the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) Goals 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.
• 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.

A NOTE ABOUT ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION: This class is designed to be very interactive and to give you an opportunity to experience the job of an actual lawyer and judge. It requires students to argue positions you may not agree with, and to listen to all arguments when you are a judge, and to follow legal precedents and form good logical opinions. Students are expected to show respect for their fellow students’ arguments and viewpoints, and your
attendance and participation grade will depend on your being in class and working up to these expectations. If you have any questions or concerns about these expectations, please discuss them with me EARLY - the first week of class.

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, AND DRAFTS FOR WORKSHOPS or submitting them electronically, whichever is assigned. You will not receive credit for hand written work. You will receive grading rubrics for all assignments which will give more detail about how your papers will be graded.

Descriptions of Major Writing Assignments:

1) Rhetorical Analysis on an Editorial discussing a controversial legal topic. You will choose one from a list of four or five editorials. This is a review and extension of the rhetorical analysis type paper students learned in first year writing. NOTE: If you are a transfer student and did not take 1150 at CU, I suggest you meet with the instructor to discuss this paper. Length 3-4 pages. Goals Addressed: Use Rhetorical skills, frame issues, define and defend theses; distinguish description from analysis and argument; distinguish flawed from sound reasoning, and be able to respond to and challenge claims; all skills in Mechanics and Style.

2) Brief on legal issues in Moot Court. In this paper you will discuss and argue the legal issues we review in class for your moot court team. In each Moot Court you will play the role of either lawyer or judge. You will write a brief when you are a lawyer, and for the other Moot Court you will be a judge and write an opinion. Length: 5-7 pages. One draft and one final. This will be work-shopped with your team of lawyers. Each lawyer turns in their own paper, then as a team, you write one final brief to submit to your court (the other lawyers and the judges). The oral argument you give will be based on your brief. You will be given a detailed rubric on the Moot Court about how you will be graded; it is based on your written work, your oral argument, your professionalism and your attendance and participation. Goals Addressed: Critical Thinking; identifying an issue and developing a logical, coherent argument; recognize and begin to apply the appropriate discourse for the purpose of the writing: to persuade a court to find an argument should be adopted; develop topic specific language; use voice, style and diction appropriate for the purpose and audience; use paragraph structure and transitional devices that assist the reader to follow a complex train of thought; make decisions about style, form and argument; all skills in Mechanics and Style.

3) Opinion on legal issues in Moot Court. For one of the Moot Courts you will be a judge, and you will read briefs for both sides, listen to oral arguments and ask questions, then write an opinion. Length: 5-7 pages. One draft and one final. Together with the other judges you will decide on a Majority Opinion, and possibly Dissenting and Concurring opinions (we will discuss these different kinds of opinions in class). You will be given a detailed rubric on the Moot Court about how you will be graded; it is based on your
written work, your questions asked during oral argument, your professionalism and your attendance and participation, including presenting your Opinion to the class. **Goals Addressed:** Critical Thinking; identifying an issue and developing a logical, coherent argument; recognize and begin to apply the appropriate discourse for the purpose of the writing; to persuade peers to adopt an opinion to resolve a conflict or issue; develop topic specific language; use voice, style and diction appropriate for the purpose and audience; use Mechanics and Style conventions; use paragraph structure and transitional devices that assist the reader to follow a complex train of thought; make decisions about style, form and argument; all skills in Mechanics and Style.

4) **Legal Analysis Paper.** This paper allows you to explore and research a legal topic of your choice and to write an extended analysis on it. You will conference with the instructor about your topic, brainstorm in groups in class, then do some independent research on your topic, outline your analysis then write two drafts, each of which will be work-shopped in class. **Length 7-10 pages: Two drafts and final paper.** You will be given a detailed rubric explaining how your paper should be organized and how you will be graded. Your participation in the workshops will count towards your final grade, as will your ability to analyze your topic from a legal analysis perspective, which we will practice in class. **Goals Addressed:** Critical Thinking; Identifying an issue, critically evaluating precedents and analogies in scholarly legal journals; distinguished flawed from sound reasoning; use paragraph structure and transitional devices that assist the reader to follow a complex train of thought; make decisions about style, form and argument; all skills in Mechanics and Style.

**HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS:** Some homework assignments in the course require you to read excerpts of court cases and law review articles and to answer questions on the reading. This is challenging material, but we will review these concepts in class, and with a group of students you will present to the class on some of these questions. These are designed to get you thinking like a lawyer and prepare you to write your own legal analysis later in the semester, and to prepare you for Moot Court. Your participation in these assignments is very important, and will also help you succeed on the Legal Reasoning Quiz.

**LEGAL REASONING QUIZ:** This quiz is intended to help you prepare for writing the briefs and opinions for Moot Court. It is important to study for the Quiz based on the readings and study handouts as well as classroom discussions. It counts for half of your quiz grade, so don’t neglect to study for it. It is a long quiz, with some multiple choice, some short answer questions, and is based on lectures, handouts and homework questions.

**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.

**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](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. 12  Introduction/Review Syllabus; New Student Questionnaire discussed.
Jan. 14  Review Case Study; discuss factual versus legal issues.
Jan. 16  **Homework #1 Due: Questionnaire/Reflection on Legal Writing piece.**

**Week 2**

(*No Class Monday Jan. 19*)
Jan. 21  **Syllabus Quiz.** Continue with Case Study discussion.
Discuss Homework #2: Factual and Legal Issues Case Study.
Jan. 23  Discuss Rhetorical Analysis: Write a Rhetorical Analysis of an Editorial. Bring draft to class next week for writers’ workshop.

**Week 3**

Jan. 26  **DUE: Homework #2 Case Study.**
Jan. 28  **DUE: Draft RA for Workshop.**
Jan. 30  **Workshop #2 on RA.**

**Week 4**

Feb 2  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. 6  Homework Questions on Malcolm Article Introduction Due.

**Week 5**

Feb. 9, 11, 13 **Homework:** Questions on Malcolm Article _Parts I-IV_ Due. Discussion of Supreme Court’s _Heller_ decision on constitutionality of D.C. handgun law. Presentations by student groups on Malcolm article/Heller case.

**Week 6**

Feb. 16  **REVIEW for Quiz on Legal Reasoning and Heller case.**
Feb 18  **QUIZ**
Feb. 20  Begin fact pattern and legal issues for Moot Court. **Roles for Moot Court #1 on Gun Control assigned.**

**Week 7**


Feb 25  Judges work on questions for oral argument; lawyers continue to draft briefs

***Extra Credit Opportunity: On Tuesday February 24 at 3:00 pm 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.***

Feb. 27  Briefs for both sides due by email to your Court by 11:59 pm. Brief Length: 5-7 Pages.

**Week 8**

March 2  DUE: Judges’ questions for oral argument must be emailed to Gail by 11:59 pm. Length: 2-3 pages.

March 4  Court #1 Oral Argument. Lawyers: Oral Argument Outlines DUE: 2-3 Pages. ALSO BRING YOUR BRIEFS!

March 6  Court #2 Oral Argument. Lawyers: Oral Argument Outlines DUE: 2-3 Pages. ALSO BRING YOUR BRIEFS!

**Week 9**

March 9  Judges only attend class – deliberations on opinions.


March 13  Judges’ Opinions on Moot Court #1 Due; present to class (both courts). Opinion Length: 5-7 pages.

***During Week 10 or 11 you will have a conference with Gail on your Legal Analysis Paper***

**Week 10**

March 16  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 18: Workshop on writing legal research analysis paper.

March 20: Workshop Introductions. **Draft of Paper Introductions (1-2 Pages)** due by email to Gail by 11:59 pm.

****Spring Break March 23-27. No Classes ****

**Week 11**

March 30: Workshop on Legal Analysis Papers. **DRAFT #1 DUE (7 pages minimum)** on laptops or flash drive to class.

April 1: Workshop Continues on papers. **DRAFT #2 DUE.**

April 3: **Legal Analysis Research Paper Due by 11:59 pm on turnitin.com**  **Paper Length: 7-10 Pages.** Begin Moot Court #2 on Affirmative Action. Admissions Committee Activity.

**Week 12**

April 6, 8, 10 Moot Court #2 prep; review fact pattern and legal issues; Lawyer teams work on briefs; Review current case law.

**Week 13**

April 13 Lawyers only attend class. **Briefs DUE by email to Gail by 11:59 pm. Brief Length 5-7 Pages.**


April 17 Final Prep for Oral Arguments.

**Week 14**

April 20 **Oral Argument for Court 1** held in Wolf Law courtroom. Lawyers: Oral Argument outline: 2-3 pages. **ALSO BRING YOUR BRIEFS!**

April 22 **Oral Argument for Court 2** held in Wolf Law courtroom. Lawyers: Oral Argument outline: 2-3 pages. **ALSO BRING YOUR BRIEFS!**

April 24 Judges only attend class for deliberations/discuss opinion.

**Week 15**

April 27 Judges meet to finalize opinion. Written Opinion due by email to Gail at 11:59 pm. **Opinion Length 5-7 pages. Discuss Moot Court Reflection Paper.**

April 29 Judges present opinions (both courts) to class.
May 1  

Last day of class. Final Moot Court Reflection Paper due. Length 2-3 Pages.

****There is no final exam****