ENGLISH 131: Rhetoric & Composition (Fall 2017)

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Study and application of the writing process and the skills of writing with a focus on analytical reading and writing. Essay assignments address rhetorical analysis and evaluation and critical responses to close readings of texts. Required of all students who do not qualify for English 133H. Prerequisite: acceptable THEA score or at least a C in English 099. Must earn a grade of C or higher to be admitted to English 132.

All information contained in this syllabus is subject to change. You are bound by these policies even if you choose not to be aware of them.

English Program Learning Outcomes
This is a general education core curriculum course and no specific program learning outcomes for this major are addressed in the course.

English 131 Learning Outcomes
At the completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify and analyze texts with the goal of examining the rhetorical structure, veracity of claims, sufficient use of accurate and credible evidence, as well as possible use in creative, analytical, and persuasive components (Critical Thinking);
- Participate in productive class and group discussion and examination of texts, in order to analyze and synthesize a variety of texts, via a multi-step drafting process (Critical Thinking);
- Understand the role of personal responsibility in the inevitable choices involved in the composition process, in the evaluation of one’s own writing and the writing of other students, in the ethical use of ideas and information, and in the critical evaluation of all assigned texts (Personal Responsibility);
- Recognize the collaborative and social aspects of the writing process by producing collaborative work and/or feedback for peers and selectively using peer feedback in their own work (Teamwork);
- Demonstrate knowledge of organizational and linguistic structures – including grammar, punctuation, and spelling – through practice in composing and revising (Communication);
- Compose texts in response to a variety of situations and contexts calling for purposeful shifts in voice, tone, level of formality, design, medium, and/or structure (Communication).
REQUIRED TEXTS


**Other Readings as Assigned.**

A writing utensil and a notebook. As this is a writing course, you will be required to do significant amounts of in-class writing. I don’t care if you write in pencil or pen or marker as long as the writing is legible and fulfills the assignment.

I also recommend you get a writer’s guide and a usage dictionary, both of which will be extremely useful to you both in this class and throughout your college career. My personal favorites are Susan Thurman and Larry Shea’s *The Only Grammar Book You’ll Ever Need* (writer’s guide) and Bryan A. Garner’s *A Dictionary of Modern American Usage*. If you have questions about this, I would be happy to discuss it further.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

**Please Note:** All assignments should be typed, double-spaced, in 12-point Times New Roman font. Margins should be standard. Failure to adhere to these guidelines will result in grade penalties.

**Problem One: Is It Worth It?** (10%)

Think about something you have strong feelings about—a movie, a book, a song, maybe even a restaurant or an app—and explain to me why it’s good or bad. Maybe you love *Guardians of the Galaxy* or you hate WhatsApp: why? Why should I agree with you? This assignment asks you to persuasively support an opinion by drawing on your own experience with something. (500-700 words).

**Problem Two: Should I Read It?** (20%)

For this assignment, you’ll need to find an article that makes an argument. Chances are, I haven’t read the piece. Your job, then, is to explain to me why I should or shouldn’t read this particular article. Tell me what it’s about, what’s good about it, and what’s bad about it. Ultimately, based on weighing the pros and cons, tell me whether I should read this piece of writing. (900-1200 words).

**Problem Three: Do You Buy It?** (20%)

Once again, you’ll select another article that makes an argument. The central question for this assignment is do you accept the argument? Why or why not? What is the author trying to say? How do they persuade you to accept their points? (1200-1800 words)

**Problem Four: Make Me Agree With You** (25%)

As college students, you face a unique set of pressures and concerns. The final assignment asks you to think about a problem in your life and propose a solution. Your job is to convince me that I should agree with your solution; that it’s feasible, workable, and appropriate to the problem.
This assignment must be turned in both to me on D2L and to LiveText. NOTE: Turning the assignment in on LiveText is an essential component of this project. Failure to do so will result in the loss of 25 points on the grade. (1800-2100 words)

Final Presentations (15%)
For this assignment, you will be placed into small groups and asked to select topics relevant to the SFA campus community. Each group will be assigned a position on the topic, and then craft an argument in support of that position. During our final exam period, your group will deliver a presentation arguing for your position, with some sort of visual accompaniment (PowerPoint, Prezi, etc.). More details will be given as we approach the exam period.

In-Class Writing Assignments/Quizzes (10%)
There are only two ways to improve your skills as a writer: reading and writing. A lot. This class doesn’t require a crushing amount of reading, but it is essential to your development as a student that you complete all the reading in advance of our classes. To ensure that you’re doing the reading, any day on which you are expected to have read something, there will be a short quiz. At the end of the semester, I will drop your lowest three quiz grades. Because I want you to get in the habit of taking good notes while you read, all quizzes will be open note.

In addition to regular quizzes, we will have weekly in-class writing prompts. For these, you’ll have 30-40 minutes to plan and write a short essay in response to a specific question. You will keep all of these assignments in a notebook, and I will give you short feedback on your argumentation skills each week. These are graded on a pass-fail scale: if you are in class and have made a good-faith effort to engage with the question, you will receive full credit. These in-class assignments cannot be made up if you miss class. Additionally, if you write on some other topic, or generally phone it in, you will not receive credit. Again, I will drop your three lowest in-class essay grades.

It is my responsibility to tell you that if you earn a grade below a C for this course, you will be required to repeat it next semester.

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance: Much of this class is run like a workshop/lab, and regular attendance is essential to success. In order to understand the texts we’re reading and the concepts we’re discussing, you will need to be in class regularly. In short, if you do not attend class, you will not do well. In-class assignments cannot be made up for any reason, I will not re-teach a lesson if you miss a day, and I rarely post PowerPoint slides on D2L. It is your responsibility to find out from a classmate what you missed. Moreover, if you are regularly missing classes, you are suggesting to me that this class isn’t important to you. As such, catching you up on our in-class activities will be low on my list of priorities.

Being physically present in the classroom is a key component of attendance, but not the only one. You are expected to have done all the reading for the day, and have all course materials. If you are frequently unprepared, I will dismiss you and give you an absence. Additionally, sleeping during class or putting your head down on the desk will result in your dismissal and an absence. If you are too tired to sit up and participate, you should not be in class.

I will call roll at the beginning of class. If you are not present when I call roll, you will be counted tardy. Tardiness is disruptive and rude, and communicates to me that you are not prioritizing the class. As such, two tardies equal one absence. Additionally, it is your responsibility to check in with me after class if you
arrive after I have called roll. Failure to do so will result in an absence. It is your responsibility to keep up with how many absences you have for the semester. You do not need to ask my permission to leave the room, but be advised that frequently leaving during class may also result in being awarded an absence for the day. Show up on time and prepared.

Students who accrue six absences will fail the course regardless of the reason for the absences. I do not differentiate between excused and unexcused absences. You do not need to notify me why you’re missing a class, nor do you need to bring me documentation when you miss a class.

DISCLAIMER TO ABOVE: I understand that life happens, and that there will sometimes be catastrophes which you are unprepared for that radically alter the course of your semester. If you have such an issue, please let me know AS SOON AS IT OCCURS. It is much easier for me to deal with a problem immediately rather than trying to retroactively sort things out the week grades are due.

Course Citizenship: Eating, sleeping, or reading other materials during class are not acceptable. All cell phones must be turned off prior to coming to class, and no text messaging or web surfing will be tolerated. Cell phones should not be used unless I indicate that you may use them for a particular activity. If I see you using a cell phone during class, I will give you one warning. After that, use of a cell phone will result in a dismissal and absence. Moreover, any time thereafter that you approach me for help, I reserve the right to play Candy Crush on my phone while I’m talking to you. I understand that many people like to take notes on their laptops, which is alright by me. I also understand, however, that many people scroll through their Facebook feed while class is going on. It will be obvious to me if you’re not using your computer for class because the room is small and I move around it frequently. If you’re discovered using your computer for non-class activities, you’ll be dismissed, given an absence, and barred from using your computer anymore. I know that I am always tempted to check my email when I have my computer out. If you’re similarly inclined, I suggest you take notes by hand.

Students with disciplinary problems tend to be few and far between at the college level, but if behavioral disruptions persist within a single class meeting (or, for that matter, across multiple meetings), the student in question will be asked to leave the class with an absence for the day.

Finally, you may find that you disagree with something we read, with myself, or with a classmate during the course of the semester. Such disagreement is vital to the education process, and I welcome a range of opinion on any given topic. It is imperative, however, that you disagree and discuss in a respectful manner. Disrespectful or combative behavior, including offensive language, will not be tolerated and may result in dismissal, absences, or harsher penalties.

Assignment Submission: All major assignments will be submitted electronically via D2L and also in a hard copy. Assignments are due at the beginning of class on their due date. I will announce a call for papers at the beginning of the class, and papers turned in after the call will be politely refused until the next class day (see below for policies on Late Work).

TECHNOLOGY DISCLAIMER: TECHNOLOGY, AND ESPECIALLY PRINTERS, FREQUENTLY FAIL. “MY PRINTER IS BROKEN” OR “MY INTERNET CRASHED” ARE NOT VALID EXCUSES FOR A PAPER’S LATENESS. BE PREPARED AND COMPLETE/PRINT YOUR WORK WELL IN ADVANCE OF THE DUE DATE.
All electronic files must be formatted in either .doc or .docx (compatible with Microsoft Word). I will not accept Rich Text Format, Word Perfect, or a PDF, for example.

**Academic Integrity:** Adhering to academic integrity standards at all times by producing your own work and successfully attributing others’ ideas to them is a necessary aspect of university communication. Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes, but is not limited to: (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assignment; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism.

Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to: (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one's own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from the Internet or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper or presentation without giving the author due credit.

Any appeals on academic integrity cases must be made within thirty days after the first class day of the next long semester. Students should appeal to the instructor first then to the chair if the situation is not resolved. Further appeals can be made to the dean and provost if necessary.

Please read the complete policies at: [http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp) and [http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic-appeals-by-students.pdf](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic-appeals-by-students.pdf).

**Conferences and Communication:** If you wish to meet with me during the semester, please avail yourself of my office hours or set up an appointment with me. You may call my office, but I am not always there and may not check the messages daily. Thus, email is the best way to contact me. I batch-answer all emails at the end of my work day, but you should always receive an answer to a question within 24 hours of sending the message during the week. On weekends, that time frame expands to 48 hours. I recommend you use the SFA email client, as I check the D2L email less frequently.

One day, you will be employed somewhere, and will need to observe proper email etiquette. To begin practicing that now, I require the following of emails:

- A proper subject line with your name, class, and section number. (I have nearly 100 students in a semester, and it is much easier for me to answer you in a timely fashion if you include this information.)
- A greeting and a signature.
- Avoid abbreviations/internet slang (IDK, LMAO, UR mean, etc.)
- Do not email me about an assignment the day it is due unless you have an absolute emergency.

Finally, a note about successful communication for this course and for college more generally: the sooner you tell me something, the more help I can give you. If you have issues, problems, or questions, tell me about them as soon as they arise. I am here to help you learn this material, and the more proactive you are, the more help I can be to you.

**Course Evaluations:** Course evaluations will be available online near the end of the semester. I highly encourage you to take advantage of the opportunity to give feedback about how effective this class and my teaching was, particularly because I read evaluations to help make decisions about future classes. In other words, your feedback can help my future students have a good class experience.
**Discrimination/Sexual Harassment:** At Stephen F. Austin State University, no faculty, staff, or student may discriminate against another on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, national origin, disability or disabled veteran status, and such acts will not be permitted in this class. For additional information, consult Human Resources Policy E-46.

**Late Work and Revision Policy:** In order to do well in the course, it is essential that you keep up with assignments and submit them in a timely manner. As such, late work is heavily penalized. In-class quizzes and writing assignments cannot be made up. For each day (calendar days including weekends, not class days) that a major assignment is late, there is a five-point deduction (equivalent to half a letter grade). If an assignment is a week late, it will receive an F. Because I realize you have other classes, however, I will offer a week extension on any ONE assignment, no questions asked. You must notify me that you are taking the extension BEFORE the assignment is due, or it will be considered late. Use this wisely.

Also, the writing process is largely about rewriting. As such, I will allow you to rewrite any essay that receives a D or an F to recover credit. If you rewrite the essay substantially and address my comments and the problems with the piece, you can raise your grade. Rewrites are due one week after grades are returned, and you must meet with me to discuss the paper before turning it in.

**The Academic Assistance and Resource Center:** The AARC offer free writing tutoring, which is available on a walk-in and appointment basis. They also offer online writing tutoring services and workshops about writing-related topics. For more information, go to [http://library.sfasu.edu/aarc/](http://library.sfasu.edu/aarc/), visit them on the first floor of the Steen Library, or call them at 936-468-4108.

**Withheld Grades Policy (A-54):** At the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms, the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

**Accommodations:** To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify your instructors and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations, and no accommodations can be made except through the ODS. For additional information, go to [http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservice](http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservice)

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**COURSE SCHEDULE**

*** This schedule is tentative. I reserve the right to change its contents and will post changes to D2L. ***

**UNIT ONE: Grammar, Essay Structure, Audience, Problem One**

**Week One: August 28—September 1: Introduction, Grammar**

Tuesday, August 29: Introduction to course, overview of D2L, Grading Methods
Thursday, August 31: Syllabus quiz, grammar overview, In-class writing assignment #1

Week Two: September 4—September 8: Reading Like a Writer, Structure
Tuesday, September 5: Essay Structure: Hooks, thesis, preview, conclusion, Reading Like a Writer
Thursday, September 7: Read “How Tracy Austin Broke My Heart,” “The View from Mrs. Thompson’s” in Consider the Lobster, In-class writing assignment #2

Week Three: September 11—September 15: Reviews, Essay Structure
Tuesday, September 12: Essay Structure 2: Body, outlining
Thursday, September 14: Read Ellen Willis reviews, Chuck Klosterman article (D2L), In-class writing assignment #3

UNIT TWO: Rhetorical Situation, Rhetorical Appeals, Problem Two

Week Four: September 18—September 22
Tuesday, September 19: NO CLASS, professor at conference
Thursday, September 21: PROBLEM ONE: IS IT WORTH IT? ASSIGNMENT DUE, Introduction to Rhetoric, In-class writing assignment #4

Week Five: September 25—September 29
Tuesday, September 26: Rhetorical Appeals: Pathos, Ethos, Logos
Thursday, September 28: Read excerpts from Cal Newport’s Deep Work (D2L), In-class writing assignment #5

Week Six: October 2—October 6
Tuesday, October 3: Figurative Language
Thursday, October 5: Read “Consider the Lobster” in Consider the Lobster, In-class writing assignment #6

UNIT THREE: Argumentation, Logical Fallacies, Evidence, Problem Three

Week Seven: October 9—October 13
Tuesday, October 10: PROBLEM TWO: SHOULD I READ IT? ASSIGNMENT DUE Argumentation overview
Thursday, October 12: Read “Host” in Consider the Lobster, In-class writing assignment #7

Week Eight: October 16—October 20
Tuesday, October 17: Argumentation and Structure
Thursday, October 19: Read “Some Remarks on Kafka’s Funniness…” in Consider the Lobster, In-class writing assignment #8

Week Nine: October 23—October 27
Tuesday, October 24: Logical Fallacies and How to Avoid Them
Thursday, October 26: Read “This Is Water” (D2L), In-class writing assignment #9

**Week Ten: October 30—November 3**
- Tuesday, October 31: Evidence: Some Types and Rules
- Thursday, November 2: Read “A Supposedly Fun Thing I’ll Never Do Again” (D2L), In-class writing assignment #10

**UNIT FOUR: Persuasion, Cohesion, Research and Sources**

**Week Eleven: November 6—November 10**
- Tuesday, November 7: **PROBLEM THREE: DO YOU BUY IT? ASSIGNMENT DUE**
  Sources and Citations: Overview
- Thursday, November 9: Read “E Unibus Plurum” (D2L), In-class writing assignment #11

**Week Twelve: November 13—November 17**
- Tuesday, November 14: Research: An Introduction
- Thursday, November 16: Research Continued, In-class writing assignment #12

**THANKSGIVING WEEK, NO CLASS: November 20—November 24**

**Week Thirteen: November 27—December 1**
- Tuesday, November 28: Putting It Together: Cohesion and Persuasion
- Thursday, November 30: Read “Authority and American Usage” in *Consider the Lobster*, In-class writing assignment #13

**Week Fourteen: December 4—December 8**
- Tuesday, December 4: **PROBLEM FOUR: MAKE ME AGREE WITH YOU ASSIGNMENT DUE**
- All week: Working on group projects

**FINAL EXAM PERIOD: Thursday, December 13, 1 P.M.—3 P.M.**
I, ______________________________, certify that I have read and understand this entire syllabus and all of the course requirements and policies contained herein. Ignorance of information contained in the syllabus does not constitute a reasonable excuse for failure to comply with course policies.

Print name: ______________________________________________

Sign:  ___________________________________________________

Date:  ___________________________________________________