Rhetoric and Composition
English 131.012
Time: MWF 9:00 – 9:50
Place: Ferguson 176

Professor: James Couch
Office: LAN 327
Office Hours: TR: 10:30 – 1:00
& by appt.

Department: English
Phone: 468-2430
Email: couchjames@sfasu.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION of English 131 (Rhetoric and Composition):
“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 or 235H. Prerequisite: Pass or exemption from THEA or a C in English 099. Must earn a grade of C or higher to be admitted to English 132.” – SFA Bulletin

About This Class
You are attempting a daunting task. Along with all of the other facets of your busy lives, you have embarked upon a journey to transform yourselves into better writers – in less than four months. Successfully navigating the path you have chosen will require certain deeds on your part. This goal may best be accomplished by activities such as examining, in a focused and critical manner, the arguments of others and discussing in a thoughtful manner what we find there; forming ideas that are well-considered; crafting arguments that are logical; and drafting, revising, and editing our work until it communicates coherently what we intend. Therefore, this class will consist of equable amounts of reading, discussion, and writing. This course is not a literature class; however, analyzing the written work of other writers can help us understand why we write and how to do so effectively.

Regarding the aspects of writing that can be taught, one-half is science, and the other is art. Although it takes application, the science can be learned from such sources as textbooks and your professor; the art, however, requires the doing, the act. This truth means that the only way to become a good writer is to write, write, and write some more. Writing is an active process. Despite the fact that we are often called upon to submit our best efforts to date, rarely is any piece of writing ever truly “finished.” Most, if not all, written work can be improved upon. The nature of this class, therefore, demands active participation, and you will see results if you put forth effort. When I ask you to create a draft – do it! When I ask you to critique or revise a selection, do it! No excuses. I say again, the art requires the doing. Those who do not accomplish the obvious and expected tasks associated with this process cannot truly claim to care about their writing or this class. Their grades will reflect this fact.

Occasionally I ask you to work collaboratively, with minimal supervision. If you do not make good use of these sessions, then you are hurting yourself. I expect you to engage in the class discussions, which means asking questions
and offering thoughtful comments relevant to the issue at hand, and to do so in a courteous manner. The nature of our endeavor makes rudeness or abusive language intolerable. That being said, you will have some (hopefully) interesting and spirited discussions with individuals from a variety of backgrounds, and you may hear something you do not like. If you feel yourself getting offended, first remind yourself how fortunate you are to live in a country where people have the right to speak what they believe to be the truth, and then proceed to tell them exactly how they are wrong.

**Texts and Materials**

- The Brief Penguin Handbook 5th Edition (Required)
- Pen and Paper (Required)
- USB Drive (Recommended)

**Course Requirements**

In this class, you will be tasked to produce logical, thoughtful, well-composed pieces of argument. These assignments are based on various topics that will emerge from the assigned readings and our in-class discussions.

These papers will include, but are not necessarily limited to, an *expressive essay*, wherein you analyze and relate a dramatic event from your life; a *rhetorical analysis*, wherein you analyze a visual argument; a *persuasive essay*, wherein you take a position and seek to persuade your audience; a *film analysis*, wherein you argue your analytical assessment of a work of motion picture art; and a *final exam* in the form of an in-class, timed essay wherein you analyze and explain a piece of text.

All papers composed outside of class must be typed and require MLA format (including an MLA heading, 12 pt. type, 1" margins, double-spacing, Times New Roman font, indented paragraphs, etc.) and are due at the beginning of class on the dates indicated. Any work submitted after the call for papers will be politely refused. No late work will be accepted. All work must be submitted by hardcopy (actual paper). Students are also required to submit, on time, an electronic copy through D2L to the Turnitin comprehensive plagiarism detector. Failure to do so will result in a failing grade (0 points) on the paper in question. If you are absent when a paper is returned, then it is your responsibility to come to my office and retrieve the work in question.

**Course Calendar**

The class will be divided into four sections based on the four major paper assignments. Each assignment will take approximately four weeks to complete. The expressive essay will take slightly less time; the rhetorical analysis will take slightly longer. The general schedule, however, will be one major paper due each month, along with the relevant daily work such as pre-writing, thesis submissions, rough drafts, peer critiques, et cetera.

**Grading Policy**

Semester grades will be the sum of the major paper grades, the corrections and revisions of the major papers, the daily grades, and the final
exam. Each major paper will constitute one grade, with grammar, content, and style contributing equally to each grade. Each major paper is worth a maximum of ten (10) points; corrections and revisions are worth a maximum of ten (10) points; the final exam is worth a maximum of ten (10) points, and each daily exercise is worth a maximum of two (2) points. After your semester grade is determined, attendance points will be deducted or added. Feel free to come and see me during office hours about your writing, your grade, or for any other reason.

Attendance Policy

Punctual attendance (physical and mental) is required, and roll will be checked at the beginning of the class. If you are not in class when roll is checked, expect to be counted absent. If you fall asleep in class, expect to be counted absent. If you text, make phone calls, use a laptop, do work for other classes, or engage in any non-class-related activity, expect to be counted absent. Notes from parents, grandparents, doctors, coaches, etc. are not required and will make no difference with regard to attendance. If you are not in class, then you are absent. I consider all absences to be “excused,” which means daily classwork missed due to absence can be submitted late if an appointment is made immediately upon return to class. Because, however, group discussion is such an important element of this class, excessive absences will adversely affect your grade. You have three absences before your grade is affected; use them how you wish. One (1) point will be deducted from your semester grade for each absence after the third. Any student who misses more than three weeks of class will receive a failing grade for the course, as per the university attendance policy. Students with perfect attendance will receive two (2) points toward their final grade.

Acceptable Student Behavior

Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (see the Student Conduct Code, policy D-34.1). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who disrupt the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be subject to judicial, academic, or other penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including electronic, classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The instructor shall have full discretion over what behavior is appropriate/inappropriate in the classroom. Students who do not attend class regularly or who perform poorly on class projects/exams may be referred to the Early Alert Program. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance that is available to help SFA students succeed.

Academic Integrity (A-9.1)

Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.
“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) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; 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 are (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 an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one’s paper without giving the author due credit. (Please read the complete policy at http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic integrity.asp)

Academic dishonesty carries a very heavy penalty: a definite F (in the form of zero (0) points), on the paper in question, a probable F in the class, and possible expulsion from the university.

**Withheld Grades Semester Grades Policy (A-54)**

Ordinarily, 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.

**Students with Disabilities**

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 the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/

**English 131 Student Learning Outcomes**

ENG 131 learning outcomes are the goals that students must meet in the first semester of the two-semester Freshman Composition core curriculum requirement. The learning outcomes for ENG 131 are as follows:

1. Ability to show appropriate acquisition of CORE objective 1 skills. Students in compositions courses make application of these skills in the writing of personal, expository, and persuasive essays, which require students to make inquiries into and explorations of topics in creative, innovative, or analytical ways. Students are expected to complete readings, to engage in course and group discussions, and to analyze, interpret and synthesize their
findings resultant from these critical engagements into well-developed essays. Written assignments will evidence the students’ command of these considerations: effective engagement of audience (pathos), logical development of ideas (logos), and effective use of examples, expertise, or insight (ethos).

2. Ability to show appropriate acquisition of CORE objective 2 skills. These skills include effective development, interpretation, and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication. Following instruction about group interaction, students will engage in oral communication through class discussions and group work (orally in face-to-face courses, electronically in online courses). Students will have occasion to respond to visual medium, as found in assigned readings, lectures, power-point presentations, or other media dependent upon course materials. Students learn processes for writing that help them to form coherent, well-developed, well-organized, and unified discussions through a variety of writing methodologies, including personal, expository, and persuasive methodologies. Students will write at least four essays in composition courses, and rubrics will assess such concerns as development and exploration, mechanical clarity, and interpretation or expression of ideas.

3. Ability to show appropriate acquisition of CORE objective 4 skills. These skills include the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal. Following instruction about peer review processes and small group work, students will perform peer mentorship on essay assignments and work together on group projects, which may include collaborative writing occasions, group presentations, or panel discussions. As peer review is the common teamwork experience, students will be required to share potentially diverse ideas with one another, to address those views in appropriate ways, and to help one another to finalize essays for submission.

4. Ability to show appropriate acquisition of CORE objective 5 skills. These skills include the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making. Students will have opportunity to examine numerous readings, including essays written by classmates, to examine the credibility and value of those readings, and to understand how expository methodologies bear responsibility and consequence.

ENG 131 “Rhetoric and Composition” (3 credits) meets three times each week in fifty-minute segments or twice each week in seventy-five-minute segments for fifteen weeks, and meets during finals week according to the final exam schedule. Students complete weekly topical readings as well as writing and discussion activities related to those readings. Students write a minimum of four essays with a total page count of at least fifteen pages of finished writing. Emphasis is placed on writing processes, including multiple drafts and short assignments that require generating, revising and editing writing. Final exams typically include presentations of student writing. These activities average six hours of work outside of classroom hours.
Syllabus Agreement

I have read and do understand the course rules, requirements, procedures, and consequences as expressed in the syllabus. As a student in Mr. Couch’s English 131 class, I agree to guide my conduct accordingly and follow all rules and procedures previously stated. Should I fail to do so, I understand that the consequences will apply no less to me than to my classmates.

Date: ____________________________-

Printed Name: ________________________________-

Signed: ________________________________-