Syllabus for English 131: Rhetoric and Composition (Fall 2019)

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Office Hours: M/W/F 10:00 – 11:00  
T/TH 9:15 – 10:15

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.

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.

In English 131, you will study and practice the writing process and endeavor to acquire and further craft the skills necessary to actively engage with the various cultural institutions, whether political, economic, journalistic, or ones involving entertainment, through analytical reading and writing. Students will read selections of articles, essays, and short stories to expand their experience with the cultural process of rhetoric. Demonstration of their understanding and acquisition of these skills will be assessed in the completion of four formal essays.

Textbooks
Lumberjacks Write (To be provided by instructor);
Perfect English Grammar by Grant Barrett;
They Say / I say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing (Fourth Edition) by Cathy Birkenstein and Gerald Graff;
My Friend Dahmer by Derf Backderf;
Student Learning Outcomes for ENG 131:

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).

Assignments

The final grade for this course will be determined by arriving at the sum of the points for each of the major assignments for the class.

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Participation Grade

Over the course of this semester, I will document student participation in class. Participation will
depend upon the student’s timely completion of daily assignments and readings, participation in classroom discussions, and attentive engagement in class meetings.

Students participation will be affected by the following offenses:

- Being late to class without a “reasonable” excuse.
- Use of cellphone or other electronic device outside of allowed times.
- Not completing a reading.
- Not bringing a textbook to class when textbook is being used.
- Persistent refusal to participate in classroom discussions.

Quizzes
Quizzes will be given at different times throughout the semester without prior notice. Quizzes can be made up only if a valid excuse was provided by the student.

Personal Narrative
In this essay, students will recount, in narrative form, an event from their lives in which a deeply held belief was proven to be incorrect.

Summary
Students will summarize the incidences of bias found in one of two journalistic sources, both described by the author(s) and committed by the author(s).

Rhetorical Analysis
Through this essay, students will examine the rhetorical strategies employed in the “Closer than You Think” comics and the flavor of “futurism” promoted therein.

Argumentative Response
After reading the graphic novel My Friend Dahmer, students will compose a response that focuses upon an argument concerning whether the author displayed bias, of any sort, in his depiction of serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer and whether this aided or hindered the intent of the novel.

Guidelines for Written Essays
To receive a passing grade for written assignments in this class, students must carefully follow the guidelines provided hereafter. These guidelines are not provided as a suggestion but are absolutely
required for every single major essay students complete in this course. There are no exceptions to these guidelines though additional guidelines will be provided in the specific prompts for each assignment. Not following these guidelines may result in a failing grade for the assignment. All essays must:

- be in essay form;
- meet the appropriate page length;
- be typed, not handwritten, in double-spaced MLA format, using Times New Roman 12-point font with 1 inch margins on all sides;
- have appropriate and complete headings;
- have an *original* title, not the title of another work or a general title such as the type of assignment;
- be submitted online through D2L by the due date (papers that are not turned in online will receive a 5% deduction for every business day they are late until after one week, at which point the paper will receive a zero);
- properly cite quotes, summaries, and sources.

**Revisions**

Students will be allowed one revision this semester from the first three major essays. The final essay and annotated bibliography are not revisable. The research proposal works differently, as will be explained in the prompt for that assignment. Revisions offer students an opportunity to recover from a possibly grade-damaging paper; however, revisions will only be awarded sufficient points to raise their grade by one letter (that’s 10% of the grade). Revisions will only be allowed for papers that receive a C or below. Any paper that is plagiarized or was never turned in is not eligible for revision unless otherwise discussed. For a revision to count, the student must complete several things:

- Make corrections beyond just those marked on the original paper. What this means is the student sat down, read my comments, looked at what was marked, reread his or her paper, and understood what the errors were and how to fix them. Any paper that only “fixes” the areas I marked will not be given full credit for a rewrite. *The Prentice Hall Reference Guide* or The Purdue Owl are valuable resources for helping students with their grammar and style. If the student is not sure what a comma splice is, he or she should look there first.

- Along with a revision, there must be a one-page explanation of the changes the student made and why he or she made those changes. This explanation needs to provide examples from his or her original graded paper as a way to support the claim of understanding. No revision will be accepted without this page. This page must follow the same format as the original paper (MLA
Because this is a revision, there should not be an abundance of grammar, spelling, or formatting errors. Any revisions that still contain these types of errors will not improve the student’s grade, but will burn his or her revision opportunity. Students should make the revision worth their time and mine.

Students will need to see me within one day of receiving the original graded paper to inform me of their plans to revise, as well as confer with me on ways to improve their paper. This is not optional. Any student that does not meet with me, yet hands me a revision, will have it handed right back to them.

Students will need to go to the AARC at least once to have a tutor look at their revision. It would be in their best interest to go with specific questions and concerns, as well as the paper prompt. If they do not understand why they received the grade they did, the AARC is not going to help them in that way. Students need to be cognizant of their writing abilities and be able to see what they are doing and not doing to make the visit to the AARC effective. If they go with generalities, the tutors will focus on the areas they think needs the most work, which may not be what the student is looking for. The AARC visit is not optional.

The original graded copy must be turned in with the revision. If I do not receive this copy, I will not grade the revision.

The revision must be submitted online through D2L. There will be a separate link for revisions. Again, if it is not turned in online by the time the revision is due, I will not accept it.

**Attendance & Punctuality**

Attendance is required for this class. Students will not have the necessary information to successfully complete assignments in the class if they are not present. Students are allowed 3 absences in this class without penalty. Between 4 and 6 absences will result in the loss of five points from their final grade while 7 – 9 absences will result in a loss of ten points and 10 or more absences result in a failing grade for the class. If students are absent beyond their 3rd absence and have a “valid” excuse for being absent, I will excuse it, and it will not be counted toward the total. Validity is determined by me if the excuse doesn’t fit within university policy on guidelines for an excused absence—I understand that life can be stressful, and things come up.

Additionally, being late to class will be taken very seriously. Punctuality and personal responsibility is a skill that students must develop to be successful in the classroom and beyond. If students are not present when I take roll for the class, they will be counted absent. But if something happened that made getting to class on time difficult, students should let me know at the end of class. I can be fairly lenient, at times. Also,
leaving class early, without an emergency or getting my prior acknowledgment, will result in an absence.

Whether an absence is excused or not, students are responsible for any coursework or content that was presented that day in class. Students should ask their classmates or check the class’s D2L site to receive any missed assignments or material.

Late Work
If a student does not have a valid excuse for an absence, I will not repeat material from the class which the student missed. Students cannot make up missed in-class activities unless they have a documented, excused absence. See SFA policy for what constitutes an excused absence. If students are unable to turn in a major paper on time, they must make arrangements with me prior to the class meeting in which the paper is due, and I must determine that the excuse for not being able to do so is valid. Otherwise, papers will be accepted for up to one week after the due date, but the grade for the paper will be reduced by ten percent of its total worth in points per business day that it is late. The papers must be turned into BOTH Dropbox and me in paper form at the beginning of class on the due date. If either of these is not turned on time the paper is considered late.

Grades
For each assignment a grade will be calculated according to the number of points it is worth. For some papers I will use a 10 point scale while on others I will use a 20 point scale. According to university policy, final grades for the course will consist of a letter grade only (no plus or minus). Here is a general description of my letter grades:

A: Students earning the grade of an A on any assignment will have completed work that obviously demonstrates a more than average understanding of the course material and completion of all aspects and requirements of the assignment. The grade of an A is reserved for that work which expertly displays one’s ability to engage the ideas at hand, recognize and dialogue about the complications of such ideas, and translate such dialogue into clear, academic prose that is free of stigmatized errors.

B: Students earning the grade of a B on any assignment will have completed work that demonstrates a more than average understanding of the course material and completion of all aspects and requirements of the assignment. The grade of a B is reserved for that work which
adeptly displays one’s ability to engage the ideas at hand, recognize and dialogue about the complications of such ideas, and translate such dialogue into clear, academic prose that is free of stigmatized errors. However, the level of thought, while still above average, may fluctuate in terms of analytic abilities and expression.

**C:**

Students earning the grade of a C on any assignment will have completed work that demonstrates an average understanding of the course material and completion of all aspects and requirements of the assignment. The grade of a C is reserved for that work which displays one’s ability to engage the ideas at hand (more so through summary and response rather than analysis), recognize and dialogue about the complications of such ideas (however, the complications recognized will focus more on surface level issues rather than the greater whole), and translate such dialogue into clear, academic prose that is free of stigmatized errors. As can be seen from this description, the level of thought will be acceptable and display that a student has read the assignment, but his/her analytic abilities and level of expression will not be nearly as complicated nor developed. Instead, C work will display a student’s hold to traditional methods of expression (simpler construction of sentence and paragraph development) and a struggle to develop complex, critical thinking skills.

**D:**

Students earning the grade of a D on any assignment will have completed work that demonstrates a below average understanding of course material and a lack of completion of all aspects and requirements of the assignment. The grade of a D is reserved for that work which displays one’s struggle or refusal to engage the ideas at hand, simply summarizes the work under study with no actual recognition of or dialogue about the complications of such ideas, and the translation of ideas into writing is completed in such a convoluted manner that the audience will have difficulty following the conversation.
F:

Students earning the grade of a F on any assignment will either not have completed the assignment, will have completed the assignment but not followed the guidelines, or will have completed the assignment and demonstrated a complete misunderstanding of the course material. In this case, it will be obvious that the student has either not completed the required reading and/or given him/herself enough time to develop the work. The grade of a F is reserved for that work which does not engage the issues at hand, offers a base (not complete) summary of the work at hand with no critical engagement, and the translation of ideas into writing is either incomplete or the audience will be unable to follow the conversation. It is important to remember that a student can receive 0 out of 100 points. In the case that a student only partially completes an assignment or completes a work (in terms of page length, but not purpose) s/he may receive 0 points.

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.

Note-taking

You should always take notes in class. This gives you a record of what occurred that day, helps you internalize the material, and provides you with information that you may be able to use in your papers.

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.
Definition of Academic Dishonesty

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.

If plagiarism is discovered on a student’s assignment, no credit will be given for the assignment unless the student and I reach an agreement for revision of the offending essay. Please read the complete policy at http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp

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/.

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 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.
AARC
Writing tutors are available in the Academic Assistance and Research Center on the first floor of the library. Drop-in tutoring is offered Mon.-Thurs from 1 to 8 p.m and on Sunday afternoons. You can also make an appt. by calling 468-4108.

Course Calendar
Please note that the following schedule is tentative and subject to change at a moment’s notice. No due dates for essays will be moved up to an earlier date. I will attempt to keep changes to a minimum, but students must be aware that the course is a living thing subject to unpredictable occurrences.

Monday Aug 26 – Class introduction and syllabus review.
   Homework: Write two-page, double-spaced letters of introduction.
Wednesday Aug 28 – Discussion of the writing process.
   Homework: Read “Shitty First Drafts” by Anne Lamott
Friday Aug 30 – Discussion of reading; revision exercise.
   Homework: Read “My Father’s Brain” by Jonathan Franzen.

Monday Sept 2 – Labor Day. No class.
Wednesday Sept 4 – Discussion of reading
   Homework: Read “My Fake Job” by Rodney Rothman
Friday Sept 6 – Revision exercise.
   Homework: Begin work on Essay 1.

Monday Sept 9 – Grammar lecture.
   Homework: Continue work on Essay 1.
Wednesday Sept 11 – In-class work on Essay 1.
   Homework: Complete Essay 1.
Friday Sept 13 – Essay 1 Due. Lecture on Subjectivity/Objectivity.
   Homework: Read “Violence of the Lambs” by John Jeremiah Sullivan.

Monday Sept 16 – Discussion of reading.
   Homework: Create list of own biases.
Wednesday Sept 18 – Bias exercises.
   Homework: Listen to “The End of Empathy” episode of Invisibilia podcast
Friday Sept 20 – Discussion of podcast.
  **Homework:** Read “A Search for Answers, a Search for Blame” by Kathryn Joyce

**Monday Sept 23** – Discussion of reading.
  **Homework:** Create a list of all instances of bias shown in the article.

**Wednesday Sept 25** – In-class examination of biases shown in Joyce article.
  **Homework:** Complete summary essay outlines.

**Friday Sept 27** – In-class outline exercises.
  **Homework:** Begin work on Essay 2.

**Monday Sept 30** – MLA Citation lecture.
  **Homework:** Continue work on Essay 2.

**Wednesday Oct 2** – In-class work on Essay 2.
  **Homework:** Continue work on Essay 2.

**Friday Oct 4** – In-class work on Essay 2.
  **Homework:** TBA

**Monday Oct 7** – **Essay 2 Due.** Essay self-grading exercise.
  **Homework:** TBA

**Wednesday Oct 9** – Essay self-grading exercise.
  **Homework:** TBA

**Friday Oct 11** – Essay self-grading exercise.
  **Homework:** Revise Essay 2.

**Monday Oct 14** – **Essay 2 Revisions Due.** Introduction to rhetoric.
  **Homework:** Read presidential speeches.

**Wednesday Oct 16** – Presidential speeches exercise.
  **Homework:** TBA

**Friday Oct 18** – Visual rhetoric lecture.
  **Homework:** Read “Closer than We Think” comics.

**Monday Oct 21** – Discussion of “Closer than We Think” comics.
  **Homework:** Select three comics to analyze for Essay 3.

**Wednesday Oct 23** – Collaborate analysis exercise.
Homework: Begin work on outlines for Essay 3.

Friday Oct 25 – Continue collaborative analysis.

Homework: Complete outlines for Essay 3.

Monday Oct 28 – In-class work on Essay 3.

Homework: Begin work on Essay 3.

Wednesday Oct 30 – In-class work on Essay 3.

Homework: Continue work on Essay 3.

Friday Nov 1 – Grammar lecture and review.

Homework: Complete Essay 3.


Homework: TBA

Wednesday Nov 6 – Logical fallacies.

Homework: Identify five logical fallacies in sample argument.

Friday Nov 8 – Introduction to comics and graphic novels.

Homework: Read New York Times article on Dahmer’s arrest and Wikipedia article concerning Jeffrey Dahmer.

Monday Nov 11 – Discussion of reading.

Homework: Read My Friend Dahmer.

Wednesday Nov 13 – Discussion of reading.

Homework: Build outline for response.

Friday Nov 15 – Collaborative argument response exercise.

Homework: Begin work on Essay 4.

Monday Nov 18 – In-class work on Essay 4.

Wednesday Nov 20 – In-class work on Essay 4.

Friday Nov 22 – In-class work on Essay 4.

Monday Nov 25 – Thanksgiving Holiday.

Wednesday Nov 27 – Thanksgiving Holiday.

Friday Nov 29 – Thanksgiving Holiday.
Monday Dec 2 – Conferences.
Wednesday Dec 4 – Conferences.
Friday Dec 6 – Conferences.

December 9-13 – Finals Week. Essay 4 due.