ENG 131.20: Rhetoric and Composition: Entering Pop Culture Debates

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.

Superhero battles, YouTubers, football tribes, and romcoms have seeped into our everyday communication to such an extent that they have become an important tool for forming connections with others and understanding our own values. We are all fanboys and fangirls of something, whether it be Tony Stark or Star Trek. The importance that pop culture holds in both traditional and new media, the billions of dollars it creates in profits every year, and unique place it occupies in human hearts makes it a critically important and fascinating field of study. Although this course will not attempt to serve as an introduction to pop culture studies, it employs the many conversations, debates, and controversies surrounding pop culture texts as a means of practicing skills essential to good writing, including close reading, analysis, synthesis, and sound logic.

Required Texts:


Course Resources:

Hollis Thompson
Department of English and Creative Writing
thompsonhc@jacks.sfasu.edu
Office: Ferguson 281
Office Hours: M/W 1-2:30 pm, T/TH 1-2:00 pm

Classroom: Ferguson 376
Class time: T/TH 11:00am-12:15pm

AARC
First floor, Steen Library
http://library.sfasu.edu/aarc/
936-468-4108
Tentative Course Calendar:

Note: I reserve the right to change this Course Calendar throughout the semester in order to meet the needs of students.

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<th>Homework Due</th>
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<td>Jan. 16th</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
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<td>Jan. 23rd</td>
<td>The Rhetorical Triangle and the Rhetorical Appeals</td>
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<td>Jan. 28th</td>
<td>The Importance of Listening</td>
<td>Notecard on <em>They Say/I Say</em> Chapter 1, pp. 19-29</td>
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<td>Jan. 30th</td>
<td>Intro to Summary</td>
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<td>Feb. 4th</td>
<td>Practice with Summary</td>
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<td>Feb. 6th</td>
<td>Listening Even When You Disagree</td>
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<td>Feb. 11th</td>
<td>Intro to Quoting</td>
<td>Notecard on <em>They Say/I Say</em> Chapter 3, pp. 43-52</td>
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<td>Feb. 18th</td>
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<td>Feb. 25th</td>
<td>What are Authors Responding to?</td>
<td>Notecard on <em>They Say/I Say</em> Chapter 14, pp. 176-186</td>
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<td>Mar. 5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>Mar. 10&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
<td>Rhetorical Analysis essay final draft due</td>
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<td>Mar. 12&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>Mar. 17&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Juggling Multiple Viewpoints</td>
<td>Notecard on <em>They Say/I Say</em> Chapter 4, pp. 53-66</td>
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<td>Mar. 19&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>The Synthesis Essay Assignment</td>
<td>Notecard on <em>They Say/I Say</em> Chapter 8, pp. 101-116</td>
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<td>Mar. 24&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Finding the Middle Ground</td>
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<td>Mar. 26&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>Peer Review Workshop for Editing</td>
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<td>Apr. 7&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Distinguishing Your Voice</td>
<td>Notecard on <em>They Say/I Say</em> Chapter 5, pp. 67-76</td>
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<td>Engaging with Alternative Perspectives</td>
<td>Notecard on <em>They Say/I Say</em> Chapter 6, pp. 77-90</td>
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<td>Apr. 16&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Making the Reader Care</td>
<td>Notecard on <em>They Say/I Say</em> Chapter 7, pp. 91-100</td>
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<td>Apr. 21&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Peer Review Workshop for Argument</td>
<td><em>Persuasive Proposal Essay draft one due</em></td>
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<td><em>Persuasive Proposal Essay draft two due</em></td>
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<td>Apr. 28&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>Apr. 30&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Concluding Thoughts</td>
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<td>Final Poster Presentations</td>
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**Course Requirements:**

1. Reading Notecards
Each student will prepare a brief question or note for each assigned chapter of They Say/I Say and turn it in on the class session in which we discuss the reading. Each notecard will be worth **2 points**, with **21 total points possible** for turning in every notecard.

2. Grammar Presentation
Students will each prepare a class exercise which will properly explain an element of grammar, mechanics, or punctuation. The exercise should include information on the topic from English Simplified and last approximately 7-10 mins. This assignment is worth a total of **30 possible points**.

3. Summary Essay
This 2-page essay will require students to accurately summarize the thesis and main arguments of one source on a topic within pop culture. This assignment is worth a total of **40 possible points**.

4. Rhetorical Analysis essay
This 3-4-page paper will require students to apply their new knowledge of writing and argument to analysis of a YouTube video essay that addresses prevalent issues within Pop Culture. This assignment is worth a total of **50 possible points**.

5. Synthesis Essay
This 4-5-page paper will require students to synthesize two opposing views on a controversial subject within pop culture. The assignment is worth a total of **60 possible points**.

6. Persuasive Proposal Essay
This 7-8-page paper will require students to make a proposal that argues for the benefit of enacting a creative change within a pop culture text or institution. The assignment is worth a total of **70 possible points**.

7. Final Poster Presentation
For the final, students will rework their persuasive proposal into a poster-presentation. They will display and explain their poster during the final session. The assignment is worth a total of **40 possible points**.

**Total Possible Points: 311**

**Grading:** Think of the grading points for assignments like experience points (EXP) in a video game. Everyone starts with 0, and you must complete tasks in order to gain points. The reading notecards are like low-level challenges that help you gain basic amounts of EXP. The major papers and presentations are like video games bosses which require more skills in order to defeat and reward victory with much higher amounts of EXP. After gaining a certain number of points, you will “level up” in the class. The levels for the class are as follows:

- **Level 1: Chiseler (0-77 Points) (F)**
- **Level 2: Scribbler (78-155 Points) (F)**
- **Level 3: Typist (156-232 Points) (F-C)**
Level 4: Writer (233-311 Points) (C-A)

Each time ten students level-up, I will buy ice cream for the entire class. For each major assignment, I will provide a printed description of the rubric that I will use to grade the paper/presentation. All grades will reflect my judgement of the extent to which the paper met the requirements of the assignment rubric. If a paper receives the full number of possible points for the assignment, the paper will have received an “A.” Lower scores will equate to lower letter grades (see the general rubric below). All final grades will be posted on D2L and display a letter grade.

Each student may turn in one late paper with no penalties. If you miss a due date, you should meet with me during my office hours within a week of the original due date with a completed copy of your paper. I will accept the paper and will never bring up the incident again. However, once a student has turned in one such late paper, the student can never turn in another late assignment. Any other failure to meet a due date will result in a 0 for that assignment.

Course Attendance:
For emergencies or sick days, a student may miss a total of 4 class sessions. After missing 5 CLASS SESSIONS, students will automatically fail this course. Students should inform the instructor in advance about any emergencies that would require them to exceed this number of absences. Excused absences will be given at the instructor’s sole discretion and only in the case of extreme circumstances or legitimate academic events.

Writing Groups:
At the beginning of the semester, each student will be assigned to a writing group. These groups will consist of three-to-four students who share a common pop culture interest (such as Star Wars, Marvel, Fortnite, or the National Football League). This group will critique each member’s paper during peer-review workshops and perform other tasks in various group activities throughout the semester. Although you are not required to meet with your group outside of class, you may find that your fellow group members can form a good support-network and further help you revise drafts and survive the course.

General Education Core Curriculum Objectives:
This course has been selected to be part of Stephen F. Austin State University’s core curriculum. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board has identified six objectives for all core courses: Critical Thinking Skills, Communication Skills, Empirical and Quantitative Skills, Teamwork, Personal Responsibility, and Social Responsibility. SFA is committed to the improvement of its general education core curriculum by regular assessment of student performance on these six objectives.

English 131 Student 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).

Credit Hour Justification:
ENGL 1301 “Rhetoric and Composition” (3 credits) typically meets three times each week in 50-minute segments or twice each week in 75-minute segments for 15 weeks, and also meets for a 2-hour final examination. Students have weekly topical, non-fiction reading assignments of 25 pages or more and are expected to write/provide response to these readings; in addition, student will write five essays in various genres (for a total of 25 or more written pages per semester) which engage the topics of the readings. They will also present to the class a final project which includes a written paper and a visual component; this project integrates at least five of the readings of the semester and three more sources which they will have gathered through research. These activities average at a minimum 6 hours of work each week to prepare outside of classroom hours.

COURSE POLICIES

Classroom Etiquette: I will treat all students as responsible adults. Please show the same courtesy to all other students. I believe in free speech, and I will not shut you down or shame you for expressing a controversial belief. I will not, however, allow any student to belittle, bully, or insult a classmate. I allow food and drink in my classes, but do not do anything that will make yourself an obstruction to class (such as playing music or a video on an electronic device). In general, allow the golden rule of “do unto others as you would have them do to you” to guide your behavior in class. I reserve the right to expel any student who violates these rules from the class session.

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 and http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic-appeals-by-students.pdf.

**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. For more information on Title IX and sexual discrimination or to file a report, contact Title IX Lumberjacks Care at titleIX@sfasu.edu or (936) 468-8292.

**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/, 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/disabilityservices/.
**D2L Technical Support:** For D2L technical support, contact student support in the Office of Instructional Technology (OIT) at d2l.sfasu.edu or 936-468-1919. If you call after regular business hours or on a weekend, please leave a voicemail.

**General Technical Support:** For general computer support (not related to D2L), contact the Technical Support Center (TSC) at 936-468-4357 or at helpdesk@sfasu.edu. To learn more about using D2L, visit SFA ONLINE at http://sfaonline.sfasu.edu, where you will find written instructions and video tutorials.

**The Academic Assistance and Resource Center (AARC):** The AARC offers 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/, visit them on the first floor of the Steen Library, or call them at (936) 468-4108.

**Counseling Services:** Counseling Services is a free service offered to SFASU students; they offer one-on-one counseling sessions. If you have something personal that is bothering you and would like to speak to a licensed counselor, you can call (936) 468-2401.