

ENG 481G: TOPICS IN WRITING RHETORICAL CRITICISM

WHEN & WHERE

Mondays
5:00 – 7:30 p.m.
Simpkins 214

CONTACT INFO

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EMAIL
a-beardsley@wiu.edu

OFFICE

Simpkins 129

STUDENT HOURS

In-person and [Gather.Town](#)
Mon. 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.
Tues. 11 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Wed. 11 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
or by appointment

Western Illinois University

Spring 2024

Table of Contents
ENG 481G: Topics in Writing – Rhetorical Criticism

Course Texts	4
How to Engage Texts and Prepare for Class	4
Workshop Requirements.....	5
Grading Scales	5
Student Hours	5
Email Policy	6
University Writing Center	6
Writing Guidelines	6
Feedback	6
Extension Policy	7
Attendance Policy	7
Professionalism and Respect	7
COVID-19	7
Brief Assignment Descriptions	7
1. Individual Meetings & UWC Appointments (5%)	7
2. Project Proposal (5%)	8
3. Short Exploration Papers (45%)	8
4. Midterm: Working Works Cited (5%)	8
Extra Credit	8
5. Final Portfolio (40%)	8
Undergraduate Students.....	8
Graduate Students	8
In-Course Honors Project.....	9
Course Schedule	10
Week 1. What Is Rhetorical Criticism?	10
Week 2. How Do You “Do” Rhetorical Criticism?	10
Week 3. Cluster Criticism	10
Week 4. No Class	10
Week 5. Metaphoric Criticism	11
Week 6. Narrative Criticism.....	11
Week 7. Cultural Criticism.....	11
Week 8. Spring Break	11
Week 9. Writing Day: Individual Meetings	11
Week 10. Place-Based Criticism	11
Week 11. Generic Criticism.....	11
Week 12. Ideological Criticism	12
Week 13. Feminist Criticism	12
Week 14. Contemporary Social Movement Rhetoric	12
Week 15. Course Eval, End-of-Semester Reflection Survey.....	12
Week 16. Final Portfolio Due	12
University Policies	13
<i>Students’ Rights and Responsibilities</i>	13
<i>Academic Integrity</i>	13

<i>Accessibility Statement</i>	13
<i>Disability Resources Center</i>	13
<i>Financial Aid & Academic Progress</i>	13
<i>Incompletes</i>	14
<i>Military/Veteran Support Statement</i>	14
<i>Students with Disabilities</i>	14
<i>Title IX</i>	14

ENG 481G: Topics in Writing – Rhetorical Criticism

The rhetorical situation expands beyond audience-speaker-purpose to places—both physical and digital—and things. This course will provide an overview of contemporary rhetorical criticism. We will look at a different method each week, and you will play with rhetorical lenses to analyze an object, text, everyday practice, space/place, or architectural structure of your choice.

We will read recent work on protest rhetoric, digital activism, feminist rhetoric, and more as examples. You will write short explorations (1250 words; ~5 pages) analyzing your artifact using different rhetorical lenses, revise one into a more developed paper, and curate a portfolio of your best work.

Learning Outcomes

- Understand the ways rhetorical criticism has been studied in the field of rhetoric, composition, and literacy
- Analyze and evaluate ideas, arguments, and interpretations
- Develop advanced writing skills
- Compare and evaluate approaches, theories, and methods that relate to the study and understanding of rhetoric
- Assemble a body of work that utilizes inquiry to analyze an object, text, everyday practice, space/place, or architectural structure of your choice

Course Texts

There is **one** required book for this course:

Foss, Sonja K. *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice*. Fifth edition, Waveland P, 2018.

The following book is **optional**, but I recommend that graduate students get a copy:

Dickinson, Greg, et al., editors. *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*. U of Alabama P, 2010.

Other readings will be made available electronically. Additionally, I will list books, articles, etc., on the WO Course Resources → **Additional Texts** page. You are not expected to read these sources; however, you can use this page as a starting point for additional research.

How to Engage Texts and Prepare for Class

I will refer to our course materials as texts because we'll use written texts, podcasts, and more during class. Please come to class each week ready to discuss the assigned texts. We all need to read and write to get the most out of this course. Therefore, I expect you to engage with all the material assigned for each week's discussion.

When reading, take notes on the following:

- Write down questions you have
- List and define key terms and theories, especially those that connect to rhetoric
- Note how what you're reading each week connects to other texts we've engaged
- Consider how what you're reading contributes to what you plan to write about in your final paper
- Pay attention to *how* texts are written

- What goes in the intro, lit review, methodology, body, and conclusion?
- How are sources used to support claims?

Workshop Requirements

We will establish a rotating workshop schedule and draft submission due dates on the first day of class. Regardless of whether we decide to read drafts in advance or during class, each writer will share one concern they have about their paper, and we will help them expand their ideas. We will not act as editors.

Even if you know there's more work to do, turn in your short exploration paper. It's better to bring something to the workshop than not have anything. Additionally, you're here to support your fellow writers. So, when your work isn't up for discussion, show up for the rest of your group and give them your full attention.

Grading Scales

Assignments will be graded and posted within 14 days after the assignment's due date. Your grade will be determined using the following grading scales:

Undergraduate Students		Graduate Students	
Letter Grade	Percentage	Letter Grade	Percentage
A	90–100%	A	90–100%
A-	87–89%	B	89–80%
B+	84–86%	C	79–70%
B	80–83%	D	69–60%
B-	77–78%	F	59% or below
C+	74–76%		
C	70–73%		
C-	67–69%		
D+	64–66%		
D	60–63%		
D-	57–59 %		
F	56% or below		

Student Hours

I hold student hours in person (Simpkins 129) and virtually ([Gather.Town](#)). Student hours are dedicated to meeting with students one-on-one or in small groups to discuss questions about the course material, unpack assignment prompts, brainstorm ideas, strategize for keeping up with coursework, develop research and writing skills, and get back on track if you've fallen behind. Even if you don't have any questions, please feel free to drop by student hours and chat!

My Spring 2024 student hours are as follows:

- Mon. 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.
- Tues. 11 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
- Wed. 11 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

or by appointment

If my student hours conflict with your class or work schedule, [use my appointment scheduler](#) to set up a meeting.

Email Policy

I typically respond to emails within 24 hours, M – F, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. I check my email after that and on the weekends, but not as frequently as I try to keep a work-life balance. Please take this response time into account when reaching out.

Additionally, I do not accept assignments via email.

University Writing Center

As many of you know, I am the University Writing Center (UWC) director. I believe that the UWC is a superb resource, even for strong writers. Having someone to bounce ideas off or review MLA citations can help you see your paper differently.

The UWC is your go-to resource at any stage of the writing process! Appointments are available in three formats: in-person (3rd Floor, Malpass Library or (QC Complex 2219), online (real-time with video or chat and document sharing), and etutoring (asynchronous feedback on an uploaded paper).

You'll be required to make UWC appointments throughout the semester—see the course schedule for dates. Please request that the UWC consultant send me a copy of the client report after your visit (consultants will need my email, a-beardsley@wiu.edu).

Register, view the schedule, and begin self-scheduling appointments at [wiu.mywconline.com](#).

Note: Please make an appointment with someone not in this class. Your peers will see your work throughout the semester, and they'll be too familiar with it.

I reserve the right to cancel or modify your UWC appointment to meet course requirements.

Writing Guidelines

All assignments (unless otherwise stated) must follow the Modern Language Association (MLA) 9th edition. I expect that you work to cite sources correctly, and papers without citations and a works cited page will not be accepted. The [Purdue Owl Online Writing Lab has excellent MLA information](#).

Feedback

You will receive feedback from your peers and me on all short exploration papers. Most of the feedback will be given during workshop. You will not receive extensive notes on every paper; however, we will meet to discuss your writing throughout the semester. Also, I'm happy to chat about your work during student hours.

Extension Policy

Because our course revolves around workshopping, I will not allow extensions (barring unforeseen circumstances, of course).

Attendance Policy

Our class meets on Mondays from 5:00 – 7:30 p.m. We'll begin each class promptly at 5:00 p.m. If you're late, come in quietly, find your seat, and jump into the discussion. Follow up with a friend **after** class to see what you missed.

Unless you are in the QC, I expect you to attend class in person. Strive to arrive 5 minutes beforehand so you're ready to start on time and plan to stay for the duration of the class. That being said, illness and life happen. **If you do not feel well, do not come to class. I expect you to communicate.** Send me an email and join the class via Zoom. Our class Zoom link is posted on WO.

I take attendance for my records, but this course has no attendance policy. Instead, your attendance impacts whether or not you can participate in workshop and receive full points for your short exploration paper. Workshops and submitting short exploration papers cannot be made up unless you have an official excused absence.

To receive an excused absence, you must provide documentation within 2 weeks of the date of the absence to make up the work.

Professionalism and Respect

Respect and care should be shown in your behavior, whether you're responding to a peer's question during class, participating in workshop, or completing an assignment. Disruptive, disrespectful, threatening, or harassing behavior toward any individual in our class environment will not be tolerated and may result in dismissal from class. If you feel uncomfortable about any aspect of the class, including class discussions, group conversations, and workshop, please contact me ASAP so we can address your concerns.

COVID-19

WIU does not require the COVID-19 vaccine for students or employees; there are guidelines to help you navigate testing and isolating. Please refer to [WIU's COVID-19 information site](#).

Please be prepared to mask when requested. Your peers may be immunocompromised, care for someone who is immunocompromised, or wish to mask for extra protection. Regardless of the reason, please be respectful and put on a mask if asked.

Brief Assignment Descriptions

1. Individual Meetings & UWC Appointments (5%)

Meeting with me throughout the semester is required. Because of the number of students in this course, some meetings will occur during class time, while others happen during student hours or additional meeting times.

Additionally, you must take drafts to the writing center. See the course schedule for due dates.

2. Project Proposal (5%)

You'll work with the same topic and artifact(s) the whole semester. The project proposal is a one-page, single-spaced justification of your choice.

3. Short Exploration Papers (45%)

Our course is writing-focused. You will write 5 short papers (5–7 pages; 1250–1750 words, including the works cited) that follow MLA 9th edition guidelines. If you submit your paper, attempt proper formatting, and come to class for workshop you will receive full credit (10 pts for each paper). The explorations are a way to play with the different rhetorical lenses without the stress of a formal grade so you can decide which lens to use for a complete analysis.

4. Midterm: Working Works Cited (5%)

For your midterm, you'll create what I refer to as a **working works cited**: a works cited page that includes all of the sources you've used in your short papers, plus entries for additional sources you might need for the final portfolio.

We'll operate under the general rule that for each page, you should have at least one source (e.g., a 5-page paper must have a minimum of 5 sources).

The purpose of the working works cited is to keep track of our sources. This is not an annotated bibliography—no summaries needed—but you must show you're researching beyond the five-page exploratory papers.

Extra Credit

Want to dive deeper into your sources? Create an annotated bibliography instead! You might choose annotations to further your understanding of rhetorical criticism, your topic, or an additional theory you're implementing. Annotated bibliographies are beneficial for graduate students—you'll often create one for your exit option.

You'll receive 2 pts of extra credit for every source you annotate.

A detailed assignment sheet will be provided.

5. Final Portfolio (40%)

This course's final project is a portfolio containing your best work.

Undergraduate Students

Your portfolio must include:

- 1-page cover letter that introduces the reader to your project
- Your **2 best short explorations** revised for clarity, conciseness, and formatting.
- **1 exploration** you expand into a longer paper (12–20 pages; 3000–5000 including the works cited).

Graduate Students

Your portfolio must include:

- 1-page cover letter that introduces the reader to your project

- Your **3 best short explorations** revised for clarity, conciseness, and formatting.
- **1 exploration** you expand into a longer paper (12–20 pages; 3000–5000 including the works cited).

A detailed assignment sheet will be provided.

In-Course Honors Project

In-course honors is a contract between you and me to collaborate on “an honors learning experience” that builds on your understanding of rhetorical criticism. The Honors College states that “credit may count towards an academic department’s Major Honors requirements, the Pre-Law Honors Minor, or, in limited circumstances, a student’s General Honors program. Honors projects are elevated activities designed to challenge the student beyond the requirements outlined in the course syllabus.”

To receive in-course honors for this class, you must complete the following project:

- Research a rhetorical criticism lens we’re not covering (see Foss for page numbers)
 - Neo-Aristotelian Criticism
 - Fantasy-Theme Criticism
 - Pentadic Criticism
 - Generative Criticism
- Create a one-page handout, modeled after course resources, that unpacks how the rhetorical criticism lens works
- Lead a 30-minute mini-lesson where you teach the class about the rhetorical lens

Students seeking in-course honors must meet with me to discuss their project and schedule the mini-lesson date.

Course Schedule

Subject to Change

This schedule provides an overview of readings and assignments for the entire semester. You must use the modules under **Content** on WO for detailed assignment descriptions and supplemental materials (PDFs, links, etc.). You will likely miss due dates and instructions if you only look at the homepage.

Before class, all readings underneath the day's topic (e.g., bullet points under What Is Rhetorical Criticism?) must be completed. I expect that you show up ready to discuss and apply the texts. If something says "submit to WO by 11:59 PM," it is due that day (e.g., Submit Drafts: Instagram Posts #1 & #2 to WO by 11:59 PM is listed on Th 9.14, so it's due that night).

As the semester unfolds, it might be desirable/necessary to make changes to this syllabus. I reserve the right to make changes and will post any updates to Western Online.

Week 1. What Is Rhetorical Criticism?

1.22 In Class

- Begin defining rhetoric and rhetorical criticism
- Syllabi, course materials, and schedule overview
- Assignment Sheet: Project Proposal: Artifact Selection
- Vote on short exploration paper due date + time
 - 11:59 p.m. on Thursdays **or** 5:00 p.m. on Mondays

Homework

- Select your artifact! Bring it to class next week.

Week 2. How Do You “Do” Rhetorical Criticism?

1.29 **DUE by 11:59 p.m. – Project Proposal Artifact Selection**

Submit your project proposal on WO by 11:59 p.m.

- “The Nature of Rhetorical Criticism” (Foss 3–8)
- “Doing Rhetorical Criticism” (Foss 9–28)
- “Entering the Unending Conversation: An Introduction to Rhetorical Criticism” (Ott and Dickinson 1–14)

In Class

- Artifact show and tell

Week 3. Cluster Criticism

2.5 • “Cluster Criticism” (Foss 61–88)

In Class

- Writing your short exploration papers and how workshop works

Week 4. No Class

2.12 Lincoln’s Birthday

Week 5. Metaphoric Criticism

2.19 *Set up a meeting with me to discuss your project. All meetings must occur by noon on F 2.23.*

Workshop: Groups A & B Short Exploration Paper 1

- “Metaphoric Criticism” (Foss 285–318)

Week 6. Narrative Criticism

2.26 Workshop: Groups C & D Short Exploration Paper 1

- “Narrative Criticism” (Foss 319–356)
- Martinez

Week 7. Cultural Criticism

3.4 Workshop: Groups A & B Short Exploration Paper 2

- “Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the *Peuple Québécois*” (Charland 133–150)
- “Introduction: Rhetoric/Memory/Place” (Blair et al. 1–56)
- Choose 1 of the following texts
 - From *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*: “Radioactive History: Rhetoric, Memory, and Place in the Post-Cold War Nuclear Museum” (Taylor 57–86)
 - [“My Name Is /KLA-ris/: The Bordered Name of an American Latina” \(Blanco\)](#)

Week 8. Spring Break

3.11 Have a good break!

Week 9. Writing Day: Individual Meetings

3.18 *One-on-one meetings in Simpkins 129. All meetings must occur by noon on F 3.22.*

DUE by 11:59 p.m. – Midterm: Working Works Cited

Week 10. Place-Based Criticism

3.25 **DUE – UWC Appointment 1**

Complete your UWC appointment by today; have the consultant email the client report to a-beardsley@wiu.edu

Workshop: Groups C & D Short Exploration Paper 2

- “On Gender and Rhetorical Space” (Mountford 41–71)
- Choose 1 of the following texts
 - From *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*: “Tracing Mary Queen of Scots” (Bowman 191–215)
 - [“Disney Death Tour: Monumentality, Augmented Reality, and Digital Rhetoric” \(Crider and Anderson\)](#)

Week 11. Generic Criticism

4.1 Workshop: Groups A & B Short Exploration Paper 3

- “Generic Criticism” (Foss 179–206)
- “‘Tried Receipts’: An Overview of America’s Charitable Cookbooks” (Longone 17–28)

Week 12. Ideological Criticism

- 4.8 Workshop: Groups C & D Short Exploration Paper 3
- “Ideological Criticism” (Foss 237–284)
 - “The Third Persona: An Ideological Turn in Rhetorical Theory” (Wander 604–623)

Week 13. Feminist Criticism

- 4.15 **DUE – UWC Appointment 2**
 Complete your UWC appointment by today; have the consultant email the client report to a-beardsley@wiu.edu

Workshop: Groups A & B Short Exploration Paper 4

- “Feminist Criticism” (Foss 141–155, 174–178)
- “#Foodporn: An Anatomy of the Meal Gaze” (David and Allard 65–80)

Week 14. Contemporary Social Movement Rhetoric

- 4.22 Workshop: Groups C & D Short Exploration Paper 4
- “Introduction” (Nish 1–31)
 - “Differences That Matter: Orientation as a Transnational Feminist Literacy Practice” (Nish 75–113)

Week 15. Course Eval, End-of-Semester Reflection Survey

- 4.29 **DUE – UWC Appointment 3**
 Complete your UWC appointment by today; have the consultant email the client report to a-beardsley@wiu.edu

Workshop: All Groups (A, B, C, D) Short Exploration Paper 5

- Complete university course eval
- Take end-of-semester reflection survey

Week 16. Final Portfolio Due

- 5.6 **Submit your final portfolio by 11:59 p.m. on Monday, May 6**

University Policies

Students' Rights and Responsibilities

Full Policy: <http://www.wiu.edu/provost/students.php>

Academic Integrity

Responsible academic conduct is required in this and all other WIU courses. Plagiarism and cheating are serious infractions subject to University policy on academic integrity. Scholastic dishonesty in any portion of the work for this course shall be grounds for awarding a grade of F for the assignment or an F for the entire course, and further disciplinary action may be taken.

It is crucial that you turn in your own work and that you document the sources for ideas that are not your own. If you are using material or ideas from another source, including the internet and any graphics, and have questions about how to properly document the material, you should consult a style manual for guidelines. If you remain unsure or if you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or cheating, please contact me before the assignment is due.

Please note that turning in work for this class that was prepared for another class or by another individual will be considered cheating. The policy on plagiarism and cheating applies to all drafts, as well as final products, turned in for this course.

For the university's policy on academic integrity, including plagiarism and cheating, refer to <http://www.wiu.edu/policies/acintegrity.php>.

Accessibility Statement

Students with disabilities: In accordance with University values and disability law, students with disabilities may request academic accommodations where there are aspects of a course that result in barriers to inclusion or accurate assessment of achievement. To file an official request for disability-related accommodations, please contact the Disability Resource Center at 309-298-2512, disability@wiu.edu or in 143 Memorial Hall. Please notify the instructor as soon as possible to ensure that this course is accessible to you in a timely manner.

Disability Resources Center

http://www.wiu.edu/student_services/disability_resource_center/

Financial Aid & Academic Progress

It is the responsibility of students to understand the attendance and academic progress requirements of their classes and the financial programs of which they are recipients. Regular attendance and successful academic progress are required for various federal, state, and private loans, grants, awards, and scholarships. Your financial aid rights and responsibilities are available online at: http://www.wiu.edu/student_success/financial_aid/policies/

Faculty are required to report attendance and academic progress information to financial aid personnel in a timely manner regardless of individual course attendance policies. WIU and other universities are sometimes required to pay back the amount of awarded and dispersed financial aid when they fail to verify attendance and academic progress information for each class in which students are enrolled.

Incompletes

An incomplete ("I") grade will be given in extraordinary circumstances (i.e., prolonged illness, death in family) at my discretion. It will not be considered unless the amount of work remaining in the course is limited and you had a passing grade before the incomplete assignment. The assignment of an "I" requires a written agreement between me and you specifying the time and manner in which you will complete the required assignments. Failure to adhere to the contract could result in an F for the missing work.

Military/Veteran Support Statement

As a military-friendly institution, and in accordance with federal regulations and Illinois statutes, Western Illinois University has established policies and procedures to accommodate military service students. In addition to the supports available at WIU's Veterans Resource Center (wiu.edu/student_success/veterans / 309-298-3505), veterans, members of the National Guard or Reserves, and active-duty military personnel with military obligations (e.g., deployments, trainings, drill) are encouraged to communicate these, in advance whenever possible, to the instructor. The Military Service Policy can be found at <http://www.wiu.edu/policies/military.php>.

Students' Rights and Responsibilities

Full Policy: <http://www.wiu.edu/provost/students.php>

Students with Disabilities

http://www.wiu.edu/student_services/career_development_center/studentsWithDisabilities.php

Title IX

University values, Title IX, and other federal and state laws prohibit sex discrimination, including sexual assault/misconduct, dating/domestic violence, and stalking. If you, or someone you know, has been the victim of any of these offenses, we encourage you to report this to the Title IX Coordinator at 309-298-1977 or anonymously online at:

http://www.wiu.edu/equal_opportunity_and_access/request_form/index.php. If you disclose an incident to a faculty member, the faculty member must notify the Title IX Coordinator. The complete Title IX policy is available at: <http://www.wiu.edu/vpas/policies/titleIX.php>.