

Instructor Policies **COMM 240: Rhetorical Criticism**

Course Information

- Fall, August 28-December 14, 2017, Tu 1:00-4:00 p.m., BLTN 018, 16571, Section #501

Instructor Information

- Marco Ehrl
- Office Location: Bolton Hall 211
- E-mail: marcoehrl@tamu.edu
- Web: <https://www.marcoehrl.com/>
- Office Hours: Tuesday, 1:00-4:00
- Course Director: Prof. Dubriwny (tdubriwny@tamu.edu)

Course Description

Principles and practices of the analysis of speeches and other forms of public discourse; compares system of rhetorical criticism, such as neo-classical analysis, mythic analysis, rhetorical genres and close textual analysis.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course a successful COMM 240 student will be able to . . .

- Identify and define key rhetorical concepts and arguments from relevant scholarly source
- Explain and apply key rhetorical theories to a variety of rhetorical situations, including political and social movement speeches
- Analyze and evaluate rhetorical discourse/artifacts from a variety of rhetorical perspectives
- Construct extended written analyses of rhetorical discourse/artefact that describe and explain contextual information and utilize relevant scholarly literature

Required Texts and Supplies

- All readings for this course are available through eCampus: <https://ecampus.tamu.edu>
- Foss, S. K. (2018). *Rhetorical criticism: Exploration and practice* (5th ed.). Long Grove: Waveland Press (recommended)
- Paper, pens, and other supplies for activities

Course Expectations and Procedures

You are encouraged to help create an environment that promotes learning, dignity, and mutual respect for everyone. If you sleep during class, display inattention, interrupt the class by coming to class late without appropriate excuses, engage in distracting behavior, use cell phones or laptops in class for reasons other than advised, use inappropriate language, or display disrespect to others you are *not* creating a climate that encourages learning.

In addition, to create and sustain a productive learning environment, you are expected to complete the assigned readings, which means that you prepare questions and critical responses to the readings. That way, we will be able to generate lively and engaging discussions and activities.

Attendance

Attendance and active participation is not only essential for you to successfully achieve the learning objectives of this class, but it is also **mandatory**. I expect you to arrive on time for class and remain in the classroom for the entire session. Entering the classroom late or leaving early is disruptive and disrespectful towards students who managed to arrive on time and **will result in an absence**. I expect you to be present for the entire class session. To be counted as present, **it is your responsibility to sign the daily attendance sheet**.

You are allowed 3 unexcused absences. Each unexcused absence after the third will result in a one letter grade deduction of your final course grade. It is not necessary for students to notify me or bring documentation for the 3 unexcused absences that are built into the course. In case of long-term medical illness, injury, or emergency, please contact me immediately to discuss the situation. If students miss class, they are responsible for missed course material. Ask a classmate for missed information, notes, and material. **“I wasn’t in class that day” is not an acceptable excuse** for a lack of preparation. Finally, check eCampus and your tamu e-mail account regularly for possible course announcements.

If your reason for being absent is recognized by the University as an excused absence then **you must turn in satisfactory documentation within one week of your return to class**. Please be aware that a receipt from a healthcare provider is not satisfactory documentation for an excused absence request, nor is the Texas A&M University Explanatory Statement for Absences. **The only acceptable documentation is a doctor’s written statement that indicates that you were too ill to attend class.** For what counts as satisfactory documentation please see (<http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07>). Finally, employment interviews will not be considered excused absences. If you are interviewing this semester, do not use any of your unexcused absences for other reasons.

Academic Integrity

For your assignment(s) I will ask you to use reliable sources. Using reliable references not only helps you to build an argument, but it also adds to your credibility as a speaker and writer. When presenting the ideas of others, please behave with academic integrity and properly indicate the source you are using by following the rules for citation according to MLA.

Plagiarism will result in failure of the course. Please be aware that there are different types of academic misconduct and plagiarism including cheating, fabrication, and falsification. If you are unsure about what constitutes academic misconduct, please contact me, or consult TAMU’s policy regarding academic misconduct and plagiarism (<http://aggiehonors.tamu.edu/Default.aspx>). **“An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal or tolerate those who do”**

Assignments

All assignments must be turned in at the beginning of class. Also, format your papers according to APA guidelines regarding spacing, margins, in-text citations, bibliographical references, etc. I encourage you to ask questions about course assignments or any other course related issues; **“I didn’t know” is not an acceptable excuse.** Late assignments will not be accepted nor will I accept assignments turned into my mailbox or sent via e-mail. **Anticipate problems in advance and communicate with me to avoid misunderstandings.** It is your responsibility to keep information and records relevant to your assignments. If you miss an assignment or exam due to an excused absence, **you are allowed to make up the assignment within 30 days after the excused absence.** If you miss any of the three exams, your make up will be an **essay exam**. You are responsible for providing satisfactory evidence to me to substantiate the reason for the absence (<http://studentrules.tamu.edu/rule07>).

Reading

Bring your Textbook to class. Follow the syllabus in terms of reading. Reading the text is not only essential for in-class discussions, it also helps you to perform well in your groups, on quizzes, exams, and activities. Do not expect me to provide you with in-depth summaries of the text.

Teaching Philosophy

I consider myself not an instructor but a facilitator. My job is not to instruct you but to facilitate learning. With your help I will not try to instruct you about argumentation and debate, instead, I will try to create an environment in which you will learn naturally. Teaching is not a delivery system where teachers deliver and students absorb information; it is a creative and collaborative effort which inspires, provokes, and celebrates curiosity. **If you are curious about group communication and group discussions, you will learn naturally.** However, creating a culture of curiosity requires you to participate in class discussions and activities. Our discussions and activities will be as lively and engaging as we make them.

In addition to creating a culture of curiosity, I am using a **dialogic method of teaching** to accommodate your individual learning style. My efforts as a facilitator are aimed at making you want to listen, and in turn I am listening in a way that makes you want to speak. I am convinced that this form of teaching and learning will create a productive environment. Finally, all course assignments are designed to test the boundaries of your “communicative comfort zone”. Learning how to effectively engage in group discussions and achieve high levels of group cohesiveness, does not happen inside, but outside of your comfort zone. Identifying your personal deficiencies is necessary to develop effective and efficient group communication skills. To this end, I use a teaching method that first, teaches you key concepts and strategies, second, let’s you apply them, and third, encourages you to reflect on problems that you encountered while using them.

Finally, in addition to my dialogic teaching method, I will also make extensive use of the **Jigsaw classroom method** in which you work in groups. I will first put you into groups of 5-6 people, where each group member will familiarize his/-herself with a specific rhetorical concept and then you will form new expert groups to discuss and refine your knowledge. Eventually, you will return to your original group.

Students with disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact Disability Services, currently located in the Disability Services building at the Student Services at White Creek complex on west campus or call 979-845-1637. For additional information, visit <http://disability.tamu.edu/>

Use of Technology in the Classroom

You are allowed to use laptops and/or cell phones in class if they do not prevent you from being engaged in the class conversation, or from being an active listener for presentations, debates, and discussions. **Laptops and cell phones are not allowed in class for uses unrelated to the course** (e.g., text messaging, “surfing the net”, catching up on the news, etc.). If a cell phone rings during class, the instructor is allowed to answer it in whatever language he considers appropriate and the phone will be confiscated until the end of class. If you or your family is experiencing an emergency situation which requires you to be available for immediate contact via cell phone, please let me know at the beginning of class.

We will be using **Padlet** (i.e., online discussion board) as a way to discuss and learn about rhetorical concepts and authors. It also helps you to track your learning curve. You will be using Padlet in groups, so I encourage you to download the Padlet app to your smart phone. This will help you to generate content and contribute to our discussions inside and outside the classroom.

Course Assignments

- **Speech/Artefact Identification (25 points):** All written assignments relate to each other. This first written assignment asks you to identify a speech that you will analyze for the remainder of the semester. Do not choose a speech that we are discussing in class. The following sources help you to choose a speech that will excite you throughout the semester

- <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/>
- <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/>
- <http://gos.sbc.edu/>
- <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches>

For the “Speech Identification” assignment, **write 2 paragraphs** in which you (1) identify your speech and explain why you consider it an important speech that will engage you throughout the semester (1st paragraph). And then you briefly explain the political and cultural context of the speech (2nd paragraph).

- **Descriptive Analysis (50 points):** Using your speech, write a **3-4 page essay** (double-spaced, Times New Roman 12pt, APA style for in-text citations and bibliography) in which you **describe the political/cultural/social/economic/ etc. goal(s) of the speech and 3 rhetorical strategies** (e.g., ethos, pathos, logos, rhetorical personae, language) that the speaker uses to achieve his/her goals. First, identify and describe the goals of the speech before describing the speech’s rhetorical strategies.

- **political** (e.g., winning over voters, announcing new policies, justifying war efforts, etc.),
- **cultural** (e.g., re-defining what the American dream means, strengthening national pride, educating the public about xyz, defining what values like security, peace, freedom, etc. mean), and
- **social** goals (e.g., defining the role of people and institutions in American society).

Second, use ample textual evidence from the speech to describe how the speech tries to achieve its goals (i.e., How does the speech achieve its goal or how does it fail to achieve its goal?). Focus on how the speech itself answers these questions, rather than focusing on external information like the speaker's personality. Use a **minimum of 3 sources**.

- **Critical Analysis Paper I (75 points):** For this **3-4 page essay** (double-spaced, Times New Roman 12pt, APA style for in-text citations and bibliography), offer a critical analysis of your speech using one of the critical perspectives we discussed (e.g., Dramatism, Genre Criticism, Close Textual Analysis, etc.). This essay should include a short introduction (1 page), where you develop your research question, explain why you choose a particular rhetorical method (rationale), and finish with your thesis statement. The remainder of the essay (3 pages) should feature your analysis. This means that you analyze your speech through the concept of the criticism that you chose. For example, if you choose Dramatism as your method then you should run a pentadic analysis of your speech (e.g., act, scene, agent, agency, purpose). Do not include a conclusion. Use a **minimum of 5 sources**, 3 of which should be scholarly sources (e.g., articles you read for class).
- **Critical Analysis Paper II (75 points):** For this **3-4 page essay** (double-spaced, Times New Roman 12pt, APA style for in-text citations and bibliography), use a different critical method. The purpose of this assignment is to help you see how different critical perspectives highlight different aspects of a rhetorical act, while neglecting others. As with your first critical analysis paper, you should include a short introduction (1 page) where you develop your research question, explain why you choose a particular rhetorical method (rationale), and finish with your thesis statement. The remainder of the essay (3 pages) should feature your analysis. This means that you analyze your speech through the concept of the criticism that you chose. For example, if you choose Dramatism as your method then you should run a pentadic analysis of your speech (e.g., act, scene, agent, agency, purpose). Do not include a conclusion. Use a **minimum of 5 sources**, 3 of which should be scholarly sources (e.g., articles you read for class).
- **Project Presentation (75 points):** Using Prezi Next (EDU Standard), for this short **5-7 min. presentation**, you will present to the class the project that you have been working on all semester. Follow this link to see a sample Prezi for your project presentation (<https://prezi.com/view/aNohxqyRlxX5Ei1kw9jd/>) Further details will be provided in class.
- **2 Quizzes (100 points, 50 points each):** There will be 2 quizzes over the assigned readings. Each quiz will consist of 25 questions total; each question worth 2 points (multiple choice and short answer questions). They are open-note, so I encourage you to take notes and summarize the articles. All the material that have been discussed up to the date of the quiz will be relevant to a quiz. Material that we will discuss the day-of the quiz will not be relevant. A guide on how to effectively take notes and summarize the articles will be available via eCampus.

Grading

Your course grade will be determined by the weighted average of the grades on individual assignments.

Grading Philosophy

Grades are earned by you and assessed by me based both on 1) the caliber of scholarship that you demonstrate during the semester and 2) the extent to which you meet and exceed established criteria. **Meeting the minimum requirements for an assignment constitutes the grade of a C.** Work that exceeds the requirements constitutes a B, and distinctly superior work constitutes an A. In general terms, the difference between A, B, and C is constituted by whether an assignment meets, exceeds, or does not meet expectations. While dedication, motivation, and effort are necessary requirements to perform well in this course, I will only evaluate how your efforts manifest themselves in your performances and the work that you turn in. Grades reflect the quality of your work, not the amount of difficulty you experience in producing the work. **Any questions regarding your grades may be discussed only privately, in person, and at least 24h after you received your graded material.** Be prepared to discuss your grades in an intellectual and respectful rather than emotional way. An inquisitive versus accusative attitude will help to create this intellectual and respectful conversation.

Course Grades:

A = 360-400 points
B = 320-359 points
C = 280-319 points
D = 240-279 points
F = 239 and below

Speech Identification: 25 points
Descriptive Analysis: 50 points
Critical Analysis I: 75 points
Critical Analysis II: 75 points
Project Presentation: 75 points
2 Quizzes: 50 each points

Tentative Course Schedule

Date:	Topic:	Assignment:
Introduction: What is Rhetoric and Rhetorical Criticism		
Week 1		
Tue, Aug. 29	Hurricane Harvey	Stay Safe!
Thu, Aug. 31	Why learn about Rhetoric and Rhetorical Criticism?	Intro to Course Course Syllabus
Week 2		
Tue, Sep. 5	What is Rhetoric? What is Rhetorical Criticism?	Herrick, "An Overview of Rhetoric"

		Foss, Ch 1, The Nature of Rhetorical Criticism
Thu, Sep. 7	How to write a rhetorical analysis?	Foss, Ch 2, Doing Rhetorical Criticism Read MLK's "I have a dream speech"
The Rhetorical Situation and Descriptive Analysis		
Week 3		
Tue, Sep. 12	The Rhetorical Situation: Exigence, Audience, and Constraints	Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation" Crick, CH 3, The Rhetorical Situation (pp. 73-84)
Thu, Sep. 14	The Rhetorical Situation Writing Descriptive Analyses	Vatz, "The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation" Read Imam Rauf's speech "There is everything right with being an American Muslim" Turn in Speech Identification Paper
Neo-Aristotelian Criticism & Genre Criticism		
Week 4		
Tue, Sep. 19	How to write a Neo-Aristotelian Analysis?	Foss, Ch 3 Forbes Hill, "Conventional Wisdom—Traditional Form: The Presidents Message of Nov. 3, 1969" (in Foss Ch 3 pp. 30-41)
Thu, Sep. 21	How to write Generic Criticism?	Foss, Ch 7 Campbell and Jamieson, "Inaugurating the Presidency" Read Obama's 2009 Inaugural Address
Pentadic Criticism and Dramatism		
Week 5		
Tue, Sep. 26	How to write a Pentadic Analysis?	Foss, Ch 11 (pp. 367-380) Read Ronald Reagan's Challenger Speech
Thu, Sep. 28	Pentadic Criticism	Tonn, Endress, and Diamond "A Dramatistic Debate"
Week 6		
Tue, Oct. 3	Pentadic Criticism	Ling, "A Pentadic Analysis of Senator Edward Kennedy" Read Mary Fisher "A Whisper of Aids"
Thu, Oct. 5	Burke and Dramatism	Burke, "Definition of Man" Burke, Definition of Man (Summary) Turn in Descriptive Analysis Paper
Week 7		

Tue, Oct. 10	Burke and Symbols	Heinz and Lee, “The symbolic construction of meat production”
Thu, Oct. 12	Burke	Foss, Foss, Trapp, “Kenneth Burke”
Narrative Criticism		
Week 8		
Tue, Oct. 17	How to write a Narrative Analysis?	Quiz #1 Foss, Ch 10
Thu, Oct. 19		Dorsey and Harlow, “Myth of Americanism” Lewis, “Telling America’s Story”
Ideological Criticism		
Week 9		
Tue, Oct. 24	How to write Ideological Criticism?	Foss, Ch 8
Thu, Oct. 26		Dickinson, Ott, Aoki, “Buffalo Bill Museum”
Week 10		
Tue, Oct. 31		Murray and Heumann, “Wall-E” In class viewing of WALL-E (excerpts)
Thu, Nov. 2		Ndiaye, “Cyber Ideology” Gilmore, “Hong Kong” Turn in Critical Analysis Paper I
Feminist Criticism		
Week 11		
Tue, Nov. 7	How to write a Feminist Analysis?	Foss, Ch 6 Foss, Foss, Zhang, “The Enactment of Advanced Style”
Thu, Nov. 9		Campbell, “The Rhetoric of Women’s Liberation”
Metaphorical Criticism		
Week 12		
Tue, Nov. 14	How to write a Metaphoric Analysis?	Foss, Ch 9
Thu, Nov. 16		Alousque, “Hugo Chavez”

Nov. 17 (Q-drop)		
Visual Criticism		
Week 13		
Tue, Nov. 21		Quiz #2 DeLuca and Demo, “Imaging Nature”
Thu, Nov. 23	No Class	Thanksgiving Holiday
Week 14		
Tue, Nov. 28		Blair and Michel, “Reproducing Civil Rights Tactics”
Thu, Nov. 30		Student Presentations
Week 15		
Tue, Dec. 5		Student Presentations
Thu, Dec. 7		Student Presentations Turn in Critical Analysis Paper II