



Rhetoric 309K: Rhetoric of Illness (82120)

Summer 2020
Online Course

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Office Hours: M 2-3, T 1-3, and by appointment
Canvas Instant Chat and Zoom

Course Description:

In the midst of the recent Covid-19 outbreak this spring, one reporter from *The Guardian* asks, “Now [that] the WHO has declared Covid-19 a pandemic, what will it mean for the way the outbreak is treated and prepared for?” (Davey 2020). Another reporter writing for *The New Yorker* argues that President Trump’s March 11 speech about the “foreign virus” carried an exceptionally nationalistic tone, exemplifying his inadequate response to the disease (Glasser 2020). As many of these news reports indicate, our rhetoric often has important effects on the way our society responds to public health emergencies. In the case of a pandemic, rhetoric can impact the means through which whole governments initiate policy changes. At the individual level, it can impact how we advocate for a loved one who is sick, how we give instructions about care needs, and how we tell our own stories.

This course will explore some of the ways people talk about illness. Students will be asked to discuss and unpack the meaning and significance of words such as “cure,” “diagnosis,” “disease,” and “immunity.” As a class, we will engage with a variety of genres ranging from personal narratives, to healthcare pamphlets, to news reports and social media – all with an eye toward what type of rhetoric is deployed and what it is intended to accomplish.

Since this is a research-based and writing-intensive course, students will be asked to identify and research over the duration of the semester a topic of interest related to rhetoric of illness. They will draft and revise numerous writing assignments related to their topic, critically analyzing how rhetoric is deployed in their choice of cultural artifacts related to the course theme. Finally, they

will use what they have learned to invent their own arguments around cultural constructions of illness.

Given the status of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, the theme for this semester's Rhetoric of Illness course will be *contagious disease*. Readings will invite students to grapple with cultural and emotional reactions to contagion, political and institutional responses to viral outbreaks, and the relationship between infectious disease and gender, race, disability, sexuality, and more. Students are asked to pursue a research project within this theme; exceptions may be made at the instructor's discretion.

Textbooks:

- *Everything's an Argument*. 8th ed. Andrea A. Lunsford, John J. Ruszkiewicz, Keith Walters. ISBN: 9781319056278. (Required)
- UNC Writing Center Resources (<https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/>)
- Other readings available on class Canvas site

Course Overview:

Unit 1 Researching Illness: The focus of this unit is to help students choose a research topic and articulate a focused research question. Students will use this first part of the course to build a foundational understanding of the conversation around their topic, culminating in the creation of a literature review. Assigned readings in this unit are intended to introduce students to a variety of approaches they might take to the course theme.

Unit 2 Analyzing Illness: The focus of this unit is to help students build essential skills for analyzing texts. Students will use this unit of the course to analyze the methods of argumentation that arise in texts pertaining to their research topic. Assigned readings in this unit are intended to help students encounter and evaluate common types of rhetorical strategies used in conversations about illness and contagion.

Unit 3 Arguing Illness: The focus of this unit is to help students identify an intervention into the conversation around their research topic and compose persuasive artifacts of their own. Students will use this final part of the course to explore possibilities for their arguments and strategize their intervention. Assigned readings in this unit are intended to model possible types of arguments with which students might engage.

Course Goals:

- Become familiar with contemporary tensions and debates around illness, with an emphasis on contagious disease
- Explore how constructions of race, gender, sexuality, and disability intersect with discourses around illness

- Develop an understanding of various types of language and rhetorical strategies are deployed in arguments about illness
- Identify a focused research project within contemporary conversations about illness and formulate an intervention
- Conduct extensive research using UT library databases and online search engines
- Write college-level, analytical essays and craft revisions based on peer review and instructor feedback

Assignments:

(Detailed descriptions for each of the following can be found on the course Canvas site.)

- Paper 1: Literature Review (15%)
- Paper 2: Analysis Essay (20%)
 - Paper 2 Peer Review (5%)
 - Paper 2 Peer Review Response (5%)
- Paper 3: Argumentative Essay (20%)
 - Completed Rough Draft (5%)
 - Paper 3 Peer Review (5%)
 - Paper 3 Peer Review Response (5%)
- Minor Writing Assignments (10%)
 - Research Summary, Mini Analysis 1, Mini Analysis 2, and Paper 3 Pitch
- Participation (10%)
 - Posts to class discussion board for every other class day
 - Two comments minimum on discussion thread for days when no discussion post is due
 - Presence in weekly synchronous Zoom meetings (or, in the event of an absence, a make-up reading response)
 - Optional peer review for Paper 1 (lit review)

Grades:

Final grades will be determined on the following scale. Please note: To ensure fairness, all numbers are absolute, and will not be rounded up or down at any stage. For example, a B- will be inclusive of all scores of 80.0000 through 83.9999. The University does not recognize the grade of A+.

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|------------|------------|------------|
| • A=94-100 | • B-=80-83 | • D+=67-69 |
| • A-=90-93 | • C+=77-79 | • D=64-66 |
| • B+=87-89 | • C=74-76 | • D-=60-63 |
| • B=84-86 | • C-=70-73 | • F=0-59 |

Resources:

- University Writing Center: <http://uwc.utexas.edu> (Open for online consultations via Google Hangouts)
- Sanger Learning Center: <https://ugs.utexas.edu/slc> (Currently offering virtual tutoring via phone and Zoom)
- UT Libraries: <http://www.lib.utexas.edu> (Includes online chat feature, research guides)
- Department of Rhetoric and Writing: <http://www.drw.utexas.edu>
- Digital Writing & Research Lab: <http://www.dwrl.utexas.edu>
- University Health Services: <http://healthyhorns.utexas.edu> (Currently offering telehealth appointments. COVID-19 testing also available)
- Counseling and Mental Health Centre: <http://cmhc.utexas.edu> (Currently offering telehealth appointments only. Crisis line available 24/7 at: 512-471-2255)
- Services for Students with Disabilities: <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/> (Currently operating remotely)

Class Policies: *Adapted for online course structure*

- **Participation:** Students are asked to compose online discussion posts for every other class day. On days when no discussion post is due, students will instead leave at least two comments on the discussion board from the previous class day. Full participation credit in the class will also include attending weekly synchronous Zoom meetings with the instructor and a small group of classmates. In the event of an absence, students are invited to earn back the credit with a make-up reading response (detailed instructions available on course Canvas site).
- **Late Work:** While I strongly recommend that you complete all major assignments on time to the best of your ability, I understand that following one's schedule doesn't always go according to plan. Students may submit late work with the understanding that **late assignments will be penalized by 5% for each calendar day they are late.** Assignments that are graded for completion (including online discussion posts) are not eligible for late submission.
- **Accessibility:** I am committed to making all course materials as accessible as possible, and to working with you if there are aspects of this course that can be made more conducive to your learning. **Students for whom accommodations will help their participation or assignments should schedule a Zoom meeting with me as soon as possible to discuss.** I recognize that not all disabilities are documented with SSD and remain committed to accommodating all disabilities and learning styles as best I can. Please note that I cannot offer accommodations retroactively, and students are required to give me substantial notice if they need accommodations for assignments (particularly if requesting an extension).
- **Community Agreements:** There will be zero tolerance for disrespect toward others. It is never okay to laugh at, belittle, or harass a colleague because of their opinion or

point of view. **Always think about how your comments will support our learning as a group.** However, students are welcome to respectfully challenge others' beliefs or ideas. Challenging colleagues to explain their arguments in a thoughtful manner is key to creating an engaging learning community.

Furthermore, everyone in our class has the right to be addressed in accordance with their personal identity. The university provides me with a class roster containing each student's legal name. **I will gladly address you by the name and gender pronoun with which you identify.** Please let me know your preferred name and pronouns early in the semester (which you may do by email if you prefer), so your peers and I can address you appropriately.

Schedule:

EAA = *Everything's an Argument* textbook

	Week	Date	Topic(s)	Assignments Due	Readings Due
Unit 1: Researching Illness	1	Thurs, June 4	Introduction to the class	Zoom Meeting Poll	
		Fri, June 5	Health and Mis/Information: Finding an Argument	First day survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EAA Ch 1 "Blocking information on COVID-19 can fuel the spread of misinformation" Assignment descriptions for research summary and literature review Canvas file: Sample research projects <p>OPTIONAL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Editorial: End the secrecy on virus deaths at nursing homes" "Coronavirus deniers' say they can prove the pandemic is an elaborate hoax" Coronavirus Conspiracy flier [pdf]
	2	Mon, June 8	"In this together": Synthesizing Information/ What is a lit review?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EAA Ch 20 <i>On Immunity</i> pp. 3-28 [pdf]
		Tues, June 9	Feminist Approaches to Illness: Integrating Sources	Research Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EAA Ch 21 Assignment description for mini analysis 1 Choose one of the following (others are optional): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "How Millions of Women Became the Most Essential Workers in America" [pdf]

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “In some states, coronavirus measures are effectively banning abortion” - “(Un)fashionable Illness”
		Wed, June 10	Bias in Medicine: Researching Responsibly		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EAA Ch 18 • Video: “Bias In Medicine: Last Week Tonight with John Oliver” • “On Virality, Corona or Otherwise” <p>OPTIONAL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poem: “Pharmacy Visit”
		Thurs, June 11	Race Matters: Evaluating Sources	[Rough Draft Paper 1 Lit Review]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EAA Ch 19 • “Conspiracy Bullshit” [pdf] • Choose one of the following (others are optional): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Coronavirus is not the great equalizer – race matters” - “Opinion: Why Coronavirus Is Killing African Americans More Than Others” [pdf] - “Opinion: The COVID-19 crisis on First Nations: a reminder of our inequality” <p>OPTIONAL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poem: “Inoculation” by Susan Donnelly [pdf]
		Fri, June 12	Disability and Healthcare: Mapping a Conversation	Mini Analysis 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skim EAA Ch 22 section called “MLA Style” • Choose one of the following (others are optional): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “‘It will not be pretty’: Washington state preparing to make life-or-death decisions” - “Who gets medical care during the coronavirus pandemic”
	3	Mon, June 15	Gender and Sexuality: Mapping a Conversation continued	[Optional Paper 1 Peer Review Form]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose one of the following (others are optional) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Health Care System Fails Many Transgender Americans” - “The State of Trans Health Care” - “The LGBTQ Health Clinic That Faced a Dark Truth About the AIDS Crisis” [pdf]
		Tues, June 16	Illness as War: Introducing	[Optional Paper 1 Peer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EAA Ch 6 • “Illness as Metaphor” pp. 57-87 [pdf]

Unit 2: Analyzing Illness			Rhetorical Analysis	Review Response]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assignment descriptions for mini analysis 2 and paper 2 <p>OPTIONAL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “In battling coronavirus, Trump embraces his ‘wartime’ presidency” Poem: “In The Sanatorium”
		Wed, June 17	Contagion and Fear: Appeals to Emotion	Paper 1 Lit Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EAA Ch 2 “My Life Is More ‘Disposable’ During This Pandemic” [pdf] <p>OPTIONAL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Contagion</i> “Introduction: Contagion, modernity and postmodernity” [pdf] “SARS and NY’s Chinatown: The politics of risk and blame during an epidemic of fear” [pdf]
		Thurs, June 18	Expertise and Ebola: Appeals to Ethos & Logic		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EAA Ch 3 EAA Ch 4 “Public Health Experts, Expertise, and Ebola” pp. 191-202, [pdf] <p>OPTIONAL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Diagnosis: What’s Wrong with Us”
		Fri, June 19	Self, Non-Self, and Other: Rhetoric & Style		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EAA Ch 13 <i>On Immunity</i> pp. 118-138 [pdf]
	4	Mon, June 22	Metaphors of Illness: Contextual Analysis & Bias	Mini Analysis 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “AIDS and its Metaphors” sections 3, 5, 6, and 8 (pg. 24-37, 44-71, & 80-95) [pdf] <p>OPTIONAL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poem: “Training During the Plague”
		Tues, June 23	Picturing Illness: Visual Rhetoric day 1/Revising	Rough Draft Paper 2 Analysis Essay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EAA Ch 14 “Pathogenesis: A Visual Diary of COVID-19” Video: #YouClapForMeNow <p>OPTIONAL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Image: “All Bodies” by Michaela Oteri “Commentary on ‘All Bodies’: US Perspective”
		Wed, June 24	Picturing Illness: Visual Rhetoric day 2/Revising		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Contagious: Cultures, Carriers, and the Outbreak Narrative</i> pp. 33-39 (“Diseases Without Borders and the Outbreak Narrative”) [pdf]

Unit 3: Arguing Illness					OPTIONAL: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Taking Lessons From a Bloody Masterpiece” (interactive close reading) • “The Visible Exhaustion of Doctors and Nurses Fighting the Coronavirus” • “Eye of the Storm: A week in the life of a paramedic fighting the COVID-19 pandemic”
		Thurs, June 25	Revisions/ Conferences	Paper 2 Peer Review Form	<i>*sign up for conference slot with me for Thursday OR Friday [towards participation score]</i>
		Fri, June 26	Revisions/ Conferences	Paper 2 Peer Review Response	<i>*sign up for conference slot with me for Thursday OR Friday [towards participation score]</i>
	5	Mon, June 29	Finding Cure: Proposal Arguments		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EAA Ch 12 • Assignment descriptions for Paper 3 Pitch and Paper 3 • Choose one of the following (others are optional): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Maybe unvaccinated people shouldn’t be allowed to fly” - “A simple way to promote HPV vaccination among Asian American women”
		Tues, June 30	Medicine & Advocacy: Arguing with Rebuttal	Paper 2 Analysis Essay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EAA Ch 5 • “I Will Not Apologize for My Needs” [pdf]
		Wed, July 1	“Don’t Call Us Heroes”: Definition Arguments		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EAA Ch 9 • Choose one of the following examples of definition-based arguments (others are optional): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Please Don’t Call Us Heroes” - “How can HIV-Positive women be good mothers?” - “Patient zero: Why it’s such a toxic term” - “Editorial: Whatever Abbott calls it, stay home if you can” - “Are Anti-vaxxers conscientious objectors?” [pdf]
		Thurs, July 2	Diagnosing Illness: Evaluation and Causal Arguments	Pitch for Paper 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EAA Ch 10 • EAA Ch 11 • Choose one of the following (others are optional):

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “How Syphilis Sneaked Up on Americans” – Causal argument [pdf] - “The Rank Hypocrisy of Trump’s Ebola Tweets” – Evaluation argument [pdf] <p>OPTIONAL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poem: “Notes from the Pain Committee Meeting”
		Fri, July 3	Workshopping Paper 3: Intros and Conclusions		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EAA Ch 16 “Making Multimodal Arguments” • Choose one of the following (others are optional) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Video: Budweiser “One Team” - Video: Uber “Thank You For Not Riding” - Video: Coronavirus.gov PSA “Protect Yourself”
6		Mon, July 6	Workshopping Paper 3: Topic Sentences and Reverse Outlining	Rough Draft Paper 3	
		Tues, July 7	Paper 3 Conferences		<i>*sign up for conference slot with me for Tuesday OR Wednesday [towards participation score]</i>
		Wed, July 8	Paper 3 Conferences	Paper 3 Peer Review Form	<i>*sign up for conference slot with me for Tuesday OR Wednesday [towards participation score]</i>
		Thurs, July 9	Last class day	Paper 3 Peer Review Response	
		Fri, July 10		Paper 3 Argumentative Essay	

Department of Rhetoric & Writing

RHE Course Policies Statement, 2018-19

WRITING FLAG

This course carries the Writing Flag. You will write regularly during the semester, completing both short and long writing projects. Furthermore, you will, and receive feedback from your instructor and your peers. Based on this feedback, you will have the opportunity to revise one or more

assignments. A substantial portion of your grade to comes from your written work. Writing Flag classes meet the Core Communications objectives of Critical Thinking, Communication, Teamwork, and Personal Responsibility, established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Rhetoric & Writing has established this attendance policy for all RHE courses. Any questions or appeals concerning this policy must be made directly to the department Associate Chair. You are expected to attend class, to arrive on time, to have prepared assigned reading and writing, and to participate in all in-class editing, revising, and discussion sessions. **Should you miss the equivalent of five TTH or MW class sessions or seven MWF sessions this semester, excused or not, you will fail the course.** If you find that an unavoidable problem prevents you from attending class, you should contact your instructor as soon as possible, preferably ahead of time, to let him or her know. You will not be penalized for missing class on religious holy days. A student who misses classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day should inform the instructor, in writing, well in advance of the absence, so that alternative arrangements can be made to complete work. If you know you will have to miss class(es) for this reason, provide your instructor with the date(s) as early as possible. Please note that the University specifies very few other excused absences (e.g., jury duty). When you must miss a class, you are responsible for getting notes and assignments from a classmate.

SCHOLASTIC HONESTY

Turning in work that is not your own, or any other form of scholastic dishonesty, will result in a major course penalty, possibly failure of the course. This standard applies to all drafts and assignments, and a report of the incident will be submitted to the Office of the Dean of Students and filed in your permanent UT record. Under certain circumstances, the Dean of Students will initiate proceedings to expel you from the University. So, take care to read and understand the Statement on Scholastic Responsibility, which can be found online at <https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/rhetoric/RHE%20306/plagiarismcollusion.php>. If you have any doubts about your use of sources, ask your instructor for help before handing in the assignment.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 512-471-6259 (voice) or 512-410-6644 (video phone) as soon as possible to request an official letter outlining authorized accommodations. More information is available online at <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/instructional-tips-for-working-with-students-with-disabilities/>.

TITLE IX AND SENATE BILL 212

Beginning January 1, 2020, Texas Senate Bill 212 requires all employees of Texas universities, including faculty, report any information to the Title IX Office regarding sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking that is disclosed to them. Texas law requires that all employees who witness or receive any information of this type (including, but not limited to, writing assignments, class discussions, or one-on-one conversations) must be reported. If you would like to speak with someone who can provide support or remedies without making an official report to the university, please email advocate@austin.utexas.edu. For more information about reporting options and resources, visit <http://www.titleix.utexas.edu/>, contact the Title IX Office via email at titleix@austin.utexas.edu, or call 512-471-0419.

Although graduate teaching and research assistants are not subject to Texas Senate Bill 212, they are still mandatory reporters under Federal Title IX laws and are required to report a wide range of behaviors we refer to as sexual misconduct, including the types of sexual misconduct covered under Texas Senate Bill 212. The Title IX office has developed supportive ways to respond to a survivor and compiled campus resources to support survivors.

DEPARTMENT CLIMATE

At the Department of Rhetoric and Writing, we are unambiguous in our commitment to fostering a diverse, inclusive, and respectful professional and educational climate. For more information on our climate commitments, see the complete climate statement at <https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/rhetoric/about/mission.php>. If you have any questions or climate-related concerns, please contact the chair of the climate advisory committee: Professor Scott Graham (ssg@utexas.edu).

EMAIL ACCOUNTS

Email is an official means of communication at UT-Austin, and your instructor will use this medium to communicate class information. You are therefore required to obtain a UT email account and to check it daily. All students may claim an email address at no cost by going to <http://utmail.utexas.edu/>.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside. Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building. Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class. In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors. Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office. Information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at <http://www.utexas.edu/emergency>.

Other important Emergency Information You can find more information about planning for emergencies on the Emergency Preparedness site at <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/preparedness/>

Behavior Concerns Advice Line: 512-232-5050 Use this resource to help fellow UT members about whom you have concerns. You can learn more about the Behavior Concerns Advice Line on their site at <https://operations.utexas.edu/units/csas/bcal.php>

Questions about these policies Questions about these policies should be addressed to:

Department of Rhetoric & Writing
The University of Texas at Austin
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rhetoric@uts.cc.utexas.edu
(512) 471-6109