

Writing and Rhetoric 13100: Acts of Arguing (Prof. Clauss)

Course Description, Goals, and Assignments Overview

“Rhetoric may be defined as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion.” –Aristotle, in *On Rhetoric*, ~350 BCE

Course Description

In *Acts of Arguing: A Rhetorical Model of Argument*, philosopher Christopher Tindale identifies “argumentation” as “the site of an activity, where reasons are given and appraised, where beliefs are recognized and justified, and where personal development is encouraged.” Emphasizing that to engage in argument is to engage in *thinking*, Tindale then points out that argumentation does not take place only in the courtroom or the classroom; argumentation takes place “in the marketplace, in the media, on the internet, and in the everyday conversations of citizens.”

Arguments are, essentially, all around us, and in WR we will analyze a variety of argument styles, structures, and methods. This is, of course, a writing class, so our efforts will not be limited to the analysis of arguments. We will also have the opportunity to produce a variety of arguments, particularly those in the expository style.

Course Goals

Over the course of the semester, we will

- investigate context and exigence, considering how these factors shape both the form and the content of an argument
- study various types of appeals, especially varieties of *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos* appeals
- explore the relationships among claims, evidence, and inference
- examine various methods of reasoning, including enthymemes, deductive and inductive logic, and “Toulmin logic”
- improve habits of accuracy and clarity in composing sentences, paragraphs, and essays
- seek solutions to composing problems, particularly in relation to invention, organization, citations, and revision

Course Assignments (Overview)

Your final WR grade will be the result of your performance in the following areas:

- **Writing Exercises:** no more than 16 (usually 1 page each, typed and single-spaced)
- **Essays:** no more than 5 essays (usually ~4 pages each, typed and double-spaced; plus a longer “research” paper; ~20 pages total)
- **Quizzes:** both announced and unannounced
- **Participation and Attendance:** class discussions, questions, etc.

All of these assignments will be described in detail over the course of the semester.