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Synthesis Essay CO301B

For most people entering this class, writing is not something of any particular interest. Most people do not care to every write in their careers and will go to lengths to avoid doing so.

And to be perfectly honest, you have to write a whole lot more in school than you ever will with a job. In addition, writing for work is usually a lot easier because you understand precisely why you are writing and how you will benefit, rather than just writing for the sake of it.

But you are here anyways, so might as well make the most of this class while you are in it. Maybe instead of thinking about this as a class focusing on writing science journalism, think of it as a class on communication in all of its forms.

In my experience working, I have to send several emails a day, even though I occupy a fairly non critical position. And even though most of them are very informal and brief, a firm grasp on rhetoric does nothing to hurt.

Talking, like writing, also uses words (what a shock). There are obviously differences, but a lot of rhetorical techniques are applicable in a wide range of circumstances. So, maybe some of what you learn in this class will be useful in some professional environment.

Most of the articles we have read for this class were centered on a central theme of increasing scientific literacy and making dense and incomprehensible science more available to the public at large. All of the articles we read had interesting information, but I feel that they missed one really important element.

Science writing should be interesting. If you want readers to remember what you wrote, make it interesting. Further, people are more likely to seek out what they find interesting and learn about it on their own. Everyone would be a scientist if they knew how cool the world was.

This doesn’t just go for science either. An interesting historical drama will do more to increase the public's understanding of history than even the greatest history textbook if the textbook is too dry to read. And if you are trying to pitch an idea, don’t just give logical reasons why the idea would benefit whoever you’re pitching it to. Make them invested themselves in the idea and they will be much more likely to adopt this idea.

I think one of the most important points of this class is that rhetoric is not a bad thing. One of the first articles we read, “Examining Writing Through A Rhetorical Lens” made this point in its very first paragraph, but it bears repeating. Clear communication is a good thing, and rhetoric is just a collection of tools to make communication clear. Of course, rhetoric can be put to malicious uses, just as a hammer could be used as a weapon, but in the right hands can do good things. Even more important, understanding rhetoric and how it is used can let you defend yourself from those who would misuse it. Knowing the tricks and techniques gives you some immunity to them.

“The Case Of The Creeping Fox Terrier Clone” provides the other most important point. There tends to be an almost blind obedience to established science and scientific articles, wherein no one will question the validity of results of a paper either due to laziness or because people don’t like to rock the boat. This can lead to a mistrust in science, where if any article is found to be inaccurate a shadow is cast on the rest of the field, calling other totally valid results into question. So, when doing serious research, remember to keep in mind that the sources you might pursue are not infallible. Dig deeper into methodologies and keep a skeptical mind when examining studies, don’t recite everything you read, and make sure to put proper time and effort into research. Science will be better for it.