

# Communication Studies 100B

## Critical Analysis of Messages

### Spring 2014



**Instructor:** Dr. Mark Stoner

**Office:** MND 5034

**Office Hrs:**

- Monday 10-10:30 via Skype (My Skype name is mark.stoner)
- Tues: 10-11; & 5-5:30 PM (I will be available in office and via Skype.)
- Thurs: 10-11 (in office and via Skype.)

**E-mail:** [stoner1@csus.edu](mailto:stoner1@csus.edu) (best means of contact)

**Course Web Page:**

<http://www.csus.edu/indiv/s/stonerm/CAMFrontPage.htm>

**My home page:** <http://www.csus.edu/indiv/s/stonerm/>

### Catalogue description

An examination of classical and contemporary models for designing and analyzing messages. Mainstream approaches in critical and empirical analysis provide techniques applicable to a variety of basic message types. Majors must complete with at least a "C-" grade. Prerequisite: **Prerequisite:** COMS 2, and COMS 4, (COMS 5 is accepted for COMS 4 for MCOM majors) or transfer equivalents, ENGL 20, passing score on the WPE.

### Place in the curriculum

This course, required for majors in Communication Studies, is designed to teach you how message analysts study, interpret and evaluate messages. Learning message analysis is analogous to entering a new culture because expert message analysts think and talk about messages of all sorts in ways that are significantly different from novices or people outside the discipline. This course is designed to assist you in moving yourself, as a message analyst, *as far as possible* from novice to expert. ComS 100B is required for majors because the ability to understand and explain how messages work is essential for the preservation of democracy—now more than ever.

### Course text and resources

***Required text*** (you need this immediately)

Stoner, M. and Perkins, S. (2005). *Making Sense of Messages: A Critical Apprenticeship in Rhetorical Criticism*. (see options for getting it below.)

Available as a free download as searchable PDF from my Google Drive: <http://goo.gl/htJfa3> Click the URL, and click the folder icon. You will see a list of chapters you can select. **Note: Chapters 4 and 9 have been divided into two sections each; be sure to get parts 1 and 2 of both chapters.** There is also a zip file by which you can download the entire book at once.

**or**

Available in CSUS Bookstore: Pearson Custom Publishing 2008  
ISBN-13: 9780555035603 (Best version)

**or**

you can use Amazon.com (Allyn & Bacon. ISBN-13: 9780205564514)

### ***E-texts available***

Aristotle, *Rhetoric*. Available: <http://www.csus.edu/indiv/s/stonerm/CAMCourseText.htm>

Worth, S. (1981). *Studying Visual Communication*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. Available:

<http://astro.temple.edu/~ruby/wava/worth/svscom.html>

*Other useful research and writing resources are available on the course web page:*

<http://www.csus.edu/indiv/s/stonerm/CAMWriteRes.html>

### **Campus resources:**

**Services to students with disabilities (SSWD):** <http://www.csus.edu/sswd/>

- Learning skills: <http://www.csus.edu/learningskills/>
- Writing center: <http://www.csus.edu/writingcenter/>  
*For free, one-on-one help with writing in any class, visit the University Writing Center in Calaveras 128. The University Writing Center can help you at any stage in your reading and writing processes: coming up with a topic, developing and organizing a draft, understanding difficult texts, or developing strategies to become a better editor. To make an appointment or a series of appointments, visit the Writing Center in CLV 128 or call 278-6356. For current Writing Center hours and more information, visit the Writing Center website.*
- CSUS Student Writing Handbook:  
[http://www.csus.edu/wac/WAC/Students/CSUS\\_Writing\\_Handbook.pdf](http://www.csus.edu/wac/WAC/Students/CSUS_Writing_Handbook.pdf)
- Academic Advising: <http://www.csus.edu/acad/>

### **Conceptual outline of the course**

As the title suggests, the focus of the course is critical analysis of messages. The course is divided into two major sections: first, we will explore the process of critical analysis of messages. The focus of this section will be developing the habits of mind of a critic: creatively and critically engaging in description, analysis, interpretation and

evaluation of messages. The second section of the course will focus on the product of critical analysis. This section will explore some common critical approaches, and will practice the skills of reporting or presenting the findings of your critical analyses, primarily in written form. Skills in research and writing arguments will be developed. **(If a diagram helps, see the map at the end of this syllabus.)**

## Course objectives

### *Attitudes and values:*

- 1) Value the role of skilled message critics in our pluralistic and diverse society.
- 2) Desire continuous development of your skills as a message analyst/critic.

### *Skills:*

- 3) Develop the ability to see significant rhetorical patterns, devices, or strategies for persuasion within any particular discourse.
- 4) Effectively use relevant research tools for message analysis.
- 5) Generate insight into persuasive messages via application of appropriate critical methods or search models
- 6) Prepare well-grounded arguments, whether oral or written, that clearly present your insights to others in a useful fashion.
- 7) Monitor and control your critical thinking about any given message.
- 8) Articulate the orientation that guides your analysis.
- 9) Appropriately generalize learnings about the critical process.
- 10) Appropriately generalize learnings about communication.

### *Knowledge:*

- 11) Develop a technical vocabulary that enables precise discussion of messages.
- 12) Know mainstream definitions and critical orientations generally accepted in the discipline.
- 13) Discover your own theories of how messages work and compare to mainstream disciplinary theories.
- 14) Know “tricks of the trade” in finding and applying appropriate support for creating and writing/reporting message analyses.

## Course assignments and weighted values\*

2 Major Essays..... (1 = 150; 2 = 200 )	350
Quizzes (Focus on mastery of critical vocabulary and theory)	300
1 Progress Report on development of 2nd essay	25
1 Review of Colleagues' Paper; provide questions, and informative responses to assist a colleague develop a useful consultative essay	25
Final Paper (complete rhetorical analysis). This is the <u>final exam</u> done in class during the final period.	150
Homework Assignments; occasional activities collected	50
Attendance	100
<i>*Be sure to make and keep a copy of all your work; often a second copy is needed for activities.</i>	Total = 1000

Final Grades will be assigned as percentage of points achieved:

A (940-1000) A- (900-939) B+ (880-899) B (840-879) B- (800-839) C+ (789-799)  
C (740-779) C- (700-739) D+ (680-699) D (640-679) D- (600-639) F  $\leq$  599

## Course policies

### *Cell phone use*

Using cell phones is not permitted during class unless I direct you to accomplish some specific tasks with it. Otherwise, cell phones must be off for the duration of class sessions. Texting or web surfing indicate to me that you devalue what is happening in the classroom. **If I see you “checking,” texting, tweeting, gaming, surfing the web or otherwise playing with your phone, you will be dismissed from the class session.** (This has happened!) **This is the first and last warning.** You are welcome to return the next session without malice.

If you **must** be available for a call or expect to receive a text message, please let me know of your need, put your phone on vibrate and sit near the classroom door so you can discretely exit and take your call or text.

### *Laptop use*

If you wish to bring a laptop, please keep it closed until there is “tops up” time for writing a few notes to yourself or there is a need to do some research online. I find it hard to connect with you if you are focused on a laptop display. Also, some students find the key clicks and monitor images distracting.

If you have a disability verified by the Services to Students With Disabilities (SSWD) office and you wish to discuss academic accommodations relative to laptop use in class, please talk with me immediately.

### *Recording of class sessions*

You may **not** record in any electronic form any portion of the class without my expressed permission. *The only potential exception rests on a specific request from Services to Students with Disabilities (SSWD).* **Google Glass is banned.**

### *Discussion of grades*

I will not discuss any grades for any assignment on the day I hand it back to you, nor will I discuss individual grades in the classroom. All such discussions will take place in my office at least one day after the grade was received. *If you wish to contest a grade, write out your argument clearly, concisely and completely and bring it with you to the meeting in my office.*

### *Attendance*

Your attendance and participation each day is important. I expect you will attend each scheduled class meeting unless you are ill or have an emergency. You start with 100 points; one miss = 95; two misses = 85; three = 75; four or more = 0.

Note: I take attendance each class period. *If you are late to class, it is your*

*responsibility to see me at the end of that class period to make sure you are marked present. If you do not take care of the attendance at that time, I will not change the attendance record at a latter date.* Please be considerate of your colleagues and me by coming on time. If you are late, please be discrete and quiet as you enter the class and take a seat near the door.

### *Due Dates*

All assignments are due at class time on the date announced or assigned. Late assignments for whatever reason will be penalized one full grade. **To receive some credit for the assignment, it must be in my hand by 5 PM the following day.** (If you are turning in your assignment in MND 5014—the Communication Studies office—be sure to ask the receptionist to time stamp your document and put it in my mailbox.)

### *Quizzes*

There will be **no make-ups** for missed quizzes. **No exceptions.**

### *Grade of “Incomplete”*

I will not assign an “incomplete” unless the requirements and conditions of the university for that designation are met. Incompletes are not routinely assigned if you are slow in getting work done or not responsible in management of your time. As is the case with dropping the course (see below), you must present me with substantial and compelling documentation that persuades me that your case meets the requirements for assignment of incomplete. You must also present to me, at the same time, a clear and coherent plan and time line for completion of the course which will function as a starting point for negotiation of a joint plan for course completion.

### *Cheating*

I follow the departmental policy on plagiarism reproduced below. In a nutshell, plagiarism is the use of other’s ideas or words without giving them credit. This includes paraphrases of another’s ideas. You must always give credit where credit is due. Plagiarism is a serious academic offense. Note that the Department Policy is very strict and very clear: “Any student proved guilty of plagiarism in this course will be failed for the entire course.” (If you are still unclear as what defines plagiarism, go to <http://library.csus.edu/content2.asp?pageID=353>)

If you are not sure if are plagiarizing on a draft, ask me about it. I’m happy to help you and am completely forgiving if you ask when drafting your work. I am *not* forgiving when plagiarism occurs in completed essays.

### Department of Communication Studies Plagiarism Policy

Any student proved guilty of plagiarism in this course will be failed for the entire course, not just for the piece of work in which the plagiarism occurs. It is important, therefore, to understand exactly what plagiarism is.

Plagiarism is literary thievery: the use of somebody else’s material as you own in a speech, film, or research paper without giving credit to the author. It includes, particularly, the following:

1. Use of somebody else’s exact wording, whatever the material, without indication of the source and quotation marks or other accepted typographical devices. Changing a few words here and there is not sufficient to avoid plagiarism.
  2. Borrowing the whole pattern of organization and points of view of a source without giving credit via standard in-text written citation.
  3. Borrowing facts, figures, or ideas with originated with and are the property of a particular source, rather than a matter of common information available in many sources.
- Collaborating with other students to the extent that two or more assignments are identical in pattern of organization, points of view, or wording.

Cheating on quizzes will result in a zero for the quiz and I will report the incident to Student Affairs.

*Dropping the course*

I follow the attached departmental policy on dropping. Be sure you drop by the end of the second week if you are at all inclined to do so because dropping after the fourth class session will require documentation of extenuating circumstances.

Department of Communication Studies Add/Drop Policy

During the first two weeks of the semester, Communication Studies classes may be added only by using an Add Permit (obtained on the 5th floor of Mendocino) signed by the instructor and brought to the Department Office in MND-5014. It is the student’s responsibility to make sure that the form is filled out correctly—using the correct 5-digit course call no., the department and course number, and section number. During this same time period, classes may be dropped using CASPER.

During the 3rd and 4th weeks of the semester, students must obtain a Petition to Add/Drop After Deadline form to add or drop a class. This form must be signed by the instructor and by the Department Chair. Attached to the petition is a student statement to be completed by the student explaining the reason for dropping or adding after the deadline. This statement must be completed before the petition can be processed in the Department Office.

Please be aware that, after the 4th week of the semester, all adds must also be signed by the Dean of Arts and Letters and then processed through Admissions and Records. The same is true for all drops requested after the 6th week of the semester.

*Contact Numbers for ComS 100B*

It is a good idea to have contacts in the class so you can form study and writing groups, get material you may have missed, etc.

Names	Address	Phone #	Email

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## The process of teaching and learning in ComS 100B

The shifts in thinking and practice from novice to expert are not easy to accomplish (what of significant value is easy?), and since you are new to the critical process, the *course is designed as an apprenticeship*. Typically, apprentices receive some instruction from an experienced or master crafter, and then attempt to replicate the skills modeled. The task of the apprentice is to pay attention to how more experienced critics do criticism, and observe how his or her own work is developing, always comparing it to the work of experts. This sort of activity is essential in many important areas of learning from art to law to surgery. Growth as a critic is facilitated by trying to solve problems in your “zone of proximal development.” That is, you grow when you are challenged just past your present capacities. That means you must experience a certain amount of discomfort and frustration in taking the course, but if you only do what you feel comfortable doing, you won’t change. So, you must study the information and models presented in order to discover the operating principles of criticism. Then you must do some criticism, and then compare your work against the model to discover what you have still need work on to become expert.

**Ultimately, the apprentice strives to be able to deal with new problems without the assistance of the expert.** Therefore, the main goal of this course is for you to be able to make sense of any significant message you encounter in a way that provides insight (and, consequently, power) for you and those around you.

A typical class session will involve a variety of activities. Occasionally, I will have to present some information (lecture) to you where you will have to actively listen, and process the information. More often, you will have completed a reading which you will discuss with colleagues and the large group; or you will have practiced some critical skills, bringing your product to class to compare with colleagues, discussing with them the elements of your writing that meet or do not meet the standards of an expert and try to figure out (with guidance from me, of course) how you can become more expert as a message critic. Class sessions are active and necessitate your regular and thoughtful participation. Course material will be presented through readings in text, observation and analysis of models, discussion, writing, and lecture.

### How to succeed in COMS 100B: Advice from previous students

“Attend class all the time.”

“Go to every class because each class lesson builds upon knowledge from the previous class.”

“Attend library workshops on research.”

“Do research and lots of it.”

“Research, research, research.”

“Explore other possible areas of theory beyond those discussed in class.”

“Start working on your analyses early.”

“Work in bursts of energy; think hard, generate some ideas, leave it a while, then work again. You have to work on papers over time. You can’t do them the night before they’re due!”

“Attend office hours.”

“Take papers to Dr. Stoner often.”

“Ask questions outside of class. Dr. Stoner will help you if you ask.”

“Read your paper to people outside of this class to see if it makes sense to them.”

“Brainstorm ideas with class members; talk to each other.”

“Think, think, think!”

“Stay up to date with the readings from the textbook.”

“Focus on learning and understanding search models.”

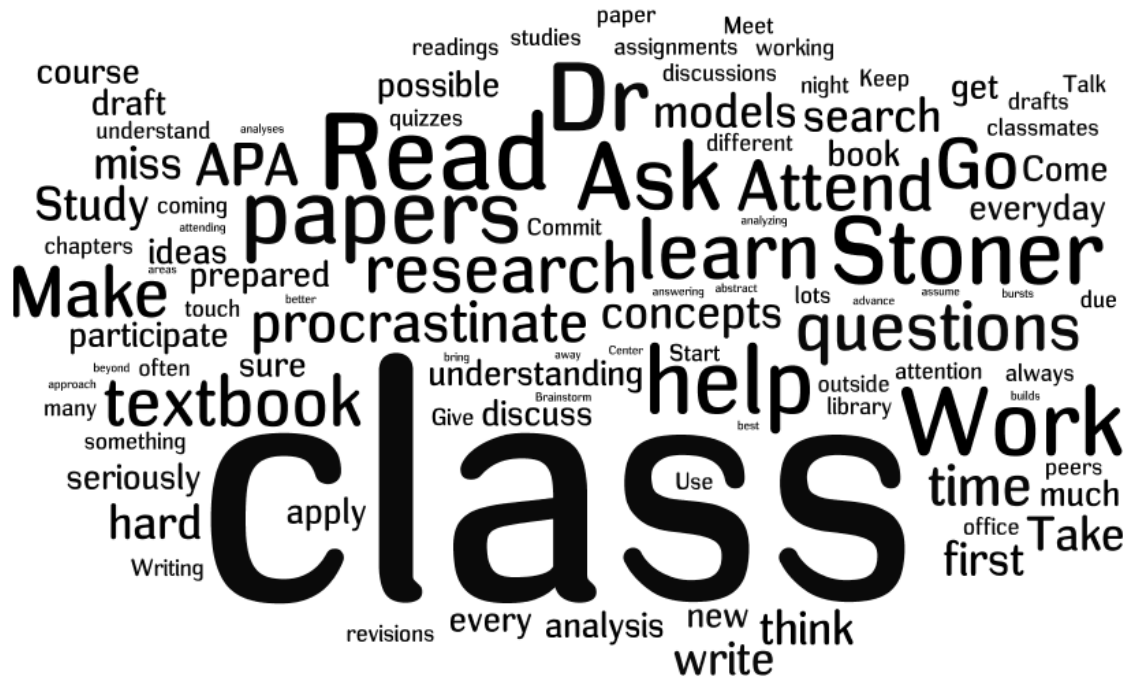
“Study for the quizzes; learn the vocabulary in the textbook.”

“Don’t just rewrite papers, re-VISION them.”

“If the class seems daunting, at first, tackle the class; get involved rather than shy away.”

“Participate! I learned the most by answering questions wrong!”

Graphic array of top 100 words from ComS 100B veterans’ advice to you.  
What behaviors do they suggest?





# Map of ComS 100B Critical Analysis of Messages

