

ComS 168 Approaches to Rhetorical Criticism

Spring 2014



Instructor: Dr. Mark Stoner

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Email: stoner1@csus.edu (best way to get me)

Office hours: Monday 10-10:30 (Skype only. My Skype name is mark.stoner)

Tuesday 10-11; 5-5:30 (in office and Skype)

Thursday 10-11 9-10:30 (in office and Skype)

Course wiki: <http://coms168.wikispaces.com/>

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Analyzes rhetorical events, using a variety of critical perspectives. Current issues on criticism's function and the critic's role. Practice in critical writing. **Prerequisite:** COMS 100B or equivalent with a grade of "C-" or better. Units: 3.0

RELATIONSHIP OF COURSE TO CURRICULUM

ComS 168 serves two main functions in our curriculum. First, it provides undergraduates with an advanced course in message analysis that develops ideas, theory, and skills first encountered in ComS 100B. Given the centrality of message analysis skills to any occupation that is primarily communication (e.g. teaching, clergy, law, sales, consulting, government, community service, etc.), this course provides a place to refine communication skills that are basic to all communication process; competence as a critic is central to competent practice of communication in all contexts.

Second, ComS 168 serves a scholarly function by preparing students who intend to enroll in or are conditionally enrolled in our graduate program with strong writing skills and a solid basis for understanding the foundational activity of our discipline: message analysis.

COURSE TEXT AND RELATED E-TEXTS

Main textbook: Hart, R. P. & Daughton, S. (2005). *Modern Rhetorical Criticism* (3rd ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson. (Buy it online; get a used copy)

Collateral texts: Foss, S. K. (2009). *Rhetorical Criticism* (2nd ed.). Long Grove, IL: Waveland. (You can buy the 2nd ed. online for pennies.)

Aristotle. *The Rhetoric*. (Both links take you to free versions.)

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/>

This searchable version of the *Rhetoric* includes hypertext footnotes. This is a very useful site since you can search texts for specific uses of key rhetorical terms.

OR

<http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/rhetoric.html>

This version from MIT is just the text in an easily downloadable form.

Reading packets (Required readings and Resources Readings will be provided as a zip file of PDF documents, free of charge via my Google Drive)

COURSE OBJECTIVES

At the end of the course, you should be able to...	
Knowledge:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulate basic theoretical issues related to doing rhetorical criticism. • Know the vocabulary of at least three methods of analysis ("search models") • Use search models for initiating and carrying out significant rhetorical criticism
Skill:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate expertise in application of a variety of methods of analysis (search models) • Articulate rationales for your choices of method as a critic • Demonstrate expertise in writing significant critical analysis • Demonstrate skills in rigorous argument • Monitor your own thinking (meta-cogitating) as a critic
Attitude:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value criticism as a significant and important "way of knowing." • Value criticism as a means for correcting and critiquing the discourse of individual and institutional sources of rhetorical discourse in our society.

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATIONS

Required Core Assignments

Assignment	Possible Score
Core/Required	
Term paper [critical study] (& presentation)	300 pts (200 term paper + 100 presentation)
Final Exam	100 pts.
Basic Questions Essays	150 pts
Comments on Reading	50 pts
Occasionally collected homework ¹	100 pts
Final reflection on your course work and progress toward course goals	100 pts
..... Core Total: 800 pts (B-)	

¹ I will collect homework randomly. Grading will be: 0-assignment was incorrect or incomplete; 1-complete and appropriate; 2 complete and particularly insightful.

Optional Assignments

You must complete all the core assignments. If you choose to do no other assignments, you will be *graded on the points you achieved* in those assignments. If you

wish to contract for a higher grade, you will negotiate a **contract** indicating the specific assignments and due dates for your assignments which you and I will sign. **You will be held to the due dates agreed upon in the contract.** [You can find a copy at the end of this document or via the course web page.]

If you choose not to do one or more optional assignment(s) after you have completed the contract, that is your choice. You may request a renegotiation to add an assignment until the 9th week of the semester. No renegotiation will be possible after that date. This avoids “cranking” out products for the purposes of padding a grade. The intent of this format is to provide you opportunity for engaging yourself in your own learning and taking responsibility for it rather being externally driven.

Optional	Possible Score/s
Journal	50-100-150
Annotated Bibliography	50-100
Glossary	50-100
Teaching of a Critical Method	100
Meeting with Instructor	50 pts

You will collect all of your completed work on your ComS 168 wiki page which will constitute a portfolio of your work throughout the semester. At the end of the semester, you will review the contents of the portfolio and your contract with me to determine your final grade. The portfolio will be a useful document for those who expect to graduate soon; you should have some writing samples in it you wish to show interested employers. Should you decide to go to graduate school, you will have a portfolio of your work to show a review committee. For those headed to graduate school, it may also be a source of useful information for research and writing.

Contract form available at end of this syllabus, on the web site and wiki.

Final Grades will be assigned per your accumulated points as follows:

A (940-1000) A- (900-930)
 B+ (880-890) B (840-870) B- (800-830)
 C+ (760-790) C (750) C- (700-740)
 D+ (680-690) D (640-670) D- (600-630)
 F <600

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.**

ATTENDANCE Your attendance and participation in every class session is important. I expect you will attend every scheduled class meeting unless you are ill or have an emergency. **After one absence**, (which I assume will be used only in case of emergency or illness) your final grade will be lowered AT LEAST one (1) grade (e.g. B to C) for each day missed thereafter.

NOTE: I take attendance each class period usually at the very beginning. **If you are late to class, it your responsibility to see me before we leave that session.** If you do not take care of the attendance at the time, I will not change the attendance record at a later date.

CHEATING I follow the departmental policy on plagiarism. I take plagiarism seriously. If you don't know what constitutes plagiarism, familiarize yourself with the concept via <http://webster.commnet.edu/mla.htm> [see Plagiarism]. This constitutes the first and last warning.

DROPPING I follow the departmental (and university) policy on dropping. Be sure you drop by the end of the second week if you are at all inclined to do so. Dropping after week #2, requires compelling documentation of unanticipated, extenuating circumstances that are beyond your control which require you to drop the course. You'll need to get my signature and the department chair's signature (Go to MND 5014 for the chair's office hours)

DUE DATES All assignments will be due at the beginning of class time on the date announced in the calendar or in class; **late assignments will not be accepted.** A “late” assignment is defined as one not prepared to be handed in at the beginning of the class session.

CONTESTING A GRADE 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 has been received. If you wish to contest a grade, write out your argument clearly, concisely and completely and bring it with you to our conference during my office hours.

GRADE OF INCOMPLETE will not be assigned unless the requirements and conditions of the university are met. See

<http://catalog.csus.edu/current/first%20100%20pages/academicpolicies.html>

CRITICAL RESOURCES

<http://www.csus.edu/indiv/s/stonerm/ComS168ResearchAndWritingResources.html>

COMS 168 COLLEAGUES CONTACT INFORMATION

Name	Email address	Phone number