

## English 354-500: Modern Rhetorical Theory

Fall, 2005 Texas A&M University

TR 9:35-10:50 a.m. Blocker 124

Professor Stephanie L. Kerschbaum

Email: kerschbaum@tamu.edu

Office: Blocker 205B

Office phone: Dial the Texas Relay at 711 and ask to be connected to my office at 979-845-2587

Office hours: T R 10:45-12:00 and cheerfully by appointment (best to contact me by email)

### Focus of the Course

Contemporary rhetorical theory centers on rhetoric as communicative action—as a way of *doing things* with words. As we read in this class, we will be asking: what are the ways in which people can do, and are doing, things with words in writing? What are the resources and tools that writers draw on as they communicate with others?

We will learn some contemporary theories offering explanations for how people argue with and persuade others, and generally make themselves understood by audiences. We will also work to understand these theories in the context of our own writing and communicating experiences. But we will do more than simply “apply” these theories to our everyday world—as an outcome of this class, you will develop your own theories about rhetoric and how people “do things with words.” That is, you will be expected to go beyond simply repeating or applying what the scholars and thinkers we read have to say—you will *invent* your own understanding of the work that language is doing in contemporary society.

### Requirements of the Course

- Daily work (20% of total grade, including attendance, class participation and a portfolio of homework, daily activities and quizzes).
- Four short papers (2-3 pages) in response to the reading and rhetorical issues being raised. Topics and questions will usually be assigned, but you are always free to suggest or raise paper ideas. (20% —5% each)
- Midterm (20%)
- Storytelling Comparison (4-5 pages) An analysis of your own rhetoric as you describe yourself or events that have happened to you to others. (20%)
- Final Exam (20%)

\*\*\*Assignments must be submitted in the proper sequence; late assignments will be penalized one letter grade

### Required Texts

Coursepack on online reserve at the library—go through the links on the library’s home page ([library.tamu.edu](http://library.tamu.edu)) or go directly to [ereserves.tamu.edu](http://ereserves.tamu.edu).

### Absence Policy

More than two unexcused absences will affect your final letter grade by half a letter for each absence. See Student Rule 7, esp. 7.1 ([student-rules.tamu.edu/rule7.htm](http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule7.htm)) for information on what counts as an excused absence.

### Calendar

T August 30	Course introduction
R September 1	Bitzer, “The Rhetorical Situation” & Vatz, “The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation”
T September 6	Identifying and Analyzing Rhetorical Situations
R September 8	<b>Short Paper 1 Due</b>
T September 13	Burke, “Identification”
R September 15	Identifying Identifications
T September 20	Rhetoric and Argumentation, <b>Short Paper 2 Due</b>
R September 22	Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, from <i>The New Rhetoric</i>
T September 27	Crosswhite, “Audiences and Arguments”
R September 29	<b>Short Paper 3 Due</b>

T October 4 R October 6	Analyzing Arguments—Toulmin, from <i>The Uses of Argument</i> Tannen, “Community and Contest”
T October 11 R October 13	Meaning and Rhetorical Situations: Farrell, “Knowledge, Consensus, & Rhetorical Theory” Farr, “Essayist Literacy,” <b>Short Paper 4 Due</b>
T October 18 R October 20	Gee, “Meaning: Choosing, Guessing, and Cultural Models” <b>Midterm</b>
T October 25 R October 27	Linton, “Reassigning Meaning” Talking about ourselves and others
T November 1 R November 3	Miller, “Genre as social action” <b>Storytelling comparison workshop</b>
T November 8 R November 10	<b>Storytelling comparison <u>analysis</u> workshop</b> Genre and rhetorical theory
T November 15 R November 17	Rhetorical Case Study: Video Games, <b>Storytelling Comparison Analysis Due</b> Video games as rhetorical. <b>Meet in Evans Library</b>
T November 22 R November 24	What’s the rhetorical situation of videogames? No Class, Thanksgiving Holiday— <b>Homework: Video Game Observations</b>
T November 29 R December 1	Playing video games as rhetorical action Analyzing arguments about video games
T December 6 F December 9	Video games as arguments <b>Final Exam, 12:30-2:30 p.m.</b>

### **Student Learning**

Your success in this class is important to me. If there are circumstances which may affect your performance in this class, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can work together to develop strategies for adapting assignments to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course.

### **Students With Disabilities**

"The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal antidiscrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Department of Student Life, Services for Students with Disabilities in Room 126 of the Koldus Building, or call 845-1637." (Student Rules publication).

### **Honor Code**

This course, like all courses at A&M, is bound by the Aggie Code of Honor: “An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal, or tolerate those who do.” (For more, see the Honor Council Rules and Procedures on the web at [www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor](http://www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor).)