

**English 354, Modern Rhetorical Theory: On Doing Things With Language**  
**Texas A&M University, Spring 2006**  
**MWF 12:40-1:30 p.m., SCTS 216**

---

Dr. 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: MWF 9-11 a.m, and very cheerfully by appointment—if my office hours are inconvenient for you for any reason, I'm always happy to set up appointments at other times that are mutually convenient.

**About this course**

Prerequisite: ENGL 104

*To do rhetoric is to do things with language.*

All language use is rhetorical. Every utterance, every text that is put out into the world has some effect, however small or large that effect might be. But not all texts achieve the same effects. Just what *are* those effects? And how are those effects accomplished through language?

In this class, we will *do rhetoric* by analyzing our language use—and others'—to understand the outcomes of that language use, and to better anticipate, respond to, and ethically negotiate various forms of written language. This work has much to offer to your ability to engage diverse textual situations and genres. Thus, in addition to investigating how the texts we encounter and produce in the world impact us and others, we will also be asking: how can we, as writers, take responsibility for the language we use and how we use it? How can we anticipate some of the consequences of language use and respond to unexpected consequences?

To answer these questions, we will examine various sites of language use within our everyday lives, uncovering the different roles and relationships we forge with others in the course of doing this work. We will look at different cultural artifacts and the language that surrounds them, we will look at our own language use, we will investigate others' language, and most of all, we will look at the people with whom and towards whom this language is produced—in order to uncover the *effects* and the *work* that this language is accomplishing in the world.

**Course goals**

- discuss key concepts and issues in modern rhetorical theory
- understand the cultural specificity of rhetorical practice(s)
- develop a repertoire of tools for performing rhetorical analyses
- analyze written texts to understand their rhetorical effects
- conduct empirical and secondary research on the rhetorical practices of a particular community or textual genre

**Requirements of the Course**

- Daily work (25%) including attendance, class participation, homework, daily activities and quizzes.
- Rhetorical Analysis (25%) 1000-1500 word analysis of language in a particular online community.
- Storytelling Assignment (25%) 1000-1500 word analysis of two stories you've shared in two different contexts
- Marketing Analysis (25%) 1000-1500 word rhetorical analysis of a company's advertising or marketing practice. (must be *research*-based).

\*\*\*Assignments must be submitted in the proper sequence; late assignments will be penalized one letter grade (for a 20-point assignment, this means two points) per day that they are late.

## Required Materials

- *Textbook*: Ramage, John. *Rhetoric: A User's Guide*. New York: Pearson/Longman, 2005.
- \$25-30 for copying costs
- A folder for submitting paper portfolios

## Absence Policy

More than two unexcused absences will affect your final participation grade by one point (out of 25) for each absence. That is, on your third absence, your participation grade will drop by 1 point; on your fourth, it will drop by 2 points, etc. See Student Rule 7 ([student-rules.tamu.edu/rule7.htm](http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule7.htm)) for information on what counts as an excused absence. I will expect your written absence excuse (doctor's note, etc.) within a week of your return to class.

## Student Learning

Your success in this class is important to me. If there are circumstances which may affect your performance in this class, 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 B-118 Cain Hall, 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).)

## Course Calendar

*NOTE*: I will often assign short take-home or in-class writing not listed on the syllabus.

### Unit 1: What is "Rhetoric" and What Can We Do With It?

W 18 January	Introduction to course <b>HW: Ramage, 1-10</b>
F 20 January	Doing "rhetoric" <b>HW: Ramage, 10-21</b> <b>Write: 300-500 word explanation of your understanding of rhetoric.</b> <b>Be prepared to read this aloud in class!</b>
M 23 January	Doing "rhetoric" <b>HW: Ramage, 21-32</b>
W 25 January	Looking at online message boards as instances of rhetorical activity
F 27 January	Looking at online message boards as instances of rhetorical activity, cont'd <i>Mini-lesson</i> : Citing online sources in MLA format; in-text citations/quoting

### Identification

M 30 January	<b>DUE: 300-500 word description of the online message board community you are focusing on</b> Metaphor and Identity <b>HW: Ramage, 33-49</b>
--------------	--

W 01 February	Identifying given, readymade, and constructed identities in our online communities <b>HW: Ramage, 49-61</b>
F 03 February	Critically examining readymade identities <b>HW: Ramage, 61-68</b>
M 06 February	Constructing identities—“control” <b>HW: find, and print out, examples from your message board community of given, readymade, and constructed identities.</b>
W 08 February	Looking at message boards for examples of identity and rhetoric
F 10 February	Looking at message boards for examples of identity and rhetoric

### Persuasion and Shaping Meaning

M 13 February	<b>DUE: 300-500 word analysis of how people on your message board are “doing” identity</b> Persuasive Practices—or “Getting Other People to See Things Your Way” <b>HW: Ramage, 69-80; find examples of coercion and persuasion on your message board</b>
W 15 February	Coercion vs. Persuasion –what’s happening on our message boards? <b>HW: Ramage, 80-91; find an example that helps illustrate how message &amp; medium affect persuasive force</b>
F 17 February	Message and Medium <b>HW: Ramage, 91-96; find an example of <i>ethos</i></b>
M 20 February	Agent/Ethos <b>HW: Ramage, 96-101; find an example of “audience” or “scene”</b>
W 22 February	Scene/Audience <b>HW: choose one of the examples (a post or a thread) that you’ve brought to class thus far to analyze for your rhetorical analysis assignment.</b>
F 24 February	Pulling all of this together for your Rhetorical Analysis—small-group work
M 27 February	<b>DUE: 300-500 word analysis of one post (or thread) for how people are persuading and shaping meaning.</b>
W 01 March	
F 03 March	
M 06 March	<b>Peer Workshop I, bring as complete a draft as possible of your final analysis</b>
W 08 March	<b>Peer Workshop II, bring as complete a draft as possible of your final analysis</b>
F 10 March	

### Unit 2: Rhetoric and Identity--Storytelling

M 13 March	<b>Spring Break No Classes</b>
W 15 March	<b>Spring Break No Classes</b>
F 17 March	<b>Spring Break No Classes</b>
M 20 March	Introduction to analyzing stories; distribute assignment <b>HW: Read Linton, “Reassigning Meaning”</b>
W 22 March	Talking about ourselves and others
F 24 March	Class cancelled—be sure to gather your stories for analysis <b>HW: Prepare to gather, or have already gathered, stories for analysis</b>
M 27 March	Practice analyzing stories (Gee)
W 29 March	Practice analyzing stories
F 31 March	<b>Storytelling Comparison Workshop: Bring copies of both of your stories to share with group members, as well as your initial observations. You and your group members will work to extend those insights and observations during this class meeting.</b>

M 03 April                      Examining the impact of rhetorical action—developing critical insights  
W 05 April                      **Storytelling Analysis Workshop:** *Bring in as complete a draft as possible of your analysis to workshop with your peers*  
F 07 April                      **Storytelling Analysis Workshop, cont'd.**  
What are we learning about doing rhetoric? Sharing insights.

Unit 3: Rhetoric and Mass Media/Communications—Advertising

M 10 April                      Talking about Advertising and Rhetoric-- video part 1: “The Persuaders,”  
distribute final assignment **HW: Ramage 173-183**  
**DUE: Storytelling Analysis**  
W 12 April                      Video part 2: “The Persuaders” **HW: Ramage, 183-193; Write 300-500**  
**word response to the video. Be prepared to share your responses in**  
**class!**  
F 14 April                      **Reading Day No Class**  
M 17 April                      Analyzing advertising rhetorically **HW: Ramage, 193-211; find**  
**advertisements that interest you, reflect upon their rhetorical**  
**function(s).**  
**DUE: response to “The Persuaders”**  
W 19 April                      **Library Visit:** Finding Research to Support Your Rhetorical Analyses—  
Contextualizing, Situating, Understanding Motivations **HW: Ramage,**  
**134-144**  
F 21 April                      **Advertisement Workshop:** *Bring in the advertisement(s) you are*  
*thinking of analyzing, along with any initial observations, insights, or*  
*research that you’ve found.*  
M 24 April                      What are we learning about doing rhetoric? Sharing insights  
W 26 April                      Examining the impact of rhetorical action—ethical consequences **HW:**  
**Ramage, 159-172**  
F 28 April                      **Advertisement Analysis Workshop:** *Bring in copies of your analysis*  
*drafts—be sure that they are as complete as possible—to workshop with*  
*your groups.*  
M 01 May                      **Advertisement Analysis Workshop, cont'd.**  
T 02 May                      Last day, evaluations

**Final Advertising Analysis DUE during Exam Window, 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Monday, 08 May**