ENGL 1302: College Composition II

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Required Texts/Materials

Reading and Writing about the Disciplines: A Rhetorical Approach, Hui Wu and Emily Standridge. This text is available to you during spring of 2015 as a free download on Blackboard. Please bear in mind, however, that it is under copyright and may not be disseminated in any form.

Course Description and Goals

This course is organized around a text that provides scholarly/technical readings appropriate to virtually every undergraduate major at the University of Texas at Tyler. Students’ activities will be largely tailored so as to concentrate their reading and writing upon their chosen academic specialization. Group projects during class and assignments outside of class are intended to introduce students to the literate protocol of the major area. Specifically, students will acquire skill in the analysis of scholarly texts in the following ways: they will learn to assess the logical progression and strength of a position, to understand the appropriate and effective use of evidence, and to recognize the intent or objective of relatively brief formal publications. To a much reduced degree, students will also be exposed to the broad conventions of fields beyond their own, since the “liberal arts” thrust of this institution aims to produce citizens somewhat conversant with the parlance of several disciplines.

Rationale

In the past, students have typically been expected to absorb new kinds of writing—both as readers and, slightly later, as writers themselves—while working their way into their academic major. Even if they chance to master the habits and manners of their chosen discipline, they have often derived little benefit from their exposure to the core curriculum because of insufficient preparation in how to address various texts beyond their special interest. English 1302 is a deliberate response to a significant but suppressed need, therefore. The content of this course overtly rehearses the student in handling idiosyncratic styles covering the spectrum of academic discourse, and also trains the student to minimize in his or her own writing the loss of general comprehension too often incurred when specialists compose technical papers.

Please remember that the intent of 1302, from start to finish, is to assist you in preparing for further academic work rather than to pressure you into following a certain academic path. If at any point you wish to change your selection of disciplinary format, you are entirely free to do so. You are under no compulsion, indeed, to join the group of students who share your current major if you have misgivings about that major or simply wish to explore life on the other side of the fence. This class’s structure is ideal for such healthy exploration.

Student Rights and Responsibilities

An updated statement concerning absences for religious observance or university-supported trips, services for students with disabilities, grade replacement policies, course-drop policies, and so forth may be found at http://www.uttyler.edu/academicaffairs/syllabuspolicies.pdf.

Required Work/Grading

Below are the requirements and criteria to be used in determining your grade, with the relative importance of each item indicated in parentheses. For the record, I assign letter-grades according to the conventional “decade” system (60-69=D, 70-79=C, 80-89=B), with the “A” range running from 90 to 100.

Class Participation (30%): College-age adults should be capable of collecting the instruction they paid for without duress. I have considered exacting fixed, rigid deductions for missed classes in the past; but in the last analysis, I cannot escape a view of such professorial “whip-cracking” as somewhat demeaning to both teacher and student. This course relies heavily on discussion as an integral part of the writing process. If
you fail to attend, you neither contribute any insights to your classmates nor profit from any of theirs. I will also most certainly record your absence, for I take attendance every day as well as make notes after each class in favor of those who actively participated.

In short, almost a third of your grade depends upon a) showing up, b) making useful comments, and c) preparing occasional notes for class discussions; and the remaining two thirds of the grade can also be very adversely affected by your failure to hear vital directions. A word to the wise should be sufficient.

The Schedule below (to clarify Item C) mentions certain classes where I expect you to bring outlines or other such pre-writing to class. I do not collect and grade these preparations—but I do remark who pays attention to them and who ignores them. Your displaying energy in small matters like this may eventually have a very favorable impact on your overall graded performance.

**Writing Exercises (70%)**: The bulk of your grade, naturally, will be determined by your performance on various writing assignments. Note that many of these allow you to resubmit the paper in question for a possibly higher grade, though in no case is resubmission a requirement. Please do not undertake any such revision unless you intend to apply yourself to it seriously. No improvement to your grade is guaranteed; and while I will never assign you a worse grade for wasting your time and mine, you will leave the impression of being a sloppy, frivolous worker. *All such rewriting must be submitted to me within one week of the paper’s return.*

You will observe that these assignments have a progressive importance to your grade. Not only do they grow longer and somewhat more difficult: I am also expecting your grammatical and stylistic competence to increase. Perhaps the most useful point to grasp here isn’t that I will be plugging each paper into a complex and inflexible mathematical formula, but that I will be more impressed by high performance as the semester wears on (and more disappointed by flagging effort and attention). The progressive weighting of the grade reflects my desire to reward any “internal light” that finally clicks on brightly. If your grades show a steady rise, I am likely to give you a break in a borderline case where the stats argue that you don’t quite have the points to reach the next level.

The percentages given relate to the 100% total for the course, not to the 75% of this specific component.

- **Personal Response (4%)**: Since you will submit this paper after only about a week of class, the standard of evaluation is not particularly rigorous. In fact, this is more or less a “get to know you” exercise on my side and a “see what I’m up against” exercise on yours. The article to which you will respond (see below in the Schedule) has the clinical style characteristic of scholarship—yet a close reading unintimidated by format will discover that the authors make several assumptions. We will try to perform such a reading together in class, at least cursorily. Then I would like you to identify some recurrent claim, technique, or procedure in the authors’ presentation which you find a) especially persuasive or effective, or else b) especially dubious or deceptive. Does the paper seem impartial and profound? Why—what one thing in its approach best accomplishes this worthy goal? Does it strike you, rather, as assuming too much—as presuming—in order to brush something under the proverbial rug? What particular ploy or tendency gives you this impression? Point to evidence, but keep any direct citations short.

This is a brief paper. It should not exceed about 300-500 words (a page or page and a half). Present your general response, cite your best evidence, and then wrap up (perhaps with a final speculation about why the authors might have used the strategy which you have identified). Three paragraphs should suffice.
I want you to do well on this and all assignments, of course; but I also expect you to refine your skills as the semester proceeds. Perhaps you will look back on this “maiden flight” in May and marvel at the progress you have made. At the same time, the project allows me to look ahead from January and make a rough estimate of where the class stands as a whole.

This paper may be edited and resubmitted if you wish to seek improvement upon its original grade.

• **Summary (7%)**: The components of a summary are explained in some detail on pp. 11-12 of your textbook. To be emphasized is the summary’s distillation of a broader text into relatively few words and the selection of these words by the commentator (as opposed to a large-scale borrowing of them from the original author). Summaries are not paraphrases. They condense rather than restate ideas. Limited citation may be effective if the cited matter is uniquely incisive in places or introduces terms critical to the original author’s point. For the most part, however, avoid direct citation for now.

We are using a relatively brief and straightforward article, Kellogg’s “Professional Writing Expertise,” as the subject matter of this summary. You are charged with compressing the author’s major ideas into a paper of about 300 words. The brevity of your summary is an important parameter, since the very nature of the exercise is to reduce and crystallize. The textbook’s guidelines suggest a three-paragraph approach. This is not an inflexible requirement, but it makes sense and should not be taken lightly. One paragraph would provide orientation, the second would stress significant (not minor) details and essential logical connections, and the third would state your author’s thesis with a little more precision and impact than the introduction (since further detail has now provided more depth and clarity).

This paper may be edited and resubmitted if you wish to seek improvement upon its original grade.

• **Abstract (4%)**: At this point, the comparatively simple task of writing an abstract seems appropriate to tackle. Kellogg’s article is not preceded by an abstract; but many disciplines require that one be published along with the rest of the piece, so we will use the summarized matter handled in the previous exercise for practice. Abstracts tend to be briefer than summaries and also somewhat more technical. They are composed for an audience that is highly likely to embark upon reading the full publication and wants a quick overview (i.e., a specialized audience). Summaries are usually written more generally for the sake of readers who have not decided whether the full piece may address their interests.

It follows that your abstract should be rather briefer than your summary, and also a little more densely written (for instance, with more specialized terminology). A single paragraph may suffice for this task.

• **Rhetorical Analysis (15%)**: This paper is a highly involved undertaking; indeed, it constitutes a pivotal point in the course. If you were to accomplish thoroughly all of the ends identified on p. 15 of the textbook, even in the context of a short article, you might emerge with a book-length manuscript! Obviously, this isn’t the objective. The completed analysis, rather, should run about 600-750 words (or around three pages). In a nutshell, such analysis requires that you familiarize yourself with author and audience rather as a detective would research the victim, the scene of the crime, and acquaintances and bystanders in trying to assess exactly what has happened. Like the forensic team, as well, you will of course pay attention to details of the area within the yellow tape (that is to say, the text). What clues did the author leave behind in structure, layout, manner of citation, and so forth about how he or she wishes to be interpreted, by whom, and on what grounds? Round up relevant evidence wherever you can find it.

Because of this essay’s relative intricacy, we shall divide it into two parts. You will begin by writing a summary, as you have already done (worth 5% of your total grade—and not to be rewritten as a summary, because it will grow into the analysis). Once you have completed a good general statement of your article’s contents, you may begin filling in further discussion about the author’s intended effect for those contents, the specific strategies used to achieve that effect, and so on. The finished product will probably preserve few of the same words as the summary. In fact, p. 16 of your textbook provides a description of the analysis which clearly operates within new parameters. This more articulated and nuanced piece of writing will be worth 10% of the total grade, rounding out the whole assignment’s 15%.

This final essay may be resubmitted for a higher grade.
Comparative/Contrastive Rhetorical Review (18%): The essence of any comparative undertaking in academic writing is of course content. You would not import a literary text into a climatological treatise just to distinguish between the style of the two. Yet you might, as a climatologist, find it very interesting that Edgar Allan Poe’s detective Dupin claims to be able to see the Andromeda Galaxy from the streets of Paris in a work composed almost two centuries ago. This evidence could prove useful if and when you could demonstrate that the fictional medium of “Murders on the Rue Morgue” did not utterly discredit the detail at issue; and to make that demonstration, you would need to know something about literary conventions.

The present essay thus calls upon you to build upon the previous one’s skills in order to meld a text from another discipline into your own. (Preserving your original choice of article from our textbook is strongly recommended; the other polarity of your pairing may be drawn from any source that might possess scholarly interest.) Even though this composition should run about 1,200 words (four or five pages), you may well find it proceeding a little faster and easier than the earlier rhetorical analysis since you have now fully rehearsed the analytical process. Precisely how you should arrange the two works so as to maximize the light shed by one upon the other will be a major focus of our discussions. There is no single surefire way to make all comparisons effective. Especially in an interdisciplinary paper, the writer must convince his or her audience that the imported material is not a whimsical “stretch” but rather a neglected piece of relevant evidence. This involves acknowledging differences in the fields concerned (i.e., contrast) while demonstrating that said differences do not compromise the cited testimony.

You may resubmit this essay for a higher grade after making alterations.

Ivan Aivazovsky’s Ninth Wave (1850) visualizes a dubious phenomenon long alleged in fishermen’s lore—that every ninth wave is bigger than its predecessors—in highly dramatic fashion. A physicist might reference the painting in exploring the allegation’s truth. An art historian would probably stress the explosive popularity of landscapes and seascapes in the nineteenth century, or else comment upon the brilliant colors and heavy brush strokes here. Then again, a literary scholar could easily forge some connections with Romantic poetry. The philosopher could illustrate the sublime with Aivazovsky’s opus (the “fearful beauty” of a scene that exhilarates the mind by exceeding the senses); and the political historian or psychologist might even tap into the work to suggest the dynamic pressures and desperate energies straining beneath the surface of the nineteenth century generally, and Russia in particular.

A single item of evidence can reveal a staggering variety of truths to eyes trained in differing disciplines.

Short Literature Review (20%): Your final exercise in this class (and the submission of the finished product will, in effect, be your final exam) is to create the sort of comparative review of scholarly material that is often published in journals. Everything you have learned up to this point will collaborate in producing the work. You will delve into a particular issue, preferably one raised in the a scholarly piece from the textbook that you have come to know very well; you will
track down further discussion of this issue; you will eventually limit the sources under scrutiny to four; and you will thereupon form a working hypothesis about how views have evolved or solidified over a period of years. A submitted abstract will express your hypothesis succinctly; and as before on one occasion, I will grade that preliminary formulation of ideas independently so as to give you some early feedback (though this time the abstract will only count 4%).

Much of the remaining time will then be spent upon analyzing the rhetorical quality of the four sources. They may all be practically equal in this regard. If some have been cited by others, they probably all belong to the same level of discussion in the scholarly community. Yet even at that level, rhetorical effects can subtly shift. Extrinsic factors such as politics and social change can influence academic judgment. A few researchers have recently claimed to have mapped a cryptohominid genome that may belong to the elusive Sasquatch—but society at large preserves a derisive attitude toward any such research, and it therefore proceeds slowly and almost covertly. A few years from now... who knows?

The finished essay is worth 16% of your grade when the abstract is deducted. The good news about this last composition is that you may use the weekend after our final class to complete it. The bad news is that you won’t have a chance to revise it for more points—so give it your very best effort!

**Schedule of Readings and Assignments**

All reading assignments are to be found in *Reading and Writing about the Disciplines*, and most discussions and other activities are based upon material from that source.

### January

12 Introduction to class. Homework: locate files containing your textbook on Blackboard and read Besio and Pronzini’s “Morality, Ethics, and Value Outside and Inside Organizations: An Example of the Discourse on Climate Change” (pp. 389-402: under “Philosophy” in Humanities folder).
14 Discussion of reading: what do the authors view as the situation’s “basic facts,” what position do they build upon this view, what unexamined assumptions have they made, are these likely to be shared by their target audience, is their presentation logically consistent, is their style effective?
16 Continue discussion in smaller groups; work up an outline in class for Personal Response. HW: prepare Personal Response for submission.
19 MLK Day: no class.
21 Submit Personal Response to Besio and Pronzini (see guidelines above) and discuss conclusions. HW: read Ronald T. Kellogg, “Professional Writing Expertise” (pp. 287-300: under “English” in Humanities folder).
23 Opening discussion of how to write a summary; group work to seek out most important points in Kellogg’s article. HW: review textbook’s guidelines on pp. 11-12 and compose outline of a summary.
26 More discussion of writing summaries; class collectively analyzes strengths and weaknesses of various outlines. HW: work on summary (next class is your chance to ask crucial questions about grammar or organization). **Census Day.**
28 Full-class discussion of grammatical and organizational/stylistic issues. HW: prepare your summary for submission (see guidelines above).
30 Submit Summary; opening discussion of the Abstract; practice writing abstracts as full class and in groups. HW: begin transforming your summary into an abstract.

### February

2 Summary returned and discussed; class breaks into groups to assess abstracts and then views several collectively. HW: write Abstract based on same matter as your Summary.
4 Division of class into groups by academic major; academic groups review articles in textbook under their specific discipline. HW: continue browsing text’s material in your field and select article of greatest interest to you.

**Beyond this point, any reference to “groups” will almost always indicate an activity with those who share your academic specialization. Yet remember that you are always free to change this latter.**

6 Opening discussion of Rhetorical Analysis begins; class practices analysis of sample texts together. HW: review your specific text with a view to analyzing it rhetorically.
March

2 Final questions and comments about Rhetorical Analysis; break into groups for final discussion and critique of papers. HW: prepare Rhetorical Analysis for submission.

4 Submit Analysis; class discussion stressing disciplinary differences in rhetoric. HW: read pp. 19-22 of textbook.

6 Opening discussion of Comparative/Contrastive Rhetorical Review. HW: begin to seek out two significantly connected texts, one from your field and one from another.

9- S P R I N G

13 B R E A K !

16 Rhetorical Analysis returned. Full-class discussion of interdisciplinary writing, with individual students describing projects they have in mind; identify disciplines with more probable or natural affiliation. HW: find specific text from another discipline (not necessarily from textbook) to use in conjunction with article from your field.

18 Meet in groups to share ideas for interdisciplinary project with students of your specialization; then create temporary groups joining students with similar cross-disciplinary interests. HW: read or study thoroughly the extra-disciplinary text or artifact that you have chosen for project.

20 Meet in temporary groups and share your initial thoughts with others who specialize in the discipline that you are “visiting”; record their insights about how information that interests you might be colored by discipline’s rhetorical conventions. HW: outline a rhetorical analysis of your extra-disciplinary work.

23 Meet in temporary groups and share outlines; brief full-class discussion to identify frequent problems and common insights. HW: begin to fuse your two works into one paper.

25 Full-class discussion of most logical and compelling approaches to comparisons and contrasts. HW: determine which template discussed in class works best for your material, or devise a new one with a clear rationale behind it.

27 Academic-specialization groups re-convene and share strategies adopted; full-class discussion of organizational issues later on. HW: write rough draft of your review.

30 Rough drafts discussed and critiqued in undefined setting (i.e., you may ask anyone in class to proofread paper for you); final discussion of issues or concerns. HW: prepare Comparative/Contrastive Rhetorical Review for submission.
April
1 Submit Comparative/Contrastive Rhetorical Review; opening discussion of Short Literature Review (Rhetorical Review of Published Research Results). HW: select issue handled by your specialized article that particularly interests you.
3 Work within groups to isolate promising references in your article and/or online; create a tentative list of sources to be read in full. HW: initiate necessary steps to obtain full copies of your sources.
6 Comparative/Contrastive Rhetorical Review returned; full-class discussion of principles useful in viewing several sources together (trend, shifting paradigm, growing controversy, etc.); discussion continued in small groups. HW: continue seeking complete sources, now based more on how they may be meaningfully viewed together.
8 Entire class shares problems and ideas. HW: continue research.
10 Individual conferences, no formal class; continue gathering and processing research.
13 Select your final four short works to review and your strategy for linking them; work mostly in groups to assist decision. HW: prepare an abstract of your review.
15 Submit abstract after presenting briefly to class. HW: create bibliographical page for your four sources.
17 Abstract returned; full-class discussion of need to weigh rhetorical distinctions or similarities in sources when building connections. HW: begin filling in abstract with paragraphs, emphasizing trends, shifts, or other patterns.
20 Further discussion of rhetorical factors in your arrangement of sources, with special emphasis on chronology and cultural mood. HW: refine final version of paper.
22 Rhetorical analysis of sources in groups (e.g., are significant shifts in your sources due to changes in audience, cultural mood, etc.? does resounding agreement among your sources arise from multiple rhetorical settings or strictly within the discipline?). HW: continue to refine paper.
24 Last formal class; review progress, resolve any remaining questions or concerns.
27 Not a class day—but Short Literature Review must be submitted by 1 p.m. You may submit electronically or else bring to my office (BUS 307A) or office of Dept. of Literature and Language (BUS 236).