

**GO INTO THE  
WORLD AND DO  
WELL. BUT MORE  
IMPORTANTLY, GO  
INTO THE WORLD  
AND DO GOOD.**

(MINOR MYERS JR.)

## **Ethical Discourses for Communities**

Writing and Rhetoric 13200-04

Spring 2012

Monday/Wednesday/Friday 10:40-11:30am

Coleman-Morse Center 243

**Prof. Kasey Swanke**

**kswanke@nd.edu**

Office Hours – 300 O’Shaughnessy

Mondays – 1:00-2:00pm

Wednesdays – 1:30-2:30pm

Fridays – 9:00-10:00am

Class Website

*communitywritingandrhetoric.wordpress.com*

## **Course Overview**

### **Writing and Rhetoric through Community Learning and Service**

The aim of Writing and Rhetoric is to help you develop writing and rhetorical skills for addressing diverse audiences. The aim of Community Based Learning is to explore how that goal is inseparable from our lives as responsible citizens of our communities. Aristotle defined rhetoric as “the art of finding the best available means of persuasion in any situation.” The opportunity presented to us in this course, then, is one that allows us to develop our skills within a diverse set of tangible and immediate situations, both at Notre Dame and in South Bend.

The content of this course prepares you for writing successfully in your current and future courses at Notre Dame. Each class that you take here will introduce you to specific conversations regarding topics of moral, political, scientific, and intellectual significance. Most often, these conversations are not simple, but instead quite complicated. Thinking about them often requires qualifications, trade-offs, and excruciating honesty. Navigating and responding to them well requires a keen understanding of argumentation and presentation tactics. While our course is first and foremost focused on the development of a diverse rhetorical toolkit and strategies for successful writing, our community-based learning component lends us a distinct advantage: you will develop these important skills within the context of a real-live rhetorical situation. The development of your skills will evolve as you practice grappling with and writing about issues of tangible, contemporary, and local importance.

Through our partnership with local organizations, our study of writing and rhetoric will focus on the themes of the social and political marginalization experienced by various social groups in South Bend. Specifically, we’ll consider how local, state, and national political officials are generally unresponsive to the needs of those who do not directly hold them accountable through the instrument of the vote. Based on those investigations, we’ll consider what we can do to identify and address the social and political challenges of those who are cast onto the sidelines of society. As we discuss important topics of the course related to writing and rhetoric, we should continually think about how we can make use of the gifts we receive through our education to contribute to the overall community.

### **Community-Based Learning Components**

As a condition of Notre Dame’s Community Based Learning, you are to complete two hours of service per week to your chosen site throughout the duration of the semester. Because the theme of our course regards socially and politically marginalized groups, we will each enter into relationships with one of four area organizations: Hope Ministries, La Casa de Amistad, South Bend Juvenile Correctional Facility, and Sisters of the Holy Cross. We’ll talk more about logistical issues associated with serving at these places early on in our class. Moreover, you’ll send me your ranked preferences for serving at these organizations by the beginning of the second week so we can solidify assignments and hit the ground running on our work there. Your hours should be spread out into two-hours-per-week increments over roughly ten weeks. Fulfilling this obligation to service in the course is your first community-based learning task.

Your second community-based learning task involves serving the needs of your organization and those that it serves through your actual writing so that you are writing *for* and *with* the community. Over the course of working with your organization, you’ll gain a rich sense of the various social and political challenges that they face. If you’re at the juvenile correctional facility, for example, you might note specific challenges such as overcrowding or lack of funds for efficacious rehabilitation

and/or prisoner re-entry programs. You will write a research paper regarding one of these problems. We'll leave ample time in our schedule for identifying and narrowing down your interests so that you can pose and address a tight and manageable research question associated with these identified challenges. Finally, you will write, revise, and submit a letter – either to an elected official or to the *South Bend Tribune's* editorial page – that contains a persuasive argument regarding your chosen cause. Ideally this letter will be co-authored by you and someone of your choosing who patronizes the organization you're working at. Being able to teach writing and rhetorical strategies to another not only serves her or him, but it also serves you in helping to hone your own skills. By the end of the semester, the symbiotic relationship among yourself, those you work with at your site, and the community as a whole will be clear. In short, you will have served these organizations and the patrons of them, and they will have served you.

### Course Objectives

Broadly, our aim is to become better producers and consumers of rhetoric. To achieve this, my goal is that you complete the course having sharpened your abilities to:

- Consider how your wide range of rhetorical tools may be employed to advance your own persuasive, credible, and well-reasoned arguments.
- Consider how your writing affects your readers and revise it to improve that effect.
- Identify and evaluate the author's audience, purpose, claims, reasons, and evidence contained in diverse sources.
- Locate popular sources, evaluate their usefulness, and employ them effectively and ethically in your own work.
- Understand multiple perspectives on an issue and responsibly and credibly enter into scholarly and public conversations.
- Speak from a position of knowledge, experience, and investment in the community of South Bend.

### Texts and Materials

The following required and recommended books are available for purchase at the bookstore and, with the exception of *Fresh Writing*, are also available online.

#### *Required Texts*

Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein. *They Say/I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*. **Second Edition**. ISBN 9780393933611

Matthew Capdevielle, ed. *Fresh Writing*. **Volume 11**. ISBN 9780738045078

Diana Hacker. *A Pocket Style Manual*. Print (ISBN 9780312664800) or Digital (ISBN 9781457605420) edition

#### *Also bring*

A notebook or supply of loose-leaf paper for in-class writing assignments

## Assignments and Grading

### *Participation – 25%*

A small, seminar-style class such as ours is well suited for developing into a supportive and stimulating intellectual community, but this potential depends upon the interactive efforts exerted by all of us. Your participation grade will depend on how actively you participate in and meaningfully contribute to classroom activities. In addition to participating respectfully and intelligently in daily class discussions, your overall participation grade, which accounts for 35% of your final grade, depends on your performance related to the following tasks:

### *Peer Writing Workshops – 10%*

As an opportunity to gauge how well you are communicating your ideas to an audience of your peers, we will have specific days to exchange drafts with others in the class for giving and receiving feedback. Specifics of these workshops will be made more explicit as we approach them on the calendar, but note here that your attendance and thoughtful contributions during these class sessions are especially mandatory.

### *Service Blog – 10%*

*communitywritingandrhetoric.wordpress.com*

You will be responsible for contributing to the class blog by posting at least ten times over the course of the semester. These posts will take the form of responses to occasional class writing exercises or reflections on your service experiences.

### *The Writing Center – 2.5%*

Notre Dame's Writing Center is dedicated to helping you become a better writer. The tutors working there will carefully consider your work with you and discuss your ideas during all phases of your writing process, including understanding an assignment, articulating a thesis statement, organizing your thoughts, revising your first draft, and editing your final paper. While the tutors at the Writing Center do not write or copy edit your papers for you, they help you develop helpful rhetorical strategies for your written work.

You are required to visit the Writing Center at least once during the semester (you're of course welcome to visit it as often as you'd like). To learn more about the Writing Center and to set up an appointment with a tutor online, visit <http://www.nd.edu/~writing/index.html>.

### *"Pot of Gold" Online Library Tutorial – 2.5%*

*www.library.nd.edu/instruction/potofgold/*

Most students discover that finding the right scholarly source among all of the library's physical and digital collections is overwhelmingly. The Hesburgh Libraries offers a one-hour online tutorial to walk you through developing information competence. By way of a gentle impetus to encourage you to take advantage of this, you are required to complete each of the modules and print out and submit the final screen (or saving it from the browser and sending it to me via email) by the end of the semester.

*Portfolio – 75% - Due Wednesday, May 2*

Over the semester you will write several short papers and a research paper. Along the way, you will submit papers to me, and I will offer commentary on what works and what doesn't. I'll also suggest revisions and let you know what level (A-F) your paper achieves at that time. Your grade for those papers, however, is ultimately judged at the end of the semester when you submit to me all of the final drafts for your papers in a portfolio (using either a folder or a binder). Since good writing is cultivated through a process that evolves over time rather than finished in one single stint, this method allows you to employ all of the rhetorical tools you've developed and polished throughout the semester. You can rewrite your papers and include the revisions in your final portfolio. **You must revise at least two of your essays for your final portfolio.** Of course, you're welcome to revise more or all of them. We'll talk more specifically about the paper assignments over the course of the semester well before their due dates approach, but in brief, here are the general details of each essay:

*Rhetorical Analysis – 10%*

*(500-750 words) Due – Friday, February 3*

The Rhetorical Analysis is a short summary and critical analysis of the argument, logical, and rhetorical appeals of a speech that you select from a list that I will provide. Your task will be to identify the speaker's primary claim and evaluate some of the rhetorical tactics that she or he employs in persuading her/his audience.

*Conversation Argument – 15%*

*(750 – 1000 words) Due – Friday, February 17*

The Conversation Argument is your opportunity to engage in an existing scholarly conversation about a specific issue. Your task is to engage the perspectives contained in at least two outside sources and articulate an argument of your own. You'll develop a cogent thesis that communicates your main claim and motivates the discussion in the rest of the essay. From there, you will put forth your argument, framed within the template of one of the argument types from *Good Reasons* that we'll talk about (i.e., definition, causal, rebuttal, narrative, evaluation).

*Research Paper – 30%*

*(2500-3000 words) Due – Friday, April 13*

The Research Paper asks you to draw on your experience at your research site to identify a problem associated with a social or political issue that plagues your organization or those who are served within it. You'll craft a proposal or "solution" to this issue. While you can be argumentative or analytical, you should craft it in such a way that it displays your abilities to refine and articulate a thesis, synthesize and evaluate claims contained in various outside sources (including but not limited to those found in the library), and engage in a scholarly conversation. While the research paper as a whole is due on Friday, November 18, we'll break this assignment up into various tasks along the way:

Research Questions – Friday, February 24

Research Proposal – Friday, March 2

Annotated Bibliography – Friday, March 23

Introduction – Friday, March 30

Outline – Friday, April 6

*Public Letter – 10%*

*(less than 500 words) Due – Monday, April 23*

This assignment requires you to write a letter, aimed towards either the editorial section of the *South Bend Tribune* or an elected official serving at a level of government of your choosing (i.e., local, state, or national). This assignment is shorter in length than your previous formal writing assignments, but in many ways its short length makes it all the more challenging. You will want to be at once specific, thorough, and extremely concise.

*Portfolio Revisions – 10%*

*(at least 250 words for each essay you revise) – Wednesday, May 2*

For the final submission of your portfolio, you will include the original drafts (with my comments) and the final drafts of your papers, along with commentary on each essay that you revise, explicating your changes and the reasons for which you made them.

### **Attendance**

Attendance is mandatory. The success of our course depends upon the collective action of all, namely through class discussion and our various collaborative in-class exercises. No doubt you will delight in coming to each class, but should you choose to forego any of your thrice-weekly opportunities for academic enlightenment, your grade will suffer accordingly:

1, 2, or 3 absences – no penalty

4 or 5 absences – one- and two-thirds of a letter grade deducted from your final grade.

6 absences – one full letter grade reduction

7+ absences – failure of the course

Arriving to class late is certainly better than not showing up at all, but these instances will each count for one-half of an unexcused absence. Coming to class but engaging in unacceptable classroom behaviors such as sleeping, newspaper reading, texting, etc, will similarly impact your grade at rates equivalent to those of unexcused absences.

Excused absences (e.g., participation in University competitions, illnesses, deaths in the family) issued only from the Office of Residence Life and/or First Year of Studies still count as absences. While you will never be penalized for an excused absence, if you have, say, three excused absences and one unexcused absence, your unexcused absence counts as a penalty against your final grade.

*Note – if you're an athlete participating in a University-sponsored athletic competition, you need not worry about providing me your written excused absence yourself – I receive notifications automatically via email for those.*

### **Late Work**

Mastering the enormously portable life skill associated with completing your work on time is paramount. I strongly encourage you to submit all of your assignments on time. However, I understand that life can be tricky at times. Maybe you'll receive an American Idol callback. It could be that your computer crashes just as you type your final punctuation mark. Perhaps you're compelled to drop everything and celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation after committing a mortal sin. Whatever the reason, I offer a no-questions-asked allowance for late work depending on when you turn it in. Work is due to be handed in at the beginning of class. If you submit your

work to me any time after I originally collect it through 5pm that day, I'll impose a five percent grade reduction. Each additional 24-hour period after that incurs a ten percent per day late grade reduction for that assignment. The two exceptions to this policy concern draft assignments due for our peer review sessions and the final portfolio – these must be submitted on time, and no late drafts/portfolios will be accepted for credit.

### **Academic Dishonesty**

Plagiarism is defined, but not necessarily limited to, the representation of another's work as your own, either deliberately or by accident. Amen, Amen, I say to you, do not engage in this. Because little matters more in academia than the fruit of our brains, academic dishonesty is rightfully treated as a really big deal. If you are caught plagiarizing, and you and I are unable work out matters of guilt and penalties between us, you face an academic honesty hearing which, I can only imagine, involves you facing a committee of hired Death Eaters and dementors from Azkaban's finest rank. The result of this hearing could include failure of the course, academic probation, or expulsion. There can't possibly exist for you a worse risk-to-benefit ratio in cheating.

To review the Notre Dame Academic Code of Honor, visit <http://www.nd.edu/~hnrcode>.

For concise information regarding avoiding plagiarism, visit <http://www.nd.edu/~writing/resources/AvoidingPlagiarism.html>

### **Technology in Our Classroom**

During specific instances throughout our course, laptops, tablets, cell phones, and other new-fangled things released over the course of our semester may come in especially handy. However, given their potential to divert our (and our neighbors') attention away from the content of the course, we will forego using these in class unless specifically stated. Cell phones and other electronic devices must be silenced and put away.

### **Disabilities Services**

If you're a student with a disability and would like to request accommodations for this course, please register with Notre Dame's Disability Services (<http://www.nd.edu/~osd/>). After you have discussed your accommodation needs with the Coordinator of Disability Services, please speak with me so I can make any necessary arrangements.

## **Tentative Course Schedule**

### **Selected Reading Assignments and Formal Writing Assignments**

*Note: This calendar is subject to revision based on the ongoing assessment of the needs of the class. Rest assured, however, that formal writing due dates will never be rescheduled for an earlier date.*

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#### **Introduction – Writing as a Process** (Wed Jan 18 – Wed Jan 25)

Graff and Birkenstein – Preface, Introduction (pp IX-14)

Burk “The Art of Revision” (Handout) \*optional, but highly recommended

\*Mandatory – Orientation Sessions at individual organizations’ sites (Date and Time TBA)

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#### **Unit One – The Basics of Rhetoric** (Fri Jan 27 – Fri Feb 3)

Graff and Birkenstein (pp 15-38)

“They Say”

“Her Point Is”

Faigley and Selzer – “Rhetorical Analysis” (Handout) and “Finding Arguments” (Handout)

Peer Review Workshop – Rhetorical Analyses

\*Rhetorical Analysis Essay Due Fri Feb 3

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#### **Unit Two – Building Logical, Ethical Arguments Yourself** (Mon Feb 6 – Wed Feb 15)

Graff and Birkenstein (pp 39-98)

“The Art of Quoting”

“So What? Who Cares?”

“Yes / No / Okay, But”

“And Yet”

“Skeptics May Object”

Faigley and Selzer – Types of Arguments – Definition, Causal, Evaluation, Narrative, Rebuttal (Selections – Handout)

Hesburgh Library visit – tour and tutorial – Mandatory!

Peer Review Workshop – Conversation Arguments

Early Semester Evaluations (in class)

\*Conversation Argument Due Fri February 17

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#### **Unit Three – Preparing to Write a Research Paper** (Fri Feb 17 – Wed Mar 28)

Hacker – “Posing a Research Question” (Handout)

Peer Review Workshop – Research Questions



- \*Research Question Due Fri Feb 24
  - \*Research Proposal Due Fri Mar 2
  - \*Annotated Bibliography Due Fri Mar 23
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**Unit Four – Crafting a Research Paper** (Fri Mar 30 – Fri Apr 13)

Graff and Birkenstein (pp 99-132)

“As a Result”

“Aint so / Is Not”

“In Other Words”

Peer Review Workshop – Research Paper Introductions

- \*Introduction Draft Due Fri Mar 30
  - \*Outline Due Fri Apr 6
  - \*Full Research Paper Due Fri Apr 13
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**Unit Five – Spreading the Word** (Mon Apr 16 – Wed May 2)

Peer Review Workshop – Letters

- \*Letter Due Mon Apr 23
- \*Final Portfolio Due Wed May 2