

CMN 423: Rhetorical Criticism
Fall 2014
TR 11:00 am -12:20 pm
1028 Lincoln Hall

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Office Hours: Mon. 3-4 pm, Thurs. 3:30-4:30 pm & by appointment
Moodle site: <https://learn.illinois.edu/course/view.php?id=7382>

What is this course ABOUT?

CMN 423 provides an advanced introduction to the critical study of rhetoric—"advanced," because it's challenging and interesting, "introduction," because you've probably never taken a class like this before. Defined in its most general terms, rhetoric is the *art of making things matter*. While rhetoric comes in lots of flavors (e.g., oratorical, visual, digital), this semester we will focus on speeches by public figures and learn a method for analyzing them. Rhetorical criticism is *a method by which we analyze and judge the effectiveness, truthfulness, ethicality, and/or artistry of public speeches*. In short, the critic asks, "What's going on here?" And, "what do we make of that?"

Criticism is a four-part process. My job this semester is to introduce you to each of these parts and guide your overall development as a critic:

Textual Analysis: You will acquire a lexicon of *relevant rhetorical terms* to guide your description of speech texts. These terms will help you understand and explain the complex workings of texts.

Context Analysis: You will learn how to use research to put rhetoric into its *context*; that is, to understand how social, cultural, and political considerations shape rhetoric.

Argument: You will learn that rhetorical criticism is not about "criticizing" in a negative sense, nor is it about merely appreciating (or showing a lack of appreciation for) rhetoric. The good critic uses all tools available to *construct and justify reasonable arguments* about how rhetoric works.

Evaluation/Judgment: Taking #s 1-3 into consideration, you will learn to *make knowledgeable judgments* about the things you discover in studying specific examples of rhetoric.

WHO is this course for?

This course is oriented primarily toward junior and senior majors in Communication as well as graduate students seeking a solid foundation in critical writing. *It is writing intensive!* Students are expected to have composition and critical thinking skills (organization, critical reading/listening, ability to identify and produce arguments) of the type cultivated in composition, public speaking, and argumentation courses (e.g., Rhet 105, CMN 111-112, 220, 323). Throughout the semester students will have plenty of opportunity to revise their writing through peer and instructor feedback. Thus, if you are not someone who enjoys developing a project over time, receiving feedback on how to make your work better, or implementing the advice of others, this probably is not the course for you.

I generally advise undergraduate students not to take CMN 423 without having first completed the Composition II requirement. See me if you have specific questions on this point.

What are we going to READ?

The following materials are your resources for the course. All books are available at Illini Union Bookstore.

- Harvey, *Writing with Sources: A Guide for Students*, 2nd edition
- Lucas & Medhurst, *Words of a Century: The Top 100 American Speeches, 1900-1999*
- Additional required readings for the course are available on Moodle

What are we going to DO?

This semester we are going to pay careful and systematic attention to the things people say in public when they want to persuade and advocate for change. We'll begin by reading and talking generally about *rhetoric* and *criticism*, considering both why and how rhetorical critics do what they do. Once we have acquired an understanding of important critical tools, we'll develop our own skills as critics through a series of exercises that ask us to pay careful attention to language, read carefully, think critically, and write clearly and expressively.

Our primary (but not sole) medium for communicating our ideas will be *writing*. Across the entire semester, you will produce roughly 60 pages of writing (ungraded writing assignments and drafts as well as graded work). Through a process of instructor feedback, peer review, self-assessment, and public presentation of your work, you will come to view writing as a PROCESS rather than merely as a PRODUCT. As a result of serious, sustained attention to your writing, you will become a better writer.

What will you PRODUCE in your ASSIGNMENTS?

The course is divided into two sections. During the first half of the semester, you will learn a method for rhetorical criticism and show your learning by taking an exam and writing a couple of short papers. Once you have the basics of criticism under your belt, you will then select and study a single speech text for the rest of the term (you will select your speech from among those collected in Lucas and Medhurst's *Words of a Century*). Your final project will be a thoroughly-researched, well-argued, much-revised 15-18 page analysis of that speech. The final project builds progressively and includes time for drafting and peer feedback during in-class writing workshops.

Here is a list of the major assignments, along with a short description of each. More detailed assignment sheets will be handed out during the semester. Assignments are worth a total of 500 points.

Communication Biography: A 2-page essay assigned for the first week of class in which you outline your various experiences in communication and set goals for the course. *Ungraded, but required.*

Textual Analysis Paper: A 4-5 page paper in which you analyze an assigned speech text according to methods taught in class. This essay will give you practice in textual analysis before you do your final project, as well as provide you with some insight into how I evaluate student writing. *50 points.*

Context Analysis Exercise: This exercise will give you practice analyzing the social, cultural, and historical background of a speech. I will provide the class with case study materials related to a specific speech. You will read the materials and integrate them into a context analysis map according to methods you learned in class. *50 points.*

Exam: An in-class exam consisting of objective and essay questions covering the first unit of the course. The exam asks you to demonstrate your understanding of the role of the critic and the general approach to criticism outlined in our readings and in class. *75 points.*

Final project proposal: A 2-page paper plus short bibliography in which you name the speech text you have chosen for your final project and justify your decision to study this text. *Ungraded, but required.*

Textual Analysis/Context Analysis worksheets: Detailed worksheet that you complete in advance of drafting the textual/context analysis and argument plan paper. *25 points.*

Final Project Textual/Context Analysis and Argument Plan: An 8-9 page paper in which you apply the methods of textual and contextual analysis to the speech you chose for your final project. The last page of the paper should include an “argument plan” in which you explain which strategy categories (e.g., argument, credibility, emotion) you will use in the final paper and why. You will revise this paper for inclusion in the final project paper (see below). *75 points.*

Draft Final Project Paper: This 15-18 page paper will be a complete draft of your final project: a full piece of criticism that describes, analyzes, interprets, and evaluates your chosen speech. The first half or so will be a revision of your textual/context analysis paper. *50 points.*

Final Project Portfolio: Your final portfolio for the course will reflect the range of your work across the semester. It will contain two items: (1) your Communication Biography, expanded to include an additional section in which you reflect upon your progress in the course and the extent to which you reached your semester goals; and (2) a professional-looking, peer- and instructor-reviewed, much-revised 15-18 page final project paper (with cover memo) that reflects your best critical writing and thinking about the speech text you have been studying all semester. *125 points.*

Engagement: See below for expectations. *50 points.*

What are my EXPECTATIONS of YOU?

Attendance

You are expected to attend all class meetings and to be on time for class. You are allowed 2 “free” absences during the semester (i.e., you may miss up to a week of class without penalty). Apart from University-sanctioned absences (University-recognized religious holidays, authorized participation in athletic events or other official University activities), I do not differentiate between excused and unexcused absences. Anything over 2 absences will be considered “excessive absence.” *Every absence beyond the second absence will result in the reduction of your engagement grade by 5 points.* Make sure you keep track of your absences; I will. For more serious issues related to attendance, see “Family and Medical Emergencies” policy below.

Engagement

Each course I teach is an opportunity to create an intellectual community. The more engaged we all are, the better that community will be. What does it mean to be “engaged”? Engaged students stay on top of what’s happening in class from day to day. They come to class having read and thought about the assignment. During class, they participate in discussions, ask questions, and offer their ideas. Outside of class, engaged students take full advantage of

opportunities for feedback on their work. They take advantage of campus resources which can improve their performance in class (e.g., the library, the Writer's Workshop). They use my office hours regularly. They ask friends for notes if they happen to miss a class. They offer careful and helpful feedback to classmates during peer review. Your engagement grade will reflect my assessment of your overall engagement with the course. Students with excessive absences should expect lower engagement grades (see "attendance" above).

Late Work

You are expected to turn in all assignments on the day that they are due. Grades on late work will be reduced by a full letter grade for each working day an assignment is late. Late work (both graded and ungraded assignments) will not be accepted at all past the fourth working day. At that point, the student will receive a zero for the graded assignment or, in the case of ungraded assignments, no credit or instructor feedback. Anticipate problems in advance and communicate with me to avoid misunderstandings. For more serious issues related to late work, see the "Family and Medical Emergencies" policy below.

Technical problems (including but not limited to power outages, erased/lost thumb drives, viruses, inability to print, etc.) *do not in themselves constitute legitimate excuses for late or missing work*. Develop good habits now, like saving frequently, backing up your work on a hard drive or in the cloud, and keeping paper copies in a safe place. Save and print out early drafts of your work so that if you lose it you will be able to reconstruct what you have lost.

IMPORTANT NOTE: I do not accept so-called "insurance" emails in which you attach a paper that you have not had the time to print so that it will count as "turned in on time." Even if your printer runs out of paper, ink, etc., there are plenty of public printers available to you on this campus. Your tuition dollars support the public labs on campus, so use them in the event that you have trouble with your own computer, Internet connections, printers, etc. Unless specified otherwise in an assignment, I will read, evaluate, and grade only paper copies of your work.

Family/Medical Emergencies Policy

I recognize that in rare cases an extended illness or family emergency may inhibit a student's ability to attend to normal student responsibilities and deadlines. Students with such emergencies should let me know immediately. In addition, in such cases it is to your benefit to contact the Emergency Dean; the Emergency Dean will in turn contact your instructors. If I receive confirmation from the Emergency Dean about your situation, I will make suitable accommodations for making up late work. Otherwise, all normal course policies apply (see "attendance" and "late work" above).

Accommodation Policy

If you feel that you may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, feel free to contact me to discuss your specific needs.

Emergency Response Policy

During the first week of the semester, please take the time to learn the locations of different exits from the building in case there is an emergency. Evacuations are mandatory for fire alarms and when directed by authorities. If there is ever a time when we need to evacuate the classroom to protect our personal safety, take only critical personal items with you and leave immediately. Review the university's emergency response materials here: <http://police.illinois.edu/emergencyplanning/general/>.

Academic Integrity and Matters of Citation and Documentation

As a student at the University of Illinois you are obligated to uphold the University's Academic Integrity policies as outlined in the *Student Code*. My ethical and professional obligations as a faculty member require me to investigate apparent violations of academic integrity when I encounter them. I assume that students taking advanced (400-level) courses are familiar with the skills of summarizing, paraphrasing, quotation, and source documentation taught in Composition I and II courses at this university. If you are unsure of the quality of your skills at this time, I encourage you to work with a free tutor at the Writer's Workshop to brush up. In addition, consult our course text, Harvey's *Writing With Sources*, on all matters of citation and documentation.

Cheating will not be tolerated. Plagiarism, *the intentional or unintentional misrepresentation of someone else's work as your own*, will not be tolerated. Students found to have plagiarized all or parts of assignments will receive severe penalties, ranging from (at minimum) a zero for the assignment to failure of the course. This policy applies whether the assignment is graded or ungraded.

Be warned: plagiarism is *not* only copying someone else's work word for word. There are actually two types of plagiarism: *cheating* and *source misrepresentation*. You are not only cheating when you pass off someone else's work as your own (whether that "someone else" is a classmate, friend, web site, or published author), but also when you collaborate with others on assignments meant to be completed alone. You are engaging in source misrepresentation when you fail to cite a paraphrased source, fail to use quotation marks around exact quotations, or fail to turn in a list of sources cited.

A special warning about online sources: Although the full text resources found in the library's databases and on the web are helpful and I encourage you to consult them, be aware of the pitfalls of using such sources. It can be tempting to cut and paste information you locate in an online source directly into your own

work; however, without proper documentation this constitutes plagiarism. The moral of the story? Be meticulous and careful about your use of sources.

If you are unsure what constitutes plagiarism, see me, read the relevant portions of *Writing With Sources*, and consult the University's Academic Integrity policy (Part Four of the *Student Code*) at:

http://studentcode.illinois.edu/article1_part4_1-401.html

Ignorance of these policies is not an excuse for committing an act of academic dishonesty.

Technology Policy

Research shows that when people attempt to perform two tasks at once (e.g., following what's happening in class while checking text messages), the brain literally *cannot do it*. The brain has got to abandon one of the tasks in order to accomplish the other. Thus most of our attempts at multitasking make us slower and dumber. This is a good enough reason to avoid the temptation of the distractions provided by phones, laptops, and other devices. Another reason is that it disrupts my work and that of your fellow students. Phones should always be put completely away (not on your lap, not in your hand underneath your desk, not visible on the floor at your feet). You are welcome to bring laptops or tablets to class if you are using them to take notes, access readings we're discussing, and the like. You are *not* welcome to use these devices to do social networking, check email, or otherwise perform non-class-related activities during class. I reserve the right to declare "screens down" at any time during class, and I deputize each student in the class with the authority to ask any other student engaging in distracting technology use to cease.

What can you EXPECT from ME?

You can expect that I will:

- make class worth attending;
- be prepared for every class meeting;
- evaluate your work fairly and offer clear suggestions for improvement;
- return your work promptly;
- create conditions in the classroom through which you and your peers may learn from one another as well as from me;
- acknowledge the diversity of human experience and foster a climate of respect in the classroom;
- provide reasonable accommodations for qualified students in accordance with University policy and the Americans with Disabilities Act;
- be accessible outside of class for questions and feedback.

Reading and Assignment Schedule

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KEY:

MOO=Links or readings online at Moodle site

WC=Lucas & Medhurst, *Words of a Century*

GH=Gordon Harvey, *Writing with Sources*

T	26 Aug.	<u>Introduction to the Course</u> Assignment for Next Time: Review syllabus; get texts; log on to class Moodle site and listen to “What Makes a Great Political Speech?”; read MOO: “Greatest Political Speeches”; MOO: Campbell and Huxman, “Rhetorical Purposes”
R	28 Aug.	<u>What is Rhetorical Criticism?</u> Assignment for Next Time: Write Communication Biography essay; read MOO Campbell, “Descriptive Analysis”
T	2 Sept.	<u>Textual Analysis: How do we describe a text?</u> Communication Biography due Assignment for Next Time: Read MOO Rowland, Ch. 7; WC King, “Dream” 375-378
R	4 Sept.	<u>Textual Analysis, cont.</u> Assignment for Next Time: Read WC FDR, “First Inaugural” 221-224; start Textual Analysis paper
T	9 Sept.	<u>Textual Analysis: Language and style</u> Assignment for Next Time: Finish Textual Analysis paper
R	11 Sept.	<u>Context Analysis: How do we understand a text’s history?</u> Textual Analysis Paper due Assignment for Next Time: Read MOO Campbell, “Historical-Contextual Analysis”
T	16 Sept.	<u>Context Analysis, cont.</u> Assignment for Next Time: Read Context Exercise materials
R	18 Sept.	<u>Context Analysis exercise</u> Assignment for Next Time: Complete Context Exercise
T	23 Sept.	<u>Introduction to Strategy Categories for Criticism</u> Context Exercise due Assignment for Next Time: Read MOO Rowland Ch. 4; Read MOO: Anthony, “Voting”; browse WC to select final project topic
R	25 Sept.	<u>Argument Strategies</u> *Final project topic meetings this week* Assignment for Next Time: Bring 2 ideas for final project to class
T	30 Sept.	<u>Argument Strategies, cont.</u> *Final project topic meetings this week* Assignment for Next Time: Read MOO Rowland Ch. 5, Read WC: Roosevelt, “Commonwealth Club Address” 212-220

R	2 Oct.	<u>Narrative Strategies</u> Assignment for Next Time: Read MOO Rowland Ch. 6, Read WC: Nixon, "Checkers" 309-317; complete final project proposal
T	7 Oct.	<u>Credibility Strategies</u> Final Project Proposal due Assignment for Next Time: Read MOO Rowland Ch. 8, Read WC: Jackson, "Rainbow Coalition" 584-593
R	9 Oct.	<u>Emotion Strategies</u> Assignment for Next Time: Read MOO Rowland Ch. 9, Read WC Savio, "End to History" 423-426 Final Project Proposal due
T	14 Oct.	<u>Confrontation Strategies: Exam Review</u> Assignment for Next Time: Review for exam
R	16 Oct.	Exam Assignment for Next Time: Read MOO Brockriede; Daughton, "Metaphorical Transcendence/FDR"
T	21 Oct.	NO CLASS: CF giving out-of-town lecture
R	23 Oct.	<u>Beginning Your Own Projects in Rhetorical Criticism</u> Assignment for Next Time: Read peer group members' speeches, sketch outline of major features of each text; start Textual Analysis worksheet
T	28 Oct.	<u>Textual Analysis Workshop</u> Complete Textual Analysis Worksheet in class Assignment for Next Time: Start collecting library sources, bring questions to class
R	30 Oct.	<u>Library Research (meet in computer lab, room TBA)</u> Assignment for Next Time: Begin context analysis worksheet
T	4 Nov.	<u>Context Analysis Workshop</u> Complete Context Analysis Worksheet in class Assignment for Next Time: Read MOO Rowland Ch. 10, Read MOO Spencer, "Eulogy for Diana"
R	6 Nov.	<u>Genre Strategies</u> Assignment for Next Time: Read GH Ch. 1-3; start TCA paper
T	11 Nov.	<u>Writer's Workshop: Sources and Citation</u> Assignment for Next Time: Complete draft TCA
R	13 Nov.	<u>Writer's Workshop: Revision/Editing/Proofreading Tips</u> TCA Draft due Assignment for Next Time: Read peer TCA drafts
T	18 Nov.	<u>Peer Review Workshop</u> Assignment for Next Time: Complete TCA paper
R	20 Nov.	NO CLASS: CF out of town at conference Textual/Context Analysis Paper due on Moodle by 5 pm Assignment for Next Time: Read MOO: Campbell and Huxman, "Understanding Evaluation"; start working on draft final project paper
T	25 Nov.	NO CLASS: Thanksgiving Break

R	27 Nov.	NO CLASS: Thanksgiving Break
T	2 Dec.	<u>Evaluation</u> Assignment for Next Time: Work on Draft Final Project
R	4 Dec.	<u>Writer's Workshop</u> Assignment for Next Time: Complete Draft Final Project
T	9 Dec.	<u>Final Project Presentations</u> (last day of class) Draft Final Project Paper due
F	12 Dec.	<i><u>*Pick up Draft Final Project in CF's office, 10 am-12 pm, 4098 LH*</u></i> Assignment for Next Time: Revise final paper, complete portfolio
W	17 Dec.	Final Portfolio Due in CF's office, 1:30-4:30 pm, 4098 Lincoln Hall