



# RWS 200:

## Rhetoric of Written Arguments in Context

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**Section:** 77  
**Class Days:** TTH  
**Class Time:** 12:30-1:45  
**Class Location:** EBA 249

### RHETORIC IS...

*“the art of ruling the minds of men.” - Plato*

*“the faculty of observing, in any given case, the available means of persuasion.” - Aristotle*

*“reason well dressed and argument put in order.” - Jeremy Collier*

*“the art, practice, and study of human communication.” - Andrea Lunsford*

### WHAT IS THIS COURSE ABOUT?

Rhetoric is everywhere! RWS 200 will assist you in identifying it, understanding its purpose, analyzing its effectiveness, and implementing it yourself. This course in academic reading and writing is designed to improve your ability to read and analyze complex academic texts, as well as to plan, draft, and revise your own academic essays. Building on RWS 100, RWS 200 emphasizes the rhetorical analysis of arguments in context. You will consider the particular contexts of arguments, discovering what they are responding to and how they may be tailored for various audiences and situations. Ultimately, this course is meant to encourage you to use key rhetorical concepts—with particular attention to the importance of context—as modes of inquiry and invention as you navigate through both academic and everyday discourse.

### TEXTS & MATERIALS

- You need to purchase Matthew Parfitt’s *Writing in Response* (2nd Edition).
- All other texts and supplementary documents will be available on Blackboard.
- Internet access is necessary for Blackboard, email, and other online content.
- You must have printer access to print hard copies of materials and assignments.
- Always bring a pen and paper for in-class notes, writings, and activities.
- You will need 4 folders to collect documents for each writing process portfolio.

### HELPFUL RESOURCES

- The Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL); for more information, visit [owl.english.purdue.edu](http://owl.english.purdue.edu).
- The SDSU Writing Center, located in the library dome, LLA 1103; for hours and more information, visit [writingcenter.sdsu.edu](http://writingcenter.sdsu.edu) (appointments can be made online).

## REQUIREMENTS

### PARTICIPATION (150 points)

This course depends on you to regularly contribute your insights, which can only be achieved by coming to class prepared for in-class discussions, activities, and assignments. The participation grade includes the following:

- **In-Class Activities:** These smaller assignments are meant to encourage class engagement. I will not always collect these, but completion is necessary for participation. This includes effort invested in individual, group, and class projects and discussions.
- **In-Class Writings:** These involve various brief, casual writing assignments, which I will usually collect.
- **Reading Assignments:** You will initially read each major text outside of class, but we will also study the texts in class. To be fully engaged in the course, you should be familiar with the texts we are working with, and you must bring a hard copy of the text the day it is up for discussion.
- **Homework Assignments:** Aside from the reading assignments, you will rarely have homework outside of your writing process for each essay. Occasionally, however, you may be assigned work to do outside of class.

Any collected participation assignments will be graded on a pass/fail scale. This means you will receive full credit if you complete the assignment adequately and attend class to submit it, and you will receive no credit if you fail to do so.

### ESSAYS\* (610 points)

You will write four major essays throughout the semester, ranging from five to eight pages. Each essay will require an outline or proposal, two rough drafts that will be workshopped and revised, and one final draft. More specific instructions will be provided with each essay's prompt. All essays are due in class on the date specified; they must be typed, stapled, and adhere to MLA formatting. The essays are as follows:

1. **Articulating and Evaluating How an Argument Persuades a Specific Audience** (120 points)
2. **Using One Text as a Lens on Another** (150 points)
3. **Analyzing the Context in Which a Set of Arguments are Made** (160 points)
4. **Advancing an Argument in the Contemporary Context** (180 points)

### OUTLINES & PROPOSAL\* (80 points)

For Essays 1, 2, and 3, you will create a preliminary outline. This prewriting assignment will allow you to gather your thoughts before you begin writing. These outlines will be workshopped in class. For further instructions, see "Guide to Formal Outlining" on Blackboard. For Essay 4, you will create a proposal. Proposing your purpose, research, and sources before you construct an argument gives you a chance to think through your project and play with ideas. You will receive a proposal prompt with further instructions later in the semester. Each outline or proposal is worth 10 points, and each workshop is worth 10 points.

## PEER REVIEWS\* (80 points)

Prior to each final draft, you will participate in an in-class peer review workshop, where you will exchange first drafts with a classmate and workshop one another's essays. There are four essays, so you will conduct four peer reviews. Each draft is worth 10 points, and each workshop is worth 10 points.

## WRITING MEDITATION\* (80 points)

Following each peer review, you will use the feedback you receive to produce a second draft. You will then workshop this draft in class by way of an independent writing meditation. This contemplative writing practice asks you to meditate with the focus of the writing task at hand, which may allow you to become aware of your thoughts about your writing and be receptive to your own feedback. Each draft is worth 10 points, and each workshop is worth 10 points.

## \*WRITING PROCESS PORTFOLIOS

To receive full credit on the entire writing process, you will need to submit a hard copy of:

1. Your outline or proposal and its workshop worksheet.
2. Your peer review rough draft and its workshop worksheet.
3. Your writing meditation rough draft and its workshop worksheet.
4. Your final draft.

These seven documents must all be **submitted in a folder on the day the final draft is due**. Writing process documents will be graded on a pass/fail scale—excluding the final draft.

## GRADING BREAKDOWN

Requirements	Points
Participation	150
Essay 1	120
Essay 2	150
Essay 3	160
Essay 4	180
Outlines/Proposal	80
Peer Reviews	80
Writing Meditations	80
Total	1,000

## GRADING SCALE

Grade	Points
A	940-1,000
A-	900-939
B+	870-899
B	830-869
B-	800-829
C+	770-799
C	730-769
C-	700-729
D+	670-699
D	630-669
D-	600-629
F	0-599

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

The following four outcomes describe the four major essays for the course. You will be able to:

1. Discern elements of context embedded in arguments—the clues that show what the argument is responding to, both in the sense of what has come before it and that it is written for an audience in a particular time and place; examine a writer’s language in relation to audience, context, and community.
2. Use concepts and arguments from one text as a context for understanding and writing about another.
3. Given the common concerns of two or more arguments, discuss how the claims of these arguments modify, complicate, or qualify one another; consider how positions advanced in these texts relate to each other and evaluate the persuasiveness of these positions.
4. Consider your contemporary life as the context within which you are reading a group of arguments; position yourself in relation to ongoing research and discussion in order to make an argument and join the conversation. Evaluate source texts so as to create a space for an original contribution.

The following points describe additional outcomes to work on throughout the semester:

5. Building on the work done in RWS 100, articulate the argument a text is making, describe the work that is done by each section of the argument, identify elements of the argument such as claims, methods of development, kinds of evidence, and persuasive appeals, and translate an argument into your own words.

6. Understand and incorporate all aspects of the writing process, including prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and proofreading.
7. Articulate the key terms, definitions, concepts, and statements of a problem or issue that are established by a text.
8. Investigate and articulate how an argument is positioned, based on certain kinds of assumptions, located in a way of thinking and representing issues from a point of view.
9. Work with multiple sources in a paper, deciding what to include and what to exclude, choosing an effective structure, and creating significant relationships among sources.
10. Craft a cohesive paper, and use effective metadiscourse to guide a reader through it.
11. Describe your own papers and reflect on how you wrote them; differentiate between the content of your texts and the language and rhetorical strategies you employ.
12. Revise your own work effectively, re-reading previous work and re-envisioning it in the light of reflection, feedback, further reading, and new sources of information.
13. Edit your writing for the grammar and usage conventions appropriate to the project.

## POLICIES

**ETIQUETTE:** Since this is a discussion-based class, it is vital that you listen and speak respectfully to others at all times. I encourage you to express your opinions, of course, as they will help inspire good discussions. However, keep in mind that good discussion is built on a thoughtful sharing of ideas, not harsh reactions. We will be looking at many arguments this semester that will present views of opinions which you may or may not agree with. Remember, this class is focused on the argument rather than the opinion or idea expressed by the author. Whether you agree or disagree with the author is not at issue. Rather, our job as rhetoricians is to analyze and discuss how the argument is working or not working. Furthermore, please keep in mind that I will choose the texts we study in class based on their rhetorical contributions, not because I agree or disagree with the issue.

**ATTENDANCE:** There is no substitute for attending class—the nature of the assignments in this course, as well as their grading breakdown, makes attendance vital to receiving a passing grade. As such, regular attendance will greatly elevate your chances of performing well. Simply showing up for class, however, is not sufficient. I expect the class to be the site of lively, intellectual activity and and critical, respectful exchange. **If you are absent**, you are still responsible for knowing what was covered in class, the assignment we are working on, and when it is due. You may find this information on Blackboard, but I suggest you exchange contact information with at least two of your classmates.

**LATE WORK:** Managing your time to meet deadlines is an essential skill in both the academic and professional world. Work is due in class on the stated due date. **Outlines, proposals, and rough drafts** may be submitted one class day late for half-credit; after that, they will no longer be accepted. **Final essays** (excluding the fourth essay, since it is due on the final day of the semester) may be submitted up to two class days late, with a penalty of a 20-point deduction each class day it is late. However, **participation assignments** will not be accepted late because they require your presence during class time, and **workshops** can not be made up. Of course, extenuating circumstances may occur, and proper communication may result in my ability to work something out with you.

**PROBLEMS:** If you run into any problems concerning attendance or late work, please talk to me about it as soon as possible so we may work out a solution (this will likely require that you submit work early). Within reason, issues may be worked out if you approach me in a timely manner, and **communicating with me beforehand is the best way to ensure a beneficial solution.**

**BLACKBOARD:** Your success in this course relies heavily on checking Blackboard, as well as your email listed with the university, regularly. This is how I will communicate with you regarding assignments and updates. Additionally, you must access Blackboard to view or print course texts and materials.

**OFFICE HOURS:** I hold office hours entirely for you, so do not hesitate to come to them. Please feel free to stop by my office if you have any questions or concerns. If you cannot attend my designated office hours, we can try to work out an appointment when we are both available.

**EMAIL:** I encourage you to email me with any questions or concerns you may have. I am not always available to answer emails at all hours, so please allow 24 hours for me to respond. If you have last-minute questions or concerns, you may email me, but I cannot guarantee a response before the next day. If you would like me to look at an essay rough draft, please arrange a time to meet with me in person, rather than emailing it to me.

**WRITING HELP:** I am committed to helping you develop as a writer. If you would like assistance with your rough drafts, you are welcome to schedule a conference with me. I will pass around a conference sign-up sheet for each essay. Additionally, the SDSU Writing Center has many knowledgeable tutors available to help you with your writing, at any stage, throughout the semester.

**ELECTRONICS:** Please turn off and put away your cell phones, iPods, laptops, and similar electronic devices when you come to class. On occasion, if we need a device to help with class work, I will let you know. Otherwise, if you are using electronic devices while in class, I will deduct participation points, as it is both disrespectful to the speaker and distracting to those who are listening.

**PLAGIARISM:** As I am sure you have heard before, your academic work should be original. Plagiarism will result in serious consequences ranging from grade reduction to failure in the class to expulsion from the university. If you are unsure if you are plagiarizing, SDSU's library has an excellent tutorial on how to avoid plagiarism, which you can view here: <http://library.sdsu.edu/guides/tutorial.php?id=28>. For more information on the university cheating and plagiarism policy, please visit [www-rohan.sdsu.edu/dept/senate/policy/pfacademics.html](http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/dept/senate/policy/pfacademics.html).

**DISABLED STUDENTS:** If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, I am happy to do so in conjunction with Student Disability Services (SDS). I am committed to helping you succeed in this course and want to avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, so you should contact SDS as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that accommodations based upon disability cannot be provided until you have presented your instructor with an accommodation letter from SDS. SDS staff are available in the Capulli Center, Suite 3101, or by phone at (619)594-6473 (voice) or (619)594-2929 (TTD/TTY).

STUDENT-ATHLETES: I understand that student-athletes have demanding, dynamic schedules. As your instructor, I am committed to helping you succeed in the course. To do so, regular and effective communication is needed. While exceptions may not be made for attendance or assignment deadlines, I am happy to work with all student-athletes in conjunction with Student-Athlete Support Services (SASS). For more information on SASS' academic advising and tutoring services, please call (619)594-4743.

## SCHEDULE

Please note that the following schedule is simply an outline of important dates and general activities; it does not include all daily activities and assignments. A more detailed schedule will be provided for each unit. Dates and topics may shift as the semester continues, but I will always let you know in advance.

Unit	Week	Date	Schedule
Intro	1	T, 1/19	Syllabus; Introductions; Defining rhetoric
Intro & 1	2	T, 1/24 TH, 1/26	Rhetoric recap (PACES, Rhetorical situation, Aristotelian modes of persuasion) BEGIN UNIT 1; Review Essay 1 prompt; Discuss Hari's text
1	3	T, 1/31 TH, 2/2	Discuss Hari's text <b>Due: Essay 1 outline</b> ; Outline workshop; Rhetorical connections worksheet
1	4	T, 2/7 TH, 2/9	<b>Due: Essay 1 first rough draft</b> ; Peer review workshop <b>Due: Essay 1 second rough draft</b> ; Writing meditation workshop
1 & 2	5	T, 2/14 TH, 2/16	<u>NO CLASS</u> : Conferences <b>Due: Essay 1 final portfolio</b> ; BEGIN UNIT 2; Review Essay 2 prompt; Discuss Roberts-Miller's text; Fallacies
2	6	T, 2/21 TH, 2/23	Roberts-Miller's text as a lens <b>Due: Essay 2 outline</b> ; Outline workshop; Rhetorical connections worksheet
2	7	T, 2/28 TH, 3/2	Demagogic debate <b>Due: Essay 2 first rough draft</b> ; Peer review workshop
2	8	T, 3/7 TH, 3/9	<b>Due: Essay 2 second rough draft</b> ; Writing meditation workshop <u>NO CLASS</u> : Conferences
3	9	T, 3/14 TH, 3/16	<b>Due: Essay 2 final portfolio</b> ; BEGIN UNIT 3; Review Essay 3 prompt; Discuss fake news texts Discuss fake news texts
3	10	T, 3/21 TH, 3/23	Relationships between texts; Putting texts in conversation <b>Due: Essay 3 outline</b> ; Outline workshop; Rhetorical connections worksheet

Unit	Week	Date	Schedule
3	11	T, 3/28 TH, 3/30	<u>NO CLASS</u> : Spring Break <u>NO CLASS</u> : Spring Break
3	12	T, 4/4 TH, 4/6	<b>Due: Essay 3 first rough draft</b> ; Peer review workshop <b>Due: Essay 3 second rough draft</b> ; Writing meditation workshop
3 & 4	13	T, 4/11 TH, 4/13	<u>NO CLASS</u> : Conferences <b>Due: Essay 3 final portfolio</b> ; BEGIN UNIT 4; Review Essay 4 prompt; Joining the conversation; Finding & managing outside sources
4	14	T, 4/18 TH, 4/20	<b>Due: Essay 4 proposal</b> ; Proposal workshop Creating a research space
4	15	T, 4/25 TH, 4/27	<b>Due: Essay 4 first rough draft</b> ; Peer review workshop <b>Due: Essay 4 second rough draft</b> ; Writing meditation workshop
4	16	T, 5/2 TH, 5/4	<u>NO CLASS</u> : Conferences <b>Due: Essay 4 final portfolio</b> ; End-of-semester party!