

# RWS 100: Rhetoric of Written Arguments

**Instructor:** Andrew Testa

**Classroom:** HH-222

**Meeting time:** MWF 8:00–8:50 AM

**Instructor's office:** SHW-108

**Office hours:** MWF 9:50–10:50 AM

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## Course Overview

Welcome to my class! I am happy to have you in this course. In RWS 100, you will analyze texts that will be useful to you in both your academic career and in your life. We will focus on topics such as college advice and the pursuit of happiness. Overall, this is one of the most personal classes you will take at SDSU. In no other course will you receive as much individual attention from an instructor as you do here. As we progress in this course, I will know your name, your major, and your aspirations, and we will have individual conferencing about your writing. We will write together, laugh together, and learn together. By the semester's end, you will feel more confident about your writing, reading, and argument skills. You will take what you learn in this class and apply it to other classes at SDSU and to your own personal life.

## Course Description

Rhetoric refers to the study and uses of written, spoken, and visual language. RWS 100 focuses on writing and reading as critical inquiry. This course is designed to help you undertake university-level writing projects with an emphasis on the rhetoric of written arguments. You will learn to use sources in your writing and make wise decisions about structure, cohesion, and rhetorical conventions.

## Prerequisites

Satisfaction of the SDSU Written Communication Assessment requirement. (See Graduation Requirements section of catalog.) Proof of completion of prerequisite required.

## Texts and Materials

1. Graff and Birkenstein, *They Say/I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*.
2. Throughout the semester, most readings will be posted on Blackboard. These readings must be printed out and brought to class. I do not anticipate this additional cost to exceed \$20.
3. A normal-sized notebook—for class notes and in-class writing tasks.
4. Optional: a copy of *The Little Seagull Handbook* or *Keys for Writers*.

## RWS 100 Student Learning Outcomes

RWS 100 is one of several Communication and Critical Thinking courses in your General Education (GE) program-of-study. Upon completion of these courses, you should be able to demonstrate the following GE Communication and Critical Thinking Student Learning Outcomes as well as the course-specific Student Learning Outcomes:

1. craft well-reasoned arguments for specific audiences;
2. analyze a variety of texts commonly encountered in the academic setting;
3. situate discourse within social, generic, cultural, and historic contexts;
4. assess the relative strengths of arguments and supporting evidence.

**Outcomes across the semester.** By the end of RWS 100, students should be able to:

5. **Analyze** a variety of texts to demonstrate rhetorical knowledge of an argument's project, claim, audience, genre, rhetorical appeals, rhetorical strategies (including evidence), and assumptions.

6. **Evaluate** arguments and their evidence through a process of critical inquiry.
7. **Locate, evaluate, and incorporate** material from sources into their writing projects.
8. **Compose** a variety of texts, employing flexible composing strategies and processes for invention, structure, drafting, reflection, collaboration, feedback, revision, and editing.
9. **Apply conventions** of academic writing, including genre choices, grammar, spelling, mechanics, and citation practices.

### RWS 100 Assignment Types

1. Identify an author's argument, claim, project, assumptions, and evidence. Analyze and evaluate the extent to which evidence and reasoning support the argument.
2. Construct an account of an author's project and argument, focusing on its use of a significant source. Examine the original source material, and analyze how that argument makes use of it. Consider what was included and what was excluded and why.
3. Use multiple texts that examine a significant public argument, identifying and analyzing the rhetorical strategies used to support their arguments. Explain how those strategies contribute to the authors' appeals to ethos, pathos, and logos. Consider how those strategies are based on key assumptions the authors make about their audiences. Evaluate the relative effectiveness of the texts with respect to the intended audiences.

### Grading Breakdown

Assignment	%	Due Date
Assignment 1: Analyzing an Argument	20	10/1
Assignment 2: Analyzing Arguments and Source Material	25	11/1
Assignment 3: Using Multiple Texts to Examine A Significant Public Argument	25	12/12
Portfolio (homework, quick writes, group work, workshops, conferences)	15	Ongoing
Participation (attendance, careful preparation, rhetorical listening)	15	Ongoing

Grade	%
A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	87-89

Grade	%
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79

Grade	%
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69

Grade	%
D	60-66
F	Below 60

Please remember that grades never reflect the intrinsic worth of a human being. I evaluate the quality of your work; thus, a disappointing grade is not a measure of your value as a person or your inherent potential at writing. Finally, for a complete description of what grades “mean,” please see page 469 of the SDSU *General Catalog*. Generally, an “A” means excellent and nearly perfect; a “B” means very good and solid; a “C” means satisfactory and adequate; and a “D” and “F” are unsatisfactory and do not adequately address the prompt.

### Requirements

**Essays:** You will write three essays of five to eight pages in length for this course. These papers will each require two rough drafts and one conference (meeting) with me. All drafts are due electronically on Blackboard by the respective deadline and must adhere to MLA formatting (Works Cited page, 12pt font, double-spaced). In addition, all essays must be completed to pass the class.

**Portfolio:** You will compose a number of shorter pieces of writing—homework, reflections, reading responses, group work, and peer reviews. Altogether, this is your “portfolio.” This work will help you draft key elements of the major papers—it is *not* busy work. Please print out homework.

**Participation:** Much of the course involves in-class discussion and, as such, requires you regularly contribute your insights. The participation grade includes preparatory reading, rhetorical listening, attendance, effort invested in class discussion and presentations, and peer reviews. Since this is a discussion-based class, it is vital that you listen and speak respectfully to others. I also encourage you to express your opinions – they will help inspire good class discussions.

**Workshops:** We will have many helpful peer review workshops for rough drafts in this class. These workshops require your attendance and optimistic participation in the peer reviews.

**Conferences:** Before every major paper, you will individually conference with me so that I can look over your essay, answer any questions you may have, and guide you on how to improve.

**Presentations:** You will occasionally be asked to give a brief presentation in class, either individually or as part of a group. These will be low-stress and low-stakes.

## Policies and Procedures

**Attendance:** There is no substitute for attending class. Research shows that attending class is one of the biggest factors of student success in college. Since this is a discussion-oriented course, your attendance is crucial and key to doing the portfolio work and the essays. Regular attendance will greatly elevate your chances of performing well in the class. Thus, you are expected to attend every meeting. You are allowed three “free” absences, but please only use them for emergencies.

Now, if three absences are reached, each additional absence will diminish your overall final grade by 1%, and these are deducted from your end-of-semester total. If you are absent more than 8 times, you risk automatically failing the course, and not just because of this policy but because you were not here enough to learn how to write the assignments. I take roll each class.

Overall, please plan to be present and on time – it counts as half an absence if you are more than five minutes late. If you are more than 15 minutes late, it counts as an absence, but please still come to do the valuable in-class work. It also counts as an absence if you leave before class ends. If you need to miss class, come late, or leave early for a documented emergency, please email me. If you are absent, you are still responsible for knowing what you missed and when the homework is due. Please contact other students and check Blackboard for this information before emailing me.

**Participation:** Participation is central to this class. We will have frequent quick writes, group work, and presentations. As far as talking, you should try to do more than simply sit in class, and you are not guaranteed an “A” in the participation portion of your grade for just attending class. Active participation does not have to mean answering every question I ask; that is, your enthusiasm and optimism for the material during class are also important in calculating this grade.

**Email:** Email is the best way to communicate with me outside of class. Please email me if you think you might have to be absent or late, or if you have any small questions. I usually respond in a few hours. However, please understand that I will not read drafts over email; discuss grades over email; or go over any lengthy problems you may be having (e.g., several absences, missed work, late work). All of these issues should be saved for office hours. Finally, when you receive my email reply on your question, please respond in a timely manner, so that I know you’ve read it.

**Electronics:** While I love technology, it can become a distraction to both you and the students around you. As a result, please **turn off ALL electronics** (including phones and laptops) when you are in class. If you are using social media, texting, listening to music, or shopping during class, I will mark you absent for the class, and it will also negatively affect your overall participation grade.

**Late Work:** Life can sometimes get in the way. Thus, if you think you cannot make a deadline, please talk to me in advance. With exception of the final essay, you are allowed one penalty-free paper extension, but you must inform me at least a day in advance. The extension will be for two days after the due date, and papers must be submitted to Blackboard by 11:59PM unless we have made different arrangements. Aside from this freebie, for major assignments you will be lowered a letter grade (i.e., a B becomes a C, or an 84 becomes a 74) for every day late. After one week, late essays will no longer be accepted. **For in-class work and homework, late work is not accepted.** In case of **documented** extenuating circumstances, please communicate with me.

**Revision:** You have the option to revise **one** of your first two major assignments. The revised assignment will be **averaged** with the original grade and must be turned in on or before the final class. For this option, you must **meet with me** during office hours to go over your revision plans. In addition, your revised essay must also contain a 200+ word writer's note at the end which justifies revising. Overall, the revision must be significant and more than grammar and spelling corrections.

**Workshops and Conferencing:** You must attend all of the rough draft workshops and conferences with me—they are instrumental to your performance in this course. For each workshop or conference you miss, your final grade on that unit's paper will go down by 1/3 of a letter grade (i.e., an A- becomes a B+, or a 90 becomes an 87). There is no way to make up a workshop, and I will not reschedule conferences with you, so it is important that you take both seriously and attend. In addition, if you do not submit your rough drafts to Blackboard, you will receive no credit for the workshops. **Please submit your rough drafts to Blackboard by the start of the workshop.**

**Plagiarism:** All of your work in this course must be original. Plagiarism will result in serious consequences ranging from grade reduction to failure in the class to expulsion from the college. For more information on the university cheating and plagiarism policy, please visit the [Student Affairs website](#) at [http://go.sdsu.edu/student\\_affairs/srr/cheating-plagiarism.aspx](http://go.sdsu.edu/student_affairs/srr/cheating-plagiarism.aspx). SDSU's library also has an excellent tutorial on how to avoid plagiarism.

## Important Resources

**Office Hours:** I hold office hours for you! I encourage all students to attend office hours, especially if you have questions or concerns about reading, writing, the course, or college in general. Bring all materials (drafts, pre-writing, texts) when you attend office hours. In addition, you can always email me to set up an appointment. Finally, I do not hold office hours on the weeks we are conferencing.

**Blackboard:** It is your responsibility to check Blackboard regularly. I will frequently post announcements, homework, and other information on Blackboard. Please check it daily.

**Course Tutoring:** SDSU has a Writing Center with an excellent staff of tutors to assist students in all courses. The Writing Center is located in the Love Library, Room LA 1103. For more information, visit the [Writing Center website](#) at <http://writingcenter.sdsu.edu/>.

**Purdue Online Writing Lab:** Purdue OWL is a fantastic resource for MLA formatting, grammar, and academic writing. [Purdue OWL](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/) is located at <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/>.

**Students with Disabilities:** Every attempt will be made to offer reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities in this course. If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Student Disability Services (SDS) as soon as possible. SDS staff are available in the Capulli Center in Suite 3101 or by phone at (619) 594-6473 (voice) or (619) 594-2929 (TTD/TTY). 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.

**Counseling:** There are many events and situations that put additional stress on being a student. SDSU has an excellent center for Counseling & Psychological Services. To set up an initial consultation, call (619) 594-5220. For immediate or emergency help, you are welcome to use San Diego's free 24-hour counseling number at (800) 479-3339. You can also always talk to me—via email, in office hours, or in a scheduled appointment. I was in your shoes and understand the difficulties that college life brings. I am happy to help in any way I can.

**Student-athletes:** Student-athletes have demanding schedules, and I am committed to helping you succeed in the course. While exceptions will not be made for attendance, assignment deadlines, or exams, I'm happy to work with all student-athletes in conjunction with Student-Athlete Support Services (call (619) 594-4743) to help you in this course.

## Course Outline and Reading Schedule

Please note that the following schedule is approximate. Refer to Blackboard for current information.

Week/dates	Schedule
<b>Week 1</b> 8/27-8/31	<i>M</i> : Syllabus; overview of course; introductions. <i>W</i> : Start of Unit 1. PACES. CR 3-9 & 13-15. <i>F</i> : Rhetorical situation. Rohde article.
<b>Week 2</b> 9/3-9/7	<i>M</i> : <i>Labor Day</i> . No class on 9/3. <i>W</i> : Appeals. Selingo's College Majors article. <i>TS/IS</i> Introduction & CH1. <i>F</i> : Evaluating evidence. H: Evaluating evidence.
<b>Week 3</b> 9/10-9/14	<i>M</i> : Assumptions. <i>TS/IS</i> CH8. H: Tone; Transitions; Using I. <i>W</i> : Fallacies. Nixon's Checkers speech. CR 47-56. H: Active Voice. <i>F</i> : Selingo's "Sprint Stroll Stumble." H: Audience; Summary.
<b>Week 4</b> 9/17-9/21	<i>M</i> : Continue Selingo's "Sprint Stroll Stumble." H: Body paragraphs; Topic sentences. <i>W</i> : Writing assignment one. <i>TS/IS</i> CH2 & 3. H: Introductions. <i>F</i> : <b>Short rough draft due on 9/21.</b> Workshop. CR 27-29. H: Editing.
<b>Week 5</b> 9/24-9/28	<i>M</i> : <b>Long rough draft due on 9/24.</b> Workshop. <i>TS/IS</i> CH11. MLA. H: Conclusions. <i>W</i> : Conferencing. <i>F</i> : Conferencing.
<b>Week 6</b> 10/1-10/5	<i>M</i> : Conferencing. <b>Assignment One Due 10/1.</b> <i>W</i> : Start of Unit 2. Using sources. H: Using sources. <i>F</i> : Parts of Speech. SVO. Clarity.
<b>Week 7</b> 10/8-10/12	<i>M</i> : Sample source text. Using sources continued. H: Receiving feedback. <i>W</i> : Cohesion. Concision. <i>F</i> : Film review. Start <i>Good Will Hunting</i> /TBD.
<b>Week 8</b> 10/15-10/19	<i>M</i> : Continue <i>Good Will Hunting</i> /TBD. <i>W</i> : Finish <i>Good Will Hunting</i> /TBD. <i>TS/IS</i> CH5. <i>F</i> : Writing assignment two. <i>TS/IS</i> CH4. Grammar errors. Grammar exercise.
<b>Week 9</b> 10/22-10/26	<i>M</i> : <b>Short rough draft due on 10/22.</b> Workshop. <i>TS/IS</i> CH10. H: Commas. <i>W</i> : <b>Long rough draft due on 10/24.</b> Workshop. <i>TS/IS</i> CH9. <i>F</i> : Conferencing.
<b>Week 10</b> 10/29-11/2	<i>M</i> : Conferencing. <i>W</i> : Conferencing. <b>Assignment Two Due 11/1.</b> <i>F</i> : Unit 3 on happiness. Rhetorical Strategies. CR 30-33.
<b>Week 11</b> 11/5-11/9	<i>M</i> : Rhetorical Strategies Continued. Relative Effectiveness. Happiness Article 1. <i>W</i> : Happiness Article 2. <i>F</i> : Happiness Article 3. Start <i>American Beauty</i> . <i>TS/IS</i> CH7.
<b>Week 12</b> 11/12-11/16	<i>M</i> : <i>Veterans Day</i> . No class on 11/12. <i>W</i> : Continue <i>American Beauty</i> . <i>F</i> : Finish <i>American Beauty</i> .
<b>Week 13</b> 11/19-11/20	<i>M</i> : Happiness articles. <i>W/F</i> : <i>Thanksgiving Break</i> 11/21-11/23.
<b>Week 14</b> 11/26-11/30	<i>M</i> : Happiness articles. Grammar exercise. H: Outlines. <i>W</i> : Writing assignment three. H: Thesis Statements. <i>F</i> : <b>Short rough draft due on 11/30.</b> Workshop. <i>TS/IS</i> CH6. H: Titles.
<b>Week 15</b> 12/3-12/7	<i>M</i> : <b>Long rough draft due on 12/3.</b> Workshop. H: Semicolons. <i>W</i> : Conferencing. <i>F</i> : Conferencing.

<b>Week 16</b>	<i>M</i> : Conferencing.
12/10-12/12	<i>W</i> : Last class. <b><u>Assignment Three Due 12/12.</u></b>

*TS/IS* = *They Say/I Say*; *CR* = Online Course Reader; *H* = Handout. Articles available on Blackboard.