

# ENGW 4341

## Current Theories of Rhetoric & Composition

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🏢 Sorin Hall, room 118  
Mon 1-2 pm  
Tues 11 am-12 pm

Fall 2016 :: Moody 306 :: Tues/Thurs 12:30-1:45 pm

1988

"A rhetoric can never be innocent, can never be a disinterested arbiter of the ideological claims of others because it is always already serving certain ideological claims."

James A. Berlin,  
"Rhetoric & Ideology in the Writing Class"

2015

"Rhetorical theories are...metaphors, serving to place practices that already exist in a new light."

John Jones,  
"Network\*Writing"

1999

"No codifiable or generalizable writing process exists or could exist."

Thomas Kent,  
*Post-Process Theory:  
Beyond the Writing-Process Paradigm*

## Course Description

Official Description: An introduction to major contemporary theories of rhetoric, focusing in particular on semiotic and postmodern rhetorical theories. Students will apply these theories to the design and analysis of print and online texts composed in multiple modes (e.g., using sound, images, writing, hypertext) and media.

### Goals

This course is designed to introduce you to major contemporary theories of Rhetoric and Composition as well as to the application of these theories in the classroom, the workplace, and the public sphere. In 15 weeks, we cannot possibly cover all the "current" questions of the field, so I have structured the course into two units. The first unit connects to your studies in ENGW 3336 Theories of Rhetoric & Composition. In the unit, we address rhetoric's reemergence in the academy as composition studies. In the second unit we examine the effects of post-modernism on rhetorical theory and the splintering of the field into sometimes competing, sometimes overlapping areas of inquiry (or rhetorics).

### Means

Building on your work in ENGW 3336, we will explore how contemporary theories have (or have not) broken from or challenged the past. We will read widely from theorists and researchers of the past half century to wrestle with the following questions:

Is there a "new" rhetoric? What makes it "new"?

What questions drive contemporary theories?

What is the relationship between theory and practice?

How does "new media" affect these theories?

What does it mean to teach writing?

### Outcomes

1. Describe key theories and theorists in contemporary Rhetoric and Composition.

2. Understand the options that different modes of communication afford composers in creating multimodal texts, and how these options affect authorship, audiences, and reading practices.

3. Conduct research that explicates the nuances of complex theories and pedagogies.

4. Compose arguments that persuasively articulate your positions on theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical issues related to Rhetoric and Composition.

# Course Structure

This class will be structured on a seminar model. What does that mean? Rather than me lecturing and telling you what is important from each of these readings, class sessions will center on the connections you make with the material. I will provide some ideas and some framework for the information, but the content of our course conversations will depend heavily on your participation and pre-class preparation.

We will complete a variety of writing tasks throughout the semester, and as you'll notice below, a substantial amount of this writing helps you reflect on and respond to our course readings. These writing assignments are combined with longer, more in-depth projects where you are asked to apply the theories to help address larger social and cultural issues.

## Course Themes

### Uneasy Origins

#### Rhetoric's Reemergence as Composition

**Weeks 1 & 2: The Discipline Emerges**  
**Weeks 3 & 4: Updating the Greeks**  
**Weeks 5 & 6: Perspectives on Process**

#### Complicating the Origin Stories

**Week 7: Cultural Rhetorics**  
**Week 8: Feminisms & Rhetorics**  
**Week 9: Queer & Trans Rhetorics**  
**Week 10: Digital Rhetorics**  
**Week 11: Public Rhetorics**

### A Complex Landscape

## Course Projects

#### Discussion Leader

Each of you will sign up to present on one week of readings from Weeks 2-11. You will develop a guide for the text that (1) defines key words/concepts, (2) provides a thorough summary, (3) reproduces important quotes with page numbers, (4) offers an everyday example that demonstrates a concept from the text, and (5) features questions to start class discussion. You'll use your handout and any accompanying materials to lead discussion that week. If more than one person signs up for a given week, then it's up to those folks to figure out who will present on which text(s). The goal for the discussion leader assignment is to dig deeply into the readings.

#### Paper Days

Over the course of the semester you will write three "paper day" papers. These papers should synthesize the course readings that led up to the paper. The first paper day paper should address readings from Weeks 1-3; the second should address readings from Weeks 4-6, and the final paper day paper should address Weeks 7-11. These papers need not take the form of a traditional essay, but they should be something that another person in class can understand. In other words, you should consider the rest of the class as your audience. You may use visual elements, such as charts, concept maps, etc., to convey your thoughts. The goal for the paper day papers is to consider how ideas from the readings build off one another and how they relate to your experiences or ideas about writing and rhetoric.

#### Project Proposal

In Weeks 9-11, you will create a project proposal for a multimodal text (video, webtext, podcast) that explores how an idea, or ideas, from the readings shapes your understanding of a event or issue, or conversely, how this event or issue shapes your understanding of the theories contained in the reading. Your event or issue could be drawn from something that you addressed in your discussion leader assignment, a paper day paper, or a question/idea that you developed outside these formal assignments. The proposal asks you to dig more deeply into ideas from the readings and consider how you can apply these ideas in your own work.

#### Multimodal Text

In the last five weeks of the course you will complete the multimodal text that you proposed previously. You will present a draft to the class and workshop it, and you will receive feedback before turning the project in during finals week.

# Grading Standards

Below are grading standards you should use when evaluating your performance in class and on major projects in the course.

**A**

The student is always prepared for class, having done the readings and brought the appropriate materials. The student participates frequently and thoughtfully in discussions by making the kinds of comments or asking the kinds of questions that lead to deeper understanding or that open appropriate new roads for exploration. The student makes detailed, insightful, clear, and accurate contributions to peer response activities. The student uses class time wisely and productively—working with partners, writing or revising documents, consulting with the professor.

To earn an A, your project must demonstrate all of the following qualities:

- Outstanding job of meeting assignment guidelines
- Thoughtful and innovative adaptation of text to audience needs, to the purpose for the document, and the context for the document
- Information well tailored to the targeted audience's needs
- Style consistently well suited to audience, purpose, and context
- Subject usefully organized at every level for reader comprehension
- Format and graphics well suited to audience, purpose, and context
- Writing almost entirely free both from all errors in standard English usage, syntax, and conventions

**B**

The student is always prepared for class, having done the readings and brought the appropriate materials. The student participates frequently in class by making the kinds of comments or asking the kinds of questions that lead to deeper understanding or that open important new topics. Or, if the student participates relatively infrequently, he/she makes contributions that are especially valuable. The student makes generous, detailed, and clear contributions to peer response activities. The student uses unstructured time productively in most cases.

To earn a B, a writing project must demonstrate all of the following qualities:

- Very good job of meeting assignment guidelines
- Text well adapted to the audience, purpose, and context for the document
- Information appropriate to the needs of the audience
- Style consistently appropriate to audience, purpose, and context
- Organization of information appropriate to audience, purpose, and context
- Format and graphics suit the audience, purpose, and context
- Writing free from mechanical and stylistic errors: perhaps one or two careless proofreading errors

**C**

The student is prepared for class, having done the readings and brought the appropriate materials. They may be fairly passive in class, seldom taking part in discussion, though they do attentively follow discussions and react to what others in the class have said. C students perform peer response work willingly but often does not offer commentary that is generous, detailed, and insightful. Students put unstructured time to adequate use, although they don't fully demonstrate the same level of initiative as other students.

To earn a C, a writing project must demonstrate all of the following qualities:

- Adequate job of meeting assignment guidelines
- Text generally adapted to the audience, purpose, and context for the document
- Information generally appropriate to the needs of the audience
- Style consistently appropriate to audience, purpose, and context
- Organization of information generally appropriate to audience, purpose, and context
- Format and graphics generally suit the audience, purpose, and context
- General mastery of standard written English conventions evident

**D**

The student is sometimes unprepared for class, not having done the readings or brought the appropriate materials. The student is inattentive (not following the discussion or taking part in it), disinterested, and/or disrespectful (reading the paper, texting, offering little if any commentary on peers' work). The student rarely uses unstructured time in a productive fashion.

A writing project will earn a NP or lower if any of the following characteristics are evident:

- Inadequate job of meeting assignment guidelines
- Text poorly suited to the audience, purpose, and context
- Information inappropriate to the needs of the audience
- Parts of the discussion missing or out of order
- Format or graphics poorly suited to audience and/or purpose and/or context
- Poor style relative to audience and/or purpose and/or context
- Unsatisfactory mastery of standard written English conventions evident

**F**

The student's participation is described by the criteria listed above for NP. However, several of the criteria apply rather than a few, or the degree of the student's lack of preparation, lack of engagement, or disruption may be so great as to warrant an F rather than a NP.

Adapted from Doug Hesse's *Language and Composition I Course Guide*.

# Course Policies

## Attendance

You are expected to attend every meeting of the classes for which you are enrolled. I do not differentiate between excused and unexcused absences. I also know that life happens, so here is the attendance policy for all my courses:

1. You may miss a maximum of three class sessions without penalty. However, you still must turn in your work on time and keep up with the course.
2. Each additional absence will lower your final course grade by half a letter grade, regardless of how well you otherwise perform. If you miss four (5) or more class meetings, I reserve the right (but do not take on the obligation) to drop you from the course with a grade of "WA." If you remain on the roster after the drop deadline and "disappear," you will likely earn a grade of "F."

### ***ProTip: The tl;dr Version***

1. **Absent is absent: there is no difference in excused or unexcused.**
2. **You may miss 3 class sessions without your grade being affected.**
3. **In-class assignments or activities cannot be made up.**
4. **If you "disappear" (stop attending) but do not officially drop the course, you will likely earn a WA or an F.**
5. **If you have a legitimate reason to leave early or arrive late, please talk to me in advance.**

## Late Work

I deduct 10 points from your final grade for each day your final projects are late unless you make arrangements with me prior to the due date. Problems can arise, but the key to their successful resolution is communication. Keep me informed; avoid simply not turning in projects or assignments.

## Participation

You will complete much of your work for this course in small groups, and I expect you to fulfill your fair share of group work and interact courteously with your peers at all times. Our class sessions will be conducted in seminar format, they cannot be "re-created" outside of class. Therefore, regular attendance and active participation are essential to your success. Active participation may also include successful completion of readings, which will be used to assess your preparedness for a class meeting.

I recommend that you save absences for when you are sick or have an emergency. If you find that an unavoidable problem prevents you from attending class, please discuss the problem with me as soon as possible. If you plan to be absent for a religious or holy day, please plan with me in advance.

### ***ProTip: How to Deal with an Absence***

1. **Email/upload any work due that day in class.**
2. **Email a classmate for notes & changes to assignments so you are prepared the next day.**
3. **Check the syllabus and course website, and complete the work assigned in class**

## Communicating with Me & Office Hours

The best way to contact me is by email. Please email me whenever you have questions. I also will email you regularly with reminders, instructions, and late breaking information. Therefore, a requirement of this class is that you check your SEU email & the course site daily, especially the day before and morning of class. Also, I am happy to meet with you by appointment if you cannot make it to office hours. Email me about setting up an appointment.

If you have an emergency, email me at [dunger1@stedwards.edu](mailto:dunger1@stedwards.edu).

## Learning Software vs. Learning How to Learn Software

Experience tells me that the most frustrating part of this course is going to be our use of software to complete the major projects. I understand this: however, software can allow us to communicate in ways that we simply can't in older media. There is a benefit to working with, rather than against, technology. But, technology changes. Rapidly. Our focus in this class is not on you all becoming expert users of particular software. I want you to gain more experience in learning how to learn software. Why? Because when you get into a professional setting, you're likely going to be asked to use software that is unfamiliar or didn't exist when you were in college. I want you to have your own methods for dealing with this experience.

What does that mean for this class?

To help you learn how to work with the different kinds of software we'll be using this semester, I have arranged for Instructional Technology to come into our class to offer tailored workshops for our major projects. We're going to start with the "human assets" we have on campus, and let the experts from OIT guide us through some basic concepts.

When you ask me a question, my first question will most likely be, "Did you Google it?" I am not doing this to deflect your question. I will ask what steps you took to learn something because experts aren't always going to be available (and there will be times when you don't want someone to know what you don't know). So, I'll be asking you to use all those free, online resources to help you find answers because googling just might help you land a job one day. How much you learn and how quickly will be determined by you and what you hope to get out of this class. Just know that your grade will always be determined by how well you work with the principles and concepts we discuss in class, not how well you use the software.

# Course Policies (cont'd)

## Challenges & Accommodations

If you have a confirmed medical, psychiatric, or learning disability that I need to accommodate in teaching you, please see me right away. I want to help you succeed, so please come see during office hours or make an appointment, preferably during the first week of classes. You will need to prove your disability by submitting certain documents to Student Disability Services in Moody Hall 155. Please note that I cannot accommodate any disability without a "504 letter," nor can I accommodate disabilities retroactively. If you do have a 504 letter to submit, my preference would be for you to come by during my office hours. This will give you and I some privacy, and it will allow me to make a copy of your letter for my files.

Please also remember that a 504 letter entitles you to reasonable accommodations, not to an easier course. You should read the reverse side of the 504 letter for information about your duties and responsibilities. I will ask you to sign the reverse side of the letter.

In addition, if you are under a great deal of stress or you just want someone to talk to confidentially, see the staff in the Health & Counseling Center (Lady Bird Johnson Hall, Suite 100). They can help you develop strategies for personal success and coping with challenges.

Academic Counseling and Exploration (ACE), located in Moody Hall 155, also offers services to help students develop and use effective skills for successful academic performance, including low-cost tutoring for most subjects.

***Note: This syllabus is subject to change. Students will be notified on the course website and/or by email of changes made to the policies or syllabus.***

## Academic Integrity

The Student Handbook states, "St. Edward's University expects academic honesty from all members of the community, and it is our policy that academic integrity be fostered to the highest degree possible. Consequently, all work submitted for grading in a course must be created as a result of your own thought and effort. Representing work as your own when it is not a result of such thought and effort is a violation of our code of academic integrity. Whenever it is established that academic dishonesty has occurred, the course instructor shall impose a penalty upon the offending individual(s). It is recognized that some offenses are more egregious than others and that, therefore, a range of penalties should be available. Whenever possible, it would also be important to try to determine the intent of the offender, since the error could be a result of careless work rather than an intent to deceive. The maximum penalty for a first offense is failure in the course, and if that penalty is imposed, the student does not have the option of withdrawing from the course. In cases of mitigating circumstance, the instructor has the option of assigning a lesser penalty."

The St. Edward's University Undergraduate Bulletin and the Student Handbook state that a student who is dishonest in any work may receive the maximum penalty of an F for that course. SEU does not allow students to withdraw from a course where an F in the course for academic dishonesty has been imposed. Students caught committing academic dishonesty in this course will be subject to the full range of penalties as described in the bulletin and handbook.

At St. Edward's, plagiarism includes turning in as your own work any drafts, papers, journals, or homework that incorporates any ideas or actual writing done by others (or from the internet) without acknowledging the source you used.

## Smartphones, Tablets & Computers

Smartphones are unavoidable, but please respect the classroom. If I observe you texting or answering the phone, then I will ask you to leave class. This results in an absence. Please treat the classroom as you would any other space where you are expected to act professionally. There will be some days during the semester where you might need to use your smartphone or other mobile device to look something up. If it pertains to class, that's fine. In general, show up to class on time, be polite, stay on task, and use digital technology smartly and professionally.

Generally, we will not have long-winded lectures in the course where you need to take copious notes, but if we do and you want to take notes, I ask that you stay on task when using technology during class (whether pen and paper, laptop, tablet, etc.).

## University Non-Discrimination Policy

Title IX makes it clear that violence, harassment, and discrimination based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources, both on and off campus, at <http://think.stedwards.edu/titleix/>.

As a faculty member, I am also required by our university to report incidents of sexual misconduct and thus cannot guarantee confidentiality. I must provide our Title IX coordinator with relevant details such as the names of those involved in the incident. Please know that you can seek confidential resources at the Health & Counseling Center in Johnson Hall, 512-448-8538. To make a formal report, you can contact the Dean of Students Office in Main Building, Suite 108, 512-448-8408, or go to <http://think.stedwards.edu/titleix/filing-complaint>. You can also make a police report to the St. Edward's University Police in the Woodward Office Building (WOB), Room 114, 512-448-8444.



# ENGW 4341 Current Theories of Rhetoric & Composition

## Rhetoric's Reemergence as Composition

Week	Day	Leader	Theme		Readings & Assignments
1	8.30		Uneasy Origins	Shifts in English Studies	<b>Course Intro</b> <b>Discussion Leader Assignment Sheet</b>
	9.1	DU			Berlin, James A. <i>Rhetorics, Poetics, and Cultures: Refiguring College English Studies</i> . Urbana: NCTE, 1996. Chapter 2: "Where Do English Departments Really Come From?" 17-37. Lauer, Janice M. "The Feminization of Rhetoric and Composition Studies?" <i>Rhetoric Review</i> 13 (1995): 276-286.
2	9.6			Toward Modern Theories	<b>Paper Day Assignment Sheet</b> Berlin, James A. "Contemporary Composition: The Major Pedagogical Theories." <i>College English</i> 44. 8 (1982): 765-777.
	9.8				North, Stephen M. <i>The Making of Knowledge in Composition: Portrait of an Emerging Field</i> . Upper St. Clair, NJ: Boynton/Cook, 1987. 9-17.
3	9.13		Updating the Greeks	Unearthing Composition's Rhetorical Roots: The Rhetorical Situation	Vatz, Richard E. "The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation." <i>Philosophy &amp; Rhetoric</i> (1973): 154-161. Bitzer, Lloyd F. "The Rhetorical Situation." <i>Philosophy &amp; Rhetoric</i> (1992): 1-14.
	9.15				Edbauer, Jenny. "Unframing Models of Public Distribution: From Rhetorical Situation to Rhetorical Ecologies." <i>Rhetoric Society Quarterly</i> 35.4 (2005): 5-24.
4	9.20			Reclaiming Rhetoric for Composition: Audience	<b>Paper Day 1 Due</b> Ede, Lisa, and Andrea Lunsford. "Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked: The Role of Audience in Composition Theory and Pedagogy." <i>College Composition and Communication</i> 35.2 (1984): 155-71.
	9.22				Ballif, Michelle. "What is it that the Audience Wants? Or, Notes Toward a Listening with a Transgendered Ear for (Mis)Understanding." <i>JAC</i> 19.1 (1999): 53-70.
5	9.27		Perspectives on Process	Expressivist, Cognitive & Social Processes	Murray, Donald M. "Teaching Writing as a Process Not Product." In Thomas Newkirk and Lisa C. Miller, Eds., <i>The Essential Donald Murray</i> . Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 2009. 1-5. Flower, Linda, and John Hayes. "A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing." <i>College Composition and Communication</i> 32.4 (1981): 365-387. McComiskey, Bruce. <i>Teaching Composition as a Social Process</i> . Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 2000. Ch 2: "Social-Process Rhetorical Inquiry." 19-41.
	9.29				<b>No Class Thurs, Sept. 29</b>
6	10.4			Post Process & the End of Pedagogy	Breuch, Lee-Ann M. Kastman. "Post-Process 'Pedagogy': A Philosophical Exercise." <i>JAC</i> (2002): 119-150.
	10.6				Kirsch, Gesa E., and Joy S. Ritchie. "Beyond the Personal: Theorizing a Politics of Location in Composition Research." <i>College Composition and Communication</i> 46.1 (1995): 7-29.

Complicating the Origin Stories				
Week	Day	Leader	Theme	Readings & Assignments
7	10.11		Cultural Rhetorics	<b>Paper Day 2 Due</b> Royster, Jacqueline Jones. "When the First Voice You Hear is Not Your Own." <i>College Composition and Communication</i> 47.1 (1996): 29-40. Smitherman, Geneva. "Black Language is Power." Ed. In Gloria M. Simmons and Helene Hutchinson, Eds., <i>Black Culture: Reading and Writing Black</i> . New York: Holt, Rhinehart, and Winston, 1972. 85-91.
	10.13			<b>No Class Thurs., Oct. 13</b>
8	10.18		Feminisms & Rhetorics	<b>Skype Visit with Dr. Alexandra Hidalgo</b> Villanueva, Victor. <i>Bootstraps: From an American Academic of Color</i> . Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1993. Ch. 1: "The Block." 1-14. Hidalgo, Alexandra. "Vanishing Fronteras: A Call for Documentary Filmmaking in Cultural Rhetorics (con la ayuda de Anzaldúa)." <i>Enculturation: a Journal of Rhetoric, Writing, and Culture</i> 21 (2016). <a href="http://www.enculturation.net/vanishing-fronteras">http://www.enculturation.net/vanishing-fronteras</a>
	10.20			Perry, Merry G. "Feminism and Cultural Studies in Composition: Locating Women and Men in College Writing Courses." <i>Composition Forum</i> 15 (2006). <a href="http://compositionforum.com/issue/15/perryfeminism.php">http://compositionforum.com/issue/15/perryfeminism.php</a> Frost, Erin, and Michelle Eble. "Technical Rhetorics: Making Specialized Persuasion Apparent to Public Audiences." <i>Present Tense</i> 4.2 (2015). <a href="http://www.presenttensejournal.org/volume-4/technical-rhetorics-making-specialized-persuasion-apparent-to-public-audiences/">http://www.presenttensejournal.org/volume-4/technical-rhetorics-making-specialized-persuasion-apparent-to-public-audiences/</a>
9	10.25		Queer & Trans Rhetorics	<b>Project Proposal Assignment Sheet</b> Cox, Matthew B., and Michael J. Faris. "An Annotated Bibliography of LGBTQ Rhetorics." <i>Present Tense</i> 4.2 (2015). Intro only. <a href="http://www.presenttensejournal.org/volume-4/an-annotated-bibliography-of-lgbtq-rhetorics/">http://www.presenttensejournal.org/volume-4/an-annotated-bibliography-of-lgbtq-rhetorics/</a>
	10.27			Rawson, K. J., and Cristan Williams. "Transgender*: The Rhetorical Landscape of a Term." <i>Present Tense</i> 3.2 (2014). <a href="http://www.presenttensejournal.org/volume-3/transgender-the-rhetorical-landscape-of-a-term/">http://www.presenttensejournal.org/volume-3/transgender-the-rhetorical-landscape-of-a-term/</a>
10	11.1		Digital Rhetorics	Marback, Richard. "Embracing Wicked Problems: The Turn to Design in Composition Studies." <i>College Composition and Communication</i> 61.2 (2009): 397-419.
	11.4			Jenkins, Henry. "Eight Traits of a New Media Landscape." <i>Confessions of an Aca-Fan</i> (2006). <a href="http://henryjenkins.org/2006/11/eight_traits_of_the_new_media.html">http://henryjenkins.org/2006/11/eight_traits_of_the_new_media.html</a> Jones, John. "Network*Writing." <i>Kairos</i> 20.1 (2015). <a href="http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/20.1/topoi/jones/index.html">http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/20.1/topoi/jones/index.html</a>
11	11.8		Public Rhetorics	Cushman, Ellen. "The Rhetorician as an Agent of Social Change." <i>College Composition and Communication</i> 47.1 (1996): 7-28.
	11.10			<b>Project Proposals Due</b> Higgins, Lorraine, Elenore Long, and Linda Flower. "Community Literacy: A Rhetorical Model for Personal and Public Inquiry." <i>Community Literacy</i> 1.1 (2006): 9-43.

12	11.15	Paper Day 3 Due Multimodal Text Assignment Sheet
	11.17	Using Still & Moving Images Workshop
13	11.22	Using Sound Workshop
	11.24	No Class, Thanksgiving
14	11.29	Presenting Draft Materials
	12.1	Presenting Draft Materials
15	12.6	Presenting Draft Materials
	12.8	Class Recap
Multimodal Text Due Tues., Dec. 13		