Jennifer Campbell, University Writing Program

WRIT 2500: Public Good, Personal Gain, and the Ethics of Persuasion

**Course Description**

Roman rhetorician Quintillian's ideal orator was "a good man speaking well," but we know that evil people can speak well and good people can struggle to communicate. We also know that a lot has changed since 95 AD. In this course, we will trace the thorny relationship between rhetoric and ethics, from the Sophists of ancient Athens to recent concerns about political persuasion on Facebook. We'll discuss several touchstones in rhetorical theory and consider if and how their philosophies and frameworks apply to contemporary argument and persuasion in fields like education, law, journalism, and politics. You'll hone your ability to read a wide variety of texts closely, critically, and rhetorically while also considering your own responsibilities as a writer and citizen. Students will compose regular analysis and response entries and other informal assignments; a multimodal 'conversation collage' that represents an ongoing argument in the civic sphere; and a dialogue, manifesto, or open letter to present their personal philosophy of ethics and persuasion.

**Course Alignment**

| SLO | Assessments | Activities |
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| **Read classical and contemporary texts closely, critically, and rhetorically.** Students will be able to: Identify rhetorical situation and how author, purpose, audience, and other affordances and constraints impact the text and its effects; identify terministic screens and biases; identify rhetorical strategies used and evaluate their effectiveness; identify logical arguments and logical fallacies. *Foundational, Application, Learning How to Learn* | Reading Analysis and Response log entries (RARs)  "Current Conversation Collage" Project (CPs) | Audience and Forum Analysis  'Evidence Hunts'  Class discussion and examples to intro RARs  Repetition of RARs  Primary Text Tracking and Analysis for CPs  CP scaffolding (studio time, peer feedback, etc.) |
| **Explain several historical, theoretical approaches to** | RARs that summarize key arguments about the relationship between rhetoric | Class conversations |

| | and ethics in each assigned text | |
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| **argument and ethics in the Western Tradition**--such as Gorgias, Aristotle, Dewey, Burke, Rogers--**and how their philosophies compare to one another and contemporary approaches.** *Foundational, Application, Integration* | Compare/Contrast/Synthesize theories across texts in RARs and personal ethics project (PEPs) | Ongoing Knowledge Grid

Have students situate their own phisophies in relation to ongoing scholarly conversation.`1 |
| **Apply concepts from the readings to multiple disciplines or areas of inquiry and practice** (politics, law, journalism, etc.) *Application, Integration, Human Dimension, Caring* | Student-selected case studies of current 'persuasion in action' for CPs

PEPs | 'Real World' Impact discussions and hypothetical scenario debates

Variety in examples - students connecting to majors |
| **Identify and address unethical persuasive strategies in others' arguments and their own** *Application, Human Dimension* | RARs - Rhetorical analysis of arguments in different genres, identifying logical fallacies, falsehoods, etc.

Group guides to navigating different genres or topics | Illustrated Logical fallacies - make your own example

Group work, online research |
| **Articulate their own philosophy of ethics and persuasion** *Application, Integration, Human Dimension, Caring, Learning how to Learn* | Students will present a cogent personal philosophy or code of ethics in rhetoric in the form of a dialogue, manifesto, or open letter. | Genre analysis
Drafting
Peer Workshop
Revision
'Publication' |

**Weighting of Assessments**
Reading, Analysis, and Response Logs (RARs)    40%
Current Conversation Collage Project (CPs)    30%
Personal Persuasive Ethics Project (PEPs)    30%

**Elaboration on RARs:**
For each substantial reading, students will complete an entry in their RAR Log. They will identify the rhetorical situation (author, audience, purpose, genre); summarize key ideas; find examples of particular rhetorical strategies (this work will become more sophisticated as they learn additional analytical frameworks); respond to one or two unique questions about the individual work or connections between works or between works and cultural or

disciplinary contexts; list questions they have about the reading or applications. I plan to use different questions types from our resources in both the RARS and class discussions. Students will complete the RAR before class and we'll use them as a springboard for conversation, and they will be allowed to add to and correct their work during and after class. The RAR log will be graded on completion, so it's a safe space for learning, and they will be able to refer to previous texts more easily by being able to look back and forth between entries. I also hope they will see how their reading and analysis is becoming more sophisticated, and perhaps they'll be more efficient at working through them.

As we add texts, we're going to create a collaborative knowledge grid to compare them (depending on size of class, I might have small groups do these instead of full class), and the RARs will provide most of that content.