

WRIT 201 College Writing II: Rhetoric and American Cultures
Rhetoric of Empathy

**prerequisite C or better in 101 or direct placement into WRIT 201*

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Meeting days/time: 9:30-10:50 Tuesday/Thursday

“**Rhetoric** is the art of communicating thought from one mind to another, the adaptation of language to circumstance.” Sister Miriam Joseph

“**Rhetoric** is language at play—language plus. It is what persuades and cajoles, inspires and bamboozles, thrills and misdirects. It causes criminals to be convicted, and then frees those criminals on appeal. It causes governments to rise and fall, best men to be ever after shunned by their friends’ brides, and perfectly sensible adults to march with steady purpose toward machine guns...It is made of ringing truths and vital declarations. It is a way in which our shared assumptions and understandings are applied to new situations, and the language of history is channeled, revitalized, and given fresh power in each successive age.” Sam Leith

“The radical relevance of the believing game and the **rhetoric of empathy** is that they raise ethical questions that must be confronted in dialogical communication. Psychologist Carl Rogers asked the fundamental question: Can you risk non-judgmental understanding of others’ opinions and beliefs to the extent that you are willing to modify or change your own positions? To Rogers, you risk *being changed yourself*.” Nathaniel Teich

“When you show deep **empathy** toward others, their defensive energy goes down, and positive energy replaces it. That's when you can get more creative in solving problems.” Steven Covey

Course Description

“When Americans hear the word “rhetoric” they tend to think of politicians’ attempts to deceive them [...] as though words had no connection to action. [...] (Crowley). During the course of this class you will learn that exactly the opposite is true: Words *are* action and the more control you have over them, the more power they can give you. Our study this semester will focus on the way traditional rhetorical concepts are still powerful in contemporary American culture; you will have the opportunity to study arguments as a reader and enact those practices as a writer. We will discuss how clarity in written and verbal communication has the potential to create more empathic interactions.

Much of your work in this class will involve different kinds of collaboration, including small group workshops and discussions that will take place in class. Because writing development is an important process that takes place over time across different writing situations, all WRIT 201 classes use portfolio evaluation as a primary means of evaluation. By the end of the semester you should be able to accurately and subtly assess a given rhetorical situation and make effective rhetorical choices based your assessment in order to write a graceful, convincing, beautifully written argument.

Respect

It is imperative that you treat your peers with as much respect as you expect from them. I expect this course to be a supportive and respectful environment where everyone feels comfortable speaking without fear of being put down or embarrassed. If you fail to respect your classmates, your grade will be affected.

In this course we will be discussing socially debated and, sometimes, conflict-laden issues. We will work as a class to create an environment that allows each member to share their ideas. This does not mean we have to agree with other's perspectives. Part of your educational experience is learning that you will disagree, sometimes radically, with people and that honest discussion is a way to learn to respect and value those disagreements. We will work together to cultivate a learning environment defined by empathy.

Required Course Texts:

- *College Writing II: Rhetoric and American Cultures* (available at the UM bookstore only)
- *The Empathy Exams* by Leslie Jamison

Other Course Materials

- notebook for in-class writing
- a folder for misc. class materials/handouts
- a folder or binder for your final portfolio

General Class Expectations:

- All reading assignments will be completed by the assigned date.
- All writing assignments must be turned in on time.
- **Homework will not be accepted via email.** Please print it out and bring it with you to class for full credit.
- **All major assignments must be typed. Please use 12 point Times New Roman font, double-space, and 1 inch margins on all sides.**
- All homework must be typed.
- Attend class.
- Actively, vocally, and appropriately participate in class discussions.
- Any individual assignments (including requests for conferences) will be completed by the assigned date.

WRIT 201 is an Approved Writing course. The university learning outcomes include:

- Use writing to learn and synthesize new concepts
- Formulate and express opinions and ideas in writing
- Compose written documents that are appropriate for a given audience or purpose
- Revise written work based on constructive feedback
- Find, evaluate, and use information effectively
- Begin to use discipline-specific writing conventions
- Demonstrate appropriate English language usage

WRIT 201 Required Elements

I encourage you to talk with me at any time to better understand my comments or to discuss your overall progress and success in the class.

Grading: You must earn a C- in this class to be awarded credit.

Participation	35%
Final Portfolio	65%

****You must turn in your portfolio and complete all major essays by their deadlines in order to receive credit for this course. ****

Grading Policy

Students enrolled in WRIT 201 are graded by the traditional letter grade A, B, C, D, F or are given NC for no credit. The NC grade does not affect grade point average. It is reserved for students who have worked unusually hard, attended class regularly and completed all assignments, but whose skills are not at a passing level at the end of the semester.

Major Assignments

Expect to write four essays and make major revisions over the course of the semester, in addition to other short writing assignments in and out of class. I will give you a detailed assignment sheet as we begin each of these major assignments.

You will have the chance to develop all of your major projects through a process of inquiry and drafting. You'll compose papers in and out of class, alone and with your small group. All inquiry projects must be completed for you to pass the course. I will respond to these projects with written comments focused on suggestions for revision, but I will also mark them using a check system to help you know where you stand on a specific project.

Major Inquiry Projects:

- Assignment #1: Rhetorical Analysis
- Assignment #2: Response Essay
- Assignment #3: Persuasive Researched Essay
- Assignment #4: Transmittal Essay

Attendance

If you miss the first two classes, you will need to drop the course on Cyberbear and enroll in another semester. This is university policy and the reasoning behind it is that important groundwork for the semester is put in place in the first few class meetings. Students without that foundational framework are better served by taking the course when they can give it the attention it deserves.

More than two absences from a TR class will compromise your grade. 5 or more absences from a TR class will result in a failing grade. Here's the breakdown.

- 3rd absence: final grade drops one letter grade (for example, A drops to B)
- 4th absence: final grade drops two letter grades (for example, A drops to C)
- 5th absence: final grade is an F

Here's the reasoning behind the attendance policy: Without attending class, you cannot perform your role as a student involved in learning, planning, inventing, drafting, discussing reading and writing, learning and practicing rhetorical moves and concepts, or collaborating with your instructor and classmates. Required University events will be excused if you provide appropriate documentation. Personal situations inevitably arise that make it impossible for you to make it to class. Remember, however, that's why a few absences are allowed; please reserve those for emergencies.

If you must miss class, *you are responsible* for obtaining any handouts or assignments for the class. Make sure you talk with me in *advance* if you are worried about meeting a deadline or missing a class.

Participation

Participation includes coming to class prepared and on time, taking part in class discussions, asking questions, contributing your knowledge and insights in whatever form is appropriate, and striving to make all your contributions excellent. It also includes doing the required reading and writing for each class.

Note: Please come to class on time. Lateness will hurt your grade because it is an unnecessary interruption and because latecomers are likely to miss valuable information. Please see *Participation Grade Descriptors* for more information.

Late Work

Your work needs to be typed, printed, and in class with you to be considered on time.

- Late or handwritten homework does not receive credit.
- Emailed assignments are considered late.
- Late formal essays are unacceptable. They will receive no revision comments from me.
- If you miss class, the homework is due the next class period; homework will be marked late unless your absence is excused.
- You are welcome to complete assignments early if you will be missing class.

Academic Conduct

You must abide by the rules for academic conduct described in the Student Conduct Code. If you have any questions about when and how to avoid academic dishonesty, particularly plagiarism, please review the Conduct Code and talk with your instructor. The Council of Writing Program Administrators describes plagiarism as follows: "Plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else's language, ideas or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source." Academic honesty is highly valued in the University community and acts of plagiarism will not be tolerated.

Plagiarism Policy

If I suspect that something a student has written has been plagiarized, in full or in part, intentionally or unintentionally, I take the following actions:

- I alert the student of areas of the text that are suspicious.
- The student receives no credit on the paper, pending failure, and it is up to him/her to prove that he/she turned in original work.
- The student is asked to provide me with hard copies of the research she/he used in writing the paper.
- If the student cannot provide documentation of her/his research, the student will fail the paper.

Note: These measures are also put into action when a paper is poorly cited. When a student brings his/her research to me I use the time to talk with them about citation and make sure that they understand how and when to cite in the future.

In the case that the student is unable to provide evidence of his/her original work, or in the case that I have evidence that the student has intentionally plagiarized his/her work:

- The student will automatically fail the given assignment.
- The student may fail the course unless, at my discretion, I offer alternative assignments and/or conditions.

- I may pursue a plagiarism citation unless, at my discretion, I offer alternative assignments and/or conditions.
- The student may receive alternate assignments, etc. to avoid failure. In this instance, all conditions must be met. I need to see evidence of excellent work and effort, and work must be completed on time.
- All other previously established conditions in the class (i.e. attendance, participation, homework grades, etc.) still stand and can still cause a student to fail the course.
- In the case of blatant or egregious offenses, I will not negotiate against course failure and will pursue a University Citation of Plagiarism.

Students with Disabilities

Qualified students with disabilities will receive appropriate accommodations in this course. Please speak with me privately after class or in my office. Please be prepared to provide a letter from your DSS Coordinator.

Participation in University Assessment

This course requires an electronic submission of an assignment stripped of your personal information to be used for educational research and assessment of the writing program. Your papers will be stored in a database. This assessment in no way affects either your grade or your progression at the university.

Journals & Free Writes

Over the course of the semester, you will write nine journals, one Occasional Paper, and in-class free writes. You will receive feedback from me but no grade on informal writing submissions. Short assignments play an important part in your overall participation grade.

Major Inquiry Projects

To give you a sense of the check system I'll be using, please refer to the following descriptors.

Check: A project with a check generally meets its rhetorical goals in terms of purpose, genre, and writing situation without need for extensive revision. Written comments will elaborate on strengths, weaknesses, and strategies for focused revision.

Check minus: A project with a check minus meets the basic requirements, but would benefit from significant revision and a stronger understanding of rhetorical decision-making. Written comments will elaborate on strengths, weaknesses, and strategies for revision.

Unsatisfactory: A project with a U does not meet basic standards, and requires extensive development and attention. An unsatisfactory submission may be incomplete or inappropriate to the assignment. Such a submission may receive a request to rewrite within a week in order to receive teacher comments.

Portfolio Grade Descriptors for WRIT 201

A Superior portfolios will demonstrate initiative and rhetorical sophistication that go beyond the requirements. A portfolio at this level is composed of well-edited texts representing different writing situations and genres that consistently show a clear, connected sense of audience, purpose and development. The writer is able to analyze his or her own writing, reflect on it, and revise accordingly. The portfolio takes risks that work.

B Strong portfolios meet their rhetorical goals in terms of purpose, genre, and writing situation without need for further major revisions of purpose, evidence, audience, or style/ mechanics. The writer is able to reflect on his or her own writing and make some choices about revision. The writer takes risks, although they may not all be successful.

C Consistent portfolios meet the basic requirements, yet the writing would benefit from further revisions of purpose, evidence, audience, or writing style/mechanics (or some combination) and a stronger understanding of rhetorical decision-making involved in different writing situations and genres. The writer composes across tasks at varying levels of success with some superficial revision. The writer has taken some risks in writing and exhibits some style.

D Weak portfolios do not fully meet the basic evaluative standards. Most texts are brief and underdeveloped. These texts show a composing process that is not yet elaborated or reflective of rhetorical understanding related to composing in different genres and for a range of writing situations. Texts generally require extensive revisions to purpose, development, audience, and/ or style and mechanics.

F Unacceptable portfolios exhibit pervasive problems with purpose, development, audience, or style/ mechanics that interfere with meaning and readers' understanding. Unacceptable portfolios are often incomplete. A portfolio will also earn an F if it does not represent the writer's original work.

Participation Grade Descriptors for WRIT 201

A Superior participation shows initiative and excellence in written and verbal work. The student helps to create more effective discussions and workshops through his/her verbal, electronic, and written contributions. Reading and writing assignments are always completed on time and with attention to detail. In workshop or conferences, suggestions to group members are tactful, thorough, specific, and often provide other student writers with a new perspective or insight.

B Strong participation demonstrates active engagement in written and verbal work. The student plays an active role in the classroom but does not always add new insight to the discussion at hand. Reading and writing assignments are always completed on time and with attention to detail. In workshop or conferences, suggestions to group members are tactful, specific, and helpful.

C Satisfactory participation demonstrates consistent, satisfactory written and verbal work. Overall, the student is prepared for class, completes assigned readings and writings, and contributes to small group workshops and large class discussions. Reading and writing assignments are completed on time. In workshop or conferences, suggestions to group members are tactful and prompt, but could benefit from more attentive reading and/or specific detail when giving comments.

D Weak participation demonstrates inconsistent written and verbal work. The student may be late to class, unprepared for class, and may contribute infrequently or unproductively to classroom discussions or small group workshops. Reading and writing assignments are not turned in or are insufficient. In workshops or conferences, suggestions to group members may be missing, disrespectful, or far too brief and general to be of help.

F Unacceptable participation shows ineffectual written and verbal work. The student may be excessively late to class, regularly unprepared, and not able to contribute to classroom discussions or small group workshops. This student may be disruptive in class. Reading and writing assignments are regularly not turned in or are insufficient. In workshops or conferences, the student has a pattern of missing, being completely unprepared, or being disruptive.