



**Course Syllabus:**  
**Rhetorical Theory & Criticism – Independent Study**  
**Prothro-Yeager College of Humanities and Social Sciences**

**ENGL 4993 Sections 201**  
**Spring 2025**

**Contact Information**

Instructor: Dr. Melissa Nivens

Office: BeaWood 220

Student Office hours: MW 10am -11am; TR 11am – 12:30pm

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**Course Description**

Introduction to theories of rhetoric and examination of different critical lenses for analyzing the persuasive or contextual elements of written or spoken texts.

**Course Goals**

- Acquire a basic understanding of traditional and contemporary rhetorical theory, criticism, and its applications.
- Hone research skills and demonstrate ability to follow the MLA style guide;
- Gain experience in conducting rhetorical analysis

**Textbook & Instructional Materials**

Foss, Sonja A. et al. *Contemporary Perspectives on Rhetoric 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Ed.* Waveland Press, 2014. (Required)

Excerpts from *The Rhetorical Tradition* and *Available Means* (posted in D2L)

**Study Hours and Tutoring Assistance**

Tutoring and Academic Support Programs (TASP) provides free drop-in tutoring and homework help for MSU students. Located on the first floor of Moffett Library, TASP's Learning Center provides tutoring support in a number of core courses and subject areas. Remember that you don't need an appointment to utilize these services. Check the [TASP webpage](#) for times.

**Student Handbook**

Refer to: [Student Handbook](#)

## Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures

Academic Dishonesty: Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work, not the individual to whom credit is given). Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the [Office of Student Conduct](#).

Since writing, analytical, and critical thinking skills are part of the goals and objectives of this course, all writing assignments should be prepared by the student. Developing strong competencies in these areas will prepare students for a competitive workplace. Therefore, AI-generated submissions are not permitted and will be treated as plagiarism.

All formal papers will run through Turnitin for an Originality Report and an AI Report. At the very least, plagiarism will result in an F on the assignment; at worst, the consequence will be an F in the course. Offenders may be reported to the Chair of the Department of English, Humanities, and Philosophy and/or the Director of Student Rights and Responsibilities.

## Moffett Library

Moffett Library provides resources and services to support student's studies and assignments, including books, peer-reviewed journals, databases, and multimedia materials accessible both on campus and remotely. The library offers media equipment checkout, reservable study rooms, and research assistance from librarians to help students effectively find, evaluate, and use information. Get started on this [Moffett Library webpage](#) to explore these resources and learn how to best utilize the library.

## Grading

For final grades, this class will not use the plus/minus grading system. The following numerical equivalents for final grades are used: A = 100-90%; B = 89-80%; C = 79-70%; D = 69-60%; F = 59-0. For individual assignment grades, an A+ = 98, A = 95, A- = 92; B+ = 88, B = 85, and so on.

Table 1: Percentages allocated to each assignment

Assignments	Description	Percentage
10 Response Papers	Short papers (2 paragraphs) that summarize and respond to a class reading	50%
Rhetorical Analysis	Essay (& associated planning and drafting assignments) that analyzes the writing related to a current or historical event	40%
Course Reflection	Reflective essay on course experience	10%
Total	*****	100%

## Mid-Term Grades

In order to help students keep track of their progress toward course objectives, I will provide a Midterm Progress Report through Navigate. I will submit a grade for all students, not just those in danger of failing the course. Midterm grades will not be reported on your transcript; nor will they be calculated in the cumulative GPA. They simply give students an idea of where they stand at the

midpoint of the semester. Students earning below a C at the midway point should make an appointment with me and consider visiting the Learning Center for tutoring services.

### **Final Exam**

The Course Reflection replaces the final exam for this course.

### **Extra Credit**

Extra credit offerings are announced at the discretion of the instructor.

### **Late Work**

Late assignments (defined as work not submitted by the date and time posted in D2L) will be accepted, but they will lose 10% of the final grade. Additionally, no late work will be accepted more than 48 hours after the original deadline without making arrangements with me. If students are unable to come to class on the day an assignment is due, they should still upload their work into the D2L Dropbox folder on time to avoid late paper deductions.

### **Submission Format and Policy**

All formal assignments are to be typed, formatted, and outside sources documented according to MLA style. All formal papers will be uploaded into the appropriate D2L Dropbox folder.

By enrolling in this class, students expressly grant MSU a “limited right” in all intellectual property created by students for the purpose of this course. The “limited right” shall include but shall not be limited to the right to reproduce the student’s work product in order to verify originality and authenticity, and for educational purposes. Please note that the D2L Dropbox folder will automatically run papers through Turnitin.com. Turnitin provides both an Originality Report and an AI Report.

Note: Students may not submit a paper for a grade in this class that already has been (or will be) submitted for a grade in another course, unless they obtain the explicit written permission of me and the other instructor involved in advance.

### **Important Dates**

Last day for term schedule changes/late registration: **January 24**

Deadline to file for graduation: **February 17**

Last Day to drop with a grade of “W:” **April 20**. Check the date on the [Academic Calendar](#).

For more information, refer to: [Drops, Withdrawals & Void](#)

### **Desire-to-Learn (D2L)**

Extensive use of the MSU D2L program is a part of this course. Students are expected to be familiar with this platform as it provides a primary source of communication regarding assignments, examination materials, and general course information. Students can log into [D2L](#) through the MSU homepage or the portal. For assistance, submit a help ticket [here](#).

### **Attendance**

Logging in to D2L regularly and submitting weekly assignments show student engagement and attendance. Students who need to miss several classes because of personal reasons or illness should

alert the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities and provide them with the necessary documentation so that they can verify the situation and notify instructors.

The instructor's records will stand as evidence of absences. Please understand that a student with excessive absences may be dropped from a course by the instructor after a verbal or written warning.

### **Change of Schedule**

A student dropping a course (but not withdrawing from the University) within the first 12 class days of a regular semester or the first four class days of a summer semester is eligible for a 100% refund of applicable tuition and fees. Dates are published in the Schedule of Classes each semester.

### **Refund and Repayment Policy**

A student who withdraws or is administratively withdrawn from Midwestern State University (MSU) may be eligible to receive a refund for all or a portion of the tuition, fees, and room/board charges that were paid to MSU for the semester. However, if the student received financial aid (federal/state/institutional grants, loans, and/or scholarships), all or a portion of the refund may be returned to the financial aid programs. Two formulas (federal and state) exist in determining the amount of the refund. (Examples of each refund calculation will be made available upon request).

### **Services for Students with Disabilities**

In accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Midwestern State University endeavors to make reasonable accommodations to ensure equal opportunity for qualified persons with disabilities to participate in all educational, social, and recreational programs and activities. After notification of acceptance, students requiring accommodations should make an application for such assistance through Disability Support Services, located in the Clark Student Center, Room 168, (940) 397-4140. Current documentation of a disability will be required in order to provide appropriate services, and each request will be individually reviewed. For more details, please go to [Disability Support Services](#).

### **College Policies**

#### *Smoking/Tobacco Policy*

College policy strictly prohibits the use of tobacco products in any building owned or operated by WATC. Adult students may smoke only in the outside designated smoking areas at each location.

#### *Alcohol and Drug Policy*

To comply with the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of 1989 and subsequent amendments, students and employees of Midwestern State are informed that strictly enforced policies are in place which prohibit the unlawful possession, use, or distribution of any illicit drugs, including alcohol, on university property or as part of any university-sponsored activity. Students and employees are also subject to all applicable legal sanctions under local, state, and federal law for any offenses involving illicit drugs on University property or at University-sponsored activities.

#### *Campus Carry*

Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University establishes as prohibited. The new Constitutional Carry law does not change this process.

Concealed carry still requires a License-to-carry permit, and openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, visit [Campus Carry](#).

### *Active Shooter*

The safety and security of our campus is the responsibility of everyone in our community. Each of us has an obligation to be prepared to appropriately respond to threats to our campus, such as an active aggressor. Please review the information provided by the MSU Police Department regarding the options and strategies we can all use to stay safe during difficult situations. For more information, visit [MSUReady – Active Shooter](#). Students are encouraged to watch the video entitled “*Run. Hide. Fight.*” which may be electronically accessed via the University police department’s webpage: [“Run. Hide. Fight.”](#)

### **Grade Appeal Process**

Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University [MSU Catalog](#)

**Course Schedule:**

**\*Notice:** Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor.

Week	Readings	Assignments
Week 1 1/20	<b>Introduction</b> Syllabus <i>CPoR</i> Ch 1 An Intro to Rhetoric <i>RT</i> General Intro D2L	Discussion Board Post
Week 2 1/27	<b>Classical Rhetoric</b> <i>RT</i> Intro to Classical Rhetoric <i>RT</i> Aspasia <i>RT</i> Plato Additional Web Resources	Response Paper #1
Week 3 2/3	<b>Classical Rhetoric</b> <i>RT</i> Aristotle Additional Web Resources	Response Paper #2
Week 4 2/10	<b>Medieval Rhetoric</b> <i>RT</i> Intro to Medieval Rhetoric <i>RT</i> Letter Writing	Response Paper #3
Week 5 2/17	<b>Renaissance &amp; Enlightenment Rhetoric</b> <i>RT</i> Intro to Renaissance Rhetoric <i>RT</i> Intro to Enlightenment Rhetoric  INTRODUCE RHETORICAL ANALYSIS ASSIGNMENT	Response Paper #4
Week 6 2/24	<b>19<sup>th</sup> Century Rhetoric/1<sup>st</sup> Wave Feminism</b> <i>RT</i> Intro to 19 <sup>th</sup> C. Rhetoric <i>AM</i> Margaret Fuller <i>AM</i> Seneca Falls <i>AM</i> Sojourner Truth	Response Paper #5
Week 7 3/3	<b>Modern &amp; Postmodern Rhetoric</b> <i>RT</i> Intro to Modern and Postmodern Rhetoric <i>CPoR</i> Ch 2 Richards Sources for Rhetorical Analysis	Response Paper #6 Discussion Post
*****	SPRING BREAK	*****
Week 8 3/17	<i>CPoR</i> Ch 4 Perelman Find and begin reading Sources for Rhetorical Analysis	Sources Assignment

Week	Readings	Assignments
Week 9 3/24	<i>CPoR</i> Ch 5 Toulmin <i>CPoR</i> Ch 6 Weaver	Response Paper #7
Week 10 3/31	<i>CPoR</i> Ch 7 Burke	Response Paper #8
Week 11 4/7	<i>CPoR</i> Ch 9 bell hooks <i>AM</i> bell hooks	Response Paper #9
Week 12 4/14	None	Rhetorical Analysis Rough Draft
Week 13 4/21	<i>CPoR</i> Ch 11 Foucault	Response Paper #10
Week 14 4/28	None	Work on Rhetorical Analysis Revisions
Week 15 5/5	None	Rhetorical Analysis Final Draft
Week 16 FINALS	None	Course Reflection