

ENGL 396: Rhetoric and Narrative
Fall 2007

Revised, 10/16/07

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Course description and learning outcomes

Rhetoric is ordinarily thought of as a tool of orators, politicians, and advertisers; it is not usually thought of as something employed by “creative” writers: memoirists or novelists. In this course, we will study rhetoric as it works in literary and cultural narratives: fiction and nonfiction prose, popular culture texts, narratives of cultural myth. We will read some rhetorical theory and some literary theory and several narratives: novels, memoirs, film, and social texts. Here are what I see as the outcomes of your learning in ENGL 396:

- Gain increased sophistication with literary criticism, particularly with rhetorical criticism
- Demonstrate an ability to read texts rhetorically
- Demonstrate an ability to convey an interpretation of a text to others: classmates and teacher
- Demonstrate an understanding of critical terminology related to rhetorical criticism by successfully deploying that terminology in speech and writing
- Read a number of American short stories, an American memoir, at least one novel and at least one cultural text
- Produce two pieces of written criticism in essay form: one a midterm test on *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, one a final paper emerging from a class presentation.
- Demonstrate an awareness of the rhetorical purposes and means of at least one text from popular culture
- Improve your written and spoken literary criticism

Assignments and evaluation

In general, we will read, talk, and write. Specifically, we will read almost all of the three required books (see below). I will expect you to learn and use the terminology and perspective afforded by Booth’s book and to be able to apply what you have learned to selected examples of narrative in several genres. Here are the major assignments, as I see them:

- A group presentation, leading the rest of the class through a rhetorical reading of a short story or stories. (15%)
- A midterm exam involving a rhetorical reading of a memoir (15%)
- An individual presentation, leading the rest of the class through a rhetorical reading of a popular culture text (15%)
- Leading class discussion, with a partner, of an aspect of a novel (10%)
- A final paper emerging from class study of a novel (25%)
- Class participation, including attendance and Blackboard postings (20%)

Required books

Booth, Wayne C. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 2nd ed. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1982. (*TRoF* in assignment schedule)

Demas, Corinne, ed. *Great American Short Stories*. New York: Barnes & Noble, 2004. (*GASS* in assignment schedule)

Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby*. New York: Macmillan-Collier, 1992. (or other approved edition)

Franklin, Benjamin. *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*. Ed. Louis P. Masur. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2003. (*AoBF* in assignment schedule)

Statement on academic honesty

It is every student's responsibility to be aware of College policy regarding academic honesty and plagiarism. The policy is laid out on pp. 26-31 of the *Student Handbook*.

Statement on disabilities

If you have a learning disability and believe you may require accommodation to succeed in this course, you should contact the Learning Services Office at 1307 Main Street. Its phone number is 861-1510. Do this as soon as possible to enhance the likelihood that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion. Any student who wishes to disclose a disability and request accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for this course first **MUST** meet with either Mrs. Laurie Roth in the Office of Learning Services (for learning disabilities and/or ADD/ADHD) or Dr. Ronald Kline in the Counseling Center (for all other disabilities).

Tentative schedule of assignments

Week I M 8/27 – F 8/31	T - Course introduction etc. R - Definitions: “rhetoric,” “narrative”; info. on feature films
Week II T 9/4 – F 9/7	T - Steinmann, “The Old Novel and the New” (handout) <i>TroF</i> , Preface to 1 st ed., Afterword to 2 nd ed. GASS – preview of short stories R - <i>TroF</i> , chapters 1-6
Week III M 9/10 – F 9/14	T - <i>TroF</i> , chapters 7-9 R - <i>TroF</i> , chapters 10-12
Week IV M 9/17 – F 9/21	T - Ong, “The Writer’s Audience is Always a Fiction” (handout) R - Demo: Rhetorical Analysis of a short story
Week V M 9/24 – F 9/28	T - group report: rhetoric analyses of short stories R - group report: rhetoric analyses of short stories
Week VI M 10/1 – F 10/5 (mid-term)	T - group report: rhetoric analyses of short stories R - <i>AoBF</i> , Introduction; “Cultural Criticism” (handout)
Fall break Sa 10/6 – Tu 10/9	
Week VII W 10/10 – F 10/12	R - <i>AoBF</i> , parts I-II
Week VIII M 10/15 – F 10/19	T - <i>AoBF</i> , parts III-IV R - take-home essay test

Week IX M 10/22 – F 10/26	T – “Analyzing Media” and “Feminist Criticism” (handouts) Schedule individual reports on “media texts” (These will occupy class meetings from T 11/20 to R 12/8)
	R - Film screening: Class meeting will run from 10:20 to 12:30 (or later?) Location TBA
Week X M 10/29 – F 11/2	T – <i>Gatsby</i> (read all) R – <i>Gatsby</i> (1 st pair discussion)
Week XI M 11/5 – F 11/9	T – <i>Gatsby</i> (2 nd pair discussion) R – <i>Gatsby</i> (3 rd pair discussion)
Week XII M 11/12 – F 11/16	T – <i>Gatsby</i> (4 th pair discussion) R – <i>Gatsby</i> (5 th pair discussion)
Week XIII M 11/19 – Tu 11/20	T – Reports 1 & 2
Thanksgiving break W 11/21 – Su 11/25	
Week XIV M 11/26 – F 11/30	T – Reports 3 & 4 R – Reports 5 & 6
Week XV M 12/5 – M 12/12	T – Reports 7 & 8 R – Reports 9 & 10; course evaluation
Final exams W 12/14 – W 12/21	Paper due in lieu of final exam; deadline TBA