

**Communication Criticism
CMST 4460**

Instructor: Jennifer Peeples

Office: Main 213

Office hours: Wed: 9-11
and by appointment

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Required Materials:

Foss, Sonja K. Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice. 4th ed. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2009.

Kress, Gunther and Theo van Leeuwen. Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design. London: Routledge, 2001. This reading is on course reserve.

Course Description:

Communication criticism is an introduction to analysis of public communication (speeches, editorials, advertisements, TV, film, etc.) from a variety of critical perspectives. Using an approach that includes theory and application, you will learn how to critically analyze the hundreds of messages that are constantly asking for your attention, time, and/or money.

In this course we will also engage in discussions about many current political and public issues. You may not agree with some of the methods, applications, readings or comments made during the course of this class. While I do not expect (or even want) you to agree with everything said, I do will require a level of civility and respect both for all sides of the subject matter and for the speaker.

By the end of the course, you will:

- Gain *factual knowledge* about the method of rhetorical criticism used to analyze communication.
- Learn to *apply the methods of criticism* to communication texts to improve creative and rational thinking and decision-making.
 - appreciate the persuasiveness of everyday communication systems.
 - engage in critical thinking about discourse.
 - improve your analytical skills.
 - become a more critical consumer of communication
- *Develop skills* to express yourself orally and in writing.
 - Engage in individual and group work to improve your speaking and writing.

My Expectations:

I am at my best as a teacher in situations where students are consistently present, actively participating in the learning process (this includes work done outside the classroom), and taking responsibility for their course-related actions. Our (mine, yours and your classmates') satisfaction with the course depends largely on the extent to which you honor these expectations to the best of your ability.

Your Expectations:

You should also have some expectations of me as an instructor. I believe my responsibilities as a teacher include starting and ending class on time, being prepared to teach, attending office hours, returning your work promptly, grading fairly and fostering a respectful, open learning environment. If at any time you feel I have not met these expectations or if you have any additional concerns, please let me know so that your needs as a student can best be met.

Grade distribution:

100-93% = A,	76-73% = C
92-90% = A-	72-70% = C-
89-87% = B+	69-67% = D+
86-83% = B	66-63% = D
82-80% = B-	62-60% = D-
79-77% = C+	59-0% = F

Evaluations:

Two critique papers (18% ea.)	36%
Final paper	30%
2 group application presentations (10% ea.)	20%
Complete draft	2.5%
Workshop (read student paper and comment)	2.5%
Quizzes	<u>9%</u>
	100%

Assignments:**Artifact:**

Your task is to choose a communication artifact, or set of related artifacts, that you will use to practice criticism using several different perspectives. The artifact itself can be any form of written/visual communication you are interested in--e.g., a speech, social movement, film, TV episode, a short book, a book chapter, a protest, or series of letters, advertisement, music video, youtube clip, etc. The artifact can have visual elements, but you will want it to have a significant amount of discourse (words) or it will be difficult to analyze. You should expect

that the artifact will need to be altered or expanded during the course of the semester to work with the various methods. Please choose something of *social significance*, that is, do not choose something relatively unheard of or considered trivial unless you can justify that it was unjustly overlooked.

Critique Papers:

After choosing an artifact(s), the remainder of the course will focus on learning how to analyze and write about it from several perspectives.

We will be studying seven different perspectives in this class. You will apply three out of the seven and use them to write two 4-6 page papers and one 7-8 page paper applying the perspectives to your artifact(s).

Each paper should include these elements:

- 1) an introductory paragraph or two that explains the purpose and/or thesis of the critique, or asks a research question;
- 2) a short introduction to the artifact
- 3) a preview of the main points of the paper (may be at end of first or second paragraph above);
- 4) a careful analysis that applies the concepts of the perspective to details of the text.

Papers will be evaluated on the basis of:

- match between theoretical perspective and analysis
- originality and persuasiveness of arguments
- detailed use of examples or data from the artifact(s) to argue your case
- clear organization
- clarity and style of writing
- writing mechanics and proofreading

A further explanation of each paper will be handed out in class before the assignment is due.

Application presentation:

For each method (besides generative), two groups of students will present 15 minute presentations of an application of the method. You will present twice during the course of the semester. For this project, you will be asked to join with 4 other classmates to perform and then present an analysis of an artifact of your choice (but **not** the artifact you chose for your individual papers).

During the presentation your group will:

1. Make the artifact available to the entire class either through handouts, posters, or powerpoint/internet.

Please make sure the artifact is something interesting that the class can understand relatively quickly. A presidential speech is too long for a 15 minute presentation—it would take 10 minutes for them to read it alone. A short section or cutting would be appropriate. Same goes for movies, books, etc.

2. Describe the artifact.
3. Explain why you chose the artifact.
4. Establish the relationship between the artifact and the method.
5. Describe your findings from the application of the method to the artifact.
6. Explain what you found useful and difficult about the method.

I will be grading your group on the following criteria: choice of artifact, presentation to the class, insight of discussion/analysis, understanding of the critical method, and staying on time.

Short papers:

Short (4-6 page) individual papers will be due one week after you present a method application to the class. For example, if your group does a cluster analysis of a television ad for the class presentation, your short paper using the cluster method to analyze your individual artifact will be due a week later. You will have two short papers.

Quizzes:

Quizzes will take place during the first 5 minutes of class. Quiz material will come from the reading assigned for that day or class activities. No makeup quizzes or extra credit will be given for absences or late attendance. Please come to class on time. Quiz questions may be any of the following: multiple choice, fill in the blank, or short answer.

Final paper:

The final paper will analyze a communication artifact using the **generative method of criticism**, the last method discussed in class and the one most commonly used for rhetorical criticism research.

Drafts:

Final paper drafts are due on Nov. 26th. They will not be evaluated on their content, but on their completeness. Bring two copies to class, one to hand to me and one to give to your critique partner. **Late papers will not be given credit.**

Workshops:

You will be asked to critique one other student's final paper at the end of the term. You will receive the paper on Tuesday, Nov. 26th and will need to **have two** copies of a written critique finished and ready to hand to the author at the first of the period on Dec.

3rd. Please bring two copies. You need to return a **marked draft**, along with the **written critique**, to the author.

Final papers are due on Dec. 5th in class.

READING THE SCHEDULE

1. This schedule is subject to change if the demands of the course require it. *Expect additional short readings and assignments to be added during the course of the semester.*
2. The reading assignment will be **discussed** the day it is listed.
3. Assignments are written in **bold type**.

Date	Topic	Reading/assignment
<u>Week 1</u> Aug 27, 29	Tues: Course Introduction Thurs: Nature of Rhetorical Criticism	Tues: Thurs: pp. 3-9
<u>Week 2</u> Sept. 3, 5	Tues: Doing Rhetorical Criticism Thurs: Selecting an artifact	Tues: pp. 9-21 Thurs: Bring examples of artifacts to class
<u>Week 3</u> Sept. 10, 12	Tues: Neo-Aristotelian Criticism Thurs: Neo-Aristotelian essays	Tues: pp. 21-28 Thurs: pp. 28-59
<u>Week 4</u> Sept. 17, 19	Tues: Neo-Aristotelian application Thurs: Cluster Analysis	Tues: Thurs: pp. 63-69
<u>Week 5</u> Sept. 24, 26	Tues: Cluster Analysis essays Thurs: Cluster analysis application	Tues: pp. 69-95 Thurs:
<u>Week 6</u> Oct. 1, 3	Tues: Generic Criticism Thurs: Generic Criticism essays	Tues: pp. 137-145 Thurs: pp. 145-205
<u>Week 7</u> Oct. 8, 10	Tues: Generic criticism application Thurs: Narrative Criticism	Tues: Thurs: pp. 307-317

<u>Week 8</u> Oct. 15, 17	Tues: Narrative Criticism essays Thurs: <i>Attend your Friday classes!</i>	Tues: pp. 317-351 Thurs: Attend Friday classes
<u>Week 9</u> Oct. 22, 24	Tues: Narrative Criticism application Thurs: Ideological Criticism	Tues: Thurs: pp. 209-220
<u>Week 10</u> Oct. 29, 31	Tues: Ideological Criticism essays Thurs: Ideological Criticism application	Tues: pp. 220-261 Thurs:
<u>Week 11</u> Nov. 5,7	Tues: Visual Analysis Thurs: Visual Analysis	Tues: Kress & van Leeuwen pp. p. 119-135 Thurs: Kress & van Leeuwen pp. 135-158
<u>Week 12</u> Nov. 12, 14	Tues: Generative criticism Thurs. <i>No class. Prof. Peebles is at a conference. Begin drafting your final papers.</i>	Tues: Thurs:
<u>Week 13</u> Nov. 19, 21	Tues: Generative criticism essays Thurs: Generative Criticism Application	Tues: pp. 387-404 Thurs: pp. 404-444.
<u>Week 14</u> Nov. 26, Nov. 28	Tues: Draft Due—bring 2 copies to class. Thurs: <i>Happy Thanksgiving!</i>	Tues: Thurs:
<u>Week 15</u> Dec. 3, 5	Tues: Workshop Thurs: Final papers due	Tues: Written critiques due at the start of class—2 copies. Thurs: Bring final copy of paper to class.

Please keep in mind the following

I will try to respond to all emails within 24 hours of receiving them, with the exception being the weekend. I will not be answering emails after 6 p.m. on weekdays or on Saturday and Sunday. Expect replies first thing on Monday morning.

Assignments:

- All assignments must be turned in at the beginning of the class period that they are due or else they will receive 05% off the final grade each day the assignment is late including the due date.
- All presentations must be performed on the due date in class in order to receive full credit. Exceptions will be made for extreme documented circumstances or if arrangements are made with me prior to the presentation due date.
- Plagiarized work will receive an F for assignment and may, depending on the severity of the infringement, receive a failing grade for the course and/or expulsion from the university.
- Students may not use a paper written in another class for credit in this one, or vice versa, without instructor consent.
- Please refer to the university honesty/honor code for further policies pertinent to this class.
- All work is to be typed, double spaced and free of grammatical and spelling errors.

In the classroom:

- If you have a disability, I strongly encourage you to contact the Disability Resource Center or myself so that the classroom environment can be made conducive to your learning style.
- I also encourage all students to take advantage of my offices hours or e-mail if you have any concerns or questions over any aspect of the course. I am here to help you learn!
- Feel free to bring food and drink. Make sure you have one hand to write with and please clean up after yourself.
- Finally, I try to create a comfortable classroom environment that contributes to learning. For that reason I ask that you turn off telephones, no iPods and absolutely no text messaging! Please refrain from bringing anything else to class that may be a distraction for you or any of the other students.

