

**Communication Criticism
CMST 4460**

Instructor: Jennifer Peeples

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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.

Evaluations:

Written group critique	15%
Two group presentations (5% ea.)	10%
Critique paper	20%
Complete final draft	2.5%
Workshop (read student paper and comment)	2.55%
Final paper	30%
Method explanation	5%
Quizzes	<u>15%</u>
	100%

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

Assignments

Critique Papers:

We will be studying seven different rhetorical perspectives in this class. You will apply at least three out of the seven to analyze artifacts. You will document your analyses by writing one 4-6 page group paper, one 4-6 page individual paper, and one 7-8 page paper.

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 (the thing you are analyzing).
- 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.

Presentations:

For each method, 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 or 5 classmates to perform and then present an analysis of an artifact of your choice (it must be an artifact that is different from 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 well over the allotted time to read it. 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) papers will be due one week after you present a method and an application to the class. For example, if your group does a cluster analysis of a television ad for the class presentation, your group paper using the cluster method to analyze an artifact will be due a week later. You will have one group short paper and one individual short paper.

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 and method explanation:

The final paper will analyze a communication artifact using any method you have not previously used during the semester. In addition, you will include a short (no more than 1 page) paper explaining why your particular method was the best one to choose to critique your artifact.

Drafts:

Final paper drafts are due on April 16th. Mark each section of the paper (thesis, method, justification, etc.) on the draft with a subhead. They will not be evaluated on their content, but on their completeness. Email me a copy before class and bring a hard copy to give to your critique partner. **Late papers will not be given credit.**

Workshops:

You will critique one other student's final paper. You will receive the paper on Tuesday, April 23rd and will need to email me a copy of a written critique and bring a hard copy for the author to class. You need to return a **marked draft**, along with the **written critique**, to the author.

Final papers are due on April 23rd 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>		
Jan 8	Thurs: Course Introduction	
<u>Week 2</u>	Tues: Nature of Rhetorical Criticism	Tues: pp. 3-9
Jan 13, 15	Thurs: Doing Rhetorical Criticism	Thurs: pp. 9-21
<u>Week 3</u>	Tues: Neo-Aristotelian Criticism	Tues: pp. 21-28
Jan. 20, 22	Thurs: Neo-Aristotelian essays	Thurs: pp. 28-59
<u>Week 4</u>	Tues: Neo-Aristotelian application	Tues:
Jan. 27, 29	Thurs: Cluster Analysis	Thurs: pp. 63-69
<u>Week 5</u>	Tues: Cluster Analysis essays	Tues: pp. 69-95
Feb. 3, 5	Thurs: Cluster analysis application	Thurs:
<u>Week 6</u>	Tues: Generic Criticism	Tues: pp. 137-145
Feb. 10, 12	Thurs: Generic Criticism essays	Thurs: pp. 145-205
<u>Week 7</u>	Tues: <i>Attend your Monday classes</i>	Tues:
Feb. 17, 19	Thurs: Generic criticism application	Thurs:
<u>Week 8</u>	Tues: Narrative Criticism	Tues: pp. 307-317
Feb. 24, 26	Thurs: Narrative Criticism essays	Thurs: pp. 317-351

<u>Week 9</u> Mar. 3, 5	Tues: Narrative Criticism application Thurs: Ideological Criticism	Tues: Thurs: pp. 209-220
<u>Week 10</u> Mar. 10, 12	Tues: Ideological Criticism essays Thurs: Ideological Criticism application	Tues: pp. 220-261 Thurs:
<u>Week 11</u> Mar. 17, 19	Spring Break!	
<u>Week 12</u> Mar. 24, 26	Tues: Visual Analysis Thurs: Visual Analysis	Tues: Kress & van Leeuwen pp. p. 119-135 Thurs: Kress & van Leeuwen pp. 135-158
<u>Week 13</u> Mar. 31, Apr. 2	Tues: Visual Analysis Application Thurs. Generative criticism	Tues: Thurs: pp. 387-404
<u>Week 14</u> Apr. 7, 9	Tues: Generative criticism essays Thurs: Generative Criticism Application	Tues: pp. 404-444 Thurs:
<u>Week 15</u> Apr. 14, 16	Tues: Draft Due —email one copy to me and bring one hard copy to class. Thurs: Workshop. Written critiques-- email one copy to me and bring one hard copy along with a marked draft.	Tues: Work on final paper Thurs: Work on final paper and critique
<u>Week 16</u> Apr. 21, 23	Tues: <i>Work day</i> Thurs: Final papers due. Bring copy of paper and explanation to class.	Tues: Work on final paper Thurs:
<u>Final Exam week</u>		

Please keep in mind the following**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. The paper must be turned in three days after the due date (including weekends) or I will not accept it.
- 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, no ear buds, 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.

