ENGLISH 309A: PRINCIPLES & PRACTICES OF RHETORIC 1

The effect of speech upon the condition of the soul is comparable to the power of drugs over the nature of bodies. For just as different drugs dispel different secretions from the body, and some bring an end to disease and others to life, so also in the case of speeches, some distress, others delight, some cause fear, others make the hearers bold, and some drug and bewitch the soul with a kind of evil persuasion.

—Gorgias of Leontini

Rhetoric is the counterpart of dialectic.

—Aristotle of Stagira

TUESDAYS, THURSDAYS, 10:00-11:20, DWE 1502

Course conductor: **Randy Harris**, x35362, raha@uwaterloo.ca,
Office hours: Wednesdays, 9:30-10:30, Thursdays, 12:30-2:00; HH 247

COURSE EPITOME

This is what the calendar tells us:

> [English 309A is a] study of rhetorical theories from the Classical period (Pre-Socratic to Augustine) with an emphasis on how these theories reflect changing attitudes towards language, reality, and the self.

And it is. But now ask yourself, "Why?" What's the point of studying this old stuff? Because this old stuff is the foundation of the study of how you think, how you judge, how you communicate, and how you make a difference (or why you fail to). More than that. Look around you. We are in **the most rhetorically saturated epoch in human history**. This old stuff can help us navigate, shape, and resist the suasions that are navigating, shaping, and resisting us.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The objectives of 309A are the objectives of liberal arts (the arts of liberty) as a way of life: the enhancement of critical thinking in both the **private sphere** (exercising judgement) and the **public sphere** (engaging society and culture).

Our specific knowledge outcomes include: what **rhetoric** is as a field, and what it allows us to say about ourselves and our **politico-cultural habitat**; a set of overlapping **rhetorical perspectives** on ourselves and our habitat, centrally including **Sophistic**, **Aristotelian**, and **Ciceronian** frameworks; how we are shaped by our habitat, for good and for ill; how rhetoric provides tools and strategies for resisting some of that shaping, enhancing some of it, knowing what to resist, what to enhance; and how those tools and strategies can also be used for reciprocally shaping that habitat, for good and for ill.

COGNITIVE SCIENCE MINOR

English 309A is an elective towards the Cognitive Science Option. Why? **Rhetoric is ineliminably cognitive.**

DIGITAL BASES OF OPERATIONS

There is an English 309A Facebook page (**UW309A**). How much we use it remains to be seen, but I will be regularly be updating the status, as well as occasionally posting links or discussion points; you are welcome to do the same.

There is also an English 309A UW ACE page. It may get some use as well, but its main purpose is to house the Turnitin dropbox for the course, and distribute some texts.

TEXTBOOKS

REQUIRED TEXT

Pernot, Laurent. 2005. *Rhetoric in antiquity*. Translated by W. E. Higgins. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press. ISBN: 0-8132-1407-6.

Various public-domain or low-cost texts. Please note: All of these texts are available on the internet, but **you will have to find them yourself**. This job is one of the requirements of the course.

RECOMMENDED TEXT

Acheson, Katherine. 2010. *Writing Essays About Literature*. Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press. ISBN: 978-1-55111-992-2

REQUIREMENTS	WORTH	DUE
Take-home midterm exam	**25%**	**20 – 23 October**
Final exam	**35%**	**13 December; 9:00 - 11:30 AM; RCH 305**
Essay / Project	**40%**	**proposal** due: midnight **27 October** **essay /project** due: midnight **29 November**

EXAMS

MIDTERM

The Midterm will be an analysis of some assigned artefact along specific critical grooves; the artefact and the grooves will be revealed during the **20 October** class; your analysis must be digitally submitted by midnight **23 October**.

FINAL

You will have to know both "facts" and "ideas" for this course. To test the former, the final exam will include multiple-choice, true/false, short-answer questions. The textbook is an important guidebook to ancient rhetoric, but many of these facts will come from me. You need to show up for class, take clear, thorough notes, ask any questions that surface, talk to each other, get notes when you miss class; most of all, **think about and apply what you hear**. If you *use* the information, it will stick. For the "ideas" quotient of 309A, there will be essay questions.

The final exam will cover **the entire course**.

ESSAY / PROJECT

Your essay / project grade (choose one or the other, an essay or a change-the-world project) is the **largest and most important component of your mark**. Start thinking about this assignment right away. I'm not kidding. It will not have to be very long (2,750 - 3,250 words), but it will have to demonstrate thought, research, and craft. If you choose an essay, you should work on it diligently throughout the term. It should shape your thought and understanding as you shape it. I will work with you on all stages of its development—invention, arrangement, style and delivery. Feel free to bring drafts to my office hours to discuss and develop. If you choose to do a change-the-world project, you will need to be even more active, picking an exigence early in the term (by the end of September at the latest), and formulating a rhetorical plan to change the world. Again, feel free to come and see me to discuss its development. For the project (but not the essay) **you may work in self-selected teams**.

The essay will need to be a research-based critical analysis examining **a cultural artefact** in the light of some theory or theorist we are studying. A typical artefact for analysis would be an oration (in print, audio, or video), a novel, a TV show, but also a website or song or game, a DVD interface, or a podcast, or the poster over your room-mate's bed, ... look around you: rhetoric is everywhere. Remember though, critical analyses need to be **theoretically informed**, so you will have to draw on the concepts and positions explored in the course, reinforced by specific readings, documented in the essay and listed in its bibliography. **No fewer than ten sources** are acceptable, including **primary readings of the theorists** you are deploying.

What matters for your **understanding**, and consequently for your grade, is how you develop your analysis: what your examination yields in terms of explaining central aspects of the artefact and/or the framework you adopt, and how you demonstrate that yield (significantly including the research you marshal and deploy, and the cogency of your argument).

The change-the-world Project will need to **identify something that needs fixed in our politico-cultural habitat** and then make well-considered rhetorical moves to effect that fix. My evaluation will depend on the success and scope of the project, particularly as it is manifest in a project report. You can structure it any way you like, but it should have at least five sections:

I. The **problem** (what you changed or tried to change).
II. The **method** (how you tried to change it).
III. The **narrative** (what you did, what 'they' did, what else you did, what else 'they' did ...).
IV. The **analysis** (how effective your rhetoric was, how effective 'their' rhetoric was).
V. All **relevant documentation** (copies of letters, copies of posters, transcripts of speeches, and so on) in one or more appendixes. Any audio,

video, interactive-media materials used in the project should be supplied by disk, link, or download site.

Sections II, III, & IV should demonstrate a thorough awareness of rhetorical principles, especially those principles discussed by the ancients. The submission should include between 2,750 - 3,250 words of description and analysis.

A proposal is required for the essay or the project. You will need to write up a one-page plan and discuss it with me

The **essay proposal** should identify the **thesis** you will be arguing (for instance, that Pierre Trudeau's performance in the "Just Watch Me" interview is an anti-Platonic use of dialectical tools; or that Eminem's "Kim" achieves moral value because the artistic ethos critiques the persona ethos; or that we should banish Modern Warfare 3 from the polis because it dangerously mixes pathotic delight with repetitive violence). You will need to do **preliminary research** on your thesis: on both critical analyses of the artefact and on the theoretical notions you are applying.

The **project proposal** should identify **a problem** and the context, sketch out the **suasive plan** you believe will solve the problem, and identify the rhetorical concepts you will be particularly leveraging.

My evaluation of the essay (including the proposal) will depend on the soundness, analytical sophistication, research depth, and rhetorical appropriateness of your work, along the following metrics:

ESSAY PROPOSAL

Articulation of your thesis	3%	
Research synopsis	4%	10%
Style and grammar (sentence and paragraph structure, citation conventions, diction, spelling, punctuation, agreement, …)	3%	

ESSAY

Articulation and framing of your thesis	10%	
Research (quality of sources; description of concepts)	10%	
Evidence (artefact data, theory deployment)	25%	90%
Argumentation (relevance, coherence, structure)	25%	
Style and grammar (as above)	20%	

My evaluation of the Change-the-world project (including the proposal) will depend on the scope, suitability, and effectiveness of the suasive activity (or the

suite of related suasive activities). Please note that while the project does not have a primary focus on research, you will need to **define and explain the rhetorical concepts** you deploy, which requires you to quote or paraphrase (and therefore **cite and document**) the scholarly sources of those concepts.

PROJECT PROPOSAL

Articulation of your problem	3%	
Rhetorical approach	4%	10%
Style and grammar (as above)	3%	

PROJECT

Articulation and framing of your problem	10%	
Suitability and description of methods	10%	
Execution of methods	25%	90%
Argumentation (relevance, coherence, structure)	25%	
Style and grammar (as above)	20%	

Digital submission. All documentation (midterm, proposal, essay / project) must be submitted as **PDF files**. The midterm and proposal as email attachments to ra-ha@uwaterloo.ca, the essay or project to the turnitin dropbox, or as an email attachment. Please be sure to follow the **filenaming conventions**: All files should named with your last name and the assignment category (e.g., Harris-midterm.pdf).

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to both follow and promote principles of **honesty**, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. That includes me as much as you, which is one of the reasons I spell things out in this much detail. If you think any aspect of my conduct, including teaching, marking, and counseling, is unfairly detrimental to you or the class in general, you have not only the right but the obligation to let me, the English Department Chair, or the Dean of Arts, know about it, whomever you are most comfortable speaking with or you feel most appropriate for hearing your views and their reasons.

Quoth Quintilian, "as it is **the duty of the master** to teach, so it is **the duty of the pupil** to show himself teachable. The two obligations are mutually indispensable." Let's not worry about the sexism inherent in Latin, nor the connotations that have crept into the English translation of *magister* (i.e., *master*), and get to the heart of the matter: **we have mutual obligations**. I will be clear, systematic, and knowledgeable. I will tell you about the principles and practices of classical rhetoric. You need to be attentive, responsive, and open. You need to explore the principles and practices of classical rhetoric. Ask questions if you have them, complete the assignments carefully and

on time, and **do the readings before coming to the class** in which they are slotted.

The digital appliance policies: **No phones**. If you have a particular reason for needing a phone—your partner is pregnant, you are waiting to hear about a lung transplant—**just ask me** and if the request is reasonable, I will approve it; if you haven't been approved for phone usage and I find you texting or flinging pigs at birds, I'll ask you to leave the room, and my mood will probably not be kindly the next time I see you. **No email, no Facebook or Google+, no IM or chat, no surfing,** which includes, for instance, what you might regard as course-related web searching (if, say, you want to know the meaning of *dunamis* or *eunoia*, which your professor has just professed). **If you need some extra information**—a definition, some context, a date—there are two options. Stick up your hand, and ask; **see if the professor is worth those big bucks he's getting**. Or wait until after class, and make your offerings to the gods of Google. You may not believe it, but a lecture is a unique temporal event, one which presents special learning opportunities you don't get on the street or the web or even in the library. Don't waste it. To sum up: **no digital activity at all** beyond note taking.

The late policy is simple: **don't be**. The turnitin dropbox is disabled as of midnight 29 November. If personal concerns, including health issues, prevent you from meeting a deadline, contact me **ahead of time** to make arrangements; if unforeseen circumstances prevent you from meeting a deadline, contact me when you are able and we can work something out. Please note that bad planning, conflict with assignments in other courses, and video-game addictions (to list a few attested reasons offered by students in the past) are not interpretable as personal concerns.

Discipline: You are expected to know what constitutes academic integrity [check Academic Integrity at UW] to avoid committing an academic offence, and to take responsibility for your actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about "rules" for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course instructor, academic advisor, or the undergraduate Associate Dean. But **ignorance is not a defence**. For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71, Student Discipline. For typical penalties check Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties.

Appeals: A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70 (Student Petitions and Grievances) (other than a petition) or Policy 71 (Student Discipline) may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to Policy 72 (Student Appeals).

Grievances: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70, Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4. When in doubt

please be certain to contact the department's administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.

Note for Students with Disabilities: The Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD), located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the OPD at the beginning of each academic term.

Digital screening: The University of Waterloo utilizes the plagiarism detection application, Turnitin.com. There is a Tunitin dropbox on the **UW-ACE site** for English 309A. Please submit your essay or project to that dropbox. Here is UW's boilerplate text about Turnitin:

> PLAGIARISM DETECTION SOFTWARE (TURNITIN) WILL BE USED TO SCREEN ASSIGNMENTS IN THIS COURSE. THIS IS BEING DONE TO VERIFY THAT USE OF ALL MATERIALS AND SOURCES IN ASSIGNMENTS IS DOCUMENTED. STUDENTS WILL BE GIVEN AN OPTION IF THEY DO NOT WANT TO HAVE THEIR ASSIGNMENT SCREENED BY TURNITIN. IN THE FIRST WEEK OF THE TERM, DETAILS WILL BE PROVIDED ABOUT ARRANGEMENTS AND ALTERNATIVES FOR THE USE OF TURNITIN IN THIS COURSE.

The option this text mentions is for you to submit your paper (**PDF only**) as an email attachment to my mailbox (raha@uwaterloo.ca), so that I can personally screen it for originality/plagiarism.