

English 793 Metonymy

Monday, 9:00-11:50, HH 227

The impulse to speak and think with metonymy is a significant part of our everyday experience. Traditionally viewed as just one of many tropes, and clearly subservient in most scholars' minds to the master trope of metaphor, metonymy shapes the way we think and speak of ordinary events and is the basis for many symbolic comparisons in art and literature.

—Raymond Gibbs, Jr.

Course Epitome

We will look at metonymy not as a stylistic overlay, but as constitutive of thought and knowledge and understanding. Our orientation will therefore be cognitive, and we will see that metonyms are broader, more pervasive, and considerably more subtle than shallow theories of style would suggest.

Evaluation

Essay proposal, 10%

Essay presentation, 15%

Essay, 50%

Participation (including weekly postings), 25%

Texts

A collection of assembled readings from poetics, linguistics, rhetoric, and philosophy, including works by such scholars as Hugh Bredin, Kenneth Burke, Gilles Fauconnier, Raymond Gibbs, Roman Jakobson, Zoltán Kövecses, and Mark Turner. They are listed on the schedule for the course on the next page. A few of these readings will be put on reserve in the library (the ones in red on the schedule); all others are available on the internet, most through our library system, others through various webby maneuvers. You are expected, as part of your research for the course, to find and download (and, if you like, print) these readings. Oh, and read them, too.

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Office hours: Mondays, 1:00-2:00; Thursdays, 12:30-2:00

Schedule

Date	Topics	Readings*
3 May	Hi, howdy-dooddy, what are we all doing here?	
10 May	Figuration	Greene (1893), "A Grouping of Figures of Speech;" "Turner (1997), "Figure"
17 May	Metaphor and Metonymy	Burke (1941), "Four Master Tropes;" Jakobson (1956), "Two Aspects;" de León (2004), "Metonymic Motivation of the CONDUIT Metaphor"
24 May	Victoria Day	
31 May	Metonymy and thought	Bredin (1984), "Metonymy;" Seto (1999), "Distinguishing Metonymy from Synecdoche"
7 June	Cognitive Rhetoric	Gibbs (1999), "Thinking and Speaking;" Papafragou (1995), "Metonymy and Relevance"
14 June	Semiology	de Man (1973), "Semiology and Rhetoric"
21 June	Semiotics	Eco (1983), "The Scandal of Metaphor"
28 June	Applications—Linguistic and rhetorical	Rundblad (2007), "Impersonal, General, and Social;" Eubanks and Schaeffer (2004), "A Dialogue Between Traditional and Cognitive Rhetoric"
5 July	Research essays	Each other's proposals
12 July	Applications—Literary	Faith (2004), "Schematizing the Maternal Body;" Woodward (1992), "Four Handsome Negresses."
19 July	Debate	Peirsman and Geeraerts (2006a), "Metonymy as a Prototypical Category;" Croft (2006), "On Explaining Metonymy;" Peirsman and Geeraerts (2006b), "Don't let Metonymy be Misunderstood"
26 July	Presentations	

* The readings in red are on reserve in Porter. Additionally, there are two backgrounder pieces I recommend you read, which I have not worked directly into the schedule, Fauconnier and Turner (1999), which is available on reserve in the library (part of the same collection that includes Gibbs's and Seto's papers), and Oakley (2010), available on the course ACE page.

Essay

Start thinking about your essay right away, and have something scoped out by the end of May. I'm serious. This is a graduate English course, so we know that writing an essay is a profound learning experience, for the author and potentially for all its readers, not a quick proof-of-concept clacked out in the last week or two to achieve a grade. Your essay, then, will be a term-long endeavour, including a peer-reviewed proposal in late June (the 28th), and a class presentation, on the way to the final course draft.

To write a good essay, let alone a great one (which I am always on the lookout for), you need to have a communal audience in mind. You can't just write it for the professor. So, have a professional destination planned for your essay—ordinarily, an academic journal, possibly a trade magazine, but I am also willing to listen to other suggestions. You should check out appropriate venues for your ideas, and choose one which will then provide the structure for your essay (word count, citation style, presence/absence of graphics, and so on).^{*} You do not need to submit your essay to this venue, though I strongly encourage you to do so, but you do need to target the writing to it.

To write a good essay, let alone a great one (which I am always on the lookout for), you need to have a template (or templates) to work from. The most obvious ones for this course are the essays by Faith, Eubanks & Schaeffer, Rundblad, and Woodward, which are all fairly contemporary contributions to current academic journals, each of which identifies a specific critical problem and applies theories of metonymy to it. (We will not be looking a trade publications directly in the course, though I would be very interested in hearing about them from you.) But the pieces by Seto, Papafragou, and de Leon—indeed, even by Burke, should you genuinely be up to the task (I'm not)—could all serve individually or collectively, as models for your work, as well. Their projects are more theoretical than critical, and consequently harder to bring off; still, you are welcome to try.

To write a good essay, let alone a great one (which I am always on the lookout for), you need to test-market your ideas, provoke feedback, and accommodate or respond to (or, sometimes, ignore) that feedback, as appropriate. Writing is, in much larger part than is often realized, a social activity. A goodly part of this in the course will come with the proposal, on which you will get not only my but also your classmate's impressions and suggestions. Another major whack of it will come with a formal presentation in the last weeks of the course, where you outline your argumentation and

^{*} We will work the details out as necessary, but if you choose an academic journal, no additional documentation will be required. If you choose a trade magazine, or some other non-academic outlet, I may require an additional few pages documenting your research and/or linking your ideas to relevant scholars or theories.

implications for the class. Should you choose to submit the essay, another round of feedback to take into account will come with my grading comments.

To write a good essay, let alone a great one (which I am always on the lookout for), you need to have a particular sub-genre in mind, an approach. The most obvious approach for this course would be a critical examination of some rhetorical or literary document—which means, essentially, any document at all probed from a rhetorical or literary perspective, where *document* is construed very broadly, to include performances, electronic media, even architecture or packaging—with a theoretically informed eye for the workings of metonymy and/or related figures. This would be the mode of Eubanks or Woodward. But you might also want to look at metonymy with respect to a particular theory or domain. Perhaps you want to examine the hitherto unnoticed role of metonymy in some aspect of argumentation theory, or in the use of graphics in technical instructions. This would be the mode of Papafragou or Runblad. Other possibilities include, depending on your interests and expertise, the functions of metonymy in some aspect of HCI (voice, graphic, even haptic), in some clinical syndrome (very roughly, along the lines of sections of Jakobson's paper), in some scientific project (statistics are metonymical to the core), and so on.

My evaluation of the essay will depend on the soundness, analytical sophistication, research depth, and rhetorical appropriateness of your work, along the following metric:

Essay evaluation

Articulation and framing of your argument	10%
Research	40%
Use of evidence (research and analysis)	20%
Quality of argument (coherence, soundness)	20%
Style and grammar (sentence and paragraph structure, diction, spelling, punctuation, agreement, ...)	10%

The essay is due by midnight, 2 August. I require electronic submission, which facilitates return and easier screening for originality/plaigiarism.

Proposal

You need to write up a two-page essay proposal, one page outlining your topic, approach, and contribution to the community of interest, all in the context of your selected venue, the other giving a preliminary bibliography of works you will consult and/or have begun consulting. You will need to post

this proposal online (by 6 PM, 25 June) for both me and the rest of the class to read.

My evaluation of the proposal will depend on the care with which you have developed and articulated it, including the research you have done, and the venue you have chosen, along the following metric:

Proposal evaluation

Articulation of your thesis	20%
Research outline	40%
Venue suitability	20%
Style and grammar (as above)	20%

Presentation

Your paper should be largely in place by the presentation date, which includes a solid first draft (though I do not need to see the draft), and your presentation will outline your project to the class.

The presentation should be 10-20 minutes long; if you have any aids or need any equipment (handouts, overhead projector, data projector, ...), please make sure you take care of all arrangements ahead of time. You will lose performance marks for last-minute fumbling.

My evaluation of the presentation will depend on the clarity and professionalism with which you deliver it, the overall quality of the argument, and the effectiveness with which you integrate your research, along the following metric:

Presentation evaluation

Articulation of your thesis	20%
Research (how you sketch its relation to your work)	40%
Quality of argument (coherence, soundness, use of evidence)	20%
Style and performance (clarity, ethos, aids)	20%

Participation

This course is a seminar: you are expected to take an active role in its development. Come to class prepared, contribute to discussions, participate in our collective growth in understanding metonymy, rhetoric, and varieties of discourse. In particular, think reflectively about all the readings, and think publicly.

Fifteen percent of your overall course mark will come from your active engagement with the issues in the class. I use a merit/demerit policy for this evaluation. Merit is awarded primarily on the quality of participation: asking relevant questions; making relevant observations; complementing or advancing someone else's contribution; and generally being a constructive rhetor. Quantity of participation is a positive factor to the extent that more quality contributions are preferable to fewer quality contributions, but talking for the sake of talking is not a good idea. Demerit will be assessed reluctantly, and only on the basis of repeated instances. The grounds for the demerit system are: absenteeism (you can't participate if you're not there); whispering or chatting while other people are talking; and/or making lengthy, unfocused comments that draw away from the general thread of discussion (verbal wanking).

The remainder of your participation mark (ten percent of your overall course mark) will come from your online posts. They will not, however, be graded. Here's the scheme: you will get the full 10% for doing them all, on time, 5% if you miss one deadline, 0% if you miss more than one—yep, you read that correctly, 0%.

Participation evaluation

Discussion (in-class and online)	15%
Online reading-response posts	10%

Online posts

The posts should be 300-to-500-word opinionated summaries: synopses of the week's readings, inter-larded with some evaluation of their cogency, relevance, and value. I want to see (1) that you have read them, (2) that you have thought about them, and I want to (3) start the discussion before we get into the classroom. They should be submitted by 6:00 PM on the Friday before the class, beginning 7 May. Everyone is expected to read all the posts before coming to class. You are welcome (indeed, encouraged) to respond to one another's posts on the discussion board.

No posts are required for 16 or 23 July, but if you want to use the discussion space to put up remarks or artifacts related to your presentation, feel free to do so, and to use the ACE mailer to alert the rest of us.

Your 25 June post will be your essay proposal.

Draconian principles

No late assignments will be accepted, no extensions will be granted, and no incompletes will be awarded, without very strong reasons.