

English 101B: An Introduction to Rhetoric

Rhetoric at its truest seeks to perfect [humans] by showing them better versions of themselves.

—Richard Weaver

No such thing as unrhetorical 'natural' language exists that could be used as a point of reference: language is itself the result of purely rhetorical tricks and devices.

—Friederich Nietzsche

Communication is a moral question: Who is to make more effort, the person sending the message or the person receiving it?

—Umberto Eco

10:30-11:20 MWF, HH 2107

Course conductor: Randy Harris, x35362, raha@uwaterloo.ca,

Office hours: Mondays, 12:30-2:00, HH 247

Course epitome

We are going to answer one question, a rather messy one, but one which should help you define your thinking, your communicating, and your life as both homo sapien and citizen: **what**, in the name of Sylvester McMonkey McBean, **is rhetoric?**

Objectives

The objectives of 101B are the ongoing objectives of liberal arts education generally, and rhetorical education specifically: the enhancement of critical thinking in both the **private sphere** (exercising judgement) and the **public sphere** (engaging society and culture). We will pursue them by building and refining our **facility with rhetoric**. If you do this with energy and focus, you should also gain more understanding of and competence in the ways and means of **communication**.

Theme song

"Everybody's talking," Tom Waits

Rules of engagement

No computers or 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 (on vibrate); if 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. Ditto, if you can demonstrate some need for a computer (from the Office for Persons with Disabilities), you can use one (but **no email, no Facebook or**

Google+, no IM or chat, no surfing). Some students, I know, use the web as a real-time course augmentation, to do course-related web searching (to find out, say, the meaning of *dunamis* or *entelechy*, which the professor has just professed). But if you need some on-the-spot **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 sanctioned note taking for students with OPD clearance). **Get a good notebook.** Bring a back-up writing implement.

Digital base of operations

For a variety of electronic services (essay submission, syllabus access and updates, occasional announcements, we will be using **Waterloo LEARN**. I will also comment on the class, or relevant material, on the Facebook page, **Prof RaHa**.

Texts

Required

Keith, William M., and Christian O. Lundberg. 2008. ***The Essential Guide to Rhetoric***. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Assorted texts, movies, podcasts, media objects, and the like, which we will examine throughout the term. They are marked in the schedule with red typography. These will be public domain or easily affordable cultural artifacts (99¢ iTunes downloads, for instance). But pay attention to this next part: **You will be largely responsible for accessing these items.** Occasionally, I will provide a link or additional information on the LEARN site, but you should be able to **find these items via simple research**. You are welcome, by the way, to collaborate in this research—for instance, by posting search results on the LEARN site, by using each other to crowd source the best sources, and so on. But, for the most part, **I will not help in this process**. You're big kids.

Read the Keith and Lundberg assignments **before the relevant class**, and again after the class, and as many times as it takes for you to get comfortable with the material. It's a little book; take it to the bathroom with you. I will expect you to know it, cover-to-cover.

Read/watch/listen to the critical texts **before the relevant class**, and come **prepared to discuss them**.

Recommended

Booth, Wayne C. 2004. *The Rhetoric of Rhetoric: The Quest for Effective Communication*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Style guide (the English department's official guide for academic writing)

Jane E. Aaron and Aimee Morrison. 2013. *The Little, Brown Compact Handbook*. Fifth Canadian edition. Aaron and McArthur. Toronto: Addison Wesley Longman.

Requirements	worth	due
Take-home midterm exam	25	5 November
Final exam	25	Saturday 8 December, 2012, 7:30 PM - 10:00 PM; RCH 308
Essay proposal	10	12 October
Essay	40	3 December

Exams

Midterm

The Midterm will be an analysis of some assigned artifact along specific critical grooves; the artifact and the grooves will be revealed during the 2 November class; your analysis must be digitally submitted by midnight 5 November.

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. These facts will come mostly from the textbook and the lectures. You need to read carefully and listen mindfully, take clear, thorough notes, ask any questions that surface, talk to each other; most of all, think about and apply what you read and hear. If you use the information, it will stick. For the "ideas" quotient of 101B, there will be essay questions.

The final exam will cover the entire course.

Essay & proposal

Your essay grade is the **largest and most important component of your mark**. Start thinking about your essay right away. I'm not kidding. It will not have to be very long (2,250 - 2,750 words), but it will have to demonstrate thought, research, and craft. You should work on your essay diligently. 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.

I require **digital submission**, in **RTF or PDF only**, using the naming convention **lastname-shorttitle.ext** (for example, harris-popeye.rtf), by midnight on the due date. This makes the logistics much simpler, and also permits easier screening for originality/plaigiarism. (the University of Waterloo utilizes essay screening software). Use the [Turnitin.com](https://www.turnitin.com) drop box on the Waterloo LEARN course page.

The essay will be a research-based critical analysis. You will have to **go beyond the course readings**, lectures, and discussions.

A critical analysis rhetorically examines a cultural artifact in the light of some theory. A typical artifact for analysis would be an oration, a political or popular or scientific argument, a novel or play, perhaps a debate. But a scene from a movie is perfectly acceptable, too, or a website or a DVD interface, or a podcast, or the poster over your room-mate's bed, even a gum wrapper would work. Remember though, critical analyses need to be **theoretically informed**, so you will have to draw on the concepts and positions explored in the course, and augmented with further sources.

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 artifact, and how you demonstrate that yield (significantly including the research you marshal and deploy, and the cogency of your argument).

A proposal is required. You will need to write up a one-page essay plan and discuss it with me before you write the essay. The proposal should identify the **thesis** you will be arguing (for instance, that *Bad Romance* is an ironic critique of the sexual commodification of women, or that Barack Obama's Cairo speech exhibits the classic features of Aristotelian ethos, or that Halo3 is dangerous for the motives it inculcates through identification). You will need to do preliminary **research** on your thesis: on both critical analyses of the artefact and on the theoretical framework you are applying. A **minimum of three** scholarly sources are required for the proposal, a **minimum of six** for the essay.

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:

Proposal

Articulation of your thesis	30
Research outline	40
Style and grammar (sentence and paragraph structure, diction, spelling, punctuation, agreement, ...)	30

Essay

Articulation and framing of your thesis	10
Research	25
Use of evidence (research and analysis)	25
Quality of argument	25
Style and grammar (as above)	15

Academic Integrity

Members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.

The late policy is simple: **don't be**. 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) should seek guidance from me or another academic advisor (for instance, the undergraduate officer of the English department, or the undergraduate Associate Dean of Arts. 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 English department 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 Turnitin 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.



Schedule

Date	Topics	Readings
10 September	Hello, happy to meet you	Keith and Lundberg, <i>The Essential Guide to Rhetoric</i> (yes, the whole pamphlet)
12 September	Rhetoric, the skinny	
14 September	Rhetoric, the phat	
17 September	Bullshit	<i>The Toronto Sun</i> , 17 September 2012 edition (The hardcopy newspaper)
19 September		
21 September		
24 September	Argumentation 1	Keith and Lundberg, chpt 4
26 September		"The Munk Debate on China" (CBC Ideas podcast, 25 August 2011)
28 September		
1 October	Genre 1	Keith and Lundberg, chpt 3
3 October		"Funeral Oration," Pericles (Thucydides); "On the Religion of the White Man and the Red" (Sogoyewapha)
5 October		"Just watch me" (Pierre Trudeau, CBC archives)
——— Thanksgiving ——		
10 October	Genre 2 (Proposal due on 12 th)	Three versions of "When the levee breaks," (by Kansas Joe, Led Zeppelin, & A Perfect Circle); "Kim" (Eminem)
12 October		
15 October	Style	Keith and Lundberg, chpt 6
17 October		<i>Meet John Doe</i> , Frank Capra
19 October		

Date	Topics	Readings
22 October	Argumentation 2	US Presidential Debates on Foreign Policy (22 Oct, 9:00-10:30 PM)
24 October		
26 October		
29 October	"The Media" (Midterm distributed on 2 nd ; due on 4 th)	Keith and Lundberg, chpt 2
31 October		CBC National (22 October) Colbert Nation (23 October) The Daily Show (23 October)
2 November		
5 November	Propaganda 1: Political	Keith and Lundberg, chpt 4
7 November		"Harper re-brands the government out of spite," Heather Mallick (Star, 6 March 2011)
9 November		
12 November	The Media	Kony 2012 (Invisible Children, video)
14 November	Library Research (Librarian Leeanne Romane)	
16 November	No class meeting, but upload bibliographic assignment	
19 November	Propaganda 2: Lifestyle	TMZ.com (website)
21 November		Here Comes Honey Boo Boo (TV)
23 November		"Kim Kardashian" results (Google News search string)
26 November	Character	"ygUduh," ee cummings
28 November		"The Noble Savage," Charles Dickens
30 November		"Dear Friends," Jack Layton
3 December	Will this be on the exam? (Essay due)	