

## Rhetoric and Composition

### Course Description

OE Rhetoric and Composition is a semester-long course, running concurrently with students' reading and research in individual subject areas. This course is designed to help students continue improving their skills in reasoning and argument. Throughout the semester, students will receive instruction in and feedback about group discussion, written argument, research skills, note-taking, oral presentations, and the completion of thesis-driven research projects. Students will practice integrating personal responses to texts with careful critical reading and analytical responses. One-on-one mentoring on individual research projects will help students practice revision in an active way: not merely proof-reading, but expanding research to answer emerging questions, effectively using multiple texts to frame an individual argument, responding to counterarguments, and clarifying individual positions about important ideas.

### Course Objectives

- to offer instruction in and help improve clear communication, in both formal and informal speaking and writing.
- to heighten students' awareness of audience, both in text and in spoken communication.
- to help improve students' comfort with basic concepts of argumentation, including use of texts as evidence and ability to respond to counterarguments, in texts or in a group.
- to build student confidence in thinking clearly, communicating honestly and effectively, and receiving helpful feedback.

**Books in the Library** *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed.  
*The Chicago Manual of Style*  
John Gage, *Shape of Reason*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed.  
Diana Hacker, *Rules for Writers*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed.  
Anne Lamott, *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*  
William Strunk and E. B. White, *Elements of Style*

### Assignments Assessed as Part of Course

Bi-weekly one idea papers (5)  
Bi-weekly memos (5)  
Weekly discussion participation  
Research Project I Paper  
Presentation  
Research Project II Paper  
Presentation  
Attendance at Lectures (at least 2 throughout semester) focused on note-taking and argumentative writing.  
Individual faculty-student conferences (number and time TBD).  
Daily, individual faculty-student conferences during research projects.

#### One-Idea Papers

These one-page assignments ask students to formalize the argumentative analysis being regularly performed in the notes. Students will select one major idea from one of the week's assigned readings. Students will then analyze the text's discussion of this idea and reflect on larger implications of this idea. One-idea papers thus provide a way to practice the analytical skills necessary for research writing.

### Memos

Memos provide a space for a slightly different form of reflection. Rather than focusing on rhetorical analysis, these one-page assignments invite more personal and potentially literary forms of response. Students are free to share any important thoughts that they have had during the course of the week's readings, lectures, and discussions. Thus, memos provide a space for brainstorming about potential areas of interest for future project research or as an additional way of processing the week's material.

### Research Projects

Throughout the semester, students will elect to complete two (2) individualized research projects. The topics of these projects should be tailored to fulfill required credits for the individual students. These topics should also reflect areas of individual interest. Students are expected to read in the range of 600-1200 pages of primary and secondary material during the research week and share discoveries, ideas, arguments, and results in a formal final project. Both Research Projects take the form of a research paper which includes one major rewrite, followed by a conference-style presentation; students have 60 minutes to present their topic and answer group questions, with the accompaniment of a handout, slide show, or other artifact.

### Individual Faculty-Student Conferences

Students will have frequent, required opportunities to interact with faculty in order to discuss personal development in the rhetoric and composition objectives. During core reading weeks, students will meet weekly with their discussion group leader in order to discuss note-taking, participation in daily discussion, and weekly writing assignments (memos/one-idea papers). During project periods, students will meet daily (or every other day) with their faculty advisor in order to discuss reading progress, refinement of project focus, development of thesis, and use of evidence.

## **Grading**

Students will be assessed in the following ways:

- Weekly faculty-student conferences reviewing the note-taking, writing and discussion opportunities of the previous week.
- Daily meetings with individual research advisor to review note-taking, thesis development, writing process, revision, formatting, and citation.
- Self-evaluations, followed by faculty-student conferences, at the end of each of the four main segments.
- Comprehensive evaluation at the end of the last segment. Assessment will be performed according to the according to the following guidelines:
  - We reserve the **A** for the combination of consistently high *effort* and *achievement* displayed across the board in your written and spoken work during the semester.
  - **B** indicates high effort but less than high achievement; or moderate effort but (nonetheless) relatively high achievement.
  - **C** indicates moderate effort at best and significantly less than high achievement.
  - **D** indicates low effort and low achievement generally.