

1-1-2006

Writing and American Rhetoric (English 204 H1)

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BEBE NICKOLAI

Writing and American Rhetoric

English 204 H1 (Honors Seminar), 4 Credits

BEBE NICKOLAI

MARYVILLE UNIVERSITY

BASCOM HONORS PROGRAM

LINDA PITELKA, DIRECTOR

Course Description:

This seminar develops students' skills in writing argumentative essays and speeches. Students examine the American rhetorical tradition in texts ranging from sermons of the Great Awakening to recent Presidential addresses. These texts serve as models as students write arguments demonstrating their knowledge of rhetorical strategies. Through a variety of written assignments, students discover their own most effective voices as writers. When students finish the class, they should be able to write effective argumentative essays based on research. Students will participate in small group work, peer editing, conferences with the instructor, and presentations.

Enrollment: 19

Texts:

Lend Me Your Ears: Great Speeches in History. Ed. William Safire.

Miles, Robert, Marc Bertomasco, & William Karns. *Prose Style: A Contemporary Guide*.

Recommended: Gibaldi, Joseph. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 6th ed.

Tentative Course Outline:

Jan. 17: Introduction to class; in-class essay

Jan. 19: Rewrite in-class essay.

Jan. 24: Analyzing and presenting an argument. *Sermons*: "Calvinist Jonathan Edwards Promises Hellfire and Damnation to the Sinful"; "Chief Red Jacket Rejects a Change of Religion"; "Lincoln, in His Second Inaugural, Seeks to Heal the Spiritual Wounds of War"

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- Jan. 26: *Tributes and Eulogies*: “Frederick Douglass Cuts through the Lincoln Myth to Consider the Man”; “John F. Kennedy, in Praise of Robert Frost, Celebrates the Arts in America”; “Senator Robert F. Kennedy Speaks after the Assassination of Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.”; Prose ch. 1: Levels of Style
- Jan. 31: *Commencement Speeches*: “Humorist Art Buchwald Speaks to Law Graduates”; “Language Maven William Safire Denounces the Telephone as the Subverter of Good English”; “General Colin Powell Urges African-American Students to Reject Racial Hatred”; Prose ch. 2: Connotations
- Feb. 2: **TEST: Bring books and notes. Final day to sign up for oral presentation of analysis of one speech. TYPED DRAFT of essay #1 is due:**
- Feb. 7: *War and Revolution Speeches*: “Patrick Henry Ignites the American Revolution”; “General Washington Talks His Officers Out of Insurrection”; “President Franklin D. Roosevelt Asks Congress to Declare War on Japan”; Prose ch. 3: Clarity.
- Feb. 9: **Essay #1 is due—turn in two copies.** *Trials*: “Antiwar Dissident Eugene V. Debs Addresses the Court Before Sentencing”; “Defense Lawyer Clarence Darrow Answers a Supporter of Capital Punishment”; Prose ch. 4: Specificity.
- Feb. 14: **Reader response form is due. Research ex. #1 is due: What is your currently controversial topic?** *Lectures and Instructive Speeches*: “William Lyon Phelps Praises the Owning of Books”; “After *Bush v. Gore*, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg Speaks Out for Judicial Independence”; “Bioethicist Leon Kass Warns against the ‘Brave New World’ of Cloning”; Prose ch. 5: Subjects and Verbs (verbs in sports pages)
- Feb. 16: Conferences with instructor
- Feb. 21: Conferences with instructor
- Feb. 23: **Research ex. 2 is due: Complete prewriting worksheet, brainstorming about your topic.** “Broadcaster Alistair Cooke Needles the Jargonists in Assessing the State of the English Language”; *Speeches of Social Responsibility*: “Social Reformer Maria Stewart Advocates Education for Black Women”; “Suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton Pleads for Women’s Rights”; Prose ch. 6: Conciseness
- Feb. 28: “Abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison Admits of No Compromise with the Evil of Slavery”; “Chief Seattle Cautions Americans to Deal Justly with His People”; “Susan B. Anthony Argues for Women’s Rights”; Prose ch. 7: Coordination (Hemingway)
- Mar. 2: **TEST: Bring books and notes. Typed draft of essay #2 is due.**
- Mar. 14: **Research ex. 3 is due: a summary of a source on your topic.** In-class essay

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- Mar. 16: Rewrite in-class essay.
- Mar. 21: **Essay #2 is due—turn in two copies.** “Governor Huey Long of Louisiana Proposes to End the Depression by Redistributing Wealth”; “Labor’s John L. Lewis Defends His Union’s Right to Strike”; “FDR Reminds the Daughters of the Revolution about Their Lineage”; Prose ch. 8: Subordination (Faulkner); ch. 9: Precision.
- Mar. 23: Résumé writing: visit from Director of Career Education
- Mar. 28: **Reader response form is due. Research ex. 4 is due: bibliography of at least 14 sources.** “Walter Lippmann Scores His Generational Cohort for Having Taken ‘the Easy Way’”; “Governor Kissin’ Jim Folsom of Alabama Startles the South with a Concern for the Negroes”; “Malcolm X Exhorts Afro-Americans to Confront White Oppression”; Prose ch. 10: Transitions; ch. 11: The Sound of the Sentence
- Mar. 30: conferences with instructor
- Apr. 4: conferences with instructor
- Apr. 6: **Research ex. 5 is due: notes based on your sources.** “Holocaust Witness Elie Wiesel Asks President Reagan to Reconsider a Visit to a German Cemetery”; “Astronomer Carl Sagan Contemplates the Potential Self-Destruction of the Earth”; “Vice-President Albert Gore Slams the Cynics and Asserts His Credo”; Prose ch. 12: Parallelism; ch. 13: Sentence Variety
- Apr. 11: **TEST: Bring books and notes. Typed draft of essay #3, an evaluation essay, is due:**
- Apr. 18: **Research ex. 6 is due: a working outline.** *Political Speeches:* “Senator Henry Clay Calls for the Great Compromise to Avert Civil War”; “Lincoln, in His First Inaugural, Asserts the Necessity of Majority Rule”; “President John F. Kennedy, in His Inaugural, Takes Up the Torch for a New Generation”; Prose ch. 14: Figures of Speech; ch. 15: Slanting.
- Apr. 20: **Essay #3 is due—turn in two copies.** Prose ch. 16: The Writer’s Voice
In-class essay
- Apr. 25: **Draft of research paper is due.** Conferences with instructor
- Apr. 27: **Draft of research paper is due.** Conferences with instructor
- May 2: **Reader response form is due. Research paper is due.** Rewrite in-class essay.
- May 4: **Research paper oral reports. Final test: Bring books and notes.**

Course Requirements:

- Three essays of 500–750 words in addition to in-class essays 50%
- Tests 15%

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Reader response forms, conferences, rough drafts, in-class exercises. . . .	10%
Research paper and oral presentation	15%
Leading a discussion of a writer's strategies and argument analysis. . . .	5%
Oral presentation about your writing process based on one essay	5%

Essay #1:

Choice #1: Write an essay or a speech on an issue that is important to you. In your composition explain why this issue is important to you and present at least two sides of the issue. The issue may focus on a concern about society, religion, education, health, business, law, the environment, politics, or policies—either domestic or foreign.

Choice #2: Write an argumentative speech or essay based on values. In this composition, you may decide to ask others to live up to higher principles, respected traditions, or even new values or complain that they have not done so. Your composition may take the form of a sermon, eulogy, or graduation speech. You may wish to develop your main point with anecdotes and examples.

For Both Compositions:

Use at least two reliable sources to bring up-to-date information and specifics to your writing. One of these sources may be an interview. If you use the internet for research, remember that many of the sources you find through search engines are not reliable. To find reputable sources, use Maryville's online databases (such as EBSCOHost, FirstSearch, JSTOR, or LexisNexis Academic). The most reliable sources will name an author and the author's institutional or organizational affiliation. If the document is published by an organization, the organization should be recognized as a provider of reliable information on the topic. If the URL contains ".com," the site is a commercial site and may have some bias (.edu in the URL refers to an educational institution and is usually an indicator of reliable information). A reliable source will include a list of references or a bibliography, and the author will provide the sources of his or her information. Reliable sources also include the date when the information was gathered and a publication date or a reference such as "last updated." The information for your essays and speeches should be current.

At the end of your composition, attach an annotated bibliography in which you briefly summarize the kind of information each source provided, assess the source (does it seem reliable? current? biased? objective? Are facts carefully documented?) and explain in what ways each source was useful or not useful in writing this essay. A good discussion of annotated bibliographies can be found at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu>.

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Essay #2:

Choice #1: Continue to investigate the issue of essay or speech #1; propose a solution to the problem/issue, and present an argument for the solution.

Choice #2: Write an essay or a speech presenting a problem and arguing for a particular solution.

Both essays require an annotated bibliography.

Essay #3:

Choice #1: Evaluate two possible solutions to the problem you have been studying.

Choice #2: Reflect on what you personally or a particular group could do to solve the problem. Evaluate this solution.

Choice #3: Write an essay of evaluation (possibly an evaluation of yourself that faculty members will be able to use when writing letters of recommendation for you for graduate schools or for employers).

Choice #4: Write an essay analyzing an argument. If you wish to analyze an argument, choose an argument presented in one of the speeches we have discussed in class and use the guidelines for analyzing an essay handout.

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