ENG 679: Rhetorical Theory Applied to Technical Documents
Monday, 7:00 p.m. – 8:15 p.m.
http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/haasg/eng6792007spring
Spring Semester, 2007
3 credits

Professor’s Contact Information
Dr. Gretchen Haas
201N Armstrong Hall
gretchen.haas@mnsu.edu
(507) 389-5506

Office Hours
Wednesday 1:00 – 3:00
I am also available to meet outside of office hours, on-line or off-line, if you contact me in advance to arrange an appointment.

Course Description
From the English Department’s Web site: Application of rhetorical theory to technical documents, including examination of how workplace cultures shape writing assumptions and approaches.

To be more specific, there are three key questions that provide the foundation for our work in this course:
- What is rhetoric?
- How does rhetorical theory provide the theoretical basis of technical communication?
- How can we use rhetorical theory to make sense of workplace practices and technical communication?

Using a seminar format, we will explore these questions in the context of theoretical work in technical communication, classical rhetorical theory, and twentieth-century theories of rhetoric.

Required Texts
- Paper-based course packet (available from campus bookstore)

Required Equipment
- Computer
- High-speed internet access
- Microphone and speakers
- Web cam

Academic Dishonesty
Academic dishonesty is not tolerated in this classroom or in any classroom at Minnesota State University, Mankato. Committing academic dishonesty in any portion of your work for this course is grounds for course failure.

Accessibility
If you are a student with a documented disability, please see me as early in the semester as possible to discuss the necessary accommodations, and/or contact the Disability Services Office at (507) 389-2825 (V) or (800) 627-3529 (MRS/TTY).
Assignments and Grading
Your grade in this class will be comprised of your work in four categories: your contribution to the wiki, your contribution to in-class discussion, reading response papers, and your final paper. See Table 1 below for a breakdown of how your work in these three categories will contribute to your overall grade.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment Category</th>
<th>Percentage of Final Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contribution to Wiki</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contribution to In-Class Discussion</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Response Papers (seven)</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
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Table 1: Breakdown of Final Grade Calculation

I do not have any specific requirements regarding assignment formatting because the way you format your assignments will be part of your grade. I expect all assignments to be submitted without spelling and grammar errors. If you have an excessive number of errors in your assignment, I will return it to you for revision without grading it and you must turn in your revised assignment to receive a grade.

The evaluation criteria for each assignment will be included on individual assignment sheets.
- Meeting the criteria of each assignment will merit a B for your work.
- Mastering the criteria of each assignment will earn an A for your work.
- Should you fall short of meeting the criteria for the assignments, you will receive a C for your work.
- The Graduate School reserves D and F grades for grossly substandard performance.

My policy on late assignments is that late is better than never; however, the grades of assignments turned in late will reflect a penalty that is commensurate with the degree to which the assignment was late. For example, an assignment turned in one week late will merit a ten percentage-point deduction; an assignment turned in three weeks late will merit a thirty percentage-point deduction; an assignment turned in five weeks late will merit a fifty percentage-point reduction, and so on. Additionally, when you turn in your assignment late, you forfeit the comments you can usually expect from me in response to your assignments.

Wiki
Since our in-class time is less than it would be in a face-to-face class, you will necessarily have a higher degree of responsibility for your own learning outside of class. To that end, I have created a class wiki to facilitate your reading of the texts. The wiki is organized by date and text and has three main content areas: outline, key passages, and glossary. Each week, you and one or two classmates will be responsible for contributing to one of those content sections (schedule to be distributed). One day prior to class, you should read all of the content associated with that particular week’s reading and make a contribution to the fourth section in the wiki, “questions,” by adding your own question. It is important that you include your own question(s) on the wiki since I will read them to prepare for that week’s discussion. The weekly schedule for posting to the wiki is as follows:
- Post wiki content (outline, key passages, or glossary) by Sunday at noon (tentative)
- Read wiki content and post your question(s) by Monday at noon (tentative)

In-Class Discussion
As with your response papers, I also look for evidence of your engagement with the reading during in-class discussion. I do not expect you to come to class on Monday with a high level of confidence in your understanding of the reading, but I will look for a sense that you’ve identified key ideas in the theory, gotten a sense of the gist of the theory, and have made connections with past theories we’ve read. As with the response readings, your ability to draw the class’s attention to particular passages either in confusion or to support your interpretation, will go far with me toward demonstrating your engagement with the reading.

Response Papers
You will be responsible for writing seven response papers over the course of the semester. Response papers will be due to me by 8:00 a.m. on Mondays so that I can read them in preparation for class that evening. The response papers provide you with an opportunity to engage with the readings more deeply and personally than your work with the wiki will allow. For the purposes of grading, I will be looking for you to articulate what the reading means to you and for evidence of how you’ve made sense of the reading. Doing both of these things will entail citing selected passages as evidence in support of your interpretations (but please, do not quote extended passages).

Final Paper
For your final paper, you have a number of options, including any option you may come up with yourself:
1. Write a paper on a central concept or question of this constellation of readings.
2. Write a paper on how a central concept or question in the readings is applicable to a particular problem in the field of technical communication or to the field of technical communication in general.
3. Write a paper in which you will address a theory, concept, or question we have addressed this semester in the context of a book-length work or three to five articles in technical communication.

Your final paper will benefit from thoughtful work in advance, review from your peers and me, and revision. We will set aside time during the last week of the semester to meet in smaller groups to review your paper drafts. By a specified time, to be agreed upon later in the semester, you will send your paper to the members of your group. Each member of the group will read each other’s paper and comment upon it in advance of the class meeting and during the class meeting time, we will discuss each other’s papers and offer advice for revisions. Please bring your comments to class so that you may leave them with the author of the paper.
# Schedule

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<tr>
<th>Week/ Date</th>
<th>Reading Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Weeks One and Two: Introduction to the Class</strong></td>
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| During the first week of the semester (no class) | - Purchase Aristotle’s *On Rhetoric*
- Test Breeze with microphones and Web cams |
| Monday, January 22 | - Purchase paper-based course packet from MSU bookstore
- Assess feasibility of dividing the class into two meeting times |
<p>| <strong>Weeks Three through Seven: Classical Rhetorical Theory</strong> | |
| <strong>Weeks Eight through Fourteen: Contemporary Rhetorical Theory</strong> | |
| <strong>Monday, March 12: No Class – Spring Break</strong> | |</p>
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<thead>
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<th>Reading Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, April 23</td>
<td>TBD (probably Ernesto Laclau) (electronic)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week Fifteen and Finals Week: Final Papers in Rhetorical Theory and Technical Communication</td>
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<td>Monday, April 30</td>
<td>Small Group Meetings to Review Final Paper Drafts</td>
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<td>Monday, May 7: Finals Week</td>
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