

# ENGL 5330: Studies in Rhetoric Rhetoric in a Post-Truth World



Fall 2020, Synchronous Online, Meetings Wednesdays from 6:00-8:45 p.m. via WebEx

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Office: Warrior Hall 420A or WebEx Meeting

Office Hours: Walk-in or Email for an Appointment

**TAMUCT Course Description:** A study of written language theories. Course contents include readings from a wide spectrum including classical Greece and Rome, the European enlightenment, nineteenth century America, and modern and post-modern periods. May be retaken for credit when topics vary.

**ENGL 5330: Studies in Rhetoric—Rhetoric in a Post-Truth World:** This class offers students the opportunity to explore the influence of post-truth epistemology and tactics on rhetorical theory and practice. In particular, students will engage with various theories as to what

post-truth means and how it operates, examine debates regarding the relationship between rhetoric and truth, question the role of expertise in rhetoric, analyze various tactics of post-truth rhetoric (propaganda, bullshit, demagoguery), and contemplate potential solutions to post-truth rhetoric. Through an interdisciplinary approach, students will scrutinize what it means to persuade and make meaning in an environment where the idea of truth is constantly being called into question.

### **Course Outcomes:**

By the end of the semester, students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- Formulate their own definition of post-truth by synthesizing a variety of texts and theories pertaining to the concept
- Articulate a view, informed by scholarship, as to the relationship between truth and rhetoric
- Analyze various mechanisms of post-truth rhetoric including propaganda, bullshit, and demagoguery
- Engage in various scholarly/disciplinary conversations pertaining to the influence of post-truth epistemology and tactics on rhetorical theory and practice
- Generate potential solutions for creating persuasive and ethical rhetoric in opposition to—or in coherence with—post-truth epistemologies and tactics

### **Required Textbooks and Materials:**

- *1984*, George Orwell, ISBN (13) #9780451524935
- *Bullshit and Philosophy: Guaranteed to Get Perfect Results Every Time*, edited by Gary Hardcastle and George Reisch, ISBN (13) #9780812696110 (Available as an eBook through the University Library)
- *Demagoguery and Democracy*, Patricia Roberts-Miller, ISBN (13) #9781615194087
- *On Bullshit*, Harry Frankfurt, ISBN (13) #9780691122946
- *Post-Truth*, Lee McIntyre, ISBN (13) #9780262535045
- *Post-Truth: Knowledge as a Power Game*, Steve Fuller, ISBN (13) #9781783086948
- *Rhetoric and Demagoguery*, Patricia Roberts-Miller, ISBN (13) #9780809337125 (Available as an eBook through the University Library)
- *The Death of Expertise: The Campaign against Established Knowledge and Why It Matters*, by Tom Nichols, ISBN (13) # 9780190469412
- Various .pdf articles and selections from texts (available through Canvas)
- Access to a Computer (the university provides a number of computer labs)

### **Technology Requirements:**

This course will use the A&M–Central Texas Instructure Canvas learning management system. We strongly recommend the latest versions of Chrome or Firefox browsers. Canvas no longer supports any version of Internet Explorer.

Logon to A&M-Central Texas Canvas [<https://tamuct.instructure.com/>] or access Canvas through the TAMUCT Online link in myCT [<https://tamuct.onecampus.com/>]. You will log in through our Microsoft portal.

Username: Your MyCT email address; Password: Your MyCT password

**Grading Scheme:** Three major projects along with various shorter, lower-stakes assignments (Summarize, Respond, Reflect—SRRs, Professorial Q&As, Discussion Boards, Online Activities, and Student-Teacher Conference) will comprise students’ grades. The weights for each component are as follows:

Informal Writing Tasks (SRRs, Professorial Q&As, Discussion Boards, Online Activities, and Student-Teacher Conference)= 10%

“A Meditation on Rhetoric and Truth”= 25%

“I Call Bullshit (or Propaganda or Demagoguery)! Performing a Rhetorical Analysis on a Post-Truth Artifact”= 25%

“The Truth, Maybe Some Truth, and Probably Just a Whole Bunch of Lies! A Scholarly Manuscript Addressing Rhetoric in a Post-Truth World”= 40%

**Summarize, Respond, Reflect (SRR):** SRRs require students to engage with readings from class in a structured—yet fluid—fashion. For certain classes, you will be assigned (or choose) one of the readings and provide an SRR for that reading. SRRs ask students to first summarize the reading, then provide a response to what they have read, and—finally—to reflect on the reading by connecting it to the class, other readings, prior experiences, and/or raising questions.

SRRs should be approximately one page single-spaced (writing slightly onto a second page is acceptable, however). Part of the skill of composing in such a genre is brevity, so avoid being overly verbose and rely on concision and clarity. SRRs will receive either a ✓+ (100), ✓ (90), ✓– (65), or 0.

**Professorial Q&As:** Professorial Q&As will provide a more guided form of engaging with certain readings from the class. These assignments will require students to respond to predetermined questions pertaining to specific readings. Students are advised to read and review the questions **before engaging with the reading** in order to gain a clear sense of certain facets of the text they should pay particular attention to.

While Professorial Q&As will vary in the number of questions asked and the depth of answers required, they will usually range between three to five questions and require roughly two to four solid paragraphs for each answer. You will want to provide sufficient, detailed answers, yet be careful not to become too tangential or indirect. You want to answer these questions in a direct and intellectual fashion. Professorial Q&As will receive either a ✓+ (100), ✓ (90), ✓– (65), or 0.

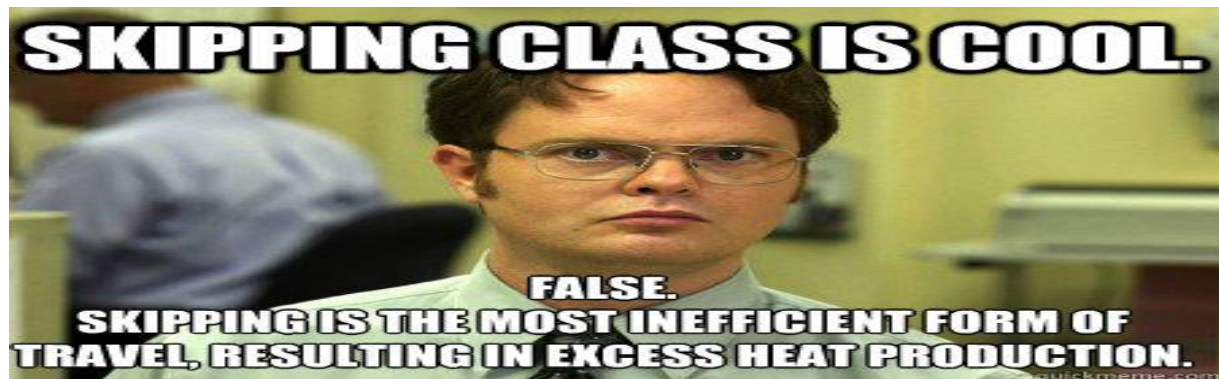
**Mandatory Student-Teacher Conference:** During the course of the semester, **I am requiring that you conference with me at least once.** Your conference will afford you the opportunity to discuss any issues with the class, to ask questions pertaining to any concepts or theories you are struggling with, to obtain guidance on any of your long-term projects, etc. These conferences

will all be conducted via WebEx as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. I will not be meeting with any students in person.

Although you are required to have at least one conference, I am not setting a date or time for you. Feel free to schedule your conference whenever it works best for you during the semester. Also, you are not limited to one student-teacher conference—you can schedule as many as you want with me for help in the class!

**Class Attendance Policy:** Attending class is vital if you are to get the most out of this course and to build a productive community of engaged learners. As a result, I do require that you have **no more than two uninformed absences** throughout the semester. If you have more than two uninformed absences, this will be grounds for possible failure.

The distinction between uninformed and informed absences is critical here. An uninformed absence occurs when you do not contact me ahead of class (or immediately after) to alert me to your absence and discuss how you will engage with the material from the class that day. If you inform me of your absence, though, and discuss with me how you will engage with the material you missed, your absence will be considered an informed absence and will not be counted against you. I am more than willing to work with you if you miss class. **However, these issues cannot be dealt with retroactively at the end of the semester. This is your one and only warning.**



Lastly, incompletes should be reserved for unexpected, life altering situations that develop after the drop deadline. Students should drop a course should something happen that prevents them from completing the course ahead of the drop deadline. Failure to do so may result in failing grades on assignments or the course if missing work is not completed and submitted before the last day of the semester. Please let me know immediately if serious health or life issues prevent you from attending class or submitting assignments.

**Class Civility Policy:** This class will tolerate neither disruptive language nor disruptive behavior. Disruptive language includes, but is not limited to, violent and/or belligerent and/or insulting remarks, including sexist, racist, homophobic or anti-ethnic slurs, bigotry, and disparaging commentary, either spoken or written (offensive slang is included in this category). While each of you have a right to your own opinions, inflammatory language founded in ignorance or hate is unacceptable and will be dealt with immediately.



Disruptive behavior includes the use of cell phones, pagers, or any other form of electronic communication during the class session (email, web-browsing, etc.). Disruptive behavior also includes whispering or talking when another member of the class is speaking or engaged in relevant conversation (remember that I am a member of this class as well). This classroom functions on the premise of respect, and you will be asked to leave the classroom if you violate any part of this statement on civility.

However, please do feel free to engage in constructive criticism and debates. This policy is not meant to discourage disagreement or passionate conversation. We will be engaging in discussions and/or debates about a host of potentially controversial topics; it is not my intention to censor your opinions. Yet, I do feel it is important to foster an environment conducive to learning where no one feels threatened and/or not entitled to their opinion.

Remember, if you disagree with someone (including myself), always remember to argue against the **IDEA** the person is presenting—not the individual.

**Late Work:** While I understand that circumstances may arise that could prevent you from turning an assignment in on time, **I do not accept late work—period!** However, **I am always willing to discuss extensions ahead of time.** If you have a reasonable reason why you believe you should be entitled to an extension, either come see me after class, arrange to visit me in my office or the UWC, or e-mail me.

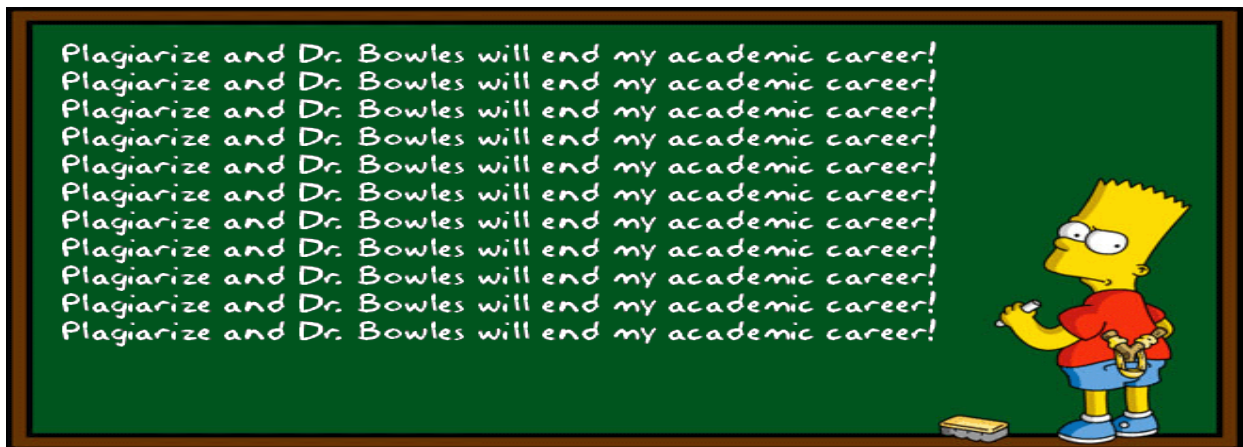
The basis for this policy is professionalism. While deadlines are negotiable in academia, it is considered unprofessional to merely not complete a task on time, not submit a manuscript by the deadline, etc. In essence, not being able to meet a deadline is not considered inappropriate or disrespectful but failing to communicate with those who will be affected by your lateness is considered so. Thus, if you stay in contact with me, I will work with you as a fellow academic and professional. I do, however, expect the same professional courtesy in return.

**Academic Integrity:** Texas A&M University–Central Texas values the integrity of the academic enterprise and strives for the highest standards of academic conduct. A&M–Central Texas expects its students, faculty, and staff to support the adherence to high standards of personal and scholarly conduct to preserve the honor and integrity of the creative community. Academic integrity is defined as a commitment to honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. Any deviation by students from this expectation may result in a failing grade for the assignment and potentially a failing grade for the course. Academic misconduct is any act that improperly affects a true and honest evaluation of a student’s academic performance and includes, but is not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work, plagiarism and improper citation of



sources, using another student's work, collusion, and the abuse of resource materials. All academic misconduct concerns will be reported to the university's Office of Student Conduct. Ignorance of the university's standards and expectations is never an excuse to act with a lack of integrity. When in doubt on collaboration, citation, or any issue, please contact your instructor before taking a course of action.

**Class Plagiarism Policy:** As an instructor, I operate by the CWPA (Council of Writing Program Administrators) definition of plagiarism: "In an instructional setting, plagiarism occurs when a writer **deliberately** uses someone else's language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source." The key here is deliberate—I do not want you to be so paranoid about plagiarism that it inhibits your creativity.



To that extent, any instance of "plagiarism" that **does not appear to be deliberate in intent** will be dealt with "in house." You may be asked to revise; I may even deduct from your grade if this was a result of negligence. However, unless intentional, you will not fail merely as a result of plagiarism nor will you be brought up on plagiarism charges.

That being said, **deliberate plagiarism will not be tolerated in any manner.** If you willfully steal someone else's language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledgment, or submit an assignment for this class that you submitted for another (without previously discussing it with me), **be forewarned—you will receive a 0 for the assignment, and I will pursue plagiarism charges with the utmost zeal!** Such behavior hinders your learning, is unfair to your classmates, is a violation of my trust, and—above all else—is highly unethical. **This is your one and only warning—you would be wise to heed it!**

**University Writing Center:** The University Writing Center (UWC) at Texas A&M University–Central Texas (TAMUCT) is a free service open to all TAMUCT students. For the Fall 2020 semester, all services will be online as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The hours of operation are from 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Monday thru Thursday with satellite hours online Monday thru Thursday from 6:00-9:00 p.m. The UWC is also offering hours from 12:00-3:00 p.m. on Saturdays.

Tutors are prepared to help writers of all levels and abilities at any stage of the writing process. By providing a practice audience for students' ideas and writing, our tutors highlight the ways in which they read and interpret students' texts, offering guidance and support throughout the various stages of the writing process. While tutors will not write, edit, or grade papers, they will assist students in developing more effective composing practices. Whether you need help brainstorming ideas, organizing an essay, proofreading, understanding proper citation practices, or just want a second set of eyes, the UWC is here to help!



Students may arrange a one-to-one session with a trained and experienced writing tutor by making an appointment via WOnline at <https://tamuct.mywconline.com/>. In addition, you can email Dr. Bruce Bowles Jr. at [bruce.bowles@tamuct.edu](mailto:bruce.bowles@tamuct.edu) if you have any questions about the UWC and/or need any assistance with scheduling.

**Tutoring:** Tutoring is available to all A&M-Central Texas students, both on-campus and online. Subjects tutored on campus include Accounting, Advanced Math, Biology, Finance, Statistics, Mathematics, and Study Skills. Tutors are available at the Tutoring Center in Warrior Hall, Suite 111.

If you have a question regarding tutor schedules, need to schedule a tutoring session, are interested in becoming a tutor, or have any other question, contact Academic Support Programs at (254) 519-5796, or by emailing Dr. DeEadra Albert-Green at [deeadra.albertgreen@tamuct.edu](mailto:deeadra.albertgreen@tamuct.edu).

Chat live with a tutor 24/7 for almost any subject from on your computer! Tutor.com is an online tutoring platform that enables A&M-Central Texas students to log in and receive FREE online tutoring support. This tool provides tutoring in over 40 subject areas. Access Tutor.com through Canvas.

**University Library:** The University Library provides many services in support of research across campus and at a distance. We offer over 200 electronic databases containing approximately 250,000 eBooks and 82,000 journals, in addition to the 85,000 items in our print collection, which can be mailed to students who live more than 50 miles from campus. Research guides for each subject taught at A&M-Central Texas are available through our website to help

students navigate these resources. On campus, the library offers technology including cameras, laptops, microphones, webcams, and digital sound recorders.

Research assistance from a librarian is also available 24 hours a day through our online chat service, and at the reference desk when the library is open. Research sessions can be scheduled for more comprehensive assistance, and may take place on Skype or in-person at the library. Assistance may cover many topics, including how to find articles in peer-reviewed journals, how to cite resources, and how to piece together research for written assignments.

Our 27,000-square-foot facility on the A&M-Central Texas main campus includes student lounges, private study rooms, group work spaces, computer labs, family areas suitable for all ages, and many other features. Services such as interlibrary loan, TexShare, binding, and laminating are available. The library frequently offers workshops, tours, readings, and other events. For more information, please visit our [Library website](http://tamuct.libguides.com/index).  
[<http://tamuct.libguides.com/index>]

**For Fall 2020, all reference service will be conducted virtually. Please go to our [Library website](http://tamuct.libguides.com/index) [http://tamuct.libguides.com/index] to access our virtual reference help and our current hours.**

**911 Cellular:** Emergency Warning System for Texas A&M University – Central Texas  
911Cellular is an emergency notification service that gives Texas A&M University-Central Texas the ability to communicate health and safety emergency information quickly via email, text message, and social media. All students are automatically enrolled in 911 Cellular through their myCT email account.

Connect at 911Cellular [<https://portal.publicsafetycloud.net/Texas-AM-Central/alert-management>] to change where you receive your alerts or to opt out. By staying enrolled in 911Cellular, university officials can quickly pass on safety-related information, regardless of your location.

**Canvas Support:** Use the Canvas Help link, located at the bottom of the left-hand menu, for issues with Canvas. You can select “Chat with Canvas Support,” submit a support request through “Report a Problem,” or call the Canvas support line: 1-844-757-0953. For issues related to course content and requirements, contact your instructor.

**Technology Support:** For technology issues, students should contact Help Desk Central. 24 hours a day, 7 days a week:

Email: [helpdesk@tamu.edu](mailto:helpdesk@tamu.edu)

Phone: (254) 519-5466

Web Chat: <http://hdc.tamu.edu>



When calling for support please let your support technician know you are a TAMUCT student. For issues related to course content and requirements, contact your instructor.

**Drop Policy:** If you discover that you need to drop this class, you must complete a Drop Request Form:

[https://www.tamuct.edu/registrar/docs/Drop\\_Request\\_Form.pdf](https://www.tamuct.edu/registrar/docs/Drop_Request_Form.pdf)

Professors cannot drop students; this is always the responsibility of the student. The Registrar's Office will provide a deadline on the University Calendar for which the form must be completed, signed, and returned. Once you return the signed form to the Registrar's Office, you must go into Warrior Web and confirm that you are no longer enrolled. If you still show as enrolled, FOLLOW-UP with the Registrar's Office immediately. You are to attend class until the procedure is complete to avoid penalty for absence. Should you miss the drop deadline or fail to follow the procedure, you will receive an F in the course, which may affect your financial aid and/or VA educational benefits.

**Academic Accommodations:** At Texas A&M University–Central Texas, we value an inclusive learning environment where every student has an equal chance to succeed and has the right to a barrier free education. The Department of Access and Inclusion is responsible for ensuring that students with a disability receive equal access to the University's programs, services and activities. If you believe you have a disability requiring reasonable accommodations please contact the Department of Access and Inclusion at (254) 501-5831. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such.

For more information please visit our [Access & Inclusion](#) Canvas page (log-in required):  
<https://tamuct.instructure.com/courses/717>

**Important information for Pregnant and/or Parenting Students:** Texas A&M University–Central Texas supports students who are pregnant and/or parenting. In accordance with requirements of Title IX and related guidance from US Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights, the Dean of Student Affairs' Office can assist students who are pregnant and/or parenting in seeking accommodations related to pregnancy and/or parenting. Students should seek out assistance as early in the pregnancy as possible. For more information, please visit the [Student Affairs](#) web page: <https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/index.html>. Students may also contact the institution's Title IX Coordinator. If you would like to read more about these [requirements and guidelines](#) online, please visit the website: <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/pregnancy.pdf>.

Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex and gender—including pregnancy, parenting, and all related conditions. A&M–Central Texas is able to provide flexible and individualized reasonable accommodation to pregnant and parenting students. All pregnant and parenting students should contact the Associate Dean in the Division of Student Affairs at (254) 501-5909 to seek out assistance. Students may also contact the University's Title IX Coordinator.

**A Note about Sexual Violence at A&M-Central Texas:** Sexual violence is a serious safety, social justice, and public health issue. The university offers support for anyone struggling with these issues. University faculty are mandated reporters, so if someone discloses that they were sexually assaulted (or a victim of Domestic/Dating Violence or Stalking) while a student at TAMUCT, faculty members are required to inform the Title IX Office. If you want to discuss any of these issues confidentially, you can do so through Student Counseling (254-501-5955) located on the second floor of Warrior Hall (207L).

Sexual violence can occur on our campus because predators often feel emboldened, and victims often feel silenced or shamed. It is incumbent on ALL of us to find ways to actively create environments that tell predators we don't agree with their behaviors and tell survivors we will support them. Your actions matter. Don't be a bystander; be an agent of change. For additional information on campus policy and resources visit the [Title IX webpage](https://www.tamuct.edu/departments/compliance/titleix.php): <https://www.tamuct.edu/departments/compliance/titleix.php>.

**COVID-19 Safety Measures:** To promote public safety and protect students, faculty, and staff during the coronavirus pandemic, Texas A&M University-Central Texas has adopted policies and practices to minimize virus transmission. All members of the university community are expected to adhere to these measures to ensure their own safety and the safety of others. Students must observe the following practices while participating in face-to-face courses, course-related activities (office hours, help sessions, transitioning to and between classes, study spaces, academic services, etc.) and co-curricular programs:

- **Self-monitoring**—Students should follow CDC recommendations for self-monitoring. Students who have a fever or exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 should participate in class remotely and should not participate in face-to-face instruction. Students required to quarantine must participate in courses and course-related activities remotely and must not attend face-to-face course activities. Students should notify their instructors of the quarantine requirement. Students under quarantine are expected to participate in courses and complete graded work unless they have symptoms that are too severe to participate in course activities.
- **Face Coverings**—Face coverings must be worn inside of buildings and within 50 feet of building entrances on the A&M-Central Texas Campus. This includes lobbies, restrooms, hallways, elevators, classrooms, laboratories, conference rooms, break rooms, non-private office spaces, and other shared spaces. Face coverings are also required in outdoor spaces where physical distancing is not maintained. The university will evaluate exceptions to this requirement on a case by case basis. Students can request an exception through the Office of Access and Inclusion in Student Affairs.
  - If a student refuses to wear a face covering, the instructor should ask the student to leave and join the class remotely. If the student does not leave the class, the faculty member should report that student to the Office of Student Conduct. Additionally, the faculty member may choose to teach that day's class remotely for all students.
- **Physical Distancing**—Physical distancing must be maintained between students, instructors, and others in the course and course-related activities.

- Classroom Ingress/Egress—Students must follow marked pathways for entering and exiting classrooms and other teaching spaces. Leave classrooms promptly after course activities have concluded. Do not congregate in hallways and maintain 6-foot physical distancing when waiting to enter classrooms and other instructional spaces.
- The university will notify students in the event that the COVID-19 situation necessitates changes to the course schedule or modality.

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**Artifact Collection:** To ensure the learning outcomes are met in the M.A. in English program, there is a program-wide artifact collection process. To that end, artifacts from ENGL 5330: Studies in Rhetoric—Rhetoric in a Post-Truth World this semester may be used for programmatic assessment. Please note that all efforts will be made to keep your identity anonymous; as such, all identifying markers will be removed from your work if used for programmatic assessment. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Dr. Bruce Bowles Jr. at [bruce.bowles@tamuct.edu](mailto:bruce.bowles@tamuct.edu).

**Syllabus Change Policy:** Except for changes that substantially affect implementation of the grading scheme, this syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.

# ENGL 5330: Studies in Rhetoric

## Rhetoric in a Post-Truth World

### Major Projects

#### “A Meditation on Rhetoric and Truth”

For millennia, philosophers, rhetorical theorists, scientists, etc. have debated about the nature of truth, how we can know if something is true, and the even the possibility of knowing anything to be definitively true at all. This is even further complicated when rhetoric is accounted for. Throughout the history of rhetorical theory, the relationship between rhetoric and truth has been a highly contested topic. For many theorists, truth is a foundational aspect of rhetoric; for others, rhetoric is nothing more than ornamental speech meant to persuade. Various scholars have even contended that rhetoric constructs reality. However, when such an approach is taken, it calls into question whether there is any truth outside of the rhetoric we employ.

As we continue to grapple with our current social and political climate, the relationship between rhetoric and truth seems fraught but also more important than ever. Your first assignment asks you to contemplate this relationship and construct your own theory as to the relationship between rhetoric and truth. Essentially, you are going to compose an essay that explores this relationship and argues for an approach to addressing how rhetoric and truth engage with one another along with the importance of viewing this relationship through your chosen lens.



There are a multitude of issues to explore in regard to this association. Early on, it will be rather important to contemplate a variety of questions as a heuristic for invention to get you started. What is truth? Is the concept of objective truth even possible? If so, how can we know that something is true? How important is truth to rhetorical theory and practice? Does rhetoric rely on truth, is it divorced from truth, or does it serve to construct truth itself? Can we ethically persuade someone without knowing the truth? What are the rhetorical consequences (if any) of being “divorced” from truth? As you can see, the implications of these questions are endless; you will have much to meditate and reflect on.

A great place to get started will be with the readings we have completed for class. Additionally, there are a host of rhetorical texts that can further your thinking in regard to rhetoric and truth. I highly recommend *Phaedrus* by Plato, *Rhetoric* by Aristotle, *Discourse on Method* by René Descartes, and the collective works of Kenneth Burke and Michel Foucault. Additionally, the University Library's databases will be an excellent way to find other sources that discuss this relationship.

Once you have a firm grasp on how you want to explicate the relationship between rhetoric and truth, you will want to begin composing your essay. While there is no set arrangement for your essay, you will definitely want to address a few key areas. First, having a solid definition for both rhetoric and truth will help you immensely. You can borrow from the definitions of other scholars or create your own. Nevertheless, these definitions will be a driving point of your essay. Furthermore, you will want to also specify what you believe the realm of rhetoric is as well as what you think the primary aims of rhetoric are. While your definitions will encapsulate this to a degree, you will probably want to expand on this further as it will be key to your argument. And, lastly, you will benefit from clarifying your views on truth in regard to what can and cannot be known and with what degree of certainty we can know it. Beyond these three key areas, though, you are open to organize your essay as you best see fit to convey your ideas.

Your essay should be five pages double-spaced at minimum and include at least three sources. These sources can be from the class, from outside the class, or a mixture of both; the choice is yours. Please cite using either APA or MLA format and include a references or works cited page.

Assessment of your "A Meditation on Rhetoric and Truth" project will be predicated upon how well you demonstrate an understanding in regard to the debates surrounding rhetoric and truth, the strength of your overall argument pertaining to the relationship between rhetoric and truth, how well your organizational structure conveys your theories, your success in incorporating your outside sources, and the polish of your work (e.g. grammar, proofreading, APA or MLA format, etc.). After I have finished engaging with your essay, the main question I will ask myself will be: *How successful was this student in articulating a cogent argument (informed by theory and scholarship) pertaining to the relationship between rhetoric and truth?*



## **“I Call Bullshit (or Propaganda or Demagoguery)! Performing a Rhetorical Analysis on a Post-Truth Artifact”**

Calling bullshit, pointing out blatant propaganda, or railing against demagoguery can be a favorite past time for us all. However, rarely do we fully contemplate what we mean when we make such accusations. There is a tendency to assume that whether something is or is not bullshit, propaganda, or demagoguery is fairly obvious. As you have hopefully discovered, though, these terms can be rather subjective and vary quite a bit in how they are defined. Thus, in order to be ethical rhetorically, it is incumbent upon scholars to support such accusations with evidence and analysis.

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A R C H I T**

This will be your task for this project. You will perform a rhetorical analysis of an artifact that you consider to be post-truth since it deploys bullshit, propaganda, demagoguery, or an intriguing mixture of both. This artifact can be from various mediums as well; you are not confined to print-based arguments but can explore podcasts, videos, newsreels, etc. The key here is to choose an artifact that you can make a convincing case for using one of the disingenuous rhetorical tactics we have discussed.

Once you have chosen your artifact, study it intensely. Engage with it multiple times. Take notes on what you observe and what—in particular—stands out to you as bullshit, propaganda, and/or demagoguery. After you have made your preliminary notes, take some time to visit the scholarship on the tactic(s) you are discussing. Do you believe the scholarship would agree with you? What evidence from the scholarship will support your analysis? Does the artifact you are analyzing perhaps offer the opportunity to expand on the conversation? You will want to ground your analysis in scholarship, not opinion and speculation.

As far as composing your project is concerned, you have quite a bit of latitude as to how you wish to approach it. However, you probably will want to make a few specific rhetorical moves in order to ensure your analysis is strong. For starters, you will want to provide context for your artifact. Unless it is a text that an everyday citizen would be familiar with, take time to explain the context in which it is found and the purpose for which it is being used. You will also want to provide an overarching thesis for why you believe the artifact is functioning as bullshit, propaganda, or demagoguery. Ideally, you will want to state this thesis upfront; however, a delayed thesis structure could work well in this situation. Tethering specific assertions to specific examples from the text will also be important. Finally, your conclusion should leave your readers with an overall takeaway, something that can be learned from your analysis outside of merely asserting that a specific artifact is an example of bullshit, propaganda, or demagoguery.

Your rhetorical analysis should be five pages double-spaced at minimum and include at least three sources with one preferably coming from outside of class. (If you are having trouble

finding an outside source, please let me know.) Your citations should be in either APA or MLA format; a references or works cited page should be included as well.

For your “I Call Bullshit (or Propaganda or Demagoguery)! Performing a Rhetorical Analysis on a Post-Truth Artifact” project, assessment will primarily involve how effective your description of the context in which the artifact resides is, the overall quality of your argument as to why your artifact is an example of the specific rhetorical tactic(s) you chose (bullshit, propaganda, demagoguery), the strength of the particular examples you use from your text and the sources you use to support them, how engaging and intriguing your conclusions are, and the polished nature of your work (e.g. grammar, proofreading, APA or MLA format, etc.). When I assess your project, the main question I will ask myself is: *Was this project successful in providing an effective rhetorical analysis of an artifact that demonstrated why that artifact is an apt example of a specific questionable rhetorical tactic (bullshit, propaganda, demagoguery) while adding to our understanding of how that particular tactic functions?*

## **“The Truth, Maybe Some Truth, and Probably Just a Whole Bunch of Lies! A Scholarly Manuscript Addressing Rhetoric in a Post-Truth World”**

One of the more fascinating aspects of studying rhetoric in our current political and societal climate is that there is so much to explore. With the evolution of digital technologies, coupled with changing norms and practices in the public sphere, so many questions remain unanswered. In these tumultuous times, there is so much we need to know. Here is your opportunity to contribute to the conversation!

For your final project, you will be composing a scholarly manuscript of approximately 12 double-spaced pages. This actually places your manuscript between the typical length for a conference paper (approximately eight pages double-spaced) and a feature article in a scholarly journal (approximately 15-20 pages double-spaced). Ideally, this will leave you with a manuscript that can either be cut down for a conference paper or expanded upon for a feature article in a scholarly journal. This should get you started on developing material to help build your C.V.

Your first step will be to choose a topic of interest in relation to rhetoric and post-truth. There are infinite possibilities here! You may wish to explore connections—and oppositions—between rhetoric and formal logic. Your inclinations may lean toward ethos in rhetoric, particularly the role of expertise. Perhaps you believe you have unique insights to contribute to the conversations surrounding bullshit, propaganda, or demagoguery. The intersection between digital technologies and post-truth rhetoric may fascinate you as well. You may even want to argue that post-truth rhetoric needs to be embraced or that rhetoric will need to adapt to—rather than oppose—these trends. There are limitless ways you can contribute to a variety of conversations.

Once you have chosen your topic, the research will begin. Start with some of the readings from class. From there, see who else is being cited on this issue. As you progress in your research, pay particular attention to the main voices in the conversation and sift through the references and works cited pages of the sources you read. Read across a wide range of sources. Take advantage of the multitude of databases and journals I have provided and/or suggested for you. Make sure to explore your topic in-depth so you are confident you are addressing the key aspects of the conversation.

After you have gained expertise on your topic, you will want to begin composing your manuscript (albeit this will not be the end of your research process). Your scholarly manuscript should have a compelling thesis to defend and/or an intriguing research question that will be explored. As your topics will differ, there is no set structure that will dictate how you compose your manuscript. That being said, you will want to be particularly attentive to the amount of relevant background information you present (consider your audience and what they need to know), the logic and fluency of the organization of the article, and the level of depth with which you engage your sources and explicate your arguments. Since you are writing as a scholar, you need to be thorough and comprehensive while also being clear and concise.

The expectation for your scholarly manuscript will be for you to have eight sources with at least two being from outside the class. Nevertheless, you can use more or less if it suits the need of your project, but consult with me if you plan to use less. (You will need to make a compelling argument for why this is the case.) Also, please remember to quote when the exact words are essential to your argument and paraphrase when they are not. You may use either APA or MLA format for your manuscript yet please adhere to the citation practices and manuscript guidelines of either. You should also have a complete references or works cited page.

As I assess your scholarly manuscript, I will primarily be concerned with how well you demonstrate an awareness of the scholarly conversation into which you are entering; your ability to make a compelling and well-reasoned argument about the topic you are addressing; the overall quality of your organization, including providing relevant background information for your audience where necessary, engaging with your sources when pertinent, and evolving your argument in a clear and logical fashion; the significance of the contribution you are making to the conversation you have chosen to enter; and the polish and preparation of your manuscript (e.g. grammar, proofreading, APA or MLA format, manuscript formatting conventions, etc.). The main questions I will ask myself will be similar to that of

a reviewer for an academic conference or scholarly journal: *Does this scholarly manuscript make a substantial and intriguing contribution to the conversations surrounding rhetoric and post-truth that scholars in the field will be interested in hearing or reading it? Is this scholarly manuscript worthy of being presented at an academic conference that features graduate student work and/or published in a scholarly journal that primarily features graduate student work?*

