## ****COMS 400 – Rhetorical Theory****

**Contact Information Office Hours**

Justin W. Kirk, Ph.D. TR 2pm-3:30pm

[jkirk11@unl.edu](mailto:jkirk11@unl.edu) or by appointment

[Book a Meeting](https://uofnelincoln-my.sharepoint.com/personal/jkirk11_unl_edu/Documents/Courses/400%20-%20Rhetorical%20Theory/Syllabi/Book%20a%20Meeting) Louise Pound Hall 371

<https://unl.zoom.us/j/2537322032>

### Part 1: Required and Relevant Information

#### ****Mission of the Department of Communication Studies****

The mission of the faculty and students of the Department of Communication Studies is to examine human symbolic activity as it shapes and is shaped by relationships, institutions, technology, and culture.  This work concerns the creation, analysis, and critique of messages ranging from face-to-face to digital media contexts.  The department’s research and teaching devote particular attention to scholarly initiatives aimed at understanding and explaining the role of communication in (a) facilitating civic engagement, mediating public controversies, and organizing for social change, (b) constituting individual and family health, promoting healthy behaviors, and helping persons navigate relational challenges, and (c) creating, maintaining, and challenging personal, social, and community identity in a complex and diverse world.

**Academic Dishonesty and Student Misconduct**

The Department of Communication Studies is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity. The Department adopts the campus definition of academic dishonesty in the Student Code of Conduct (Article 3, Section B-1) including cheating, fabrication or falsification, plagiarism (including self-plagiarism), abuse of academic materials, complicity in academic dishonesty, falsifying grade reports, impermissible collaboration, and misrepresentation. The instructors will meet with the student and if they determine that academic dishonesty or misconduct has occurred, the instructor will prepare a written account and file a “Misconduct Referral Form” with the Office of the Dean of Students. The full “Academic Dishonesty and Student Misconduct” policy is linked to the department’s website:  <https://comm.unl.edu/forms-and-policies>

The Department of Communication Studies “Grading and Grade Appeals” policy document is linked to the department’s website:  <https://comm.unl.edu/forms-and-policies>

#### ****Accommodations for Students with Disabilities****

The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can discuss options privately. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). If you are eligible for services and register with their office, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so they can be implemented in a timely manner. SSD contact information: 232 Canfield Admin Bldg.; 402-472-3787

#### Statement on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The Department of Communication Studies is committed to achieving inclusive excellence as outlined by the university’s [Office of Diversity and Inclusion](https://diversity.unl.edu/diversity-home). As communication scholars and teachers, we believe communities and relationships are enriched when we give voice and value to diverse perspectives based on  “group and social differences (e.g., race/ethnicity, indigeneity, class, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, country of origin, and [(dis)ability](http://www.accessiblesociety.org/topics/demographics-identity/dkaplanpaper.htm)), historically underrepresented populations, and cultural, political, religious, or other affiliations.” We are committed to continual reflection and refinement of curriculum, scholarly endeavors, and community engagement to achieve goals of inclusiveness and equal opportunities for our students, faculty, and staff. If you have questions or concerns, feel free to discuss these with your instructors, the Chair of the department ([Dr. Jody Koenig Kellas](https://comm.unl.edu/jody-koenig-kellas)), members of the department’s [Committee on Diversity and Inclusion](https://comm.unl.edu/committees), or the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

#### Student Concerns and Feedback

Your experience with this course is important to me. If you have questions, concerns, or positive feedback, please contact me at jkirk11@unl.edu. If I am unable to respond, or you feel I've not adequately addressed your concerns, you can contact my direct supervisor, Department Chair Jody Kellas at jkellas2@unl.edu. If your concern is still not resolved, please contact [june.griffin@unl.edu](mailto:june.griffin@unl.edu).

#### Assignment Turn In

All assignments must be submitted through Canvas as explained in each assignment description. Assignments will not be accepted via email or any other format. All assignments will automatically be run through Turnitin to be screened for plagiarism. It is your responsibility to use Canvas effectively to turn in your assignments and to ensure that your assignment is properly submitted before the assignment due date according to course specifications. PLEASE NOTE: Your assignments MUST be Microsoft Word documents or PDFs. If you are saving your assignments on your MAC, you must add the .doc or .docx file extension to your document in order for it to be accepted.

#### Accommodations

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.

#### Course Credit

Please note that Communication Studies majors must earn a grade of ‘C’ or better to receive credit for the course. All assignments and exams must be completed in order to earn a ‘C’ or better in the course. The Department of Communication Studies “Grading and Grade Appeals” policy document is linked to the department’s website: https://comm.unl.edu/forms-andpolicies.

#### Incompletes

Incomplete grades are rarely assigned in this class. Please plan to complete all work for the course within the semester you are taking it. In the event, you experience circumstances that you see as potentially warranting an incomplete, please note that you must have completed at least 75% of the work in the course and you must approach me before the last week of classes with a proposal for completion of the work.

#### Title IX

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same accountability and the same support applied to offenses against other protected categories; such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, UNL offers several resources for reporting and support (https://www.unl.edu/equity/title-ix). Located in Canfield Administration 128, Tami Strickman is UNL's Title IX coordinator. Her contact number is 402- 472-3417. In the Student Union, Jan Deeds runs the Women's Center and is supervisor of PREVENT (the on campus student organization aimed toward sexual assault awareness and bystander intervention). Her contact information is jdeeds1@unl.edu, and 402-472-2598. Also located in the Student Union, Voices of Hope provides support in answering questions and guidance in reporting options. Please find the many resources offered by Voices of Hope at http://involved.unl.edu/gender/advocate. Additional support is offered through Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) located in the University Health Center on the second floor. The contact number for CAPS is 402-472-7450. In addition, be aware that as the director of the debate program at the University, I am a mandatory Title IX reporter and will report any incidents I am made aware of that rise to the level of a reportable incident.

#### Resources for International Students

[Academic Mentoring/Coaching for International Students: First Year Experience Team](http://success.unl.edu/international)18

[ESL Support Lab](https://www.unl.edu/piesl/esl-support-lab) [Intensive English Program](https://global.unl.edu/english/)

[Academic Success Program](https://www.unl.edu/piesl/academic-support) [OASIS](https://www.unl.edu/oasis/academic-success-and-intercultural-services)

[International Peer Mentors](http://success.unl.edu/international#mentors) [Writing Center](http://www.unl.edu/writing/home)

### Part 2: Course Information and Policies

#### Course Description

Rhetoric suffuses our world. From the movies we watch to the news and information we consume, rhetoric informs how individuals craft and receive persuasive messages in the public realm. What counts as rhetoric? Is silence rhetorical? What the heck is rhetoricity? These questions and more drive the theoretical development of rhetoric as an academic discipline. This course examines the history and development of rhetorical theories with a specific focus on the development of contemporary rhetorical theory vis-à-vis critical theory and continental philosophy. In particular, students will survey the history of rhetoric, the development of rhetorical theory as a practice, and discuss recent controversies and developments in the field of rhetoric.

#### Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students should:

1. Understand that (a) speech, words and language have consistent and long-lasting effects, (b) rhetoric describes a theory of the speaker and their ability to invent persuasion, a theory of the audience, and the scenes where rhetoric is received or taken up, and a theory of meaning-making and representation that gives text a viral life of its own and (c) rhetoric is a tool for ethical-worldmaking that allows us to make more deliberate and inclusive choices about their speech.
2. Understand that rhetoric is an art of speaking and representation and a technology of power.
3. Interpret and critically analyze rhetorical theories for significant contributions to the development of the theory and practice of rhetorical in contemporary and historical times.

#### Readings and Class Participation

You are expected to complete all syllabus readings prior to attending class. You are expected to participate in class discussions and provide analysis and insight during class about the rhetorical artifacts we are examining in class. Classroom experiences contribute positively to the university learning environment and so you are expected to participate in discussion in a way that is respectful of others’ perspectives and experiences. This course is designed to deal with difficult and often problematic material. As adults and students in a university environment, I expect every student to approach the material in a critical, scholarly, and responsible manner. The purpose of the class is to provide you with the tools necessary to examine and analyze a brutal, violent, and often extremely anxiety-inducing world. We will not shy away from difficult discussions, rather we will seek them out and as your instructor, I need your assistance to take this journey. Understanding that the content can be difficult to confront at times, I will do my best to provide trigger warnings and content warnings for any material deemed sensitive or violent. If I do not meet your expectations in this regard, please let me know directly so that I can remedy the situation.

#### Attendance

Attendance is essential to success in this course. Lectures will not be recorded, but power point slides will be provided on the canvas page prior to class. Attendance will be taken throughout the semester to ensure that you are showing up for lecture and discussion material. Excused absences include personal emergencies with documentation, university sanctioned activities or competitions, and prior authorization by me. Attendance will constitute 10% of your overall grade for the course.

#### Netiquette: Communication Courtesy Code

All members of the class are expected to follow rules of common courtesy in all email messages, discussions, and chats. If I deem any of them to be inappropriate or offensive, I will first schedule a time to meet with the student to discuss the issue, then if the issue is not resolved I forward the message to the Chair of the department and appropriate action will be taken. The same rules apply online as they do in person. Be respectful of other students.

#### Use of Large Language Models and Artificial Intelligence

The recent development of ChatGPT and other language models that rely on artificial intelligence provides a lot of useful informational tools for students. The use of these tools is not prohibited in this class, nay, it is strongly encouraged. You may use these tools to prepare, research, organize, or coordinate your assignments. However, all written product must be original work (including analysis assignments, exams, and the term paper.) If you use these tools to produce writing that is to be graded for the course, you will receive no credit for that assignment. TLDR: yes you can use ChatGPT, just not to write the paper for you.

#### Late Assignments

All assignments are due prior to class on the day assigned unless otherwise specified. Please check canvas regularly for changes to any assignment requirements, including due dates. Due to the nature of this course, falling behind on assignments will make it difficult for you to succeed in the class.

#### Required Readings

Hallsby, Atilla. (2022). *Reading Rhetorical Theory*. University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing, Twin Cities. <https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/>

Various readings on the presidency provided on Canvas by the instructor

#### Grading

Attendance and Participation 10% Short papers (3 total) 30%

Exams (3 total) 30% 1891Final Paper 30%

### Part 3: Course Schedule

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Topic** | **Readings** | **Due** |
| Aug 22 | Introduction to the Course |  |  |
| Aug 24 | What is Rhetorical Theory? | Hallsby – Ch.1 |  |
| Aug 29 | Teaching Theory – Talking Community | James (Canvas) |  |
| Aug 31 | Origins of Rhetorical Theory | Hallsby – Ch. 2 |  |
| Sep 5 | Aspasia and Greek Philosophy | Jarratt and Ong (Canvas) |  |
| Sep 7 | Propaganda and the Common Good | Hallsby – Ch. 3 |  |
| Sep 12 | Against the Sophists | Mirhady and Too (Canvas) |  |
| Sep 14 | The Symbol | Hallby – Ch. 4 |  |
| Sep 19 | Definition of Man | Burke (Canvas) |  |
| **Sep 21** | **NO CLASS – DEBATE TRAVEL** |  | **Short Paper #1 Due** |
| Sep 26 | The Sign | Hallsby – Ch. 5  Norton (Canvas) |  |
| **Sep 28** | **Exam #1** |  |  |
| Oct 3 | Rhetoric and Ideology | Hallsby – Ch. 6 |  |
| Oct 5 | Language and Culture | Hall (Canvas) |  |
| Oct 10 | Argumentation | Hallsby – Ch. 7 |  |
| Oct 12 | Narrative | Hallsby – Ch. 8 |  |
| Oct 17 | **NO CLASS – FALL BREAK** |  | **Short Paper #2 Due** |
| Oct 19 | Breaking Bad and Whiteness | Johnson (Canvas) |  |
| Oct 24 | Visual Rhetoric | Hallsby – Ch. 9 |  |
| Oct 26 | Background on Visual Rhetoric | Campbell (Canvas) |  |
| **Oct 31** | **Exam #2** |  |  |
| Nov 2 | Rhetorical Situation | Hallsby – Ch. 10 |  |
| Nov 7 | Genre and Situation | Jamieson (Canvas) |  |
| Nov 9 | The Settler Situation | Hallsby – Ch. 11 |  |
| Nov 14 | Decolonization is not a Metaphor | Tuck and Yang (Canvas) |  |
| Nov 16 | The Secrecy Situation | Hallby – Ch. 12 |  |
| Nov 21 | Panopticism | Foucault (Canvas) |  |
| Nov 23 | **NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING** |  |  |
| Nov 28 | The Digital Situation | Hallsby – Ch. 14 | **Short Paper #3 Due** |
| Nov 30 | Rhetorical Algorithms | Hallsby (Canvas) |  |
| Dec 5 | Paper workshop/Exam study session |  |  |
| **Dec 7** | **Exam #3** |  |  |
| **Dec 15** |  |  | **FINAL PAPER DUE 5pm** |