

rhetoric & bullshit

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Is bullshit the excess of our collective bowel, or the force that keeps it moving and “regular”?

The stench of bullshit is near and clear, and yet it lingers -- why? In this course, we will explore the role of bullshit in a “democratic society” by analyzing its relationship to rhetoric; to do this, we will write, read, critique, reflect, and interact with a variety of “texts” that explore a myriad of rhetorical situations and discursive formations -- ancient and modern, political and popular, fabricated and factual -- as a means for studying the excrement of our society (also known as Taurascatics). In short, this class will interrogate the shit that stains our collective un/conscious.

Learning Outcomes

In this course you will learn to:

- compose in more than one genre by responding to rhetorical situations and genre conventions according to readers' expectations and writers' purpose.
- ask questions and be guided by strategic explorations of those questions in order to generate research topics and sustain meaningful inquiry.
- locate relevant source material, evaluate its credibility, and cite it appropriately.
- analyze and synthesize ideas in source material to produce projects that interpret and evaluate your own ideas and assumptions, as well as those of other writers.
- apply strategies when composing, revising, or evaluating their own work that enable them to follow conventions of standard professional English, such as arrangement, language use, mechanics, or documentation style.
- reflect critically on how to apply their processes for writing and analysis to writing projects in other contexts, within and outside the University.

Course Expectations

In this course you will compose three major project:

The Multi-Modal Project	20%
The Article Review	20%
The Research-Based Project	20%
The Zine	20%
Active Participation	20%

As a five unit course, you will be expected to work an average of fifteen (15) hours per week; therefore, to earn full credit for participation -- which is 20% of your grade -- you will need to do the following:

1. Meet with me at least once during office hours.
2. Attend each class on time and prepared to actively engage in discussion (you are allotted one "free" absence/ three tardies, any additional will result in a significant loss of points and/or a non-passing grade in the course).
3. Keep open lines of communication with both me and your peers.

Course Materials

1. A Wordpress Account & Blog Site
2. A Stapler
3. A Free-Write Journal
4. Access to Printing

Point People Presentations

Each writing community will be responsible for facilitating a one-hour discussion on a course text; in these "presentations," your community will offer the class a brief summary of your text's main points, then apply its rhetorical framework to a contemporary social issue.

Please prepare a handout for the class that outlines your key ideas; no powepoints.

Blog Posts

Each week you will be asked to publish two blog posts to your Wordpress site: one, a reflective response; the other, an analysis of the text(s) and/or concepts discussed in class that week. Both posts will be due by Friday, 5pm.

Major Writing Projects

You will develop, write, and revise four major writing projects this quarter--each will ask you to practice your knowledge of rhetorical structures, while offering you opportunities to compose in different genres.

The Multi-Modal Project: Personas & Terministic Screens

The Article Review: Entering the Conversation

The Research-Based Project: Rhetoric in Action

The Zine: Repurpose, Revise, and Reflect

Plagiarism & Academic Integrity

According to UC Santa Cruz's Campus and Administrative Manual, Section 684.3: "Plagiarism is defined as the act of using the ideas or work of another person or persons as if they were one's own without giving proper credit to the source. Such an act is not plagiarism if it is ascertained that the ideas were arrived through independent reasoning or logic or where the thought or idea is common knowledge. Acknowledgment of an original author or source must be made through appropriate references (...)."

Any acts of plagiarism will be reported and result in a failing grade.

Don Rothmans Award

Each year the Don Rothmans Endowed Award in First-Year Writing honors the achievements of one or more first-year students in the genre of nonfiction, academic, or analytic writing. Up to five students will receive an acknowledgment and monetary award during a Fall awards ceremony. The deadline for submission will be announced later this year.

Inclusion & Diversity Statement

UCSC considers the diversity of its students, faculty, and staff to be a strength and critical to its educational mission; therefore it expects every member of the community to contribute to an inclusive and respectful culture for all in its classrooms, work environments, and campus events.

If there are any aspects of the design, instruction, and/or experiences within this course that act as barriers to your inclusion or accurate assessment of achievement, please notify me as soon as possible. Open lines of communication are vital.

Assignment Schedule

Week One

Monday, June 25: What is Bullshit?

Wednesday, June 27: Process over Product

Reading: Create a Bullshit Inventory

Project #1 due Sunday by 12pm.

Week Two

Monday, July 2: An Academic Approach to Bullshit

Reading: "On Bullshit" (pdf)

Wednesday, July 4: No Class

Week Three

Monday, July 9: "I do" Bullshit

Reading: "Performative Utterances" (pdf)

"The Public Apology" (pdf)

Wednesday, July 11: Performing Style

Reading: "Style: The Hidden Agenda (...)" (pdf)

Week Four

Monday, July 16: Finding Convergence

Reading: "Rhetoric and Bullshit" (pdf)

Wednesday, July 18: Writing Community Presentation

Annotated Bibliography due as a hard copy in class

Week Five

Monday, July 23: Interpreting Research

Reading: "The Debunking Handbook" (pdf)

Wednesday, July 25: Situated Knowledge

Reading: "Has Trump Stolen Philosophy's Critical Tools" (pdf)

Week Six

Monday, July 30: The Politics of Bullshit

Reading: "Stuart Hall and Cultural Studies" (pdf)

"Google's Dangerous Identity Crisis" (pdf)

Wednesday, August 1: Writing Community Presentation

Article Review due Friday, by 5pm (electronically)

Week Seven

Monday, August 6: Science & Bullshit

Reading: "Manufacturing Uncertainty" (pdf)

Wednesday, August 8: Writing Community Presentation

Week Eight

Monday, August 13: Logic and Argumentation

Reading: "Book of Bad Arguments" (pdf)

Wednesday, August 15: Peer Review

Please bring a draft of your paper to class.

Research Project due Sunday, by 5pm (electronically)

Week Nine

Monday, August 20: Digital Literacy

Reading: "Literacy, Democracy, and Fake News" (pdf)

Wednesday, August 22: Writing Community Presentation

Week Ten

Monday, August 27: Hyperreality and Truth

Reading: "The Precession of Simulacra" (PDF)

Wednesday, August 29: Jeopardy

Zine Projects due during Final's Week