

Terrapin Young Scholars Proposed Course

ENGL 294: Persuasion and Cleverness in Social Media

Course Description

This course explores the rhetorical strategies employed by social media creators and the varied impacts of social media. Through rhetorical and cultural analysis, the course will look at how individuals and influencers craft identities in online spaces, how online communities form around in-group inclusion and out-group exclusion, and how social media might be wielded as both a tool of social change and reactionary backlash. The course will mix analytic and reflective writing with hands-on social media creation, allowing students to apply what they have learned through analysis to making their own media. No prior multimedia experience is expected.

Assignment Descriptions and Grade Breakdown

Engagement—5%

Discussion Boards—10%

Peer Review—10%

Social Media Autoethnography (3 pages)—25%

In this assignment, you will reflect on and critically study your own social media presence. You will analyze your tweets, posts, profile pictures, etc. in order to better understand the persona that you have created in online spaces and how you have constructed that persona. You will also reflect on the factors (such as negative and positive personal experiences with social media, the influencers and social media personalities you follow, etc.) that have shaped the way you approach creating your online presence.

Social Media Rhetorical Analysis (3 pages)—25%

In this assignment, you will analyze how a social media community has become a community. This might be followers of a particular celebrity or influencer, communities organized around a particular interest or hobby, sports/team communities, or another community of your choice. You will define the community and its guiding focuses/principles and may study the language/dialect of the community, the rhetorical moves and tropes that members of this community employ in order to participate and signal in-group status, the ways in which the community operates within the constraints of a platform or differently across different platforms, and/or how the community engages with dissent, conflict, or out-group individuals.

*Group Social Media Advocacy Campaign (3-4 Materials and a 1.5-page Designers' Statement)—
25%*

In this assignment, you and a group of your classmates will develop mock-ups of social media materials designed to effect some sort of social change, whether that be to promote a particular community resource, call attention to a problem, or combat misinformation on a particular subject. Your materials will be accompanied by a brief designers' statement outlining the rhetorical choices made in the materials and how those choices respond to the rhetorical situation in which your campaign operates.

Sample

Course Policies

Class Delivery

This course will be synchronous online. We will meet live during class hours and will have additional writing and reading to complete outside the classroom.

Class Activities

Improving your writing requires working simultaneously on different skills in different ways, so English 294 includes the following activities:

- Engagement— Just being present in class won't cut it. You are expected to be an active and engaged participant in class discussions as well as during small group and individual exercises.
- Peer editing – You will be responsible for reading and responding to the work of your classmates.
- Discussion Boards—These will provide initial practice in the skills and concepts you will need for your major assignments
- Major assignments – will include two papers and a social advocacy campaign

Texts

Course readings will be posted to the course (Canvas) site. As soon as you are able, please check to make sure you can access the course website.

Attendance

The work that you submit in English 294, including but not limited to rough drafts and formal writing assignments, will be based on skills that you develop and hone in class. For this reason, your attendance and active participation are essential to your success in this course. If you miss class for any reason, it will be your responsibility to find out what you missed and what is needed to make up the work.

Whether or not you are allowed to make up that work will depend on two factors:

- 1) whether your absence is excused or unexcused (please see the University's statement on excused and unexcused absences at https://www.faculty.umd.edu/teach/attend_student.html);
- 2) whether the work you handed in or the activity you missed during class constitutes a "major course event." Rough draft workshops and final due dates of formal assignments constitute major course events. Any work connected to a major course event is due on the date stipulated unless an alternative arrangement has been worked out ahead of time.

There is a limit to the number of unexcused absences that you may accrue over the course of the semester. For this class, you have two. While you are allowed these absences, missing class sessions still means that you will lose participation points for that day and for any in-

class exercises that your peers complete. For each additional unexcused absence beyond two, your engagement grade for the course will be impacted.

If you miss class for any reasons, it will be your responsibility to find out what you missed and how you can make up the work.

Late Papers

Papers are due at the assigned time on Canvas (or thereabouts, within reason). Late papers will be marked down one letter grade per class late. If you must hand a paper in late, you must also contact me the day the paper is due, so that I know when to expect your paper and so that we can make arrangements for delivery (whether you'll give it to me in class, or deliver it to my office, etc.)

Writing Workshop Policy

Every great writer is also a great reader, and analyzing the choices that others have made is one of the best methods for developing your own skill as a writer. For each assignment, we will have a draft workshop before your paper is due.

On workshop days, you will offer suggestions via Canvas on how your peers can improve their drafts; I will also provide specific criteria that you can use to evaluate each other's work. You will also have the opportunity to talk further with your peers about your writing, allowing you to clarify comments and collaboratively brainstorm next steps for your writing.

After each workshop, you will also draft a short Revision Plan in which you set clear goals for revising your work and the motives behind those desired revisions. You will thereby provide yourself with a specific starting point for purposefully revising your work.

Writing is a public act as well as a private one, and peer editing is one important means by which we will integrate this social aspect into the classroom. You will receive a grade for your peer editing skills, which I will determine based on your engagement in workshops as well as on the quality of the written comments you provide on your peers' drafts. I recognize that this sounds like a good deal of additional work, but remember that a good comment from a peer can substantially improve an ongoing challenge in your work. You owe it to yourselves and each other to be active and insightful workshop participants.

Tips for Success in an Online Course

1. **Participate.** Discussions and group work are a critical part of the course. You can learn a great deal from discussing ideas and perspectives with your peers and me. Participation can also help you articulate your thoughts and develop critical thinking skills.
2. **Manage your time.** Make time for your online learning and participation in discussions each week. Give yourself plenty of time to complete assignments including extra time to handle any technology related problems.
3. **Log in regularly.** Log in to ELMS-Canvas several times a week to view announcements, discussion posts and replies to your posts. You may need to log in multiple times a day when group submissions are due.

4. **Do not fall behind.** This class moves at a quick pace and each week builds on the previous. It will be hard to keep up with the course content if you fall behind.
5. **Use ELMS-Canvas notification settings.** ELMS-Canvas can ensure you receive timely notifications in your email or via text. Be sure to enable announcements to be sent instantly or daily.
6. **Ask for help if needed.** If you need help with ELMS-Canvas or other technology, contact IT Support. If you are struggling with a course concept, reach out to me and your classmates for support.

Making Up Work

Timeliness is important in making up work. As soon as possible, make an appointment with me, or come to my first available office hour so you can arrange a schedule to make up the work you have missed.

E-mail Correspondence

I will make reasonable attempts to respond to your questions by e-mail, but I am not online constantly; I will make every effort to reply to any email within 24 hours and often within 12 hours. On weekends, I will promise to check my e-mail once on Sunday nights, but not each evening.

Please be aware that you are responsible for keeping your email address up to date and must ensure that forwarding to another address functions properly. Failure to check email, errors in forwarding, and returned email are your responsibility, and do not constitute an excuse for missing announcements or deadlines.

Comments:

At its best, responding extends and deepens the exchange that begins in the classroom, and it offers opportunities for students and teachers to engage in dialogue. The role of the student in this exchange is to be open to a teacher's comments, reading and hearing comments not as personal attacks or as the teacher's idiosyncrasies but rather as instructive words to carry to the next draft or assignment. And the role of the teacher in this exchange is to welcome students into the process by engaging with their ideas, respectfully and thoughtfully, treating students as apprentices, with much to gain and much to give. (Nancy Sommers, *Responding to Student Writing*, p. 10)

I could not have said it better myself. (That's why I quoted her.) Please do not consider the comments that you receive on your writing as justifications for a grade; instead, think of them as a means of applying the principles and concepts we discuss in class to the specific piece you have submitted. Use the comments I provide on your writing as a guide for approaching your future writing assignments. That said, I would also strongly encourage you to see my comments as only a *starting point* for further discussion about your progress in the course and your

development as writer. Margin comments and endnotes can only accomplish so much; conversation between the two of us can accomplish so much more.

Academic Integrity

The UMD Honor Code prohibits students from cheating on exams, plagiarizing papers, submitting the same paper for credit in two courses without authorization, buying papers, submitting fraudulent documents and forging signatures. Allegations of academic dishonesty will be reported directly to the Student Honor Council: <http://www.shc.umd.edu>

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Policy

In this course, my expectation is that you will not use any artificial intelligence (AI)-powered programs such as ChatGPT or DALL-E to help you with your assignments. Any use of AI-generated work to outline, write, create, or edit your assignments will be considered an academic integrity violation. My reasoning for this is that these programs may provide inaccurate or biased information, but more importantly, they do not serve your development as a student. In this course you will learn valuable skills from outlining, generating, and editing your own work. If you have any questions about this policy or are not sure if a resource you have found will violate this policy, please ask.

Grading Scale

<u>Grade</u>	<u>University Definition</u>
97-100: A+ 93-96: A 90-92: A-	Superior Achievement
87-89: B+ 83-86: B 80-82: B-	Good
77-79: C+ 73-76: C 70-72: C-	Average
67-69: D+ 63-66: D 60-62: D-	Passing, but not satisfactory
59 and below: F	Failure

Copyright notice

Class lectures and other materials are copyrighted. They may not be reproduced for anything other than personal use without written permission from the instructor. Copyright infringements may be referred to the Office of Student Conduct.

Classroom Environment in English 395

The classroom environment for English 395 is built on mutual respect, valuing behaviors such as listening to others before responding, critiquing our peers' ideas rather than our peers themselves, and framing disagreements as opportunities to develop and nuance our own positions and persuasive strategies. I expect that we will each do our part to ensure that everyone feels encouraged to contribute. If at any point in the semester you feel like I can better facilitate a respectful and productive learning space, please come and talk to me. I would love to hear your ideas.

The University of Maryland values the diversity of its student body. Along with the University, I am committed to providing a classroom atmosphere that encourages the equitable participation of all students regardless of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, national origin, race, religion, or sexual orientation. Potential devaluation of students in the classroom that can occur by reference to demeaning stereotypes of any group and/or overlooking the contributions of a particular group to the topic under discussion is inappropriate.

English Department Names, Pronouns, and Self-Identifications Statement

The University of Maryland recognizes the importance of a diverse student body, and we are committed to fostering inclusive and equitable classroom environments. I invite you, if you wish, to tell us how you want to be referred to both in terms of your name and your pronouns (he/him, she/her, they/them, etc.). The pronouns someone indicates are not necessarily indicative of their gender identity. Visit trans.umd.edu to learn more.

Additionally, how you identify in terms of your gender, race, class, sexuality, religion, and dis/ability, among all aspects of your identity, is your choice whether to disclose (e.g., should it come up in classroom conversation about our experiences and perspectives) and should be self-identified, not presumed or imposed. I will do my best to address and refer to all students accordingly, and I ask you to do the same for all of your fellow Terps.

English Department Statement on Diversity and Inclusion

UMD English considers the diversity of its students, faculty, and staff to be critical to its educational mission and expects every member of the community to contribute to an inclusive and respectful culture in the classroom, work environment, and at campus events. It is my intent that students from diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and learning needs be well served by this course and that the diversity students bring to class be viewed as a resource and strength. Dimensions of diversity include, for instance, intersections of sex, race, age, national origin, ethnicity, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, intellectual and physical ability, primary language, faith and non-faith perspectives, income, military service, political affiliation, marital or family status, and education. I endeavor to present materials and activities that foster a positive learning environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. Please let me know of ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you or other students or student groups.

If you experience issues or have suggestions related to diversity and inclusion in your English courses or as part of the English department community, please contact the Chair of our CAARES Committee (Committee of Anti-Racism, Accessibility, Respect, Equity and Social Justice) at englishcaares@umd.edu.

Week One

Day	Topic	Possible Readings	Possible Writing Due
Day One	Rhetorical Foundations— Appeals and Rhetorical Situations	Kucher, Social Media Content Creative Spotlight: Rhetorical Analysis and the Art of Persuasion	
Day Two	Rhetorical Foundations— Visual Rhetoric Rhetorical Foundations— Affordances of Medium and Genre	Excerpts from Riechers, <i>The Elements of Visual Grammar</i> Olajide, “Medical Influencers: An Analysis of TikTok’s Genre Features”	Discussion Board #1: Studying Appeals and Situation in Online Texts
Day Three	Performing the Self: Authenticity and Ethos in Social Media	Jackson, “We Need to Talk About Digital Blackface in Reaction GIFs” Syme, “Selfie: The Revolutionary Potential of Your Own Face, in Seven Chapters” Ellis, “Want to Profit Off Your Meme? Good Luck If You Aren’t White”	Discussion Board #2: Analyzing Visual Rhetoric and Platform Affordances
Day Four	Performing the Self: Analyzing Social Media Use Habits Autoethnography: What Is It, and How Do We Do It?	Excerpts from Sunstein and Chisleri-Strater, <i>FieldWorking</i>	
Day Five	Performing the Self: Social Media, Identity, Relationships Autoethnography: Analyzing Our Own Social Media Presence	Excerpts from Turkle, <i>Alone Together</i>	

Week Two

Day	Topic	Possible Readings	Possible Writing Due
Day Six	Providing Feedback on Others' Writing Workshop: Social Media Autoethnography		Social Media Autoethnography Draft
Day Seven	Crafting Communities: Creating the In-Group	Wurst, "Bread and Plots: Conspiracy Theories and the Rhetorical Style of Political Influencer Communities on YouTube" Episodes from New York Times, <i>The Rabbit Hole</i>	
Day Eight	Crafting Communities: The Rhetoric of Us vs. Them	Excerpts from Roberts-Miller, <i>Demagoguery and Democracy</i> Robinson, "Greta Thunberg Claps Back at Andrew Tate's 'Small Dick Energy'"	Assignment #1: Social Media Autoethnography
Day Nine	Crafting Communities: Hate in Online Spaces Rhetorical Analysis: What Is It, and How Do We Do It?	Wagner, "The Future of the Culture Wars is Here, and It's Gamergate" Chu, "Of Gamers, Gates, and Disco Demolition: The Roots of Reactionary Rage" Shepherd, et al. "Histories of Hating"	
Day Ten	Crafting Communities: Finding Our Purpose in Online Spaces Writing a Rhetorical Analysis	Excerpts from Burton, <i>Strange Rites</i> : "Two Gospels for a Godless World" and "Twilight of the Chads" Paul, "Doja Cat Started a War with Her Own Fans. Now They're Jumping Ship."	

Week Three

Day	Topic	Possible Readings	Possible Writing Due
Day Eleven	Workshop: Social Media Rhetorical Analysis Essay Marshalling Change: Using Social Media to Mobilize and Message	Richardson and Ragland, “#StayWoke: The Literacies and Language of Black Lives Matter” Bereznak, “‘It Changes Who Has the Power’”: How Bail Funds Across the Country Are Responding to Protests”	Draft of Social Media Rhetorical Analysis Essay
Day Twelve	Marshalling Change: The Limits of Digital Activism	Gladwell, “Small Change” Willingham, “Why Posting a Black Image with the ‘Black Lives Matter’ Hashtag Could Be Doing More Harm than Good” Berlatsky, “Hashtag Activism Isn’t a Cop-Out”	
Day Thirteen	Marshalling Change: Digital Literacy and Contending with Disinformation Marshalling Change: Putting the Strategies into Practice	Illing, “‘Flood the zone with shit’: How misinformation overwhelmed our democracy” On the Media, “How the Food Industry is Influencing Your Social Media Feed”	Assignment #2: Social Media Rhetorical Analysis Essay
Day Fourteen	Marshalling Change: Putting the Strategies into Practice		
Day Fifteen	Marshalling Change: Putting the Strategies into Practice		Assignment #3: Group Social Media Advocacy Project