RWS 200: Rhetoric of Written Arguments in Context  
Section 67  
Spring 2015 Course Syllabus

Instructor: Professor Jennifer Roche  
Email: jroche@rohan.sdsu.edu  
Class meets: in EBA - 256 on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:00AM - 12:15PM  
Office hours: Storm Hall 116 on Tuesdays 2:00PM - 4:00PM or by appointment  
Office Mailbox: in RWS main office -- AH3138

COURSE DESCRIPTION

RWS 200 is a course in academic writing and reading, emphasizing the rhetorical analysis of arguments in context. Building on RWS 100, the course asks students to continue the work of articulating the argument a text is making and analyzing elements of the argument. The course asks students to consider the contexts of arguments and to discover what arguments are responding to, both in the sense of what has come before them and in the sense that they are written for an audience in a particular place and time. RWS200 also teaches students to a) evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of arguments, b) discover ways of “joining the conversation,” and c) reflect on and analyze their own reading and writing strategies.

Required Texts & materials

2. Course reader available from the SDSU bookstore – Be sure to purchase the Roche version  
3. Supplementary readings available on Blackboard. These must be printed out and brought to class.  
4. A writing handbook (any recent grammar, style, and usage handbook will do).

Useful resources

1. The Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL): https://owl.english.purdue.edu/  
2. SDSU Writing Center, located in PSFA-116, open M-F 9.00 – 5.00  
   http://writingcenter.sdsu.edu/

RWS 200 LEARNING OUTCOMES

The following four outcomes describe the four major writing projects or “assignment types” for the course. You will be able to:

1. Discern elements of context embedded in arguments, the clues that show what the argument is responding to – both in the sense of what has come before it and the sense that it is written for an audience in a particular time and place; examine a writer’s language in relation to audience, context, and community;

2. Use concepts and arguments from one text as a context for understanding and writing about another;
3. Given the common concerns of two or more arguments, discuss how the claims of these arguments modify, complicate, or qualify one another;
4. Consider your contemporary, current life as the context within which you are reading a group of arguments; position yourself in relation to ongoing research and discussion in order to make an argument, drawing on available key terms, concepts of frameworks of analysis to help shape the argument.

The following points describe outcomes to work on throughout the semester:

5. Building on the work done in RWS 100, you will be able to articulate what argument a text is making, describe the work that is done by each section of the argument, describe elements of the argument such as claims, methods of development, kinds of evidence, persuasive appeals, translate an argument into your own words;
6. Understand and incorporate all aspects of the writing process – including prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and proofreading;
7. Articulate what key terms, definitions, concepts, statements of a problem or issue are established by a text;
8. Investigate and articulate how an argument is positioned – based on certain kinds of assumptions, located in a way of thinking and representing issues from a point of view;
9. Work with multiple sources in a paper, deciding what to include and what to exclude, choosing an effective structure, and creating significant relationships among sources;
10. Craft a cohesive paper, and use effective metadiscourse to guide a reader through it;
11. Describe your own papers and reflect on how you wrote them; differentiate between the content of your texts and the language and rhetorical strategies you employ;
12. Revise your own work effectively, re-reading previous work and re-envisioning it in the light of reflection, feedback, further reading, and new sources of information;
13. Edit your writing for the grammar and usage conventions appropriate to the project.

REQUIREMENTS

Essays: You will be required to write 4 essays for this course. Each essay will require at least one rough draft. All pre-writing, rough drafts, and final drafts are due in-class and/or on Blackboard TurnItIn on the date specified. Specific criteria for each essay will be given along with the prompt.

Homework Assignments and Reading Responses: Homework assignments and reading responses will be assigned throughout the semester. Guidelines and criteria for each assignment will be given out and posted on Blackboard. Assignments will be worth 3-5 points each based on the complexity of the assignment.

Reflection Blog: Once per unit (or three times during the semester), after you have completed your paper, you will be required to post on the class blog on Blackboard. For each post, please consider your writing and performance for the paper you have just completed. What do you feel you did well? What would you change? What would you like to improve on for the next paper.
you write? Your posts should be **150-200 words** long and are worth 5 points each. They are due the class meeting after your papers are turned in (so if your paper is due on a Tuesday, your blog is due that Thursday).

**Conferences/Peer Review:** One or more drafts will be required for each writing assignment. The week before your essays are due, class will be cancelled. Instead, you will sign up for a 10-15 minute one-on-one conference time with me to review your draft. To make up for the class time missed, you will be required to complete peer review online via Blackboard using feedback forms that I will provide. These forms can also be used as tools for revising your final draft. Further directions will be given along with your paper prompts.

**Participation:** You are expected to participate actively in class. Although this does not mean speaking up and contributing valuable insight during every class session, it does mean arriving on time and being prepared, paying attention, and being involved.

**GRADES**

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**RWS 200 UNITS/ASSIGNMENTS**

**Assignment 1: Analysis of an Argument in Context**

Building on RWS100, this assignment asks students to articulate a text’s argument and to analyze and describe its elements. It also asks students to discern elements of context embedded in the argument—the clues that suggest what the argument is responding to, both in the sense of what has been written before it and in the sense that it is written for an audience in a particular time and place – and to evaluate how effectively the argument persuades this audience within this specific context. The assignment will use two short texts that examine debates over the meaning of the veil in Muslim culture ("Veiled Intentions" by Maysan Haydar, and "The Muslim Woman?" by Lila Abu-Lughod.)

**Assignment 2: Using One Text as a “Lens” on Another**

In this assignment you will use concepts and arguments from one text as a context for understanding and writing about another. The first text will thus provide a “lens” for
understanding and evaluating the “target” text. Specifically, you will draw from materials on the rhetoric of demagoguery to examine LaPierre’s speech after the Sandyhook tragedy.

**Assignment 3: Analyzing the Context in Which a Set of Arguments are Made**
Understandings of gender and cultural notions of femininity and masculinity have raised important questions about citizenship and civil discourse. In this assignment you will map major points of similarity, difference, contrast and connection between texts that address these questions. You will consider how major positions advanced in these texts relate to each other, and you will evaluate claims representative of these positions. You will then use these claims as a lens to evaluate a piece of visual rhetoric.

**Assignment 4: Advancing an Argument in the Contemporary Context**
In this assignment you will draw on your current life as the context from which to understand and evaluate different texts. You will draw on select texts to construct a context that allows you to “enter the conversation” and advance your own claims.

**COURSE OUTLINE AND TENTATIVE SCHEDULE**

Please note that the following schedule is approximate, as dates and topics may shift as the semester continues. Refer to Blackboard for current information regarding your reading and assignment due dates.

**Week 1**  
Jan. 22: Intro to course, discuss syllabus

**Week 2**  
Jan. 27: PACES, review of RWS 100, key concepts/terms  
Jan. 29: Evaluating short texts, pre-writing, and paraphrasing

**Week 3**  
Feb. 3: Rhetorical analysis of context, Introduction to Paper #1  
[Note: Last day to drop classes is Feb 3rd at 11:59pm]  
Feb. 5: Discussion of Haydar, drafting introductions

**Week 4**  
Feb. 10: Discussion of Abu-Lughod, drafting body paragraphs  
Feb. 12: Rough Draft Due: Peer review and conferencing

**Week 5**  
Feb. 17: Conferencing  
Feb. 19: Conferencing

**Week 6**  
Feb. 24: Paper #1 Due, Introduction to 2nd paper  
Feb. 26: LaPierre and the rhetoric of demagoguery

**Week 7**  
March 3: Using one text as a lens on another  
March 5: Discussion of LaPierre

**Week 8**  
March 10: Paper #2 Rough Draft due, peer review and workshop  
March 12: Conferencing
Week 9
March 17: **Paper #2 due in class**, begin discussion of gender and difference
March 19: Working with and evaluating multiple sources
Portfolio Draft Piece Due

Week 10
March 24: Introduction to Paper #3, analysis of readings
March 26: Synthesizing texts, mapping contexts, evaluating claims

Week 11
SPRING BREAK!! No Class

Week 12
April 7: Library research orientation
April 9: Text discussion

Week 13
April 14: Analyzing, mapping and evaluating sources
April 16: Paper #3 Rough Draft due, peer review and workshop

Week 14
April 21: Conferencing
April 23: **Paper #3 due in class**

Week 15
April 28: From synthesis to contribution, situating your argument
April 30: Building your claims, finding support and creating space for your contribution

Week 16
May 5: Class presentations
May 7: LAST DAY OF CLASS, class presentations

POLICIES

ATTENDANCE: **There is no substitute for attending class.** This is a discussion-oriented course and your attendance is mandatory. If you are absent you are still responsible for knowing what was covered in class, what the homework is, and when it is due. I suggest you exchange phone numbers and/or emails with at least two of your classmates. In addition, check Blackboard regularly. Students are allowed **no more than 3 absences** during the semester. Missing more than 3 classes will result in a reduction in the class attendance/participation grade. I will mark down excessive tardiness (arriving more than 5 minutes late to class) on my attendance sheet. Please note: two tardies are equivalent to one absence.

FORMAT OF WRITTEN WORK: All essays and assignments are due as a hard copy in class on the date specified. All assignments **must be typed** (Times New Roman, 12-point font, 1” margins) AND STAPLED (I will take points off if it is not stapled!!). Please adhere to MLA format when citing and for all bibliographic information. Essay pre-writing and drafts will not be graded; however, evidence of pre-writing and at least one rough draft is required to receive a grade on the final essay. **Late assignments will not be accepted.** For emergency cases, late work may be accepted up to one week following the printed deadline and will be subjected to a grade penalty.
**EMAIL:** Please use your resources first (Blackboard, the syllabus, classmates), but feel free to email me between **8:00 AM to 8:00 PM.** I will respond as quickly as possible, but please allow me 24 hours to get back to you. Additionally, please include your full name on all emails, especially if your email address does not contain your name.

**RE-WRITES:** Students may choose to re-write ONE essay after receiving a grade for the assignment. You may revise any paper for which you receive a grade lower than a C. Essay re-writes may be submitted up to one week after I hand back your graded essays. In order to qualify for a re-write, your paper MUST HAVE BEEN SUBMITTED ON TIME. Late papers relinquish this right. Please note that the fourth essay cannot have a re-write due to time constraints.

**BLACKBOARD:** Students should go to [https://blackboard.sdsu.edu](https://blackboard.sdsu.edu) to access all important information required of this class, such as YouTube videos, class assignments, readings, and this syllabus.

**ELECTRONICS:** Your active participation is required in this course. As such, our classroom will be an “electronic-free zone.” Please turn off your cell phones, iPods, and similar electronic equipment when you come to class. Because we will be interacting often, the use of laptops will also be prohibited. Students who would like to use laptops are encouraged to discuss the specific need with me in advance. If you are in class listening to music, texting, on social media or instant messaging, I will mark you absent. Some days when we are drafting, I will allow laptops in class and will inform you in advance when they will be allowed.

**PLAGIARISM:** It is never ok. All work in this course must be original; academic integrity is expected at all times. Plagiarism in **any** class will result in serious consequences ranging from grade reduction to failure in the class to expulsion from the college. For more information on the university cheating and plagiarism policy, please visit: [http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/dept/senate/policy/pfacademics.html](http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/dept/senate/policy/pfacademics.html). SDSU’s library also has an excellent tutorial on how to avoid plagiarism.

**TURNITIN:** Turnitin (integrated within Blackboard) will be used in this course for submission of four essay assignments. Students in this course agree that papers are subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turninit.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Students may submit their papers in such a way that no identifying information about them is included. Another option is that a student may request, in writing, that her/his papers not be submitted to Turnitin.com. However, this option requires the student to provide documentation to substantiate that the papers are the original work of the student and do not include any plagiarized material.

**RESPECT:** During this course, we will be covering controversial and debatable subjects. Since this is a discussion-based class, it is vital that you listen and speak respectfully to others at all times. Discriminatory and disrespectful remarks will not be tolerated. I encourage you to express
your opinions, of course – they will often inspire good discussions—but please do so consciously with tact and professionalism.

**COURSE ASSISTANCE SERVICES**

**OFFICE HOURS:** I encourage all students to attend office hours, especially if you have any questions or concerns about reading, writing, the course or college in general. If you need assistance but cannot make it to office hours, please email me and we will schedule an appointment. Please bring all of your pre-writing, drafts, and final drafts of your essays with comments to office hours and conferences. It will assist me in answering any questions you may have on the assignments.

**COURSE TUTORING:** I welcome all students to attend office hours with questions on writing or the RWS 200 course. If you would like additional assistance and encouragement, SDSU has an excellent staff of tutors to assist students in all courses. Students who need assistance with course concepts or writing assignments in English or ESL are encouraged to contact the department of Rhetoric and Writing Studies at (619) 594-6515 for more information on drop-in tutoring hours.

**DISABLED STUDENTS:** Every attempt will be made to offer reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities in this course. If you have an outstanding medical issue which may affect your performance in this course or require special accommodations, please notify me privately as soon as possible, before assignments are due. Students with disabilities who may need accommodations in this class are also encouraged to contact Student Disability Services (SDS) as soon as possible. All discussion of disabilities will take place privately to protect student confidentiality. SDS staff are available in the Capulli Center in Suite 3101 or by phone at (619) 594-6473 (voice) or (619) 594-2929 (TTD/TTY).

**COUNSELING:** There are many events and situations that put additional stress on being a student. SDSU has an excellent center for Counseling & Psychological Services that is open to students Monday through Friday from 8am-4:30pm. To set up an initial consultation, call (619) 594-5220. For immediate or emergency help, you are welcome to use San Diego’s free 24-hour counseling access line at (800) 479-3339. C&PS on campus also has a “Center for Well-Being” with multiple stations for relaxation if you are feeling stressed. C&PS is located in the Capulli Center, Room 4401.

**STUDENT-ATHLETES:** Student-athletes have very demanding, dynamic schedules which place additional hardship on excelling in both arenas. As an instructor, I am committed to helping you succeed in the course. To do so, regular and effective communication is needed. While no exceptions will be made for attendance, assignment deadlines, or exams, I would be happy to work with all student-athletes in conjunction with Student-Athlete Support Services (SASS) to help you excel in this course. For more information on SASS’ academic advising and tutoring services, call (619) 594-4743.