

Division of Rhetoric and Composition
Course Proposals
Ruszkiewicz
July 14, 1993

E 306 Rhetoric and Composition--A composition course that provides basic instruction in the writing and analysis of expository prose; includes and introduction to logic and the principles of rhetoric.

Remains as is, with syllabus modified to stand on its own--separate from Writing Arguments (or any other textbook).

E 309K Topics in Writing--Reading and writing about a specific subject, with the emphasis on the evaluation of information, analytical reading, and critical writing.

Offered in two versions, each with a general syllabus, some required assignments, and common textbooks for the writing strand of the course.

- 1) Writing About Literature: A course designed primarily--though not exclusively--for literature majors. Course would focus on writing about major literary genres: poetry, essay, novel, drama. Instructors may choose genres and texts to give the course particular emphases. Would include an introduction to basic literary research methods and types of literary analysis.
- 2) Writing About Popular Culture: A course designed to teach students how to analyze, explore, report, and evaluate aspects of contemporary culture. Instructors could focus on a single genre or topic.

E 309L The Writing Process--The study of rhetoric, logic, and the processes of writing in a workshop setting.

E 310 revisited. Designed for the student who wants practice in writing beyond E 306. A general course with assignments specified by the instructors, but topics selected by students.

E 309M Thinking and Writing--Addresses the relationship between writing and conceptualization, with emphasis on analytical reading and expository writing.

Offered in two versions, each with a general syllabus, some required assignments, and common textbooks for the writing strand of the course.

- 1) Writing and Technology: Explores the relationship of writing and technology.
- 2) Classical Rhetoric: Uses classical principles and methods to augment what students have learned about argumentation in E 306. Focuses on invention, imitation, figures of speech, etc. Topics drawn from the political realm.

E 309Msp A course in argumentation for students who have placed out of E 306.

{Should we make E 309 a prerequisite for E 325M?}

Sue Rodi

E306 Rhetoric and Composition

I envision E306 as a course in argument, based on the stasis questions, such as the course is now. In the course, students would write five arguments papers. (1) A warm-up paper in which students support an argument with two because a la Ramage and Bean's (R&B) warm-up paper (The exercises for this paper in R & B are excellent and should not be omitted; they establish the basics for invention, organization, and style upon which subsequent papers are based.). (2) A definition paper. (3) A cause and effect paper based on library research and using MLA research annotation (The cause and effect topics in Fahnestock and Secor's A Rhetoric of Argument are an excellent source of topics for this paper.), (4) An evaluation paper, and (5) A proposal/ policy paper. Equally as important as introducing students to these logical formats for argument is the way the material is taught: we should teach the writing process, especially revision. R & B provide quite good pre-writing strategies for selecting topics and arranging arguments. To this, I add emphasis be given to rewriting by requiring that each paper be written twice and marked/graded twice. Marking the original with revising suggestions is the key to learning; Grading it ensures students will write it to the best of their ability. Rewrites should be required of any student receiving a C, D, or F, while students earning B's should be given the option of revising. Marking should be done by peers (after they are taught way of marking) as well as the teacher. I cannot stress enough the importance of guided rewriting, a conclusion I reach from teaching E306 the past two semesters. Students learn more about writing, have the best chance of becoming proficient writers, and have the most motivation using this system of grading and revising. Following this procedure, however, does require cutting out other things: analysis(with any depth) of the rhetorical stance for papers, discussion/analysis of readings (articles by professional authors), philosophical theory and even Toulmin logic (R&B are heavy on both). If R & B is used, only material directly about the five papers should be assigned so that the students' manuscripts become the texts for the course. This emphasis is especially compatible with the computerized courses we'll be moving to.

Finally, let me suggest an added emphasis that is needed: attending to grammar. This makes good sense from several perspectives. First, students who are required to take E306 have landed there because of their failure to score high enough on a grammar test. So, we know at the outset that they lack grammatical/mechanical knowledge. Second, if we continue giving only lip service to attending to grammar, their deficit--even with grammar logs which are now being used--will remain largely uncorrected. Consequently, they will move on to other college-wide courses continuing, some more some less, to write error-ridden papers.

E309 Topics in Writing: Writing About Literature

I envision this course as one devoted to writing analyses of literary texts, novels, short stories, drama, and perhaps poetry. Text selection should be at the discretion of individual teachers. I see teachers unifying their course generally by studying a unifying theme (e.g., man's alienation, psychological themes about literature) in a cross-genre approach. Since the current E316K uses a cross-genre, historical/survey approach, it would probably be best that E309 not be chronologically/historically based. Likewise, I believe ideological approaches (Marxism, feminism, deconstruction, etc.) should be avoided, these being best saved for upper division courses in the English major. The course also, in my opinion, should not devote itself to teaching complex analytical apparatus (e.g., learning poetic meter, the Stanislavsky method of drama construction, etc.) which would take time from student writing. This means that class discussion would, for the most part, be textual analysis derived from New Criticism: seeing the artistic organic merging of plot, character, setting, theme, point of view (mood/atmosphere), imagery patterns (and, in the case of poetry, sound patterns). Some historical background/new historicism as a filigree by which to more clearly understand/appreciate the texts themselves would also often be called for.

I believe the major writing text should be John Trimble's Writing With Style (or some similar work, if there is one). WWS is a good choice for this variant of E309 because it is an expository writing text primarily based on analysis of literature (See Ch. 3 and students examples in Ch. 4). In addition, it builds on E306 (though not based on stasis questions) in that it teaches argument--proving a gutty thesis using (literary) textual evidence arranged in a reasoned, discursive essay. Generally, I don't recommend texts on Writing About Literature as were used for several years in E316K; they're too canned. What I recommend instead is teachers of the course, obviously, research their own selected texts but also learn about literary analysis by reading in such texts as Louise Rosenblatt's The Reader, the Text, The Poem, and by participating in a workshop or two on constructing interesting paper topics based on the literary elements above. (I do this in my E360M and I'm sure other people have ideas here that could be combined into such a workshop.) Of course, they would also have the suggestions our committee will give them for the course. For us, I recommend we get Joe Malof's handout of paper assignments for his poetry analysis course. It would need some adapting for topics about other kinds of literature, but it is an excellent resource. So is Joe.

E309K - Topics in Writing: Writing About Popular Culture

I envision this course as one whose topics could be of two varieties, though there may be other possibilities as well: one, the course could be given to studying

two, it could eclectically dip into a variety of pop forms (analyzing a piece of modern art in the HRC, writing a movie review of a recent film, analyzing audiences of popular magazines etc.) . Some teachers may even opt to propose a course that studies the popular culture of a particular time period or momentous event. (For example, the fifties is generating new interest and several good books are now coming out about it. Or Ken Burn's TV series on the Civil War is an example of studying artifacts of the popular culture of a particular historic event.)

The kinds of writing assignments for this course could be especially varied. For example, if TV were the course topic, students could write an historical piece on how news coverage came to be what it is today (There's a good book about CBS like this), or write an informative piece on how the actual day's news stories are chosen; or they could write an argument about such philosophical/policy issues as TV violence; or they could analyze genre(s) such as crime stories, family sit comedies, or analyze commercials (analyzing those found during a certain time period of the day, for Monday night sports, etc., the nature of their persuasive the appeals, the profile of their targeted audience, etc.) Or the class could learn about conducting a survey, conduct one and write up its results, (e.g., how popular are soap operas on campus, which ones are, and why, etc.) Or they could write an interview piece about local TV personalities, etc. These latter assignment would introduce students to first-hand, field research, an area not covered in E306. Other objective, informative pieces also diverge from E306's writing arguments but do build upon the logical organization learned in E306.

E309L The Writing Process: Intermediate Expository Writing

I envision this as a class like our earlier E310, one elected by students who might be intimidated by E325M Advanced Expository Writing but who want a course that builds on the E306 skills they've learned and advances further their ability to write solid discursive prose. Unlike the E309's, this course would not be topic driven nor would it cover subject-matter content. Rather, it would be course with teacher-designed assignments on engaging subjects in some sort of sequence. I believe John Trimble should take charge of this course, much like he did E310's, selecting the teachers and approving their syllabi. He, too, could suggest the texts. In addition, the course would have to have the writing process built into course instruction.

E309M Thinking and Writing

Since I know nothing about Information Technology, I leave the design of this course to Lester and John Slatin. And to John Ruskiewicz if he wants to design one such as he briefly described at our last meeting: a computer course on writing about controversial issue.

To: DRC
From: John Slatin
Date: 14 July 1993
Re: 309M

E 309M Writing and Thinking: Information Technology

An intermediate writing course that focuses on rapidly changing information technologies and their impact in education and society. Writing assignments seek to develop students' awareness of the changing rhetorical situations created by new electronic writing environments including electronic mail, computer conferencing systems, hypertext, and multimedia as well as more traditional essay forms.

Core text(s) to be chosen from:

Pagels, *The Dreams of Reason*

Papert (new book on computers and schools, forthcoming)

Pirsig, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*

Hofstadter, *Gödel, Escher, Bach*

-----, *Metamagical Themes*

McCorduck, *Aaron's Code*

Mondo 2000

Wired

Various 'zines

DRC-compiled anthology

Linda
14 July

E309K Topics in Writing offers critical reading and writing, with a decided emphasis on writing. Individual sections are focused on specific topics (e.g., classic cars, growing up in America, education, pop culture) through a variety of texts or media (any combination of "literary" and nonliterary texts as well as other media) **OR** on specific genres or types of writing/media (the essay form; the short story; drama; film; "literary texts" [could be some combination of say drama, poetry, and fiction]). In the former, the emphasis is on topic; the latter, on genre or type. Of course, hybrids of the two are possible (films about fictional cars: "Chitty, Chitty Bang Bang," "The Love Bug," etc.).

Two problems to guard against:

- 1.) especially for teachers who have devoted most of their own study to "literature" rather than to rhetoric and composition, this course could easily become a "literature" course. Limit the number of texts so that this doesn't become a readings course (though we are also helping to sharpen analytical reading abilities, the course must retain its identity as a writing course).
- 2.) topics or genres that are so very idiosyncratic that they are unlikely to appeal to students (e.g. Autobiographies by Portuguese-American Women). While students are likely to enjoy innovative topics, we must be sure that there are twenty or more students on this campus who will be engaged by the topic.

Assignments may include expository and argumentative writing, rhetorical analysis, etc.

E309L The Writing Process involves students in an intensive study of the process of writing and the principles of rhetoric. Usually taught in a workshop setting. I'd like to see John Trimble and Sue Rodi (if they're interested) work up this variant based on things they're doing and they've done.

Assignments may include narration, expository and argumentative writing, and possibly rhetorical analysis, etc. But while this course may have readings, here readings serve only to illustrate rhetorical principles, etc.

E309M Thinking and Writing involves students in an exploration of information technology. Not simply a course taught in the lab (E309K and E309L may also be taught there), 309M asks students to study computer technology and consider its implications for literacy. Readings on pertinent topics may be used. Exploration of the technology is encouraged. Assignments may include expository and argumentative writing and wierd hypertextual-type projects.

E319M Pushing the Limits gives ambitious experienced teachers the chance to experiment with course design, especially in technology.

John Trimble
July 14, 1993

To: DRC colleagues (Buckley, Campbell, Faigley, Ferreira-Buckley, Kimball, Kinneavy, Rodi, Ruszkiewicz, Slatin)

I am struck by how often my students, even in 325M, are ignorant of what used to be called "the basics"—the core conventions of grammar, punctuation, and usage. Such stuff used to be taught in 9th or 10th grade, remember? Once we'd learned it, it gave us confidence that at least we knew The Rules—we wouldn't be making bonehead errors, in other words—and it also taught us a respect for niceties of form and logic, a respect that was apt to make us lifelong students of the language.

Today's students, on the other hand, even otherwise very good ones, generally have only the vaguest sense of mechanics, and it embarrasses them, as indeed it should. Ask them to identify the subject in a sentence, for example, and they'll squirm. Ask them when it's OK to use a semi-colon, and they'll look blank. Ask them to tell you what a comma splice is, and they'll study their shoes.

Yesterday I spoke with a former student, who had been a Phi Beta Kappa at UT and then gone on to law school here, where he made Law Review. Now newly graduated, he was asking for feedback on an application essay he'd written. In his second paragraph, I spotted consecutive sentences that began with dangling modifiers—e.g., "As an undergraduate, my Plan II degree allowed me to. . ." I told him that those two sentences contained glitches and asked him gently if he could find them. He hadn't a clue. Sad.

While I grant that we need to give our students plenty of practice framing persuasive arguments, I believe that we're as guilty as most high school English teachers when it comes to not teaching the basics. And the reason is probably the same: It takes superior teaching skills, not to mention sure-footed technical knowledge, to teach grammar both responsibly and interestingly. *Like our own students, we tend to put off dealing with grammar and punctuation.* Meantime, we con ourselves into believing that teaching them to *argue* responsibly satisfies the imperative that we teach them how to *write* better. And so the buck gets passed yet again.

This new Division of Rhetoric & Composition must resist the temptation to substitute rhetorical theory and literary analysis for the teaching of writing skills. Clearly, the English Department couldn't resist that temptation, despite all the signs showing its folly. Now it's our turn to be tested.

Let us ask ourselves, "What technical equipment must a UT student possess in order to construct sentences competently?" I want to see that question debated. And if we can come to a consensus answer, I want to see each of our lower-division writing courses redesigned so as to at least *include* assignments dedicated to imparting that equipment.

In my own lower-division writing classes, I intend to get serious about this technical stuff, which I've been dodging too long myself. Below are some things I aim to cover:

1. Basic rules of grammar.

- Include explanation of the 10 most common grammatical blunders.

Ex: "The participle in a participial phrase must agree with the subject of the main clause. If the main clause begins with a pronoun like 'his,' it's tempting to imagine that the participle modifies that pronoun, but in fact that pronoun isn't the subject of the main clause. It's only modifying the subject."

- Include a lexicon of useful grammatical terms, such as "appositive," "direct address," "passive voice," "infinitive," "participle," "parenthetical," "conjunction."

2. Basic rules of punctuation.

Ex: "Commas and periods go inside closing quotation marks; colons and semicolons go outside."

Ex: "A period goes inside the closing parenthesis only if the parenthetical statement is a sentence unto itself."

Ex: "Separate the two clauses in a compound sentence with a comma before the conjunction."

Ex: "Set off appositives and parenthetical elements with a comma at both ends."

Ex: "Separate the last item in a series with a comma before the conjunction."

- List and explain the most common blunders with punctuation.

3. Basic points of usage.

Ex: "Criteria" is plural.

Ex: "Imply" vs. "infer."

4. Basic terms of logic.

Ex: "non sequitur," "begging the question," "straw man," "ad hominem," etc.

5. Basic techniques of editing.

- Basic editing/proofreading marks.
- Protocols for tightening, clarifying, etc.