Introducti

The 13th century poet Rumi comes close to summarizing what I hope to inspire my students to do each semester. Rhetoric and Composition is not a course in figuring out your English teacher's pet peeves (let's see, will it be using contractions or starting a sentence with a conjunction?). What I ask is that you become acutely conscious of what you know, observe, and experience; and then that you ask "why" until you're blue in the face (that's called pre-writing and brainstorming). Then you will uncover precisely what motivates you to communicate a particular subject (the answer is not, "to get an 'A'"). Once your purpose is clear, you can think about whom it is out there you most hope to reach (audience). Next, you will make decisions about the most effective way to put together your thoughts in order to carry out your purpose for your reader (structure and arrangement). It's that simple.

Of course, simplicity is an art. All of you coming into the class have a working knowledge of rhetoric: for example, you know instinctively that you probably shouldn't tell your teacher what you really think of the Tao of Pooh using the same words you shared with your roommate. But to pass over into the realm of art requires making conscious choices about what wording is appropriate, what is effective, and what is beautiful.

So Rhetoric and Composition is a course about becoming a more conscious rhetorician. Why does this matter? Because words are one powerful way to clarify, sing, sell, argue, reflect, rejoice, recruit, rebel, and relate. They are a kind of tool few can do without. The goal of our course, then, is to test the heights we can reach on our thought-wings... which of course requires excellent mechanics. But that's the easy part. Now for the hard facts: to pass Rhetoric and Composition at PSU, every student must carry out some basic requirements.
Requirements:

Deadlines:

In addition to various exercises, you will be asked to write five papers and a journal this semester. For some of these, you will be required to hand in a proposal. For all five essays, you must hand in a full-length rough draft for in-class review, followed by a revised final draft. TO PASS THE COURSE YOU MUST PROCEED SATISFACTORILY AND IN A TIMELY MANNER THROUGH THE ABOVE CYCLE FOR ALL FIVE PAPERS. If you hand in all five papers and drafts at the end of the semester, you will still fail the class. All work must be completed on time. Not only will you learn most from this course if you keep up with the pace, but also late papers will normally be penalized one letter grade per day unless you get my approval of an extension in advance (not five minutes before the paper is due). Your final paper grade will be lowered by one-third a letter grade if you don’t have a substantial rough draft for the designated workshop day.

Academic Integrity:

I expect of course that the work you turn in will be your own. It’s good to share ideas, brainstorm, and peer edit together with a friend, but there is a limit. It is not O.K. to have another person correct or rewrite your paper for you (this will be considered plagiarism, which is grounds for failing the class; it also contradicts the entire purpose of the course, which is for you to learn by writing, writing some more, revising, writing again and again). If you borrow words or ideas from a published source, you must always acknowledge your source. To underscore how seriously you must take this honesty thing, here is the official University policy on academic integrity:

Penn State defines academic integrity as the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest and responsible manner. All students should act with personal integrity, respect other students' dignity, rights and property, and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts (Faculty Senate Policy 49-20). Dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated in this course. Dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. Students who are found to be dishonest will receive academic sanctions and will be reported to the University’s Judicial Affairs office and to their colleges for possible further disciplinary sanction.

Attendance:

You are required to show up to class. English 30 is a writing workshop; you can’t catch up by getting notes from a friend. If you miss a class, you are responsible for all the material covered,
assignments given, or revisions made to the syllabus during that class. This holds true even when you have an excused absence. Unexcused absences will affect your final grade after the third absence; after the sixth absence, you fail the course. I also expect that you will show up to class having read all assigned materials; it is our collective responsibility to make class interesting, and we all know what happens when there is a class discussion based on texts no one has read.

I would also request that you take responsibility for communicating with me if you are having trouble with the course. Do not wait until the last minute, please. If you can't make it to my office hours, then we can arrange another time.

Grades

Grading Philosophy:

In many ways, it feels funny to call myself a teacher of rhetoric, because many people will translate this as "an academic who helps people manipulate words in order to sell a product, win an election, or get her own way." Yikes.

Where along the way did rhetoric get such a bad reputation? And what would all those ancient Greeks in sheets think? I don't believe they meant any harm when they began formalizing the art of debate: their underlying assumption was that the ability to communicate effectively lies at the heart of a successful democracy. How can we rule by the voice of the citizenry when the average citizen can only express herself like, um, you know, in a limited way?

So at its inception, anyway, teaching the art of rhetoric was about freeing the democratic participant by encouraging him to think well: deeply and fairly, tough mindedly and clearly; and then to express those thoughts well, with grace and passion, conviction and conciseness. The point was not to win a contest: the point was to win the minds of those listening because the subject at hand mattered.

So where did we go wrong? Well, I don't know exactly, and that's not what I'm here to teach you. But we all know that in our democracy, anything said by the actual people running it is suspect. We don't respect politicians precisely because of the way they use language. It might help us as writers reaching out to an audience beyond the ubiquitous English teacher to think about why that is: because we know from experience that politicians are more motivated by winning elections than they are by the desire to tell the truth. We don't like to waste our time listening to prose we know has been invented to please whatever audience will potentially win the race for the speaker. In other words, it's annoying to listen to folks whose acts of communication lack precision, honesty, personal integrity, hard facts, and unbiased analysis. We like to know what the writer or speaker really means, really feels, really believes—even if we don't agree with her position.

So. You may have guessed by now where this is going: you are about to begin a course taught by a teacher whose primary purpose is to get you to write in a way that will guarantee you failure in a present-day election. Sound good? Then wait until you hear the words of this 13th century poet named Rumi:

You knock at the door of reality,
shake your thought-wings,
loosen your shoulders,
and open.

--Rumi

You see Rumi, an exuberant mystical poet who writes with the most compelling and concrete metaphors I've ever read, suggest that we allow our thoughts to expand and fly rather than to contract and...not fly. I like this metaphor for reasons which I will soon make clear, but not without a small digression. You may be aware that academics in the liberal arts in particular have been accused by those uncomfortable with the "political correctness" movement of molding their
students into (gasp!) liberal extremists. I find this accusation vaguely insulting not because insidious coercion doesn't sometimes happen (it does), but because to believe this theory is to underestimate grandly the intelligence and will of the majority of students in classrooms today.

Still, it is true that students are in a vulnerable position, because of course grades matter, and teachers have the power of grading all on their side. So it is conceivable that an intelligent, mindful student might write papers reflecting not his own true thoughts, but rather those he guesses his teacher has and will therefore reward. However such an approach in my class would be, using Rumi's image as a guide, the equivalent of a crash and burn. I want your real thoughts, carefully considered and mulled over and examined, to take wing. I may disagree with your position—I may loathe it—but if you present your ideas logically, concisely, beautifully, creatively, then you will get your grade.

This idea of the tension that political correctness (however we may define the beast, which we must and will do as a class) creates in the act of communicating will be a major theme in our readings this semester. I encourage you to bring in any readings you come across on your own that might embrace our on-going group discussion of the issue. And so, one final word about my hopes for my students as a teacher: Soar!

Summary:

Grades on individual papers are meant to reflect, quite simply, the quality of your work. You are not competing with your colleagues (there is no 'curve'), but rather you are working to demonstrate how well you understand (and can use) the principles of rhetoric that we discuss in class and uncover in the assigned readings. In other words, your grades will reflect your effectiveness as a rhetorician--how effectively you say what you have to say considering the nature of your audience and your purpose in writing. Please understand that while effort will surely pay off, it does not guarantee an 'A'--or even a 'C' grade.

Percentage breakdown:

Journal: 15%
Papers #1-5: 75% (15% per paper)
Class
Participation 10%

Paper Topics:

P #1: Narrative as revelation: storytelling with a purpose.
P #2: Clarity and in-depth logic: unraveling revelation.
P #3: Rhetorical analysis: analyzing rhetoric to reveal layers of purpose and to measure effectiveness.
P #4: Researched thought paper: information as persuasion.
P #5: Argument: complexities of controversial persuasion.

Required Texts (in order of appearance):

Cisneros, Sandra. The House on Mango Street.
Berry, Wendell. Sex, Economy, Freedom & Community.
Ackerman, Diane. A Natural History of the Senses.
Wiener and Bazerman. Writing Skills Handbook.

SYLLABUS

Please note that all of the following dates are approximations; while all readings and papers will be due, the due date may change at any given moment. The pace of the course depends on the needs of each class.

It is your responsibility to find out what is expected for class and what changes have been made when you are absent for any reason.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>CLASS COVERAGE</th>
<th>DUE DATES &amp; ASSIGNMENTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W 8.22</td>
<td>Review Syllabus. What is rhetoric?</td>
<td>Read all Cisneros</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 8.27</td>
<td>No class</td>
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<tr>
<td>W 8.29</td>
<td>Introductions; interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>F 8.31</td>
<td>The writing process; audience and purpose</td>
<td>Begin pre-writing for paper #1.</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 9.3</td>
<td>LABOR DAY</td>
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<tr>
<td>W 9.5</td>
<td>Discuss Cisneros; character revelation and purpose</td>
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<tr>
<td>F 9.7</td>
<td>Discuss Kingsolver; perspective, point of view.</td>
<td>Complete at least one draft of paper #1</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 9.10</td>
<td>ROUGH DRAFT WORKSHOP</td>
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<tr>
<td>W 9.12</td>
<td>The revision process: re-seeing your own work; getting another perspective from peers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 9.17</td>
<td>Observation as subtle persuasion; discuss Kingsolver</td>
<td>Read selected Berry.</td>
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<tr>
<td>F 9.21</td>
<td>Brainstorming as discovery—in-class exercise.</td>
<td>Topic Proposal, paper #2 Due.</td>
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<td>CLASS COVERAGE</td>
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<td>W 9.26</td>
<td>In-class exercise in formulation of thesis.</td>
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<tr>
<td>F 9.28</td>
<td>Structure and arrangement as strategy.</td>
<td>One draft of paper #2 completed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 10.1</td>
<td>ROUGH DRAFT WORKSHOP</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>W 10.3</td>
<td>Usage; tune-ups</td>
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<tr>
<td>F 10.5</td>
<td>The rhetoric of advertising</td>
<td>Paper #2 Due.</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 10.8</td>
<td>FALL BREAK</td>
<td>Read all O'Brien.</td>
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<td>CLASS COVERAGE</td>
<td>DUE DATES &amp; ASSIGNMENTS</td>
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<td>W 10.10</td>
<td>Introduction to rhetorical analysis: ethos, pathos, logos.</td>
<td>Begin paper #3.</td>
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<tr>
<td>F 10.12</td>
<td>In-class rhetorical analysis as preview.</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 10.15</td>
<td>Review preview (an all-class form of rough draft workshop).</td>
<td>Complete draft of paper #3.</td>
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<tr>
<td>W 10.17</td>
<td>Discuss O'Brien.</td>
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<tr>
<td>F 10.19</td>
<td>Any Questions?</td>
<td>Paper #3 Due.</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 10.22</td>
<td>Information and purpose.</td>
<td>Read selected Ackerman.</td>
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<tr>
<td>W 10.24</td>
<td>Introduction to MLA.</td>
<td>Begin paper #4 topic proposal.</td>
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<td>F 10.26</td>
<td>Discuss Ackerman; in-class exercise.</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 10.29</td>
<td>Discuss Kingsolver and Berry.</td>
<td>Topic Proposal, paper #4 due.</td>
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<td>W 10.31</td>
<td>Library Field Day.</td>
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<td>F 11.2</td>
<td>Integrating sources into prose, using Ackerman.</td>
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<td>M 11.5</td>
<td>Model paper and article applications.</td>
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<td>W 11.7</td>
<td>Usage workshop.</td>
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<td>F 11.9</td>
<td>Establish debate groups.</td>
<td>Complete draft of paper #4.</td>
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<td>M 11.12</td>
<td>ROUGH DRAFT WORKSHOP.</td>
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<td>F 11.16</td>
<td>Wrap-up.</td>
<td>Paper #4 Due.</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 11.19</td>
<td>The art of controversial persuasion.</td>
<td>Read all Berger.</td>
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<td>W 11.21</td>
<td>Debate workshop.</td>
<td>Begin paper #5</td>
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<tr>
<td>F 11.23</td>
<td>THANKSGIVING BREAK</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 11.26</td>
<td>Discuss Berger.</td>
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<td>CLASS COVERAGE</td>
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<td>W 11.28</td>
<td>Debate workshop.</td>
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<tr>
<td>F 11.30</td>
<td>ROUGH DRAFT WORKSHOP.</td>
<td>Journals Due.</td>
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<td>M 12.3</td>
<td>Debate #1.</td>
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<td>W 12.5</td>
<td>Debate #2.</td>
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<tr>
<td>F 12.7</td>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>Paper #5 Due.</td>
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These grading standards establish four major criteria for evaluation at each grade level: purpose, reasoning and content, organization, and expression. Obviously, every paper will not fit neatly into one grade category; it may, for instance, have some characteristics of B and some of C. The grade it finally receives depends on the weight the instructor gives to each criterion.

The A paper
1. The A paper has not only fulfilled the assignment, but it has done so in a fresh and mature manner. It has effectively met the needs of the organization. The paper is fully accommodated to its audience(s).
2. The evidence is detailed; the sources of information or persuasion have been used creatively. The evidence presented is wholly appropriate to the audience. The reasoning is valid. Beyond that, the paper is thoughtful, showing good judgment and sensitivity to the complexities of the situation or issue.
3. The organization is effective for this audience and purpose. The introduction establishes the sense of audience. Every paragraph and segment is fully developed and follows inevitably from what precedes it. Headings and subheadings are appropriately used. The conclusion is suitable in tone and strategy.
4. The prose is not only clear and readable but occasionally apt and memorable. It contains few errors, none of which seriously undermines the effectiveness of the paper for educated readers.

The B paper
1. The assignment has been not just followed but fulfilled. In taking its stand, the paper shows a clear and precise sense of audience.
2. The writer has not settled for the most obvious evidence. The B paper is characterized by thoroughness. The reasoning is more than adequate. Not only does it make no mistakes, but it shows thoughtfulness, some complexities, and some awareness of other points of view.
3. The B paper has an effective introduction and conclusion. The order of the presentation is logical, and the reader can follow it because of well-chosen transitions. Paragraph divisions are logical.
4. The expression is competent, more ambitious than that of the C paper, less felicitous than that of the A paper. Not only is sentence structure correct, but it also uses subordination, emphasis, sentence length and variety, and modifiers effectively. It would be surprising to find serious sentence errors in a B paper. Word choice is idiomatic, vocabulary precise and varied. Punctuation, grammar, and spelling conform to the conventions of edited American English.

The C paper
1. The assignment has been followed. The paper develops its points and shows some sense of audience.
2. The information or degree of persuasion in a C paper is appropriate. Though the evidence is perhaps obvious and easily accessible, it has been gathered honestly and used responsibly. The C paper may exhibit some minor imperfections or inconsistencies, but it commits no major flaws in reasoning.
Beginning now, you will be expected to keep an on-going, informal journal about your reaction to the books we read for this class. You may respond to one theme in the book, one character, one article which reflects the philosophy of the writer’s collected works—whatever grabs you. The purpose of this assignment is not for you to practice your skills at writing summaries, but rather to give you a chance to brainstorm your perceptions of/reactions to/opinions about what you read. What I will be looking for are:

- Signs that you have given the text a good critical read; that is, I want to see evidence that you have gone beyond just accepting the face-value message of the piece. Ask yourself: who is the author? Does that answer matter? Does the overall effect of the book have anything to do with what you think the writer intended? What is the context in which the piece was written?
- Evidence that you have pushed yourself beyond an immediate reaction. Do you examine the why’s of your conclusions? Do you ponder the implications of your commentary? Have you tried to see connections beyond the obvious?

In short, what I am looking for is not grammatical perfection, but in-depth thought. In this light, I’d advise you not to wait until the last week of the semester to write up all your entries. Get into the habit of writing your entries soon after reading the required text.

How long each entry should be depends on many things, including which font you use. Given that I am looking for in-depth thinking, it makes sense to me that each entry should be at least three pages. But three pages of drivel are worth far less than two pages of insightful exploration.

Your journal is due Friday, November 30th. Hand in typed, loose-leaf sheets in your manila folder (I won’t accept notebooks, because I cannot carry 50 of those suckers at a time).
Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street* is a series of vivid snapshots, a collage of brief sketches. Each chapter stands on its own as a bare, compelling portrait, or a bleak, detailed urban landscape, or a rough, tragi-comic home video. But Cisneros' work as a whole also develops a narrative story, interweaving several themes, including identity, gender, poverty, family, and friendship.

Cisneros allows her narrator, Esperanza, to reveal herself in her own young voice; but the author chooses to have the narrator tell about herself indirectly, by focusing on interactions with and observations about others in her life. We learn most about Esperanza by watching how she looks at others—and this gives us the sense that we know her from the inside out. It's very likely that Cisneros intended for the reader to feel as if she were discovering Esperanza on her own, and that intent likely has something to do with the readers she dedicated the book to—women she hopes to empower.

For your first paper, you, too, will develop a narrative essay derived from selected snapshots from your own family album—your memory bank. I am offering you lots of room to choose your own genre, level of formality, etc. But remember: all of your choices must come from a crystal clear sense of your audience and purpose BEYOND HOPING TO GET A GOOD GRADE FROM THE TEACHER.

Why? Remember how much you hate it when a good friend pulls out her 500 page photo album and says, "Oh, let me show you pictures of my vacation and family reunion!" Think how grateful you would be if instead she were to take into consideration your particular interests (horses) and how many of her family members you have actually met or care two hoots about. If she has TAKEN AUDIENCE INTO ACCOUNT, you may actually find yourself enjoying her select showing of wild horses running free on Assateague Island; a portrait of her arrogant, tough Aunt Lucy who used to lecture you girls about the virtue of self-sufficiency and who is here looking vulnerable and empty at a table by herself in an overcrowded reunion hall; and a surprising shot of your friend, who has always insisted she is too self-conscious to dance, appearing to swing exuberantly in the jitterbug embrace of a mystery man.

If your friend is very thoughtful of her audience, she may even pull all of those snapshots together for you by hinting that freedom is really only a concept which often relies on place and context for its finest expression.

At the very least, then, your friend will have helped you maintain a decent level of interest in her vacation story. At best, she will have left you with something to think about further, something to apply to your own experiences. This is what Barbara Kingsolver does for us in her more narrative-oriented essays. In "Confessions of a Reluctant Rock Goddess," for example, she weaves the thematic contemplations of loss and risk into a seemingly straightforward account of how she came to sing in a band. Without these themes, it means little to us that a perfect stranger once joined a band.

**PREWRITING PROCESS**

- Choose a memory to narrate. Remember that your readers expect you to keep their attention by giving something more than a chronology of random events.
- Clarify your purpose for offering this story to readers. Your purpose can be simple and still be effective. If done well, your purpose can simply be to make
the reader laugh, or remember something sweet/painful from his own childhood, or to convey something about a time in history that is unfamiliar to him, or which he hasn't understood because of an age difference.

• Notice that you can not successfully clarify your purpose without having a sense of who in particular you are writing for. In other words: consider audience. Remember to be merciful: there is a thin line between narrative as READER-BASED PROSE and narrative as a real diary entry. The difference is that in the one case a real audience might be interested in getting something out of a glimpse at your character and story; in the other, only you and your mother or best friend would care. Big Hint: avoid the “Breaking up with my boyfriend/girlfriend was so Painful” idea. That's prose for Jerry Springer; in a college course, you're going for PBS. Read Kingsolver's comment on pages 250-1 for re-enforcement of this idea that murder and mayhem, weeping and wailing are not necessary for effective writing. Check out how she handles recounting her real devastation in subtle, but powerful terms on page 126.

• Make more choices about how to present your story, all contingent on your previous choices of audience and purpose. What tone of voice should you use? Which scenes should you amplify by showing the reader descriptively rather than generally what you wish to convey? Would it best serve your purpose to be formal or informal?

Please note that pre-writing involves, well, writing: I must be able to see your pre-composition process on paper.

COMPOSING
• Just do it.
• Be prepared to do it again.

REVISING
• This means to re-see. Not the same thing as proofreading.

PROOFREADING
• Don't count on computers to catch your errors. Believe me, they're not as picky as English Teachers.

PLEASE NOTE (CUT OUT AND TAPE ONTO YOUR COMPUTERS):
As with all papers in this class, you must hand in pre-writing and rough drafts as part of your final paper. You are graded on the portfolio, not one draft. All papers in E30 must be typed, double-spaced, with reasonable margins and your name, section number, date, paper number, and draft number at the top left. Your final draft should have the words “Final Draft” clearly visible—don't give me a number, as I will have no idea which number represents the final. All papers must have a title. You must purchase one manila folder, put your name on the tab, and use it to hand in your portfolio for every paper. All assignments will be four pages in length or so. Anything way off of that indicates a potential problem, so see me before the paper is due.
In Barbara Kingsolver's "Somebody's Baby," the author begins with a rather modest observation offered narratively: people in the culture she is visiting seem to like children better than we generally do in the U.S. Kingsolver then takes this observation and turns it over, under, and around, looking at it from various angles; she considers possible explanations and ponders their implications. She weaves her position, or conclusion, or opinion about the meaning of her initial observation throughout the essay, sometimes revealing her stance with subtle word choice, sometimes by choosing a particular example (and leaving out others), sometimes by making a bold pronouncement. By the end of her piece, we are clear about what she has observed, we concede (because she has used examples and logic to convince us) that her observation has at least a modicum of validity, and we understand (though don't necessarily share) her feelings about the importance and implications of her observation.

That's all I'm asking of you for paper #2: that you offer the reader an observation (about anything at all that intrigues you/bugs you/befuddles you), show us why it is a valid one, allow us to understand what it means to you, and what implications your analysis has for the reader—and why.

Start now: look around. Be aware of little things you would typically notice, then pass over—and don't pass them over this time. Ever wonder what the eerily tame squirrels on Old Main might do if we stopped feeding them nuts and stuff? What does it mean to you that the president of the free world often doesn't write a word of the speeches he presents to us?

Before you decide firmly on a topic, make sure you have enough ideas to carve out a meaningful (approximately four page) essay. Brainstorm. Analyze. Then write up a proposal, which will include your topic, all pre-writing work, projected audience, purpose, and thesis. Once your topic has been given the O.K., do it all some more, only in more depth: brainstorm, analyze, ask yourself why, what does that mean, what next?

Then write it, rewrite it, perfect it. It's that simple!
For this paper, you will rhetorically analyze Florence King's column from the *National Review*. Allow yourself to ponder the piece and react to it viscerally before you begin the more objective work of vigorous rhetorical analysis. Jot down notes to yourself (“I hate this part; I don’t know why. Maybe she’s overdoing the sarcasm?”). Scribble in the margins. Underline key places (even before you’ve actually decided why they’re key yet). The writing on your copy of the article will count as part of your portfolio pre-writing/brainstorming (so hand it in).

Now start digging in: what is the context of the piece? Where does it appear, and what might that tell you about the potential audience or the prestige of the writer? When does it appear, and what does that timing (current events) say about the subject matter?

Dissect the elements of rhetoric we have discussed in class: *ethos, pathos, logos*. But also remember how interwoven all these categories really are, and that each of them is only relevant in as much as they relate to the writer’s apparent audience (say that three times fast for extra credit). In other words, before you do anything, make sure you have figured out (BASED ON CLUES FROM THE TEXT) who you think the writer is most trying to reach and why. Question, for example, what King’s serious purpose may be (if there is one). How does she want her reader to feel about it? Is there something she wants us to do about it? For whom is this purpose potentially the most compelling? Why? Remember our discussion of how writers sometimes uses FORM TO REFLECT/EMPHASIZE/GENERATE CONTENT; remember also how important detecting a writer’s intended TONE OF VOICE is in interpreting his or her meaning. For example: what is the role of irony in King’s piece? Consider how it is used, why, and whether it is effective. Whatever you do, don’t ignore it.

As you go through the process of dissection, your rhetorical analysis thesis should begin to reveal itself. Once you have that, you can begin making decisions about how to write your piece, in what tone of voice, with what arrangement. Remember that while you want to be aware of your personal reaction to the content of the writer’s article, your primary job as rhetorical analyzer is to examine how the writer’s choices (structure, word choice, tone, examples, as well as content and context) affect her purpose. Remember also that an evaluation of whether or not she succeeds in carrying out that purpose is an integral part of a complete rhetorical analysis. And of course you know it is crucial to provide evidence from the text to back up each conclusion you draw, followed by an explanation of how/why YOU think the example makes your point.

Keep in mind that the classic terms used for rhetorical analysis are only tools to help you decipher all levels of meaning in the text. You do not need to refer to those terms directly to carry out the rhetorical analysis assignment. In other words, you can write, “The author convinces us of his expertise on the subject when he…” You do not need to announce that this is an example of using good ethos as a form of persuasion. In fact, it would be more elegant if you did not.

In summary: 1) Read carefully; 2) Dissect objectively; 3) Analyze the rhetoric; 4) Evaluate effectiveness, given the writer’s audience and purpose; and, 4) Compose, making your thesis clear and always providing evidence and explanation.
Barbara Kingsolver's work proves to us that we can read a non-fiction researched book and still be delighted by style, humor, and a peek at the writer's character. Now it's your turn to try to write an essay that both delights/intrigues and informs the reader.

This is not a full-blown research paper. You can write a light, personal essay punctuated with researched information that enlivens, broadens, or affirms your argument or intent. You must, absolutely must be able to write a 3-4 page opinion essay on the topic of your choice BEFORE doing any research. This early draft will be considered an essential part of your portfolio. Your final draft will likely look nothing like the first, because research will alter your approach as well as perhaps your perspective—but the early draft will keep you from falling into the cut-and-paste school of research papers.

There are two purposes behind this assignment: one is to get you familiar with Patee library; the other is to get you used to integrating researched information into your prose—a thing you will have to do often in college classes. Given these intentions, I will be offering some strict requirements which I truly hope you will take heed of.

REQUIREMENTS

1) You must hand in a written proposal, including any pre-writing or brainstorming you have done to help you come up with a topic. Include an informal assessment of your potential targeted audience and your purpose. Be reassured that everything except your topic may change somewhat as you learn more by researching. This is a normal part of the process. Feel free to ask questions or bring up concerns in your proposal. WARNING: if you do not get a topic officially O.K'd by me, you risk failing the paper.

2) You must use the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (or, for Web citations, the Net reference guide I gave you the address of early in the semester) as your constant citation companion. Everything cited in your paper should be in perfect MLA form, from parenthetical references to the Works Cited. Remember that following the MLA style (or any other style, for that matter) is always a matter of patience, not knowledge. There is no (good) excuse for not getting it right.

3) You should have four entries at least in your Works Cited, including three from different types of sources; that is, you must get info from a book, a trade magazine, and a newspaper (or some combination). Two of these can come directly from the Internet, but remember that you must be sure of your source. I assure you it is possible to find four sources for any topic you choose. You may not find an article directly addressing your subject—but the art of research is about finding surprising but relevant information with which to back up your own original point. You will read far more information than you will actually use; this is part of the research process.

Remember that, just as with your rhetorical analysis paper, every piece of evidence you offer must be followed up with your explicit explanation about how/why you interpret this information as proving A, B, or C.

We will be talking extensively in class about how to use research to enhance a topic, and there will be plenty of opportunities to talk with the class and with me about the specifics of your paper. But please make sure you have covered the requirements above.
Your final paper for this course will be persuasion as an art form, the culmination of all your training in a reader-based presentation of deep thinking in a voice that is genuinely your own. You must come up with something to argue and someone to persuade for a good reason; that is, you must pick a subject that has meaning for you.

The hardest part of your assignment is picking an inspirational topic (you can't make a full-bodied wine out of an issue that never grew on the vine for you). Make sure you take the time to try out a few ideas on paper. Let them ferment. Brainstorm a little. Then write up an informal but complete proposal of your best subject (including the usual: audience, purpose, tentative thesis, including a "because" statement that illustrates your major premises).

You will be considering your topic from every possible angle, so find something that intrigues or infuriates or moves you. A word of caution: do not necessarily rely on the major debatable issues in the media, such as abortion, euthanasia, welfare, or gun control. In fact, I would discourage you from choosing such unwieldy topics unless you have a very personal, focused angle which can add something other than rehashed generalities to the debate. The purpose behind this assignment is to allow you to hone your ability to analyze an issue and your position on it, based on your own observations and experiences. This is not a research-based paper, though you may find it appropriate to use a quote or cite a source on occasion for emphasis; but be careful to choose a topic that allows for more personalized analysis than factual information.

CONSIDER:

- **Audience.** Will they be hostile or sympathetic or neutral to your position? How much do they already know about the issue?
- **Purpose.** Are you hoping to provoke your audience, reassure them, or delight them into agreeing with you? Is your goal to persuade your readers that your solution is the wisest, or to convince them that your issue represents a serious problem that they have previously ignored?
- **Thesis.** Remember that your thesis cannot be either a non-debatable fact or a matter of taste; you must make a claim that deals with a matter of probability which can be supported—but also argued to the contrary.
- **Arrangement.** Because this is your final paper, I expect a clear, conscious presentation of ideas using every appropriate and elegant rhetorical strategy you have by now mastered. What part of your character will you highlight (implicitly or explicitly) in order to most effectively win over your audience? *Logos* will of course be an active ingredient in all your arguments, because compelling evidence (in this assignment, in the form of rational cause/effect thinking) is always necessary in persuasion. How much will you rely on *Pathos*, keeping in mind that some things can only be argued from the heart? On the other hand, remember that over-use of pathos can make your reader feel manipulated.
- **Deadline.** Your paper is due WITH NO EXCEPTIONS Friday, December 7th within the first five minutes of class time. Anything later will be considered a no-show, and will result in a failing grade for the entire course. Don't mess with deadlines at the end of the semester.
What do you think are the two main objectives of this writing assignment?

Do these objectives make sense to you? (This is the E30 version of a “Suggestions Box”). Why or why not?

In what ways does your paper fulfill assignment expectations? (This is your chance to brag; but remember, insincere rhetoric can be sniffed out a mile away).

In what ways might it not? (This means, what aspects of your paper are you unsure or worried about?).
Now forget about rhetoric and teacher objectives for a minute. Talk about why this paper might keep a certain reader interested. Why will he finish your piece, if he isn’t forced to? What might she get from it that’s fresh, moving, funny, unexpected, refreshing, insightful, intelligent? And who might that “certain reader” be?

Think about whether there are places where your reader might feel as if you are using words just to sound impressive (readers hate that); or leaving out crucial thought-steps because you are forgetting that your readers don’t share your memory or mind (makes readers feel lost and mad as hell); or stating the obvious because you don’t trust the reader’s intelligence (readers really hate that).

FOR PEER EDITORS ONLY

Does the piece hold together structurally? Logical development of ideas, smooth transitions, clear use of key terms? If the paper’s form is one that relies on creative/understated/unusual arrangements of words, does it work? Or are you just pretending it works so you don’t have to look like you don’t get “art”? Explain. Give examples. Give constructive criticism only.
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