Course Packet, pt. I

Required text:  *Good Reasons with Contemporary, 2nd edition*, by Faigley & Selzer

**Course Objectives** (English Department Policy):

English 15 at Penn State challenges you to an ambitious semester-long inquiry into the subject of rhetoric, an ancient art that has always been closely associated with education and with democratic institutions. The course has a simple goal: to help you to become "critical citizens"—inside and outside the university, people who engage actively and influentially with the communities they belong to because they have an awareness of how communities are created and influenced through language and other symbols. The course proposes to create a safe and yet provocative environment where you can develop sophistication as a producer and consumer of discourse.

Rhetoric is the study of how language works and how to make it work well. All human beings are somewhat skilled in rhetoric, in more or less intuitive ways. But the difference between intuitive rhetoric and conscious, artful rhetoric is something like the difference between walking and dancing, or between tossing a ball around and playing an organized sport. Our goal, then, is to develop more conscious skill, especially in what broadly might be called "argument."

Acquiring skill in rhetoric and argument means learning to write (and speak) with a coherent sense of audience and purpose, and with a strategic sense of argument and design. It also means learning to read (and listen) rhetorically, with a critical yet open-minded attention to the methods of persuasion employed by others. Such methods may be used to teach, explain, create knowledge, alter beliefs, protect the innocent, recommend actions, reform society; they also may be used to manipulate, exploit, and deceive. Let us together learn to look at rhetoric creatively and analytically, lest we put ourselves in powerless situations; let us avoid being the dupe of others.

In this course we will focus attention on the main aspects of effective discourse (logos, ethos, pathos, structure, style) and on the elements of the writing process (planning, inventing, arranging, drafting, revising, editing). By the end of this semester, you should be better able to evaluate the quality of others' arguments and to develop and articulate your own position clearly, thoughtfully, persuasively, and even eloquently. You will also gain an appreciation of how visual and material elements operate in the act of persuasion.

Some things to keep in mind: This course asks not simply for self-expression, but for your participation in public discourse on matters of public interest—such as might be expected of educated adults in the world outside of school. Interesting, important discourse develops not in isolated egos, but within communities committed to some mutual inquiry or to some shared question. In consequence, this course depends greatly on what you bring to it, so you need to make a real commitment to the work and to your peers in the classroom. The University sometimes estimates that students should spend a minimum of two hours of study time outside of class for every hour in class, so in our course you can expect to have various kinds of reading and writing homework due at virtually every meeting of this class. But think positively: yes, I will
expect you to come to class prepared and ambitious; but I will also be doing my best to make your studies interesting, vital, and unforgettable.

Attendance:
Regular attendance is required because course instruction depends on your active participation. True, two or three absences will probably not affect your performance too much (unless you miss a rough draft session—a major problem); but try to limit it to that. Indeed, why not attend every meeting? Excused absences are appropriate, of course, but beyond that, let me repeat University policy (Policies and Rules, 42-27): A student whose absences are excessive "may run the risk of receiving a lower grade or a failing grade," whether some of those absences are considered "excused" or not. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to get the assignments and complete the work. If you come in late, it is your responsibility to let me know so that I can mark you present.

University and Department Plagiarism Policy:
The Department of English insists on strict standards of academic honesty in all courses. Therefore, plagiarism, the act of passing off someone else's words or ideas as your own, will be penalized severely. The following discussion is offered so that you won't commit plagiarism.

Sometimes plagiarism is simple dishonesty. If you buy, borrow, or steal an essay to turn in as your own work, you are plagiarizing. If you copy word-for-word or change a word here and there while copying without enclosing the copied passage in quotation marks and identifying the author, you are also plagiarizing.

But plagiarism can be more complicated in act and intent.

Paraphrasing, stating someone else's ideas in your own words, can lead you to unintentional plagiarism. Jotting down notes and ideas from sources and then using them without proper attributions to the authors or titles in introductory phrases may result in a paper that is only a blend of your words combined with the words of others that appear to be yours.

Another way to plagiarize is to allow other students or friends to give you too much rhetorical help or do too much editing and proofreading of your work. If you think you have received substantial help in any way from people whose names will not appear as authors of the paper, you should acknowledge that help in a short sentence at the end of the paper or in your list of Works Cited. If you are not sure how much help is too much, talk with your instructor, so the two of you can decide what kind of outside help (and how much) is acceptable, and how to give credit where credit is due.

As you go through the writing process, you should keep careful track of when you use ideas and/or exact words from sources. As a conscientious writer, you have to make an honest effort to distinguish between your own ideas, those of others, and what might be considered common knowledge. Try to identify which part of your work comes from an identifiable source and then document the use of that source using the proper format, such as a parenthetical citation and a Works Cited list. If you are unsure about what needs documenting, talk with your instructor.

When thinking about plagiarism, it is hard to avoid talking about ideas as if they were objects like tables and chairs. Obviously, that's not the case. You should not feel that you are under pressure to invent completely new ideas. Instead, original writing consists of thinking through ideas and expressing them in your own way. The result may not be entirely new, but, if honestly done, it may be interesting and worthwhile reading. Print or electronic sources, as well as other people, may add useful ideas to your own thoughts. When they do so in identifiable and specific ways, give them the credit they deserve.
Course Packet, pt. II

Required text: Good Reasons with Contemporary Arguments, 2nd edition, by Lester Faigley & Jack Selzer

Course Requirements (posted department policy):
To pass this course you must do the following three things:

1. Complete all six major assignments.
2. Complete all homework assignments (reading and writing).
3. Actively participate as both reader and writer in draft workshops, argument workshops, in-class exercises, and classroom discussions.

Papers must be handed in on time: Late papers will normally be docked one letter grade per day, unless you get my approval for an extension before the due date. Note well: This also holds for drafts that are due for peer review—not only must you present a draft on the day it is due, but the draft must be a complete draft that is ready to share.

Format: Choosing a format is a rhetorical decision, but normally your papers should be typed (double-spaced) with black ink and one-inch margins on all sides. Separate title pages are usually inappropriate in this course. Place your name, the date, the instructor's name and the essay number in the upper right hand corner of the first page. Place any title above the text on page one, and double space beneath it. (The title should not be underlined or in quotation marks.) Page one need not be numbered, but all subsequent pages should be numbered in the upper right hand corner. Fasten the pages by some means—do not turn in loose, unnumbered pages.

Grades: You will find in this packet (p.9) a copy of the department’s grading standards, which I will use when I read your papers. When figuring your overall semester grade, I will use the following formula:

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<th>Assignment</th>
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<td>Assignment #1</td>
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| 9/01 | W   | Watch, read or listen to two speeches from the Republican National Convention (RNC) | • Course objectives.  
• Small groups: discussion of RNC  
• Short in-class writing assignment (handout #1, pt. 1) |
| 9/03 | F   | Short essay on speaker at RNC (handout #1, pt. 2) | Introduction: Essay #1.  
Political Ad Analysis |
| 9/06 | M   | NO CLASS |  |
| 9/08 | W   | Reading: Good Reasons (GR) p. 1-20 & p. 225-253 | Class discussion:  
Ethos, Logos, Pathos |
| 9/10 | F   | Due: bring in a piece of political, visual rhetoric (ad from magazine, newspaper, online) that you wish to analyze for essay #1. Note: television commercials may be used if you bring in VHS or DVD copy. | • In-class ad approval  
• What is an assignment proposal (handout)?  
• Work on assignment proposals in class |
| 9/13 | M   | Due: Assignment Proposal, Essay #1 (all assignment proposals must be typed) | Small group: discussion of ads |
| 9/15 | W   | Due: Draft of Essay #1 | Draft Workshop  
(class attendance is mandatory) |
| 9/17 | F   | Due: Essay #1, final draft | Introduction: Essay #2.  
Rhetorical Analysis of speech given at the RNC or DNC  
• Questions about DNC speakers (handout #1, pt. 1)  
• Short essay on speaker at DNC (handout #1, pt. 2) |
| 9/20 | M   | • Read, watch, or listen to three speakers from the Democratic National Convention (CNN.com for text; NPR.org for audio).  
• Bring in text of one speech | Library (mandatory): Democracy Now! (online) critique of DNC & RNC speeches.  
Bring headphones. |
| 9/22 | W   | Reading: GR p. 57-97 |  |
| 9/24 | F   | Due: bring in written argument you wish to analyze for essay #2  
Reading: GR p. 100-102 | In-class writing assignment—“Steps in Writing a Rhetorical Analysis” |
| 9/27 | M   | Due: Assignment Proposal, Essay #2 | Class discussion: essay structure—thesis & outline, intro, body, conclusion |
| 9/29 | W   | Reading: Sample essay, To be announced (TBA)  
Due: outline for essay #2 | *Formal Library visit/tour |
| 10/01 | F   | Due: Draft of Essay #2 | Draft Workshop  
(class attendance is mandatory) |
| 10/04 | M   | Due: Essay #2, final draft | Introduction: Essay #3.  
Cultural Analysis |
| 10/06 | W   | Reading: Handout or online source | Class Discussion:  
Jadikiss song/video “Why”  
• In-class discussion  
• Library assignment (Jadikiss) |
<p>| 10/08 | F   | Due: topic for Cultural Analysis essay |  |</p>
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Assignment Due</th>
<th>Topic (class discussion)</th>
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<td>10/11</td>
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<td>Due: Assignment Proposal, Essay #3</td>
<td>TBA</td>
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<td>10/13</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Reading: GR p. 297-328 Due: outline for essay #3</td>
<td>Class discussion: research &amp; documentation (MLA &amp; APA)</td>
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<td>Due: Essay #3, final draft</td>
<td>Introduction: Essay #4</td>
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<td>Rebuttal Argument</td>
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<td>10/20</td>
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<td>Reading: GR p. 77-102 Due: bring in written political argument with which you agree for class discussion.</td>
<td>*Library assignment, handout</td>
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<td>10/22</td>
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<td>*Due: bring written political argument for rebuttal essay #4</td>
<td>*Library assignment, handout</td>
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<td>10/25</td>
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<td>Reading: GR p.29-55 Due: library assignment</td>
<td>In-class assignment: “Questions for finding good reasons” (GR p. 42-43)</td>
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<td>Due: Assignment Proposal, Essay #4</td>
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<td>10/29</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Due: outline for essay #4</td>
<td>In-class discussion: Michael Moore’s USA Today article (rebuttal) on RNC</td>
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<td>11/03</td>
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<td>Reading: sample essay, TBA</td>
<td>In-class discussion &amp; writing assignment, handout</td>
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<td>11/05</td>
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<td>Due: bring recent (published before election) political rebuttal argument</td>
<td>Explore effective rebuttal arguments from winning side</td>
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<td>11/08</td>
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<td>Due: Essay #4, final draft</td>
<td>Introduction: Essay #5 Proposal Argument for President Elect</td>
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<td>11/10</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Reading: GR p. 197-209</td>
<td>Class discussion: Jonathan Swift’s “A Modest Proposal”</td>
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<td>11/12</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Due: bring in topic for proposal essay</td>
<td>In-class writing assignment, GR p.207</td>
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<td>11/15</td>
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<td>Reading: TBA</td>
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<td>11/17</td>
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<td>Due: Assignment Proposal, Essay #5</td>
<td>Small group discussion</td>
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<td>11/19</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Due: outline for essay #5</td>
<td>Library visit, work on paper</td>
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<td>11/22</td>
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<td>Due: Draft of Essay #5</td>
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<td>Reading: GR p. 211-222</td>
<td>Introduction: Essay #6 Newsletter: Group Project</td>
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<td>In-class/lab group assignment</td>
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<td>12/03</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Review: GR p. 223-253, visual design</td>
<td>In-class/lab group assignment</td>
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<td>Due: selection of revised essays for Newsletter</td>
<td>In-class/lab group assignment</td>
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<td>12/08</td>
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<td>Due: Portfolio of semester work</td>
<td>In-class/lab group assignment</td>
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<td>12/10</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Due: Newsletter/Essay #6, final draft</td>
<td>End of semester</td>
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Course packet pt.2—page 3

Davidson, Fall 2004
Essay #1: Ad Analysis

This paper gives you a chance to practice some of the skills and concepts we've discussed in class. Advertisements are always persuasive, in that they have specific designs on their audience. The most common of these designs, of course, is that the company wants you to buy their product or service. To this end, companies use rhetorical devices—ethos, logos, and pathos. First, advertisements carefully construct an image or persona for a company; they want the audience to think the company is trustworthy and reliable. Secondly, advertisements appeal to the audience's sense of logic, using good reason to support the claim that you should buy their product. Finally, and most importantly, advertisements use pathos to connect to the audience's beliefs or values. Often, the pathos appeal connects to basic American values, like equality, material comfort, efficiency, or individualism. Evidently, the audience for a given advertisement has a significant influence on these rhetorical choices.

For this paper, choose an advertisement that you find rhetorically interesting. Obviously, you'll want to think about the rhetorical situation for the ad, as well as the appeals (ethos, logos, pathos) used. Use the following questions to help you come up with ideas:

**Audience & Rhetorical Situation** – Where was the advertisement published and when? What does the type of publication tell you about the probable audience for the advertisement? To get a better idea of a publication's target audience, look at the other advertisements in the publication. Are they targeted towards a certain gender, age, income level, education level, and so on? The ad itself should help you to flesh out your audience analysis. What visual and verbal cues does the ad give that would connect to a particular audience?

**Ethos** – Companies work carefully to build a recognizable brand image, and advertisements play a big role in this task. What kind of image does the ad create for the company? How does the ad try to build credibility? Look at the verbal cues, like "4 out of 5 dentists recommend Crest" or "Serving you for 75 years." Websites, 800 numbers, and even registered trademark symbols are also verbal cues. However, the images in an ad also provide cues to its ethos. What type of company do they want the audience to believe they are? Progressive, traditional, reliable, trendy, exciting?

**Logos** – First, identify the main claim of your ad. (In many cases, the main claim will be something like "You should buy product X"). What logical reasons does the advertisement use to support this claim? What evidence is provided to support these reasons? Again, look at the text, but also the visual cues. Remember that the logos of an argument isn't always stated explicitly—sometimes it's implied by the images, word choice, etc.

**Pathos** – Drawing on the readings on American advertising, think about the values, emotions and beliefs contained in the ad. You might also go through the list of "Common Topics in American Discourse" for ideas. Once again, examine the images in the ad as well as the text. For example, do the colors used in the ad evoke a particular emotion or belief?

Once you've worked through the invention topics above, look for a common thread that seems to connect most of your ideas together. For example, you might find that the theme of family values relates not just to the pathos of your ad, but also to the ethos, logos, and target audience. You can use this common theme to formulate your thesis statement. As you write your paper, use concrete details from your advertisement to support your claims. You can quote directly from the ad's copy, or use detailed language to describe the images, colors, fonts, etc. in the ad. Although you're free to structure your paper however you want, it's often a good idea to organize it around the following categories: audience, rhetorical situation, ethos, pathos, logos. Keep in mind that your audience for this paper is your instructor, and that she will be looking for a solid understanding and application of the rhetorical concepts covered in class.
Essay #2: Rhetorical Analysis

Preface: This first assignment is designed to introduce many of the course’s key concepts. The purpose for writing a rhetorical analysis is to explain how an author attempts to influence an audience. That is, we use specific evidence from the text to establish a generalization (thesis) about the text’s rhetoric (how it persuades its readers).

Assignment: Find an advertisement, a traditional printed argument, a website, or some other type of text that you deem to be interesting and that has a persuasive aim. By “interesting,” I mean that the text in question should have some sophistication about it. There is no point in analyzing the obvious. Then write an analysis that will help your readers understand how the text works to persuade its audience. Introduce the text and identify its basic claim/thesis. Arrange the body of your paper so that the readers move through it in an orderly way. Also, make a judgment about the text’s rhetorical effectiveness.

Note: Your analysis should not simply paraphrase or summarize what the author says. The reader has already read the text and knows what it contains. Your purpose is to provide a way of understanding how the text persuades its audience.

Some basic questions: Below are some basic questions. These questions are not meant to provide an outline for the paper; rather, they simply help you to think about the rhetorical aspects of the text.

1. What is the rhetorical situation? Who is the writer’s audience? What is the writer’s purpose? Also, think about where the item originally appeared. This may help you to determine the purpose, audience, and scope of the text’s argument.
2. How would you describe the writer’s ethos? That is, what can you apprehend in the text about the writer’s character, ethics, attitude, and overall credibility? “Ethos” speaks to the trustworthiness of the writer. Those who employ ethos to persuade say this: “Believe me, identify with me, because of the kind of person I am.”
3. How would you describe the logos of the text? “Logos” speaks to the logic of the text. More specifically, think about how the supporting claims and the implied claims of the text reinforce the overall thesis. How are they linked together? Also, how does the writer use evidence, data, to support the thesis? Those who use logos to persuade say this: “Believe me because what I say is reasonable.”
4. How would you describe the pathos of the text? How does the writer appeal to emotions? “Pathos” means “feeling,” and it speaks to the desires, attitudes, and deeply engrained values of a person. Pathos is frequently communicated through vivid descriptions, details, and examples. Writers use such things in order to invoke emotional responses. Pathos, like ethos and logos, is also communicated through the style and tone of an essay. Those who use pathos to persuade say this: “Believe me because X feels good, bad, fearful, joyful, admirable, (etc.) at the very cores of our beings.”
5. How does the text’s structure work? Why are the elements of the text arranged as they are?
6. What is the role of style and tone? Style is one of the most important aspects of any rhetorical text. Style speaks to the overall shape, mood, and atmosphere of the text.
7. What seems to be the writer’s dominant strategy? Each of questions 2-6 addresses a particular kind of rhetorical strategy. All of these aspects are more than likely present in the text at issue, but in most cases, one strategy is dominant. If possible, identify the dominant strategy.
Essay #3: Cultural Analysis

This assignment asks you to examine closely, define and interpret some aspect of American culture—an aspect related in some way to the cultural mores, roles, or myths Americans live by. Your interpretation of this "cultural artifact or phenomenon" should help an audience interested in American culture to understand better—more fully, more critically—some aspect of our culture as it exists today. Your analysis should reveal the continuing power of cultural myths and mores in our lives today; it should show how they are embodied or communicated in the various forms our culture takes.

Your topic could be a common practice which your audience may take for granted the way it is. You may show readers how and why it is not simply "natural," but specific to our culture. You may choose a celebrity and examine the persona which that person creates and try to account for its success—or its controversial nature. You may choose a book, a photograph or painting? Perhaps a trend or a particular artifact represents something in ways we have not realized—body piercing? Tanning? Rollerblading? Owning a sport/utility vehicle?

If you have knowledge of other cultures because of family background or travel or living abroad (or even in a different section of the United States), you may want to use examples from those cultures as points of comparison. Your own experience of your own culture—personal or observed—may also be valuable evidence.

Clearly you'll have more to do in this assignment than simply describe the subject. The following suggestions might help you begin to focus your ideas.

Invention:
Think about the audience you've chosen to address and about what impact you want to have. Imagine them as a friendly but skeptical audience, willing to be persuaded by a reasonable argument. Perhaps they are familiar with the topic or image you have selected but less conscious of its implications than they realize. Can you show them new connections and interpretations? Can you give them a new perspective?

Next, gather information about your subject. What aspects of an American mythology or cultural more are the audience asked to identify with, and how are its characteristics embodied in the topic? What do most people seem to think about the topic? What else might it mean? Try to remain open as you gather more information about your subject: consider its parts; look at details; compare a variety of examples of it; look for evidence about the causes and effects of images; consider contrasts too. Think also about similar practices or artifacts in the culture and common factors that might account for them as well. Then, think about how this information can help you shape a thesis—an interpretation you wish to argue.

As you develop your argument, start with the questions you have about the topic. Consider also questions that the audience may ask; decide how your responses can be organized around a particular claim and support for that claim. Try to assess the strengths of your evidence and the changes or modifications your thesis may need.

Composition/Delivery:
As you draft the paper, think about structure. Your introduction should make a clear contact with your reader. The body paragraphs should develop the main points in an order that is best for the audience and purpose; think strategically about the developing responses of the audience. The essay should present a statement that the audience is prepared to accept, given the evidence and reasoning you have shown.
Essay #4: Rebuttal Argument

Preface: In short, a writer uses a rebuttal argument to disagree with an opposing position. The term “rebuttal” often carries with it a confrontational aura, but in most cases of rebuttal, aggressive confrontation does very little to move an opponent closer to one’s own position. In most types of sophisticated disagreements, opponents concede points to each other and search for common ground. This behavior shows a willingness to engage, and it also creates a positive tone for the disagreement. By trying to make a meaningful connection with your opponent, by discovering shared goals and assumptions, and by actively listening, you are far more likely to accomplish a productive and civil conversation.

Assignment: Please find a specific argument with which you disagree. Write a rebuttal of that argument. Your rebuttal could take the form of a traditional essay, a personal letter to the author, an open letter, or a response piece for a newspaper. Many other genre possibilities exist as well. Consider who you want your audience to be, and consider what type of forum might work best for a productive disagreement.

Some common elements of a rebuttal essay
1. Identify the specific claim against which you will argue.
2. Responsibly summarize the alternative position. Be fair and rigorous.
3. Establish common ground.
4. Find a point or points of disagreement.
5. Explain your good reasons for disagreeing with the alternative argument.
6. Explore other ideas, arguments, and possibilities that your opponent discounts or ignores.
7. Try to persuade the audience towards your position.

Not all rebuttals contain all of these elements, but most of these elements should be represented in a complex rebuttal.

Types of disagreements
People disagree for different reasons. Here are a few ways to think about how you might disagree with someone else’s argument: you might disagree with a basic fact, or a definition of a key term, or the value of something (good, bad, desirable, undesirable). You might disagree about the proper course of action that should be taken in light of the facts, or about the cause of a problem. You might disagree with the analogies, metaphors, and descriptions that someone uses in an argument. Perhaps the argument just does not feel right. You might disagree with someone because they seem untrustworthy. You might disagree with someone’s fundamental assumptions about the world. Usually in the course of a complicated disagreement, one person disagrees with another for a combination of reasons, but in most cases, one or two particular kinds of reasons prove to be more important than the others.
Essay #5: Proposal Argument

For this assignment, advocate that something should be done to address or alleviate a problem. Your aim is first to convince your audience that a situation is a problem (if that's needed) and then to propose that a certain action should be taken to respond to that problem. What action is possible and desirable? Your starting point might well be something that bothers you and that you feel should be changed. (Of course, you might have to convince your readers that it is a problem for them too, if that is not obvious.) Then devote the balance of the paper to advocating your plan for dealing with that problem.

Issues to consider? Here are some ideas:

- You might want to consider some issue that concerns you as a student--one of the issues targeted recently by >The Daily Collegian. Do you have a realistic solution or alternative to argue to those responsible or able to change the situation? Do you have suggestions to improve dorm policies, admissions policies, testing policies, course policies, other academic policies?
- Are there issues which concern you as a citizen, issues for which you have a solution? The threats to the environment? The censoring and banning of certain textbooks in some schools? Competitive imbalances in major league baseball? Or consider some more local issues particular to your town or school district--e.g., should your town build a community center to give young people a place to gather? should the school district make hockey a varsity sport?
- You may want to consider issues related to entertainment. Should movies be rated separately for violence and sex? Should they be rated at all? Should CDs be rated like movies are? Would you propose some restrictions on bands with offensive lyrics? What should be done about violence on TV? Should federal funding for the arts or for Public Broadcasting be cut?

You get the idea: propose that someone take some action. You might even wish to return to some aspect of the topic of an earlier paper. Or you might look through Good Reasons with Contemporary Arguments for ideas.

Conceptualizing and Accomplishing Your Task

As you work out the rhetorical situation for this assignment, pay particular attention to audience. You should be able to specify an actual audience and forum for which you will present your proposal. Consider what your purpose is--to convince someone directly to take action; or to create grass roots support for an action that someone other than the audience would take. Your audience should be asked either to undertake the action proposed or to support the action proposed.

Consider carefully how differences in audience and forum will influence the specific kind of thesis and support you need to present. That means, first, assessing whether your audience agrees with you that a problem exists. If there is no question about it, then you can spend your time on your solution. But if it is not clear that a problem exists, or if your audience does not necessarily appreciate the magnitude of the problem, then you must first concentrate on establishing the problem. That might mean employing the tactics of evaluation that we will discuss in class.

Then, as you develop your proposal itself, make effective use of all the strategies of invention that we have been practicing in earlier papers—testimony (i.e., cite experts), narration, definition—as well as the tactic that many proposals especially depend on: consequence. You will certainly need to be aware of competing solutions and to take up issues of feasibility as necessary.

Essay #6: Group Newsletter

TBA
These grading standards establish four major criteria for evaluation at each grade level: purpose, reasoning and content, organization, and expression. Obviously, every essay will not fit neatly into one grade category; some essays may, for instance, have some characteristics of B and some of C. The final grade the essay receives depends on the weight the instructor gives each criterion and whether the essay was received on time.

The A Essay

1. The A essay fulfills the assignment—and does so in a fresh and mature manner, using purposeful language that leads to knowledge making. The essay effectively meets the needs of the rhetorical situation in terms of establishing the writer’s stance, attention to audience, purpose for writing, and sensitivity to context. When appropriate to the assignment, the writer demonstrates expertise in employing the artistic appeals of ethos, logos, and pathos appropriately.

2. The topic itself is clearly defined, focused, and supported. The essay has a clear thesis that is supported with specific (and appropriate) evidence, examples, and details. Any outside sources of information are used carefully and cited appropriately. The valid reasoning within the essay demonstrates good judgment and an awareness of the topic’s complexities.

3. The organization—chronological, spatial, or emphatic—is appropriate for the purpose and subject of the essay. The introduction establishes a context, purpose, and audience for writing and contains a focused thesis statement. The following paragraphs are controlled by (explicit or implicit) topic sentences; they are well developed; and they progress logically from what precedes them. (If appropriate, headings and subheadings are used.) The conclusion moves beyond a mere restatement of the introduction, offering implications for or the significance of the topic.

4. The prose is clear, readable, and sometimes memorable. It contains few surface errors, none of which seriously undermines the overall effectiveness of the paper for educated readers. It demonstrates fluency in stylistic flourishes (subordination, variation of sentence and paragraph lengths, interesting vocabulary).

The B Essay

1. The assignment has been followed and fulfilled. The essay establishes the writer’s stance and demonstrates a clear sense of audience, purpose, and context.

2. The topic is fairly well defined, focused, and supported. The thesis statement is adequate (but could be sharpened), especially for the quality of supporting evidence the writer has used. The reasoning and support are thorough and more than adequate. The writer demonstrates a thoughtful awareness of complexity and other points of view.

3. The B essay has an effective introduction and conclusion. The order of information is logical, and the reader can follow it because of well-chosen transitions and (explicit or implicit) topic sentences. Paragraph divisions are logical, and the paragraphs use enough specific detail to satisfy the reader.

4. The prose expression is clear and readable. Sentence structure is appropriate for educated readers, including the appropriate use of subordination, emphasis, varied sentences, and modifiers. Few sentence-level errors (comma splices, fragments, or fused sentences) appear. Vocabulary is precise and appropriate; punctuation, usage, and spelling conform to the conventions of Standardized American English discussed in class.
The C Essay

1. The assignment has been followed, and the essay demonstrates a measure of response to the rhetorical situation, in so far as the essay demonstrates some sense of audience and purpose.
2. The topic is defined only generally; the thesis statement is also general. The supporting evidence, gathered honestly and used responsibly, is, nevertheless, often obvious and easily accessible. The writer demonstrates little awareness of the topic's complexity or other points of view; therefore, the C essay usually exhibits minor imperfections or inconsistencies in development, organization, and reasoning.
3. The organization is fairly clear. The reader could outline the presentation, despite the occasional lack of topic sentences. Paragraphs have adequate development and are divided appropriately. Transitions may be mechanical, but they foster coherence.
4. The expression is competent. Sentence structure is relatively simple, relying on simple and compound sentences. The paper is generally free of sentence-level errors; word choice is correct though limited. The essay contains errors in spelling, usage, and punctuation that reveal an unfamiliarity with the conventions of Standardized American English discussed in class.

The D Essay

1. The D essay attempts to follow the assignment, but demonstrates little awareness of the rhetorical situation in terms of the writer's stance, audience, purpose, and context. For example, the essay might over- or under-estimate (or ignore) the audience's prior knowledge, assumptions, or beliefs. The writer may have little sense of purpose.
2. The essay may not have any thesis statement, or, at best, a flawed one. Obvious evidence may be missing, and irrelevant evident may be present. Whatever the status of the evidence, it is inadequately interpreted and rests on an insufficient understanding of the rhetorical situation. Or it may rely too heavily on evidence from published sources without adding original analysis.
3. Organization is simply deficient: introductions or conclusions are not clearly marked or functional; paragraphs are neither coherently developed nor arranged; topic sentences are consistently missing, murky, or inappropriate; transitions are missing or flawed.
4. The D essay may have numerous and consistent errors in spelling, usage, and punctuation that reveal unfamiliarity with the conventions of Standardized American English discussed in class (or a lack of careful proofreading).

The F Essay

1. The F essay is inappropriate in terms of the purpose of the assignment and the rhetorical situation. If the essay relates vaguely to the assignment, it has no clear purpose or direction.
2. The essay falls seriously short of the minimum length requirements; therefore, it is insufficiently developed and does not go beyond the obvious.
3. The F essay is plagued by more than one of the organizational deficiencies of a D essay.
4. Numerous and consistent errors of spelling, usage, and punctuation hinder communication.