

## Reason, Writing, and Culture

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ENG 691 Composition Theory  
Fall 2016 James Crosswhite  
Thursdays 2-4:50pm 253 PLC  
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The teaching of writing in Composition programs in colleges and universities is generally aimed at preparing students for success in higher education, by teaching writing as inquiry, and for successful citizenship (of all kinds), by teaching writing as a kind of deliberative reasoning. These efforts are grounded in conceptions of argumentation as the core of reasoning, and so in concepts and theories of argumentation. These theories of reasoning and argumentation are supposed to be universal enough—culturally “neutral” enough—to be able to explain how controversies can be resolved through argumentation in a fair and just way, a way that does justice to the participants in the controversy. This is, of course, a great challenge. It was, historically, one of the challenges taken up by rhetorical theory and by philosophy, especially in the development of theories of democracy, and it has drawn renewed attention from contemporary philosophers and rhetorical theorists.

In this seminar, participants will gain knowledge of a few of the most promising theories of argumentation of our time. With this knowledge, they will be able to examine the claim that argumentation can do justice, and they will be able to ask in informed ways about the implications of these theories for the teaching of writing in colleges and universities. Students will also gain an understanding of some of the cultural challenges faced by these theories, and they will better be able to judge the extent to which they can rise to these challenges.

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### **Texts**

Miranda Fricker. *Epistemic Justice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*.

Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca. *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*. (TNR)

Douglas Walton: *The New Dialectic: Conversational Contexts of Argument*. (TND)

Additional readings available through Canvas.

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**Requirements:** Regular attendance. Reading all assigned work before class. Informed and respectful participation in seminar discussions. Three written substantive questions for discussion brought to each seminar meeting. One in-class presentation. One short (300-500 word) proposal for final paper. One 12-15 page final paper.

## Schedule

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### 1. September 29 Rhetoric. Argumentation. Culture.

#### Introductions

1. Rhetoric. Brian Vickers – “An Outline of Classical Rhetoric” – Read quickly until the section (iii) called “The Main Processes of Rhetoric,” and then read more carefully. Source: *In Defence of Rhetoric* (Oxford UP 1988).
2. Argumentation. Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca – *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*, pp. 1-51.
3. Culture. “On the Ascendance of Argument: A Critique of the Assumptions of Academe’s Dominant Form.” From *Research in the Teaching of English* 50:1 (August 2015).
4. Nathan Heller: “Trump, the University of Chicago, and the Collapse of Public Language.” *The New Yorker*, Sept 1, 2016.

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### 2. October 6 Universality and Dialogue

#### Universality

1. TNR - Review pp. 26-34.
2. TNR 63-114
3. “Audiences and Arguments.” (Chapter 5 of Crosswhite: *The Rhetoric of Reason*, 135-64). This is a kind of commentary on and further development of the notions of audience and universality in *The New Rhetoric*.
4. “Universalities.” (Crosswhite. A social-political interpretation of rhetorical universality as a process)
5. “Reason and Justice.” Chapter 7 of *Deep Rhetoric* (Crosswhite). A general reading of TNR as a work on reason as justice.

#### Dialogue

6. “Introduction” to *The New Dialectic* (Chapter One, 3-36).
7. “Claiming” – Chapter 2 of *The Rhetoric of Reason*, 51-83.

#### Optional Suggested Readings on Universality.

8. “Rhetoric and Ideology.” (From *Deep Rhetoric* 65-82.) This chapter explains the way in which argumentation exerts a counter-ideological force.
9. “Argument and Ideology.” (Chapter 7 of *The Rhetoric of Reason*.) This chapter describes some of the limits of argumentation.

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### **3. October 13 Forms of Reasoning and Inquiry**

#### **Forms of Reasoning**

TNR General Remarks 187-92

TNR Causal Arguments 261-92

TNR Person/Act Arguments 293-349

#### **Inquiry**

TND 69-99

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### **4. October 20 Forms of Reasoning, Deliberation, Eristics**

#### **Forms of Reasoning**

The Behaviors of Binaries

TNR "The Dissociation of Concepts" 411-59

#### **Deliberation**

TND 151-77

#### **Eristics**

TND 178-197

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### **5. October 27 Culture and Shifting Ground**

Manfred Kraus: "Culture Sensitive Arguments"

Yun Xie, Dale Hample, Shuying Shi, Sarah Evans: "Exploring the meaning of argument in China." (Commentary: James Crosswhite)

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### **6. November 3 Gender, Feminism, Argumentation**

Khameiel Al-Tamimi: "Feminist Alternatives to Traditional Argumentation"  
(Commentary: Phyllis Rooney)

Michael Gilbert: "Emotion as permeative: Attempting to model the unidentifiable." (Commentary: Jean Goodwin)

Phyllis Rooney: "Feminism and Argumentation: A Response to Govier"

Miranda Frickers: Introduction and chapter one of *Epistemic Injustice*.

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### **7. November 10 Epistemic Injustice**

Miranda Frickers: *Epistemic Injustice*

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### **8. November 17 Class discussion of paper proposals**

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**9. November 24 Thanksgiving**

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**10. December 1 Deep Disagreements and Equity**

Manfred Kraus: "Cognitive Communities and Argument Communities"

Chris Campolo: "Argumentative Virtues and Deep Disagreement"

(Commentary: David Godden)

Danielle Allen: "Rhetoric: A Good Thing." From *Talking to Strangers: Anxieties of Citizenship Since Brown V. Board of Education*