

English 609: Perspectives on Research

CSUSB, Spring 2008 • TR 4-6:50 p.m. • UH 054

Professor J. Rhodes

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Hours: TR 2-3 p.m., Wed. 12-4 p.m., and by appointment

COURSE GOALS

As Laura Micciche says, “research is a rhetorical act—that is, it is an inquiry-based act of selection, interpretation, and presentation.” This course explores the implications of the idea of research-as-rhetoric, focusing on how conversations in a scholarly field can compel and/or complicate the research process. This course, then, focuses not only on the “how?” of research, but also the “why?” and the “what then?”

TEXTS & MATERIALS

McComiskey, Bruce, ed. *English Studies: An Introduction to the Discipline(s)*. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 2006.

Mann, Thomas. *The Oxford Guide to Library Research*. 3rd ed. New York: Oxford UP, 2005.

Miller, Richard E. *Writing at the End of the World*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 2005.

Additional readings online (and on reserve at Pfau Library).

Access to a computer and a printer that will allow you to download and print articles from the library’s electronic reserves (<http://www.lib.csusb.edu/about/reserveinter.cfm>) and the internet more generally.

COURSE COMPONENTS/GRADING

- 1. IN-CLASS WORK (20%):** Includes quizzes, library work, groupwork, and other sundry activities. Expect something to happen in every class—and no, you can’t make it up if you miss it! *Due Daily*.
- 2. WEEKLY RESPONSES (20%):** One-page, single-spaced (450-500 words) responses. What to write? For now, I’ll refer back to a Classical model: Aristotle’s *topoi* (for an overview, go to the online *Silva Rhetoricae* and look up “topics of invention” or “commonplaces”). I would like you to experiment with different *topoi* in your responses: perhaps one week you’ll compare two texts, and another week you’ll talk about “the good,” “the unworthy,” or “the advantageous/ disadvantageous” in a given text or methodological approach. As the quarter progresses, we will talk about other possible genres of response. Be creative, but be precise! I’ll grade your responses on a 1-5 scale, and you’ll get points for bravery. *Due each Monday at the beginning of class*.

You will be permitted two unexcused absences during the quarter; upon the third, your final grade will suffer. If you must miss class, you are still responsible for turning your work in on time. Late work will be marked down 1/2 grade for *every day (not class meeting)* that it is late.

3. **PRESENTATION ON SCHOLARLY JOURNAL (20%):** Choose a journal in your field and explore the last three years of its history; present your findings during the fifth or sixth week of class. Your 10-minute presentation should be lively and informative; our classroom is wired to the internet *and* has PowerPoint capability, so please move beyond “stand and deliver” mode (note: you don’t *have* to use the technology to get an “A.” Just think outside the box a bit). All presentations should be accompanied by a one-page handout, which you will distribute to the rest of the class after your presentation. *Due: weeks 5 and 6.*

Some questions to consider as you explore:

- What is the focus of the journal? What types of essays do the editors solicit?
- What special features does the journal have? Does it include writing other than scholarly essays (e.g., reviews, bibliographies, interviews, etc.?)
- What is the submission and review process? Is the journal refereed?
- Where is the journal indexed? Is it indexed in the MLA database? Is the journal self-indexed?
- For what audience is the journal designed? How can you tell?
- What essays stand out in this period of the journal’s history? Why?
- Could you send your own work to this journal? Why or why not?

All of the following journals may be found in Pfau Library (in fact, a number of them are available through the JSTOR database at Pfau); the departmental composition library (in Professor Boland's office), or various faculty members’ collections. If you can’t locate a journal, *ask*. You can pick a journal not listed here, but clear it with me first.

<i>College English</i>	<i>Rhetoric Society Quarterly</i>
<i>College Composition & Communication</i>	<i>Rhetoric Review</i>
<i>Critical Inquiry</i>	<i>Pedagogy</i>
<i>Studies in Romanticism</i>	<i>ELH (English Literary History)</i>
<i>TESOL Quarterly</i>	<i>Eighteenth-Century Studies</i>
<i>Technical Communication Quarterly</i>	<i>JAC: Journal of Composition Theory</i>
<i>Writing Center Journal</i>	<i>Journal of Business Communication</i>
<i>The Writing Instructor</i>	<i>Journal of Linguistics</i>
<i>Written Communication</i>	<i>Writing on the Edge</i>
<i>Reflections</i>	... others you can think of...

4. **ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY (20%):** Using Margaret Woodworth’s “rhetorical précis” (look it up!) as a model, you will compile and annotate 12-15 sources (including scholarly articles, online work, and at least one full-length book) relevant to your exploration of a topic in your field. *Note:* all sources must have a *clear* relation to your topic. Bibliography must conform to MLA or APA format; you should already own (or have ready access to) a copy of the MLA or APA guidelines. *Rough draft due May 21; final draft due during final period.*
5. **RESEARCH PROPOSAL (20%):** The proposal should be 1000-2500 words long, and should outline the topic you’ll focus on for your annotated bibliography (below). What questions motivate your own research? What interests you about your field of study? This proposal, then, should explain your research topic and give a sense of the questions that led you to it. You are free to choose how “final” this project is. Is it, for example, a trial run at your thesis proposal? Is

it a chance to get your feet wet in a topic you don't know much about? Is it a chance to explore a question raised by your investigation of a major journal in your field? Is it the beginning of an essay you may submit for publication? You decide.

We will discuss guidelines for research proposals in class, and will also have a peer critique session for proposals. Peer critique and an individual conference with me are required for this project, as is a one-page handout which you will distribute to the class during our final period. *Rough draft due May 28; final draft due during final period.*

Where does the drama get its materials? From the "unending conversation" that is going on at the point in history when we are born. Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress.

--Kenneth Burke, The Philosophy of Literary Form

