

# FS 102

SECTION W 3

SPRING, 2012

## WORDS, WORDS, WORDS

HAMLET, 2.2.189

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Office hours: MWF 10:00-11:00, M 1:30-2:30, Th 2:45-4:45, and by appointment

Texts: Sheridan Baker, *The Practical Stylist*, 8<sup>th</sup> edn. (Longman, 1998)

*Speaking of Words: A Language Reader*, ed. MacKillop and Cross (course reader)

This course explores the power of the English language. It surveys how language shapes our reality; the function of jargon, euphemism, prejudicial language, and political propaganda; the ethics of rhetorical persuasion; and the importance of audience and occasion. It also involves an understanding of how the English language developed in all its permutations. Words are our primary mode of communication, and for that reason a facility with words and an ability to shape a persuasive argument can provide you with a powerful tool to influence the world you live in and to achieve the outcomes you seek. Different disciplines, of course, have different modes of discourse; but a fundamental grasp of how words achieve or obscure meaning will make you a more astute reader, writer and speaker. It will also sharpen your thinking.

This section of FS 102 will focus on helping you to develop effective communication skills – in writing and in speaking. You should expect to write until you go blind. There will be frequent paper assignments, many of them short; you will have regular exercises in grammar, rhetoric, and logic; speeches will advance such rhetorical work; and class readings will focus on the uses and abuses of language. Expect your own work to be criticized in class: even the best writing can stand improvement, and learning how to take constructive criticism and to revise accordingly is a skill that will last you a lifetime. While class discussion will usually address language and rhetorical strategies, your own papers and speeches need not do so. They may address any topic you wish, so long as you feel passionate about that topic and have an argument you wish to make. Feel free, during the semester, to bring to class samples of writing from books, magazines, and newspapers that you find particularly persuasive. Such samples may serve as models for you as you attempt various types of essay. The essays you write will be cumulative: that is, each one will add to your repertory of rhetorical techniques so that by the time you write your final research paper, you should have a variety of models and techniques from which to draw.

Because this class depends so heavily on cooperative participation, your regular contribution to discussion (which should demonstrate that you have completed homework assignments) will amount to 30% of your final grade. Speeches will count 20%; papers, 50%. I expect all assignments to be done on time, and late papers will be docked a half letter grade for each day they are late. Attendance, too, is crucial. You may have up to three unexcused absences without penalty. Each additional unexcused absence will incur a 3 1/3 point deduction from your final grade. Absences will be excused only with *written* proof of cause – medical, institutional, or religious.

NOTE: For the purpose of brevity, in this syllabus *The Practical Stylist* is referred to as **SB**; *Speaking of Words* as **MC**.

**DATE            ASSIGNMENT**

- 1/18            Introduction to the course; analysis of an editorial from the *Tribune*.
- 1/20            **Paragraph due:** In response to an opinion piece or editorial.  
**SB:** chapter 1: the point of argumentative writing. **MC:** pp. 2-14.
- 1/23            Analysis of argumentative paragraphs.  
**SB:** chapter 2 and exercises: from subject to thesis.
- 1/25            **MC:** pp.14-25.
- 1/27            **SB:** continue exercises.
- 1/30            **SB:** chapter 3 and exercises: structuring a paper.
- 2/1             **SB:** continue exercises. **MC:** pp. 37-54.
- 2/3             **Editorial due** on a topic of current interest.
- 2/6             Analyze editorials. **MC:** pp. 54-77.
- 2/8             **SB:** chapter 4 and exercises: beginning, middle and ending paragraphs
- 2/10            **SB:** continue exercises.
- 2/13            **SB:** chapter 5 and exercises: description, narration.
- 2/15            **SB:** continue exercises: cause and effect, problem and solution.
- 2/17            **Short essay due:** argue an aspect of college life (e.g. alcohol policy, the honor code, the rationale for academic requirements, the lack of diversity).  
**SB:** continue exercises: comparison and contrast.

- 2/20 Analyze short essays. **MC** pp. 92-104.
- 2/22 Continue analysis of short essays. Also: What makes a good speech?
- 2/24 **MC**: pp. 105-127.
- 2/2, 29 **SB**: chapter 6 and exercises, plus **SB** handout #8, p. 125: working with evidence – logical fallacies.
- 3/2 **MC** pp. 140-150.
- 3/5-12 **Speeches**: advancing an argument in which you use any combination of induction and deduction, personal experience, definition, analysis, comparison and contrast, etc.
- 3/14 Test on all essays read thus far in **MC**.
- 3/16 **Expository essays due.**
- 3/17-25 SPRING BREAK
- 3/26 **MC**: pp. 150-168.
- 3/28 The inductive essay: exercise #9 in the **SB** handout, p. 127. **These paragraphs are to be handed in at the end of class.**
- 3/30 **SB** handout: writing good sentences, exercises 1, 3, 4, 7-9, and 10-13. Do only the first five sentences in exercises 1, 3, 4, 9 and 10.
- 4/2 **SB** handout: continued.
- 4/4 **Inductive essays due.**
- 4/6 No class
- 4/9 **MC**: pp. 169-182.
- 4/11 The inductive-deductive essay: **SB** handout, exercise # 11, p. 131. Also **SB**: chapter 8 and exercises: correcting wordy sentences.
- 4/13 **SB**: chapter 8 and exercises, continued.
- 4/16 Library workshop: the research paper.

- 4/18      **Inductive-deductive essays due.**  
SB: chapter 9 and exercises: words, words, words.
- 4/20      **SB:** chapter 9 and exercises, continued.
- 4/23      **MC:** pp. 231-251.
- 4/25-30    **Speeches** which persuade with the assistance of research.
- 5/7, 9 am    **Research papers due.**