

ENG 225: Rhetorics of Murder

- Monday/Wednesday 4pm-5:20pm
- Professor: Patrick Harris
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- Office Hours: TBD

"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*

Introduction

In essence, the goal of this class is to improve your writing skills, specifically in the area of persuasive argument. For content, we will focus this semester on media coverage of murder and death. Throughout the semester, you will choose a topic within this general area and become a specialist in it. By the end of the semester, you should be able to explain the topic in simple language, and make a compelling arguments about it to a wide range of audiences.

Trigger Warning

It is entirely possible that students will find themselves distressed by some of the topics we will be discussing this semester. Each day's topic is laid out on the syllabus; students are invited to engage in self-care in whatever ways they find necessary. If you do not think you are able to attend a discussion of a certain topic, or if you are unable to write about a certain topic, please see me; alternate assignments can be worked out.

Daily Expectations

Reading: There are no required texts to purchase for this course. Students will be expected to read, watch, or listen to various pieces which will either be provided on or linked via our Canvas site.

Writing: This is an advanced writing class, so writing will be expected. On days when papers are not due, you will turn in a brief piece of writing: 250+ words unless otherwise noted. Prompts for these will be assigned based on our class discussions.

Participation: Your active participation in class is expected. We will discuss in our first meeting the various ways in which one might actively participate in a class.

Course Outcomes

- **Genre Knowledge:** Students will learn to analyze academic and community genre expectations, understanding how conventions for writing differ across contexts and media.
- **Inquiry-Driven Research:** Students will engage a specific inquiry question in depth over time, conducting intensive research to examine an issue from multiple disciplinary perspectives.
- **Audience Adaptation:** Students will critically analyze the expectations of various audiences, adapting their writing to meet those expectations.
- **Revision:** Students will revise work in response to peer and instructor feedback, deeply re-seeing their work in light of genre conventions, audience expectations, and rhetorical knowledge.
- **Reflective Transfer:** Students will reflect about the writing strategies they have learned throughout their coursework, considering how they can apply and adapt those strategies to meet the writing challenges they will face in their majors, careers, and civic lives.
- **Style and Editing:** Students will learn editing techniques to enhance clarity, concision and reader engagement while also recognizing how stylistic conventions and citation formats differ across contexts.

Papers

1. **Personal Statement:** You'll begin by talking about your personal stance on your topic, if any. If there isn't one, why did you pick this topic? What benefit do you get from the argument you are making?
2. **Research Paper:** Learn more about your topic, and write about what you can find. You should have a specific research question in mind as you begin, which will allow you to direct your research in a consistent direction. We will discuss this in class.
3. **Refutation Essay:** Find an argument you disagree with. Prove it wrong. It's not enough to just say "nuh uh"—our goal here is to demonstrate that you understand the way these arguments are framed, and you are arguing within that framework—show me that you grasp the genre of the argument you're refuting by putting your refutation in the same one.
4. **Digital Essay:** Make your argument in digital form—a video, a podcast, etc. This will demonstrate your ability to transfer your argument from audience to audience, as well as your adaptability between media.
5. **Reflection Essay:** Discuss your progress over the course of the semester in terms of your composition process, your composition product(s), and how your research affected your opinion(s). Talk about how you will apply these developments to your career and/or schooling in the future.

Grading

Assignment	Grade %
Attendance	10%
Daily Reading/Writing/Listening Responses	15%
Personal Essay (Paper #1)	16%
Research Paper (Paper #2)	18%
Refutation Essay (Paper #3)	16%
Digital Essay (Paper #4)	15%
Reflection Essay (Paper #5)	10%
Total	100%

Policies & Procedures

Attendance: It is Miami University policy that every student is expected to attend every class meeting. Since this is a discussion-oriented course, your attendance is crucial, and key to successfully completing assignments. Regular attendance will greatly elevate your chances of performing well. Simply showing up for class, however, will not be enough. I expect this class to be the site of lively intellectual activity, discussion, debate, and critical but respectful exchange. Accordingly, timely arrival is crucial. Attendance will be taken at the start of class; your attendance percentage (calculated by Canvas' Roll Call software) will be 10% of your final grade in this class.

Plagiarism: The assumption in English 225 is that the writing you submit is your own original writing—that is, produced originally for this class. To copy someone else's writing without acknowledging that use is an act of academic and professional dishonesty, whether you borrow an entire report or a single sentence. The most serious forms of academic dishonesty are to "buy" an entire paper, to have someone else write an assignment for you, or to turn in someone else's entire paper (or significant portions of an existing piece of writing) and call it your own. These forms of dishonesty constitute serious breaches of academic integrity. If you have doubts about whether or not you are using your own or others' writing ethically, ask the instructor. For further details about Academic Integrity at Miami University—including a detailed list of examples of academic dishonesty and procedures and penalties for dealing with instances of academic dishonesty—see <http://www.muohio.edu/integrity/undergrads.cfm>.

Assignment Format: Papers should be in MLA format. There is a thorough guide to MLA style online at the Purdue Owl and we will review this information in class; no excuses will be accepted for incorrect citations or formatting. **MLA formatting guidelines no longer require URLs. Do not use URLs in your MLA citations.** Additionally, papers must be submitted in universally readable formats—PDF, RTF, DOC, or DOCX are all acceptable; Pages format is not.

Submission/Grading: All essays will be submitted via Canvas and must be submitted before the start of class on the day they are due. All assignments must be turned in on time. Final grades on papers will be downgraded one whole grade for each day late--for example from A to B--unless you have made prior arrangements for an extension. First, please note that "a day" is each period up to 24 hours--the penalty begins as soon as the paper is late. Second, please note that extensions are available for exceptional circumstances only.

Backing up Work: Make sure to have a plan for backing up all of your digital work in multiple places in case of computer failure. Please also make sure to save all of the writing you complete for class. You are responsible for data loss! Consider a real-time backup program such as Dropbox.

Accommodations: I assume that all of us have different ways of learning, and that the organization of any course will accommodate each student differently. For example, you may prefer to process information by speaking and listening, so that some of the handouts I provide may be difficult to absorb. Please communicate with me as soon as you can about your individual learning needs and how this course can best accommodate them. You may also obtain additional information and support from the Office of Learning Disabilities Services 513-529-8741 or The Office of Disability Resources 513-529-1541.

Canvas/Daily Schedule: The daily course schedule and more detailed assignment prompts will be available on Canvas. The course schedule is subject to change based on the needs and interests of the class. You are responsible for regularly checking Canvas for updates, as well as regularly checking your Miami email address.

Distractions: Please silence your cell phone and refrain from texting. While we will regularly use laptops for in-class writing, research, and collaboration, please refrain from using your laptop for non-class activities. Additionally, side conversations are not acceptable.

Respect: Since this is a discussion-based class, it is vital that you listen and speak respectfully to others at all times. I encourage you to express your opinions, of course—they will help inspire good discussions. In other words, you are allowed and expected to speak your mind at all times, as long as you can do so without being a jerk.

Problems: If you run into problems or emergencies, talk to me as soon as possible!

Resources

Classmates: Rely on one another for the questions you have regarding the readings, the work we're doing in class, software we may be using, etc. You all, both individually and as a collective, embody a vast bank of knowledge and experiences.

Instructor: I will do all I can to assist you in succeeding in this course. Feel free to meet with me during my office hours or another scheduled time. Email is a reliable way to contact me and I will try my best to respond in a timely manner. I have office hours in the same building for three hours after this class, and I am more than willing to meet with you outside those hours by appointment.

IT Support: The IT support desk is the main point of contact for technology questions at Miami, including issues with connecting to MU wireless. You can call 513-529-7900, email ithelp@muohio.edu, or go to 317 Hughes Hall.

Writing Centers: The Howe Writing Center is located on the main floor of King Library. The Center is staffed with writing consultants from many different academic areas. In a one-on-one workshop, a staff member will consult with you concerning work-in-progress, final drafts, research style, and many other aspects of writing. It is best to schedule an appointment ahead of time, but you may also walk in on days when they have consultants available. For further information, visit the student resources site at <http://writingcenter.lib.muohio.edu/>.

The Student Counseling Service: Located in the Health Services Center, this office provides a wide range of counseling services. For more information, call 513-529-4634. Also, they have therapy dogs that you can hang out with. No kidding. Call them.

Tentative Schedule

Monday 1/25	Syllabus; Definitions	In Class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What exactly is this class going to cover? For Next Time: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written Response
Wednesday 1/27	Rhetoric and Argument	In Class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “No, It’s Not Your Opinion, You’re Just Wrong” (article) • <i>An Illustrated Book of Bad Arguments</i> (website) For Next Time: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Stasis Theory” (article) • Written Response
Monday 2/1	Rhetorics of Mental Health and Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD
Wednesday 2/3	Imitation Workshop	In Class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Imitation” (article) For Next Time: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued Imitation Exercise

Monday 2/8	Rhetorics of Race and Class in Murder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD
Wednesday 2/10	Peer Review of Personal Essay	For Next Time: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Version of Personal Essay
Monday 2/15	Personal Essay Due	For Next Time: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic Proposals for Research Paper (including Research Inquiry)
Wednesday 2/17	Copia Workshop	In Class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “A Short Guide to Copia” (article) For Next Time: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued Copia Exercise
Monday 2/22	Rhetorics of Serial Killers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD
Wednesday 2/24	Research and Citation Workshop	In Class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “MLA Formatting and Style Guide” (website) For Next Time: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Loving v. Virginia</i> (Supreme Court ruling) • Written Response
Monday 2/29	Rhetorics of Mass Shootings: Is it Terrorism?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD
Wednesday 3/2	Style Clinic	In Class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specifics to be determined after reviewing first paper. For Next Time: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued Style Exercises
Monday 3/7	Peer Review of Research Paper	For Next Time: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Version of Research Paper
Wednesday 3/9	Research Paper Due	For Next Time: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposed Article for Refutation & Reasons for Same
Monday 3/14	Rhetorics of Genocide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD
Wednesday 3/16	Genre and Discourse Community	In Class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wikipedia on “Discourse Community” (website) • “Belief and Ideology” (article) • “Navigating Genre” (article) For Next Time: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written Response

Monday 3/21	Spring break!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoy your vacation.
Wednesday 3/23	Spring break!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoy your vacation.
Monday 3/28	Some Call it Murder: Abortion, Execution, Euthanasia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD
Wednesday 3/30	Some Call it Murder: Abortion, Execution, Euthanasia (con't)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD
Monday 4/4	Language Workshop	<p>In Class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Girl Troubles” (comic) • “Word Choice” (article) • “Bloggers' word choice bares their personality traits, study finds” (article) <p>For Next Time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written Response
Wednesday 4/6	Peer Review of Refutation Essay	<p>For Next Time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Version of Refutation Essay
Monday 4/11	Refutation Essay Due	<p>For Next Time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media Proposal.
Wednesday 4/13	Digital Tools Workshop	<p>For Next Time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD
Monday 4/18	Rhetorics of Weaponry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD
Wednesday 4/20	Conferences	<p>For Next Time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written Response to Conference
Monday 4/25	Murder in Entertainment	TBD
Wednesday 4/27	Peer Review of Digital Essay	<p>For Next Time (after Thanksgiving):</p> <p>Final Version of Digital Essay</p>
Monday 5/2	Digital Essay Due	<p>For Next Time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggest media you wish we'd looked at this semester for perusal next time. (This is optional.)
Wednesday 5/4	Donuts, evaluations, student submissions.	<p>For Next Time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final version of Reflection Essay
Wednesday 5/11	Reflection Essay	Due @ 4pm (handed in online; no meeting)