UN 2001  Revisions: Oral, Written & Visual Communication

Class meets  MTWR 10:00am to 11:40am in Walker 116
Instructor:  Karen Springsteen
Office:  147 Walker
Office hours:  9am to 10am MTW
Office phone:  487-3276
Email:  klspring@mtu.edu

Course Description

In Revisions, you will have consistent and prolonged opportunities to observe, learn about, and reflect overtly on your own and others' communication practices. We will use civic participation and advocacy as context for the communications we study and create.

An underlying strategy of the class is NOT to separate oral, written, and visual communication, but rather to help you come to an understanding that only in rare communication situations are these modes separated from each other. Instead, I want you to understand how (for example) processes of discussion, in class and in other social circumstances, feed into and circle about writing, or that writing on screen or paper always involves making rhetorical decisions about visual presentation, and so on.

I also want you to understand that the conventions of presentation—whether oral, visual, or written—are indeed conventions, which can be learned by careful observation and which require thoughtful and aware modification for particular audiences and circumstances.

Required Texts


Required Assignments

1. Reading Responses

   Over the semester you will each give 2 reading responses. A response must have 3 parts. First, use the article you read to write a 1-2 page essay answering one of the following question sets:
• What is rhetoric? What are some specific rhetorical concepts? How do these concepts help shape pieces of communication in different ways? Do you think rhetoric is civilizing, neutral or evil?

• What is meant by “genre” and “generic conventions”? What different kinds of genre and generic conventions are there? How does genre shape material to meet audience expectations? How does genre help an audience come to a piece of communication with readily shaped expectations?

• What makes good communication? To what extent is good communication bound to time, place, ideology and culture?

• What are some ethical and cultural dimensions of communication?

• What are some principles of design? In what ways can words and images work together to create different effects? In what ways can different parts of an oral, written or visual text be coordinated? What kinds of appeals can be made?

• What is an argument? What do we do with it? What kind of relationship does it assume between people? What are some different options for presenting an argument?

• What does it mean to be a citizen? How is civic participation part of your life and your community?

Then, come to class on your assigned day(s) prepared to present your answer orally for 5 minutes. (In your presentation, you might review the contents of the article, situate it in terms of other readings and activities our class has done, and/or speculate about kinds of applications the ideas have beyond class. You may not simply read your essay aloud.)

Finally, you must include visual support in your presentation.

2. Civic Participation Project

Since civic participation and advocacy provide the contexts for the communications we will be studying, this initial project allows you to think about how you are personally situated therein.

Please develop a final product that addresses oral, written, and visual communication in the context of civic participation. Examples include:

• An interview with a relative or acquaintance (over 30 years old) based on that person's civic activities outside of home and work.
Schedule of Readings & Formal Assignments

July 1  

July 2  Period Styles

July 3  The Rhetoric of Neutrality

July 4  NO CLASS

July 8  Show and Tell

July 9  Absolute Powerpoint

July 10  Icebreaker (handout)

July 11  Civic Participation Projects
         Rhetorical Background

July 15  Audiences and Intentions (handout)

July 16  Pitch Proposals
         Language Matters

July 17  The Argument Culture (handout)

July 18  Small Group Communication and Problem-Solving

July 22  Inviting Transformation

July 23  What Other Ways Are There?

July 24  Commemorating in the Theme Park Zone

July 25  Critical Analysis Research Papers
         The Word

July 29  The Power of Sadam Hussein’s War Rhetoric

July 30  Involvement Strategies in a Speech by the Reverend Jesse Jackson

July 31  Language, Politics, and Power

August 1  Swastica Chic

August 5  Final Presentations
         Women Who Turn the Gaze Around

August 6  Final Presentations
         Every Student Teaches, Every Teacher Learns

August 7-8  NO CLASS