COMM 3370/MLCOM 5370 – RHETORICAL DIMENSIONS OF THE MEDIA
Instructor: Dr. Robin Williamson
Hours: 3:30-4:30 MW; 11:30-12:30 & 2:00-4:00 T; 11:30-12:30 & 2:00-3:00 TH; and by appointment.
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Course Purpose: The goals of the course are two-fold: (1) to acquaint students with theories of rhetorical criticism; and (2) to apply those theories to public address, news, advertising, broadcasting and film.

Objective: Through case studies and assignments, students will learn to use nine methodologies for rhetorical criticism.

Texts: Foss, S. Rhetorical Criticism. 4th Ed.
       Jamieson, K. and Campbell, K. The Interplay of Influence. 6th Ed.
       Handouts

REQUIREMENTS:

Two Midterms: 50% (25% per exam)
Final Exam: 25%
Critique: 15%
Group Presentation: 10%

ASSIGNMENTS/REQUIREMENTS:

EXAMS – Each exam will cover approximately one-third of the course and will contain objective, short answer, and essay questions. If you miss an exam (illness, accident or the like), you must make up that exam at the Career Services Center on the 2nd floor of Crooker Center within one week. Please do not miss exams habitually. The number to call for appointments is (713) 525-3160.

CRITIQUE – Using any critique method covered in the Foss book, analyze a speech, news article or broadcast, advertisement, or film. Your critique should be 6-7 pages in length. You may cite other sources, but original thinking is most important in a critical thinking assignment. If you do cite other sources, please use MLA style. The critique is due on November 15. Late papers will be penalized one-half grade per class until received.

GROUP CRITIQUE or PRESENTATION – Each group will be assigned a criticism method or chapter not covered in class. For the criticism method, first an overview
of the approach will be given (detailed in a handout to be distributed to other class members.) Then an oral criticism of any rhetorical artifact (speech, television program, advertisement, political campaign, film) will be conducted. This presentation should be approximately 25-30 minutes in length. For the chapter presentations, each group will cover major concepts explained in the chapter and illustrate those concepts with photo, video or film examples. A handout of major ideas should be distributed to class members. These presentations should be about 30-35 minutes in length. Both critique and chapter presentation groups should prepare power points.

ADDITIONAL ASSIGNMENTS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS:

For every exam, graduate students will write an additional essay. For the critique, graduate students’ papers will range from 9-10 pages.

SCHEDULE:

8/23: Overview; Introduction to Rhetorical Criticism (Foss, Chs. 1 & 2); Rhetorical Theory (handouts); sample writing assignment

8/30: Classical Rhetorical Theory (handouts); Neo-Aristotelian criticism (Foss, Ch. 3)

9/6: Argument, Style, Eloquence (handouts); Metaphoric Criticism (Foss, Ch. 8)

9/13: Pentadic Criticism (Foss, Ch. 10); Review for Exam #1

9/20: EXAM #1 (Foss, Chs. 1, 2, 3, 8, 10, lectures and handouts)

9/27: Rhetorical Nature of the Mass Media (Jamieson & Campbell, Ch. 1) What is News? (Jamieson & Campbell, Ch. 2) News as Persuasion (Jamieson & Campbell, Ch. 3); Influencing the News Media (Ch. 4)

10/4: Advertising (Jamieson & Campbell, Ch. 6, 7 & 8); criticizing ads

10/11: FALL BREAK

10/18: Fantasy Theme Criticism (Foss, Ch. 5 – this material will be on the final) How to Influence the Mass Media (Jamieson & Campbell, Ch. 9 – this material will be on the final).
10/25: EXAM #2 (Jamieson & Campbell, Ch. 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8; lectures and handouts)

11/1: Film – REAR WINDOW; Cluster Criticism (Ch. 4, Foss)

11/8: TV, symbols, myths and genres. Generic Criticism (Chapter 6)
Explain Group Projects: Topics include: Ideological Criticism (Foss, Ch. 7); Narrative Criticism (Foss, Ch. 9); Political versus Product Campaigns (Jamieson & Campbell, Ch. 10); How has the Internet Changed Politics (Jamieson & Campbell, Ch. 11); News and Advertising In the Political Campaign (Jamieson & Campbell, Ch. 12)
Work on Group Projects.

11/15: Work on group projects. CRITIQUE DUE

11/22: GROUP PROJECTS

12/29: GROUP PROJECTS; Review for Final Exam

12/13: FINAL EXAM (Foss, Ch. 4, 5, 6, 7, 9); Jamieson & Campbell, Ch. 7, 9, 10, 11, 12) TIME: 4:30-7:00 p.m.