

# Engl 611-001: Studies in Rhetoric

## Rhetorics, Ecologies, Networks -- Fall 2007

Room: Innovation 333  
Day/Time: T 7:20-10:00  
Professor: Byron Hawk  
Email: bhawk [at] gmu [dot] edu  
Office/hours: Sci-Tech I 105, T 4:10-7:10  
Office phone: 703-993-3174  
English office: RobA 487  
Online syllabus: <http://classweb.gmu.edu/bhawk/611-REN>

### Course Description:

Web 2.0 technologies have made digital networking and social connectivity an important area of rhetorical knowledge and research. But since the technologies are so new and constantly changing, academic theories and practices have yet to completely catch up. This course seeks to put students at the center of this knowledge production. The class will investigate rhetorical theories, theories of ecology and complexity, and network theories in the context of a semester long encounter with a particular social networking site of each student's choice. Students will use the site over the course of the semester and write about the connections they see among the various theories and the site under investigation. Assignments will consist of weekly blog entries, four short papers, a final paper, and one class presentation on the technology under investigation.

### Texts:

Johnson, Steven. *Emergence: The Connected Lives of Ants, Brains, Cities, and Software*. New York: Scribner, 2001.

Gladwell, Malcolm. *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*. New York: Back Bay Books, 2005/2007.

Borgo, David. *Sync or Swarm: Improvising Music in a Complex Age*. New York: Continuum, 2005/2006.

Latour, Bruno. *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

### Technologies:

Each student needs to pick a preferred technology to follow and participate in over the course of the semester. Social networking sites are often easy to set up and manage, but require a lot of time to maintain, update, and network. I recommend picking something that is related to a personal interest or your professional goals. There are sites out there for just about everything. The key is finding the right one for you. Below is an initial list, but do some searching early on to find a good fit.

- Motime (Blogger, Xanga, Wordpress, etc.) – all server-side blogging sites with various social networking capabilities.

- [Blogmeister](#) – blogging tool explicitly designed for teaching: teacher's can evaluate, comment on, and publish student blogs in a controlled environment.
- [Facebook](#) – social networking site based largely on school networks, both high school and university.
- [Myspace](#) – social networking site with a high number of individual pages but also has a function for bands and has become the main site for showcasing music.
- [Friendster](#) – social networking site based on individual pages that emphasizes connecting with old and new friends.
- [Yahoo 360](#) – their entryway into general social networking.
- [Youtube!](#) – the primary social networking site for sharing video.
- [Flickr](#) – the primary social networking site for posting, cataloging, and sharing photos. (also see [Webshots](#))
- [Delicious](#) – social networking site that lets you categorize and share web links.
- [Furl](#) – another social book-marking site with some decent features.
- [Twitter](#) – social networking and micro-blogging service using instant messaging, SMS or a web interface.
- [Pownce](#) – social networking IM site that let's you send music, photos, messages, links, and events to your friends.
- [Lastfm](#) – social networking site based on music tastes that allows you to listen to and catalog music within the site and then network with people of similar tastes. (also see [Pandora](#) and [Musicoverly](#))
- [Shelfari](#) – social networking site that lets you share book ratings and reviews with friends and meet people who have similar tastes in books. (It also lets you build an online bookshelf, join book clubs, and get good book recommendations from friends.)
- [Delicious Monster](#) – Catalog, browse, and share all your books, movies, music, and video games (Mac).
- [LinkedIn](#) – the primary business oriented social networking site, mainly used for professional networking. (also see [Ecademy](#), [Doostang](#), [XING](#), [Plaxo](#))
- [Classroom 2.0](#) – social networking site for those interested in the practical application of computer and Web 2.0 technologies in the classroom and their own teacher development.
- [EDUSpaces](#) – social network set up for those interested in all aspects of education.
- [Teacher Share](#) – upload, store, categorize, and share links, course papers, and pre-print materials, and discover new materials through searches and related tags.
- [You Could Write](#) – social networking site for writers.
- [e-Jamming](#) – set up a profile, meet musicians, jam online.
- [Indaba](#) – a community-driven site that let's you find musicians and collaborate online.
- [K-solo](#) – karaoke site that let's you record and share your voice on standard tunes.

### **Workshops/Labs:**

Since this course primarily focuses on rhetoric and server-side technologies, only a limited amount of time will be spent in class on technical skills. We will do a brief introduction to help you sign up for the class blog, but aside from that you'll need to learn different things depending on your prior knowledge and on the social network you decide to participate in. Consequently, you'll need to spend time each week outside of class learning technologies on your own in addition to reading and doing writing assignments.

If you need help working with photoshop, dreamweaver, (x)html, wikis, podcasting, or even social bookmarking/tagging you can take advantage of the workshops available on campus. Students

need to sign up for workshops but are able to get individual, walk-in peer tutoring in the Star labs for any project you are working on. Topics, dates, and times for workshops can be found from the workshop schedules below.

- [Star Workshop Schedule](#)
- [IT Training Workshops](#) (list of all IT workshops, including Star)
- [IRC Workshops](#)
- [Star Lab JC 229](#) (student mentors help walk-in students)
- [Star\\*T Lab JC 344](#) (open lab if no workshops are being held)
- [Web Star Lab JC 311](#) (also has peer mentors who will help with web development)

#### **Attendance:**

Each week we will discuss the readings, do short assignments, give presentations, and/or have lab time to blog or network. Consequently, attendance is extremely important and will count towards participation grades. It is also vital that lab time in class be utilized. Others around you can help with your efforts. If you stop coming to class, it will be your responsibility to drop. Failure to do so will result in an 'F'.

#### **Office Hours:**

I will have office hours in Sci-Tech I 105 from 4:10-7:10 on Tuesdays. If you need to speak to me and cannot make this time, then ask me to schedule a time that is convenient for both of us. I check my e-mail several times daily, so this will be the best way to contact me in a hurry if you have a question or problem, especially about what is due that week. The only other option is to call and leave a phone message, but I will not receive it immediately.

#### **Grades:**

Students in English 611 receive a final grade of A+ (4.0), A (4.0), A- (3.67), B+ (3.33), B (3.0), B- (2.67), C+ (2.33), C (2.0), C- (1.67), D (1.0), or F (0.0). Since both A+ and A have the same GP, I make little or no distinction between them. Although a B- is a satisfactory grade for a course, students must maintain a 3.0 average in their degree program and present an overall 3.0 GPA on the courses listed on the graduation application.

#### **Rewrite and Late Policy:**

Responses to readings will need to be posted to the blog before class. The short papers will be read aloud in class and discussed. I will also give written feedback on these papers and they may be rewritten. We will schedule a day for getting peer feedback on drafts of the final paper, but there will be no opportunity for revision after it is turned in. I don't accept work past the due dates.

#### **Specific Needs:**

If you require accommodation based on a disability, then meet with me privately after class on the first or second day to be sure you are properly accommodated. If you need a faculty contact sheet, call the [Disability Resource Center](#) at 703-993-2474.

### **Class Weblog:**

Before class starts I will set up a single weblog for the course. Everyone will post to the main blog. The first day of class I'll give a quick tutorial and we'll make initial posts. Students will then be expected to post regularly in response to readings (at least 2 solid paragraphs, 300-400 words). In addition to posting your short reading responses, post a comment on other posts, a comment about a class presentation, questions about the reading or a tech issue, a cool link, site, or online article you found. The responses should be thoughtful and a little more formal, but in general try to keep it informal and conversational. Often times blogs in the classroom devolve into just another way to post information to the web. To avoid this it takes a lot of effort to keep conversations alive when everyone is so busy. Sometimes you'll have lab time in class to post to the blog; sometimes you'll have to find some time outside of class. Just try to get in the habit of making it a part of the class. All blog posts and comments will count toward participation grades.

### **Presentation:**

Everyone will be expected to give one short class presentation on the technology they are investigating over the semester. It should be in the neighborhood of 15 minutes. The presentations can vary widely in terms of form and content. You can read a paper, talk from notes, click around the site you're discussing, give a PowerPoint presentation, whatever makes sense with your technology and topic. In terms of content you can discuss what you've experienced and learned about your site, give a how-to presentation on the site, present on research you've gathered about the site, or lay the theoretical ground work for your final paper about the site. Everything is potentially fair game; I just want you to run your idea by me for approval before your presentation. If you are somewhat tech savvy already or are investigating a technology you've had prior experience with, try to sign up to present earlier in the semester to give others more time with their technologies before they have to present. Presentations will get up to 5 participation points.

### **Short Papers:**

Approximately every 3-4 weeks (week 5, week 9, week 12, week 15) students will write short papers (1.5 to 2 pages single-spaced, 1000-1250 words) that

- directly apply concepts under discussion to the technology under investigation,
- summarize some of the readings from the previous two weeks,
- make connections among the theories discussed from the previous two weeks and the semester as a whole,
- introduce new readings or research about the chosen technology, \*OR\*
- summarize your experience with the technology and lay the groundwork for the coming final paper.

These options are meant as conceptual starting places to show the range for what is possible with the papers. However, feel free to pursue other ideas as long as they are related to the readings and technologies under investigation. Contact me if you are unsure whether an ulterior paper idea meets the goals for the class. After writing the paper, everyone will bring them in and deliver them orally to the entire class. We will spend the class period listening to the papers and commenting on them orally. The audience should take notes on the presentations and post some additional comments on the blog. Only respond to one or maybe two presentations and gear the comments toward future revision—note what you liked about the paper/project and suggest another essay to look at, an additional line of support, a counter-argument the author didn't consider, etc. I will also comment on the papers, grade them, and ultimately average the papers for the short paper grade. Students may take the commentary given orally in class, on the blog, and by me and revise the first three papers.

### Final Paper:

At the end of the semester students will write a final paper (8-10 pages double-spaced, 2800-3500 words) that shows what they've learned over the semester. The paper should be a basic argument/research paper that combines

- some of the class readings over the semester,
- your experiences with the technology under investigation,
- some additional research on the technology, \*and\*
- reflection on the theories and technologies with regard to your primary personal or professional interests.

For example, some of you may focus on teaching, the workplace, the culture, or being a writer, an academic, or a fan. All of these are fair game and show up in social networking on the web and show up as functions of rhetoric. The paper may lean more toward the theoretical or toward the ethnographic, but a strong essay that makes connections between rhetoric, technology, and your field is vital. The final paper should ultimately build from the blog entries, presentations, and short papers you've given over the semester. For the final short paper assignment you can present your final paper idea to the class for feedback. After class we will set up peer review groups to look over the final papers before you turn them in. Final papers will receive a letter grade and cannot be revised.

### Participation:

Participation will consist of class attendance, presentations, weekly blog posts, any attendance at technology workshops or labs, and overall effort in the class. These will be tallied and averaged.

- Attendance: roll will be checked each day and numerically factored into the participation grade.
- Presentations: on days that you present a paper I will check off those who participate; the one class presentation will get up to five points.
- Blog discussions: to encourage more class discussions on the reading and assignments, I will give a participation grade each time you post or comment. The more posts and comments you have, the higher your participation grade will be.
- Workshops/labs: if you attend a workshop, bring me verification and I will give you credit toward participation; if you get help in a lab, let me know and I'll give you credit (obviously this is open to fraud, but I trust you).
- Individual effort to learn the technologies and participate in the social networks: this is the only non-calculable participation grade; it will be the x-factor when it comes down to giving final grades. If you are on the borderline, my sense of your effort outside of class could mean the difference between an A and a B.

### Percentages:

The following is a breakdown of percentages.

Blog/Participation	20 %
Short Papers	40 %
Final Paper	40 %
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100 %

## **Syllabus:**

This is a tentative schedule by week for readings, assignments, and activities. Tentative means I can vary it as much as seems appropriate. However, plan on sticking very close to this outline especially on major due dates. I will post all revisions of/additions to the syllabus on this web page. The updated web version will always override the [printable PDF](#) version.

## **Introductions**

### **Week 1** (Aug 28): Introductions to Course

In Class:

- Go over syllabus.
- [Sign up](#) for the [class blog](#).
- Write a blog post: introduce yourself to the class; note your disciplinary area or program and where you think it might link up to the course; state what social software you might follow over the semester and why.
- Comment on other blog posts and/or surf for other social networking sites related to your area of interest and post them to the blog.

### **Week 2** (Sept 4): Introductions to Rhetoric and Blogging

Required Readings:

- [A Brief History of Rhetoric and Composition](#)
- Miller, Carolyn. [Blogging as Social Action](#)
- Brooke, Collin. [Weblogs as Deictic Systems](#)
- Mathes, Adam. [Cooperative Classification](#)
- Boyd, Danah. [Social Networking Sites](#)

In Class:

- Discuss readings.
- Comment on other blog posts made before class.
- Surf for social networking sites and post to blog.
- Skim the folksonomy articles and responses above and comment on the issues and debates.
- Sign up for a presentation day.

## **Rhetorical Situation**

### **Week 3** (Sept 11): Emergence and Complexity

Required Readings:

- Johnson, Steven. *Emergence*

In Class:

- Discuss readings.
- Presenter #1: \_\_\_\_\_
- Presenter #2: \_\_\_\_\_
- Comment on other blog posts.

**Week 4** (Sept 18): Rhetorical Situation

Required Readings:

- Bitzer, Lloyd. "The Rhetorical Situation."
- Vatz, Richard. "The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation."
- Biesecker, Barbara. "Rethinking the Rhetorical Situation . . ."
- Trimbur, John. "Composition and the Circulation of Writing."
- Edbauer, Jenny. "Unframing Models of Public Distribution."

In Class:

- Discuss readings.
- Presenter #3: \_\_\_\_\_
- Presenter #4: \_\_\_\_\_
- Comment on other blog posts.

**Week 5** (Sept 25): Short Papers

Required Writing:

- Write a short paper.
- Consult with me on a topic if necessary.
- Bring a hard copy to class.
- Be prepared to read your paper and to listen to and comment on other papers.

In Class:

- Read papers outloud.
- Comment orally on content and delivery.

**Epistemology and Kairos**

**Week 6** (Oct 2): Knowledge

Required Readings:

- Gladwell, Malcolm. *Blink*

In Class:

- Discuss readings.
- Presenter #5: \_\_\_\_\_
- Presenter #6: \_\_\_\_\_
- Comment on other blog posts.

**Week 7** (Oct 9): No Class - Columbus Day (Monday class meets Tuesday, no Tuesday class)

**Week 8** (Oct 16): Invention/Kairos

Required Readings:

- Young, Richard. "Arts, Crafts, Gifts, Knacks."
- Berlin, James. "Contemporary Composition" or "Rhetoric and Ideology"
- Miller, Carolyn. Kairos in the Rhetoric of Technology (+ foreward to *Rhetoric and Kairos*) or Kairos in the Rhetoric of Science
- DeLanda, Manuel. Virtual Environments as Intuition Synthesisers

In Class:

- Discuss readings.
- Presenter #7: \_\_\_\_\_
- Presenter #8: \_\_\_\_\_
- Comment on other blog posts.

**Week 9** (Oct 23): Short Papers

Required Writing:

- Write a short paper.
- Consult with me on a topic if necessary.
- Bring a hard copy to class.
- Be prepared to read your paper and to listen to and comment on other papers.

In Class:

- Read papers outloud.
- Comment orally on content and delivery.

**Writing and Ecology**

**Week 10** (Oct 30): Music and Improvization

Required Readings:

- Borgo, David. *Sync or Swarm*

In Class:

- Discuss readings.
- Presenter #9: \_\_\_\_\_
- Presenter #10: \_\_\_\_\_
- Comment on other blog posts.

**Week 11** (Nov 6): Writing/Composition

Required Readings:

- Kameen, Paul. "Rewording" and/or "On Coleridge"
- Cooper, Marilyn. "The Ecology of Writing."

- Dobrin and Weisser. "Breaking New Ground"
- Taylor, Marck C. "Screening Information."

In Class:

- Discuss readings.
- Presenter #11: \_\_\_\_\_
- Presenter #12: \_\_\_\_\_
- Comment on other blog posts.

**Week 12** (Nov 13): Short Papers

Required Writing:

- Write a short paper.
- Consult with me on a topic if necessary.
- Bring a hard copy to class.
- Be prepared to read your paper and to listen to and comment on other papers.

In Class:

- Read papers outloud.
- Comment orally on content and delivery.

**Networking**

**Week 13** (Nov 20): Actor-Network-Theory

Required Readings:

- Latour, Bruno. *Reassembling the Social*

In Class:

- Discuss readings.
- Presenter #13: \_\_\_\_\_
- Presenter #14: \_\_\_\_\_
- Comment on other blog posts.

**Week 14** (Nov 27): Social/Networks

Required Reading:

- Spinuzzi, Clay. Weaving and Splicing Networks
- Spinuzzi, Clay. Describing Assemblages: Genre Sets, Systems, Repertoires, and Ecologies
- Spinuzzi, Hart-Davidson, and Zachry. Modeling Knowledge Work
- Steuer, Eric. The Infinite Album (also see Music Reborn)
- The MySpace Generation
- Hopkins, Heather. Bebo and MySpace Network Maps for Music Category (blog entry)
- Dodge and Kitchin, Outlines of a world coming into existence

- Mann, Nolan, and Wellman. Sousveillance

In Class:

- Discuss readings.
- Presenter #15: \_\_\_\_\_
- Presenter #16: \_\_\_\_\_
- Comment on other blog posts.

### **Week 15** (Dec 4): Short Papers

Required Writing:

- Write a short paper on the networking section.
- Or, write an initial one-page, single-spaced abstract of your final paper.
- Bring a hard copy to class.
- Be prepared to read your paper and to listen to and comment on other papers.

In Class:

- Read papers outloud.
- Comment orally on content and delivery.
- Put together a peer review group.

After Class:

- Exchange paper over email or use Google docs.
- Follow the basic peer review sheet and write a brief summary of your essay and distribute it to your group.
- Comment on the papers, looking at content, argument, form, language, style, and grammar.
- Using the brief summary from the author and your comments on the paper, fill out the peer review sheet, thinking more broadly about the rhetorical effectiveness of the paper.
- Give the paper and review sheet back to the author in the next class.

### **Final Papers**

### **Week 16** (Dec 10-15): Finals Week

Required Writing:

- Finish your final papers.

No Class:

- Final Papers due by \_\_\_\_\_ in my box, RobA 487, or email me a Word doc.