

## English 124 Advanced Composition: Critical Reasoning and Writing

“All the fun’s in how you say a thing.” Robert Frost, Poet

### **Course Info and Syllabus**

Fall 2005, Sec. 5122

Time: Mon./Wed. 8:00-10:50 AM, 10/17-12/9

Instructor: Scott Tinley

Place: 325B

Office: 590

Office hours: Wed. 7-8:00 A.M. and by

appt.

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### **Required textbooks and materials**

- Crusius, Timothy W. & Channell, Carolyn E., The Aims of Argument, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. McGraw Hill, 2006

-Raimes, Key for Writers. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Houghton Mifflin, 2005 (or a similar grammar handbook)

-A good dictionary (eg. The American Heritage Dictionary, 3<sup>rd</sup>. Edition) and a thesaurus  
(Bring *Aims of Argument* to every class meeting)

### **Suggested additional reading and/or texts:**

-Hurford, James R., Grammar—A Student’s Guide, Cambridge University Press, 1994

-Palumbo, Dennis, Writing from the Inside Out, John Wiley and sons, 2000  
(suggested texts not available at campus bookstore)

### **Other required materials:**

-A three-ring binder and notebook paper

-Access to a computer or word processor (available at the Instructional. Media Lab or Writing Center)

### **Course Description**

English 124 is an introduction to reading and writing as critical inquiry, focusing on the rhetoric of written argument. While there is a heavy composition component (we will be writing between 8,000 and 10,000 words in eight weeks), much of the course will foreground the various elements of argument such as claims, warrants, support and language. Further to the discovery and investigation of these elements, we will be reading a number of interesting and thought-provoking essays, and then de-constructing them to discuss and decide what the message is, which elements of argumentation they might incorporate, how they are used and if they are successful in supporting the claims through the use of these elements. The student will be asked to develop his or her own thoughts and ideas not only on the theme of the text, but how and why it is presented by the author. The students will learn to critique an essay thoughtfully and knowledgeably, without prejudice or pre-conceived notions, making note of the methods of persuasion, analysis, evaluation, refutation, definition, comparison, synthesis and summary.

Concurrently, the students will construct their own essays using the various elements, forms, styles and skills as identified in the discussed texts.

Critical reasoning and writing is based on this premise: when a student reads a text that provides for genuine inquiry, when it challenges them to fully grasp what the writer is trying to say and how they are saying it, then the student not only begins to develop the ability to critique all text, written or not. The student then carries that knowledge of the specifics and a newfound “critical eye” into the development of their own writing. Thus, reading, critical thought and careful writing are mutually dependant, synergistic and beholden to each other.

Specifically, the course will have two basic components: an analysis component where the texts will be discussed and a student’s ability to grasp the elements (tested by traditional pen and paper tests and/or in class discussion), and a writing component where the student will display their ability to put these elements (along with other writing and composition skills brought forth from previous courses and/or experience) into a series of essays. The analysis of argument will follow the Aims of Argument text closely while the written essays will be evaluated on the continuing development of the ability to use the various argumentative and rhetorical skills, as well as the general principles of critical thinking.