

Eng 350 [Rhetorical Theory] Midterm group project

Goal: To integrate all the topics so far into your own coherent defense of rhetoric, and to educate the rest of the University about the undergraduate perspective on the rhetoric major.

Assignment: (1) Defend "Rhetoric" (or something similarly named) as a legitimate major at a large, land-grant university in the 21st century; (2) state and defend the goals (intended learning outcomes) for students in that major.

Due: Thurs, 9 Mar, 5:15-6:30, 212 Ross (pizza provided): both oral & written versions.

Details:

1. Immediate audiences. You'll present your proposal

- orally to the English Club & any others I can round up; and
- in writing to the instructor, who will distribute it to English/rhetoric faculty.

Please keep in mind that these are real audiences, at least somewhat curious about a rhetoric major, but also likely to tune out, disagree, change the subject.....and so on. You should focus the oral presentation on the learning goals; you'll have a bit less than 20 minutes, but you should reserve *at least* 5 for open discussion. The written version can be in any form that works for you. .

2. Audience's Perspectives. Your proposal should primarily reflect *your* (students') perspective. It should be a major that meets the overall learning goals of yourselves and at least a decent number of other students. (The major has to attract more than the two dozen or so currently majoring in each of English/rhetoric and Speech Comm) But to be adopted, your proposal must eventually persuade at least these additional audiences:

- English faculty, i.e., those of us already teaching rhetoric courses, who may have ideas about the learning goals for a rhetoric major different from students' views.
- Faculty in other departments, who may think rhetoric is not a "real" field of study, like their own (e.g., Ag Engineering).
- The University administration (who will be approving the major), who want to see how this major contributes to ISU's mission & strategic plan.
- The Iowa legislature/the general public/your relatives, who may wonder why they should pay for students to learn to emit "hot air" and make the weaker argument appear the better.

You may want to talk to some of these people in order to get a better sense of their views and how to persuade them.

3. Think Big. Note that in defending Rhetoric as a major you're going to have to say something about what it is--that is, you're going to have to "define" rhetoric or the rhetorician. In designing your learning goals, think big. Think of all the knowledges and skills that a graduating major should possess; but think also about the attitudes, values, feelings, commitments, ethical principles, experiences, appreciations. . . they should have (if any). You will want to think specifically about some of the topics we've already been discussing, for example:

- Do your majors need to know about the rhetorical tradition?
- Do they need to have an ethics of rhetoric?

- Do they need to know something about science?
- Are writing, speaking, visuals and electronic comm. all equally important?
- Do they need a broad, liberal education?
- Do they need to be committed to civic participation?

If you think that some or all of these are *not* learning goals, you should include a defense of why you've chosen to leave them out.

4. Group work. Use the diversity of your group. You probably have a member with a major outside English; listen to their perspectives on the Rhetoric major. If you have a person with coursework or experience in proposal writing, listen to her advice about formatting. If you have disagreement about what the nature or goals of the major should be, submit a "minority report" (a short document arguing for a different position), and make sure that the majority and minority views address each other. Note; I recognize that group writing projects are stressful, so if the written version is "chunky," I'll know why. But do your best to address your real audience well, given the constraints of group work.

5. Other programs. Check the course website for some places to start: I'll put up some links to our own & other undergraduate majors.

6. Technicalities. Hand in abstracts (separately) of any course text you mention (and you *should* be drawing from them). Of course, re-use good abstracts previously handed in, but get the others into better shape (at last). If there are members of your group who did not actively participate in this project, do *not* list their names on the written version. I will work with them to get them some credit for midterm work; it's not your problem.

7. Final plea. I really am plotting for a major overhaul of the rhetoric major here at ISU—a task that will take many years. So I, if no one else, am willing to be listen to your vision. So articulate it, and persuade me!

Evaluation standards: The evaluation standards are largely the same as those for the debates and papers thus far:

1. The proposal is defended clearly and forcefully to audiences who may disagree.
2. The proposal shows a deep engagement with the rhetorical tradition: recognizing the issues and choices raised in the tradition, and drawing from the tradition to defend positions.
3. The proposal shows a deep engagement personally, drawing from your individual experience as a learner and future graduate; it speaks in your own voice.