

# coms 100b

spring 2015  
critical analysis of messages  
section 2, #30271, T/TR, 9-10:15 a.m., MND 1026

## description

Critical Analysis of Messages, a required course for Communication Studies majors, offers students the opportunity to study, interpret and evaluate various types of messages. The course is designed to help you think critically about the messages surrounding you and in turn, learn how to write well.

Catalogue description: "COMS 100B. Critical Analysis of Messages. Classical and contemporary models for analyzing messages. Discussion of techniques applicable to a variety of basic message types. Practice in written analysis. Note: Majors must complete with a grade of "C-" or better; Writing Intensive. Prerequisites: COMS 2, and COMS 4, (COMS 5 is accepted for COMS 4 for MCOM majors) or transfer equivalents (COMS 100A may be taken concurrently), and (GWAR Certification before Fall 09, or WPJ score of 80+, or at least a C- in ENGL 109M/W)."

## texts & materials

1. **Required:** Foss, S.K. (2009). *Rhetorical criticism: Exploration and practice*. (4th ed.) Waveland Press.
2. **Required:** Other readings, as assigned. (Available free online or SacCT)
3. **Required:** Access to and full knowledge of how to use SacCT
4. **Required:** Familiarity with library research databases
5. **Required:** American Psychological Association (2009). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed). Washington: APA.

## course objectives

1. To appreciate the need for critical message analysis in today's society
2. To understand classical and contemporary theories for critical message analysis
3. To recognize persuasive messages in various contexts and forms
4. To effectively interpret and evaluate messages
5. To demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of critical message analysis through oral and written work.

## feedback

Throughout the semester you will have many opportunities to provide feedback about the course. I always welcome student input and realize if we wait until the end of the semester during university evaluations, I cannot make changes that will help you. So, please share your suggestions and concerns with me in an open and constructive manner *during* the semester whether in class, privately during office hours, via e-mail or anonymously.



# coms100b policies & requirements

## the process of teaching & learning in coms 100b

To me, learning is an active process which means that in this class, YOU will be directly involved through discussion, activity and collaboration. Not only does it make the process more enjoyable (read: not boring), but your learning will be more effective, increasing your competence in the subject matter.

Effective learning happens when:

- \* you understand communication and critical message analysis in ways more sophisticated than when you began the course
- \* you are conscious of the communication choices you make when communicating, assessing claims, reading arguments and interpreting messages
- \* you are able to construct and explain arguments, evaluate messages, and challenge and defend claims

You will facilitate these outcomes by:

- \* mindfully completing reading and written assignments before coming to class
- \* being prepared and willing to share ideas and dialogue with colleagues
- \* looking for connections between real life experiences and the ideas and concepts encountered throughout the course to build a deep, complex understanding of communication processes

A typical class session will involve a great deal of student-to-student interaction. You will: talk about your ideas; develop, present and analyze arguments; write and share your writing; develop conceptual maps and models; and identify concepts in various media. Occasionally, I will talk for 10-15 minutes, and you'll do some note taking. As a result, there will be ample opportunity to practice relevant skills and test concepts presented.

## late work

All assignments are due at the BEGINNING of class time on the date assigned. Essays must be submitted via TurnItIn software in advance of the deadline AND in hard copy at the beginning of class. If you will be absent when an assignment is due, you may turn the assignment in early or to send it to class with one of your colleagues. Early work may be submitted to the ComS Office in Mendocino 5014 and requires a time/date stamp. Note: Absolutely no assignments will be accepted via e-mail. Ever. Ever, ever, ever. No late work will be accepted except in extreme circumstances (read: you are in a full body cast and cannot type) and will be marked down by 50%.

## attendance

To do well in this class (or any), you need to show up **on time** and be prepared. That said, the responsibility for attendance is entirely yours. Attendance will be taken daily at the beginning of class via sign-in sheet. You are responsible to sign the attendance sheet every day and keep track of your attendance. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to get lecture notes or handouts from your colleagues. If you miss a class period where an assignment is due—for any reason—you assume responsibility for the zero that will be recorded. This includes papers, presentations, quizzes and exams. If you miss more than three classes, for any reason, your final grade will be lowered by 1/3 letter. Note: leaving early is equivalent to being tardy; two tardies will constitute an absence.

## e-mail etiquette

Please remember that e-mail should be treated with the same care and respect that you would a face-to-face interaction. Compose e-mail carefully, using a pertinent subject line, an appropriate greeting and a concise message, without spelling or grammatical errors. I will attempt to return all e-mail promptly, within two business days. Messages received after 10 p.m. will not be addressed until the following day.

# coms100b policies & requirements

## classroom behavior & student conduct

Keeping the golden rule in mind, you should treat others as you wish to be treated. I intend to treat each student with respect, dignity and courtesy. I assume that your classmates and I will receive the same treatment from you. You are expected to arrive on time, fully prepared to actively engage in class discussion and activities. Active participation demonstrates your commitment to the learning process and enhances your understanding of the material.

I want to build a classroom climate that is comfortable for all. In a communication class, it is especially important to:

- \* display respect for all members of the classroom – including the instructor and students
- \* pay attention to and participate in all class sessions and activities
- \* avoid unnecessary disruption during class time (e.g., talking, arriving late, reading the newspaper, surfing the internet, doing work for other classes, making/receiving cell phone calls, text messaging, etc.)
- \* avoid racist, sexist, homophobic or other negative language that may unnecessarily exclude members of our campus and classroom.

This is not an exhaustive list of behaviors; rather, it represent examples of the types of things that can have a dramatic impact on the class environment.

## academic honesty, plagiarism and cheating

The very best way to fail this course? Plagiarize or cheat. Academic misconduct will result in, at the very least, a zero on the assignment in question, and may include a failing course grade and/or possible university sanctions. Please be aware that plagiarism is the stealing of ideas which happens when you use someone else's material (including words, figures, images, structure, style, etc.) without giving the creator proper credit. Note that "recycling" papers from other classes also falls under academic misconduct and will not be tolerated. All work completed for ComS 100b must be original. Please acquaint yourselves with the university's academic honesty policy, which can be found here: <http://www.csus.edu/umannual/AcademicHonestyPolicyandProcedures.htm>.

To assist with student learning, honesty, and integrity in our academic processes, you will be asked to submit your essays to Turnitin which will enable you to check your paper for citations and plagiarism. TurnItIn also allows me to compare your work with prior publications and papers. Details about how to use TurnItIn will be given in class.

## electronic devices

In order to create the best possible learning environment for you and your colleagues, electronic devices (e.g. ipods, laptops, cell phones, tablets) are not to be used in the classroom.

**Specifically: Cell phones must be turned off and put away during class.** If you choose to use your cell phone during class, you choose to forfeit 50 points from your final grade, each time. If you need to use your phone, no problem. Just step out in the hallway.

Also, the use of laptops—except for prescribed periods of time— is prohibited. If you believe you have special circumstances, please speak with me right away.

## a social media-free zone

Research\* indicates that we have but two primary channels for receiving and interpreting information: visual and aural. These channels become overloaded easily when faced with too much stimuli or information, e.g., trying to facebook/instagram, "listen" to a lecture, take notes and pay attention to visual aids. Since meaningful learning involves actively engaging with content, limiting electronics in the classroom gives you an opportunity to involve yourself with the course material. Isn't that great?

\* Links to research are available on SacCT.

# coms100b policies & requirements

## assignments & evaluations

Throughout the semester, you will have the opportunity to earn 1,000 points. These points are distributed across the assignments listed below. Detailed criteria and requirements will accompany each assignment.

Warm up paper .....	50 points
A short analysis exercise designed to give me a baseline of your writing and critical analysis skills.	
Homework/In-class Activities/Participation .....	100 points
Academic Honesty/Plagiarism Exercise .....	50 points
Rhetorical analysis article posts (5 posts on Blackboard, 10 points each) .....	50 points
Paper #1 (3-5 pages) .....	75 points
Paper #2 (6-7 pages) .....	150 points
Paper #3 (Full Rhetorical Analysis, 12-15 pages) .....	200 points
Paper 3 Description Practicum .....	15 points
Paper 3 Analysis Practicum .....	15 points
Paper 3 Interpretation Practicum .....	15 points
Paper 3 Evaluation Practicum .....	15 points
Rough draft .....	20 points
Reading Quizzes (8 quizzes, 25 points each).....	200 points
These quizzes will cover material from the textbook and class sessions, and are designed to evaluate your mastery of vocabulary and theory. (9 quizzes listed on syllabus; lowest quiz grade will be dropped)	
Paper Planning forms (3 forms, 15 points each) .....	45 points
Paper #3 Presentations (during final exam, required to pass the class) .....	Pass/No Pass

## assignment formatting

All written assignments (except in-class activities) must be typed AND stapled or they will be not accepted. Seriously. No staple = no points. Proper grammar, correct spelling and articulate writing style are imperative. Assignments neglecting these elements will receive lower grades as a result. Specific formatting requirements for written assignments include: **one-inch margins**, double-spacing and 12-point Times New Roman or Garamond font. Please also include a single-spaced header for each assignment that includes your name, the date, the class and section number, and the assignment on the right-hand margin. APA style will be required for citations/references only.

Straight A. Student  
February 15, 2015  
ComS 100b, Section 2  
Essay #1

# coms100b policies & requirements

## grading perspectives

Grades are part of the teaching and learning process. Keep in mind that you earn your grade based on how well your work meets class objectives, fulfills requirements and reflects the academic skills expected of college students. It is your responsibility to understand why you have achieved a certain grade and what steps can maintain or improve your grade (See "Grading Standards" on the following page).

## returned assignments

I will do my best to return regular assignments to you seven days after you turn them in. Exams and papers may take up to two weeks. Grades will be posted to SacCT. Please make sure the score on your homework matches the score recorded on SacCT. If it doesn't, you must bring me the hard copy with handwritten score. It is in your best interest to keep ALL assignments until the semester ends in case there is an error on the SacCT grade book.

### grading scale

94% +.....A	88% - 89%.....B+	78% - 79%.....C+	68% - 69%.....D+	< 60%.....F
90% - 93%.....A-	84% - 87%.....B	74% - 77%.....C	64% - 67%.....D	
	80% - 83%.....B-	70% - 73%.....C-	60% - 63%.....D-	

## grading questions

If you have questions about a grade or evaluation, I am more than happy to speak with you. You will never, ever, ever, ever have a grade lowered because you raise concern or voice an inquiry about it. It is ALWAYS in your best interest to talk with me and ask how something was graded or what could be done to improve scores next time around (See "Grading Standards" for more information).

Please note I will not discuss grades for an assignment on the day I hand it back to you, nor will I discuss individual grades in the classroom. All such discussions will take place in my office at least one day after the grade has been received. If you wish to contest a grade, write out your argument clearly, concisely and completely, and bring it with you to the meeting. **You have seven days to contest a grade from the time the assignment was handed back.**

\*\*\* If you are concerned about your achievement in the course, please speak to me early and often. There is not much I can do to help when the semester is over! \*\*\*

### an aside

As this is an upper division course, much of the discussion and activities will be centered around your questions, observations and contributions. As seasoned college students towards the end of your undergraduate education, it is expected that your work be polished and thought-provoking, and that you consistently engage with the material and assignments.



# coms100b grading standards

## A: Outstanding – Original, appropriate criticism of course concepts

“A” work constitutes superior handling of the mechanical and conceptual material covered in class. Not only will “A” work synthesize and interact with the ideas and materials covered, but it will also show some originality of thought, an unusual degree of clarity in expression, and an ability to contextualize ideas, explore implications, and/or raise meaningful questions. “A” serves as a reward for superior presentation of extremely diligent consideration given to conceptually complex work. Such quality of work is achievable, but it is not common.

## B: Very Good – Thorough, appropriate synthesis of course concepts

“B” work is marked by a timely completion of the assignment, demonstrating not only a grasp of the material under consideration, but the ability to synthesize and interact with that material, rather than simply repeat it. “B” work goes beyond minimum requirements outlined in the assignment, but not in a disorganized or rambling manner. Not every attempt to go beyond the minimum requirements will succeed. The grade of “B” represents work that is above average, having succeeded by surpassing the standard requirements in the quality of the finished product.

## C: Adequate – Solid comprehension of course concepts

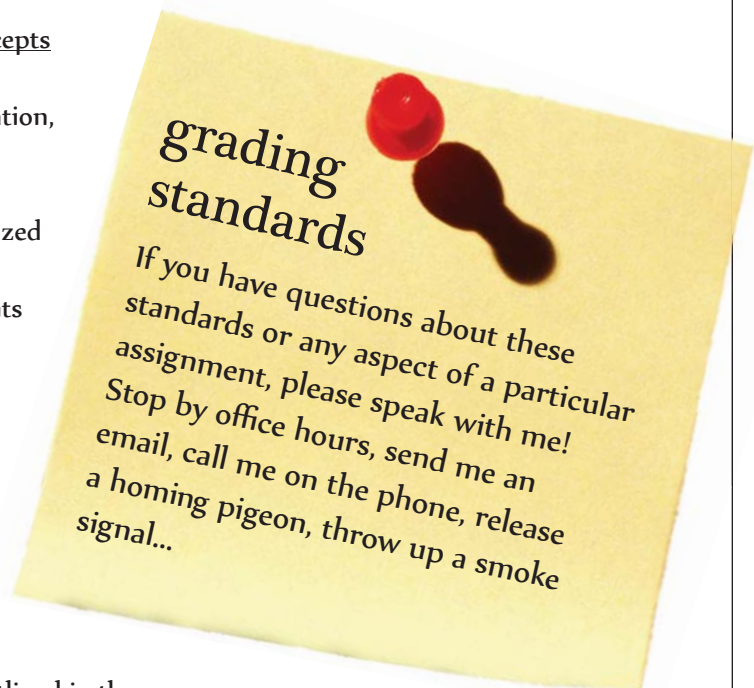
“C” work is marked by timely completion of the assignment, demonstrating a solid grasp of the material. “C” is the standard grade and all assignments are made with this in mind. Assume that fulfilling all aspects of the assignment well will result in a C. If you are looking for a grade higher than this, you will have to go beyond the minimum requirements outlined in the assignment. (Please note, that “going beyond” the minimum does NOT generally entail things like fancy cover sheets, colored fonts, or exceeding the assigned length of the assignment. “Going beyond” almost always applies to the conceptual concerns of the course, fine tuning clarity of expression, etc.)

## D: Poor – Lack of understanding/Assignment does not meet most requirements

“D” is given for work that meets the requirements established, but demonstrates serious flaws either in conceptual formation or mechanical limits. “D” work could be seen in, for example, a good idea expressed very poorly or, conversely, a well-written paper that actually says nothing. “D” work: requires major revision; strays from or confuses audience and purpose; lacks substantive development; is overly generalized or uses facts that have questionable credibility; is formatted or designed in a way that is confusing or misleading; demonstrates an inconsistent or sometimes muddled style; demonstrates unsatisfactory mastery of standard written English where required.

## F: Fails – Does Not Meet Assignment Requirements

“F” is given for an assignment that fails to meet the mechanical or conceptual requirements of university work. Mechanical requirements would be matters such as turn-in times, length of assignment, grammatical concerns, focus of assignment, etc. Conceptual matters would revolve around the comprehension of ideas and relationships between ideas. “F” work: fails to meet most of the stated assignment requirements; lacks focus on a subject or appropriate audience; includes unsatisfactory format; includes content that is weak, poorly developed, inadequate; lacks logical connections between ideas, sentences, paragraphs; lacks consistency in style and tone; demonstrates habitually poor writing skills where required.



# coms100b resources

## violence and sexual assault support services

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources via the Sac State Violence and Sexual Assault Services Program. More information: <https://shcssacstate.org/wellness-promotion/violence-sexual-assault-support-services>, Sac State Victim Advocate: 916-278-3799, Student Health and Counseling: 916-278-6461; Office of Student Conduct: 916-278-6060

## writing resources

If you need help with your writing, please visit the Writing Center in Room 128 of Calaveras Hall, just west of Mendocino Hall between Douglas and Alpine halls. Students may sign up for tutoring once per week and appointments must be scheduled in person. For more information, call 916-278-6356 or visit: <http://www.csus.edu/writingcenter/>

## unique academic needs/disabilities

If you have a disability or unique academic need and require assistance, please inform me as soon as possible so that I may accommodate you. You will need to provide disability documentation to the Office of Services to Students with Disabilities, Lassen Hall 1008. To learn about resources available, please visit their web site at: <http://www.csus.edu/sswd/> or call 916-278-7239.

## academic support services

Various services are available on campus to support to your academic career, including counseling, tutoring and career advisement. For more information, please visit the Academic Support Services web site at: <http://www.csus.edu/studentresources/>.

## library databases

A multitude of periodical databases are available via the library web site to help you with your academic career and writing every single paper in this course. You will find "Communication & Mass Media Complete" especially helpful for any Communication Studies courses you take (especially this one!). Visit: <http://library.csus.edu/> to learn more.

## incompletes

Incompletes will only be considered due to an extreme personal situation. In that case, you must provide a compelling reason and substantive documentation that justifies an incomplete grade. At that same time, you must also provide a concise plan and time-line for completing the course. I will then determine if your situation meets the requirements for an incomplete grade.

## SacCT/blackboard

Course announcements and assignments are distributed in large part via SacCT/Blackboard. You are required to check this site frequently for e-mails, assignments and updates. It is vital that you become familiar with this technology immediately not only for success in this course, but in your other courses as well.

## caveat

I reserve the right to update or change portions of this syllabus in order to make the class a better experience for everyone. You are invited to make suggestions at any time. Any changes will be posted to SacCT.

# coms100b tentative course calendar\*

wk	date	reading due/topic for class	assignment due at the START of class
1	T 1/27	Introductions/Welcome	
	TR 1/29	Ch 1: The nature of rhetorical criticism	Syllabus quiz
2	T 2/3	Ch 2: Doing rhetorical criticism	Academic Honesty Exercise
	TR 2/5	Critical Thinking Process	<b>Warm-up Paper</b>
3	T 2/10	Ch 3: Neo-Aristotelian criticism	Quiz 1 (Lecture, Ch 2)
	TR 2/12		Planning Form #1
4	T 2/17	<b>Writing Day</b>	No class, no office hours
	TR 2/19	Black & Bitzer: The Rhetorical Situation (Reading on SacCT)	Quiz 2 (Ch 2)
5	T 2/24	Ch 4: Cluster Criticism	Quiz 3 (Bitzer + Ch 4)
	TR 2/26		<b>Paper #1</b>
6	T 3/3	Ch 6: Generic criticism	Quiz 4 (Ch 6)
	TR 3/5		
7	T 3/10	Ch 8: Metaphor criticism	Quiz 5 (Ch 8) Planning Form #2
	TR 3/12		
8	T 3/17	Ch 9: Narrative criticism	Quiz 6 (Ch 9)
	TR 3/19		<b>Paper #2</b>
9	T 3/24	<b>Spring Break</b>	NO CLASS
	TR 3/26	<b>Spring Break</b>	NO CLASS
10	T 3/31	Cesar Chavez's Birthday	NO CLASS
	TR 4/2	Ch 10: Pentadic criticism	Quiz 7 (Ch 10), <b>Artifact &amp; Planning Form #3</b>
11	T 4/7		
	TR 4/9	Ch 7: Ideological Criticism	Quiz 8 (Ch 7) Paper 3 Description Practicum
12	T 4/14		
	TR 4/16	Gender Critique (See SacCT)	Paper 3 Analysis Practicum
13	T 4/21	Ch 11: Generative Criticism	Quiz 9 (Ch 11)
	TR 4/23		Paper 3 Interpretation Practicum
14	T 4/28	Visual Approaches (See SacCT)	
	TR 4/30		Paper 3 Evaluation Practicum Due
15	T 5/5	Critical Thinking/Writing Workshop 1	<b>ROUGH DRAFT DUE</b> , Bring 2 copies to class
	TR 5/7	Critical Thinking/Writing Workshop 2	
16	T 5/12	<b>Meetings with instructor</b>	
	TR 5/14	<b>Meetings with instructor</b>	
17	T 5/19	<b>FINAL EXAM PERIOD 10:15-12:15 p.m.</b>	<b>Paper 3 Due, Paper Presentations</b> <b>**Attendance is mandatory to pass the course**</b>