

# **RWS 200: The Rhetoric of Written Arguments in Context**

## *Subversive Social Arenas: Political Subtexts in Digital Space*

**Instructor:** Katlin Sweeney

**Class:** T/TH 9:30 a.m. - 10:45 a.m.

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**Class Location:** Hepner Hall 150

**Section #:** 61 **Schedule #:** 23067

**Office Location:** Arts & Letters 283

**Office Hours:** T/TH: 3:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. and by appointment.

**Course Website:** [www.subversivesocial200.wordpress.com](http://www.subversivesocial200.wordpress.com)

### **Course Description:**

RWS 200 is a course that builds on the analytical work you completed in RWS 100 by developing your critical thinking, reading, and writing skills. This semester, our tasks as a class collective will consist of analyzing a wide range of texts to consider their context, identify the rhetorical strategies utilized by the rhetor/creator, and evaluate the effectiveness of their argument. Additionally, we will consider how the aesthetics of a text informs the viewer's likelihood of accepting the argument or text as valid. The skills that you develop as a reader will prepare you for the tasks of crafting your own arguments in written and verbal forms, utilizing rhetorical strategies to persuade your audience, and juxtaposing the strategies enlisted by other creators to observe strengths and weaknesses. To accomplish these goals, our course collective will utilize a variety of genres, including (but not limited to) articles, interviews, films, vlogs, music videos, film trailers, comics, news segments, and speeches. Our collective's growth as readers and writers will prepare you for the lifelong task of critically engaging with media, the writing process, and politics; thus, our semester's overall goal is to understand and evaluate how everything is a text with an intention.

While you are learning the skills needed to succeed in RWS 200, on the WPA, and in future writing courses, the lens we will use to practice these skills is digital space. During three units of study -- Professional Gain, Political Gain, and Personal Gain -- we will analyze and discuss how social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter present opportunities for users to build careers, campaigns, and community. In particular, we will consider how digital space is warped, politicized, and personalized so that tech-savvy rhetors can generate content that suits their beliefs, audience, and goals.

**NOTE: This syllabus is a living document and is therefore subject to change. You will be notified if any changes are made.**

### **Required Texts to Rent/Purchase:**

- *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (2007)
- *The Hunger Games* (2012)

- *Divergent* (2014)
- *Black Mirror*, Season 3, Episode 1: “Nosedive” (2016)

### Writing Resources:

- **The Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL)** <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>
- **SDSU Writing Center**, located in LLA 1103 in the Love Library (Appointments available at the Writing Center Online). The Writing Center is a free resource where you can find support for the writing assigned for this course. Tutors can help you with your assignments at any stage of the writing process—from brainstorming topics to revision of in-process drafts. You can expect your session to be collaborative: consider your tutor a writing coach who can offer insight into the specific project you are working on, as well as strategies to help you develop your writing skills overall. <http://writingcenter.sdsu.edu/>

### RWS 200 Student Learning Outcomes:

By the end of RWS 200, students should be able to:

- **Analyze** a variety of print and digital texts to articulate relationships between an argument’s elements and the contexts within which the argument was created.
- **Evaluate** both print and digital arguments through a process of critical inquiry, examining the arguments in their original contexts and in the context of other arguments in order to discover relationships between texts.
- **Locate, evaluate, and synthesize** material from sources related to a public discussion in order to generate and support arguments.
- **Contribute** an informed argument to an ongoing public discussion by identifying and assessing the rhetorical context for an issue.
- **Compose** a variety of texts, including elements of digital and/or non-print text, through a multi-stage recursive process.
- **Employ** conventions of academic writing in rhetorically purposeful ways.

### Grade Breakdown:

ASSIGNMENT	POINTS POSSIBLE	GRADE PERCENTAGE
Essay #1	150	15%
Midterm Paper	200	20%
Final Paper	200	20%

Creative Project	100	10%
Portfolio	150	15%
Peer Workshops	150	15%
Participation	50	5%

## Grading Scale:

940-1,000: A	740-769: C
900-939: A-	700-739: C-
870-899: B+	670-669: D+
840-869: B	640-669: D
800-839: B-	600-639: D-
770-799: C+	Below 600: F

## Course Policies:

### Productive & Inclusive Dialogue

RWS 200 is a course that challenges you to think critically about the world around you, navigate complex discussions in a group setting, and question preconceived notions you may hold on a myriad of topics. Thus, you are expected to maintain a civil, open-minded attitude towards your classmates, your instructor, and yourself each time you enter the classroom. Developing rhetorical analysis and critical thinking skills takes time and practice. Be patient with yourself and others as you develop your skills in these areas. Please work towards building a patient, understanding attitude towards your learning process and the learning process of your classmates. We want our class meetings to involve productive and inclusive dialogue – that is, we want to generate class discussions that are safe and welcoming to all members of our collective and build towards our goal of understanding how an argument is made.

**Throughout the semester, we will be discussing and analyzing texts that may result in strong opinions and/or heated debate. Additionally, there will probably be at least one text that you find boring while another student may find it interesting. Rather than jumping to assumptions/conclusions or raising your voice during class discussions, participants must:**

- Avoid speaking over one another. One of our tasks is to listen to one another and build understanding of what constitutes persuasive/effective rhetoric, not to attack one another based on beliefs.

- Avoid dismissing contributions made by other classmates. We are challenging ourselves to be educated folks in the conventions of argument, but also in the conventions of productive, meaningful listening.
- Avoid making blanket generalizations. Although we may encounter generalized statements about a group of people, set of beliefs, etc. in a reading, we are working as critical readers to avoid making assumptions/generalities about a person/group. We are working to analyze how agendas and narratives are crafted in order to understand which people/groups they benefit.
- Practice compassionate listening – do not rush to criticize a classmate for making a statement that may offend you or presents an issue. Rather, work towards asking questions and using “I” statements to explain your response.
- Absolutely NO laughing at another student’s answers when they are asking serious questions or when they are vocalizing points of confusion – our classroom is a safe learning space and we will not joke about another student’s contributions to the discussion.

### **Attendance**

Your final grade is calculated by combining your scores in two large categories: essays and praxis. The essays category consists of the following: Essay #1, Midterm Paper, and Final Paper, which collectively count for 55% of your final grade. The praxis category consists of the following: Creative Project, Portfolio, Peer Workshops, and Participation, which collectively count for 45% of your final grade. While it may be tempting to direct the majority of your attention and care towards the essay category, your grade is well balanced between the two categories. Additionally, without attending peer workshops and completing portfolio assignments, your essays will not demonstrate a refined grasp on how to assess or craft an argument. In order to score well in the praxis category, it is necessary that you attend class regularly. Unless you attend class, your opportunities to complete portfolio assignments, participate in peer workshops, and take part in class conversations are limited.

However, as your instructor, I do not have an attendance policy that dictates how many absences you can have. You are welcome to miss as many class sessions as you see fit, but please note that the more classes you miss, the more you will be behind in class material. I acknowledge that life has many variables that cannot always be planned for. Please know that you are welcome to contact me in the event of any emergencies and/or problems so that I can assist you to the best of my abilities in succeeding in this course.

### **Extra Credit Opportunities**

You will be notified throughout the semester when there are opportunities to earn extra credit on assignments. Please do not inquire about extra credit in addition to what is already offered. Extra credit will always be due on the day that the essay for that unit is due.

### **Electronic Devices Policy**

Our section of RWS 200 meets for seventy-five minutes per session. I expect you to spend class time with respect for one another and your instructor by leaving all digital devices in your bag unless cleared by me. It is rude to be on your device during class instead of contributing to the

class discussion or listening to your peers. I am especially strict about laptops in RWS 200 -- they cannot be out unless they are related to class activities and cleared by me.

### **Course Website**

We will not make use of our BlackBoard site for any purposes other than grade postings. We will rely heavily on our course website to share the information, readings, and supplemental resources necessary to complete our goals for the semester. Our course website can be found at [www.subversivesocial200.wordpress.com](http://www.subversivesocial200.wordpress.com).

### **Plagiarism**

RWS 200 is a course that asks you to bring your original ideas and work to the classroom and your assignments. Please carefully review the university's policies on plagiarism at <http://studentaffairs.sdsu.edu/srr/cheating-plagiarism.html> as plagiarism will **NOT** be tolerated under any circumstances in our class this semester.

### **Late Work**

It is expected that all work is submitted by the deadline. While your final grade is heavily influenced by scores on essays and the final project, do not overlook the in-class participation and portfolio categories since strong scores in these areas could potentially push a borderline grade upwards (e.g. a B+ to an A-). Work that is not submitted by the deadline will be considered late and will only be accepted up until one week after the deadline. All work submitted late will receive a lower grade. If you encounter a circumstance that prevents you from attending class and/or submitting an assignment by the deadline, please contact me immediately. I am here to help you succeed; keep me updated if you are in need of an extension and we can discuss the possibilities of one.

### **Problems**

An effective instructor/student dynamic relies on honest communication. If you encounter problems or emergencies during the semester, please talk to me as soon as possible so that we can identify possible solutions/extensions.

### **Office Hours**

My office hours are Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. in Arts & Letters 283. Drop-in meetings are welcome, but it is preferred that you email me to schedule an appointment as drop-ins are not guaranteed meeting time and operate on a first come, first serve basis. I will notify you if office hours are cancelled for any reason.

### **Student-Athletes**

I understand that student-athletes have demanding, dynamic schedules. As your instructor, I am committed to helping you succeed in the course. To do so, regular and effective communication is needed. I am happy to work with all student-athletes in conjunction with Student-Athlete Support Services (SASS). For more information on SASS' academic advising and tutoring services, please call (619) 594-4743.

## **Students With Disabilities**

Every attempt will be made to offer reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities in this course. Students with disabilities who may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to notify me privately and to contact Student Disability Services (SDS) as soon as possible. SDS staff are available in the Capulli Center in Suite 3101 or by phone at (619) 594-6473 (voice) or (619) 594-2929 (TTD/TTY).

If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Student Disability Services. To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you should contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that accommodations based upon disability cannot be provided until you have presented your instructor with an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services.

## **Counseling**

There are many events and situations that put additional stress on being a student. SDSU has an excellent center for Counseling & Psychological Services that is open to students Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. To set up an initial consultation, call (619) 594-5220. For immediate or emergency help, you are welcome to use San Diego's free 24-hour counseling access line at (800) 479-3339. C&PS on campus also has a "Center for Well-Being" with multiple stations for relaxation if you are feeling stressed during the semester. C&PS is located in the Capulli Center, Room 4401.

## **Discrimination & Harassment**

SDSU complies with all federal and state laws regarding discrimination and harassment on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender and gender identity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, medical status, veteran status, and disability. Further, the expectation for our classroom is that it is a safe, collegial space where differences of background and perspective are treated with consideration and respect. Disagreement on some issues is expected as part of the learning process, but should always be expressed within a framework of collegiality.

## **Important SDSU Resources**

**Academic Advising Center:** (619) 594-6668

**Counseling and Psychological Services:** (619) 594-5220

**Student Disability Services:** (619) 594-6473

**Student Health Services:** (619) 594-5281

**Public Safety:** (619) 594-1991

**Public Safety Escorts:** (619) 594-6659

# Course Calendar

K-Swizzle | RWS 200 | Spring 2018

WEEK	DATE	WHAT'S DUE
1	Thursday, January 18	<b>Introduction to Course; Syllabus Discussion</b>  HW: None.
2	Tuesday, January 23	<b>UNIT 1: PROFESSIONAL GAIN</b>  <b>Rhetoric Crash Course, Part I: PACES &amp; Context</b>  HW: None.
2	Thursday, January 25	<b>Rhetoric Crash Course, Part II: Rhetorical Strategies &amp; Appeals</b>  HW: Watch Lucy Moon, “Best Coffee Shops in London” (2016), Zoella, “Autumn Lookbook 2016” (2016), and ToThe9s, “FILM LOOKBOOK” (2017).
3	Tuesday, January 30	<b>Using YouTube: DIY Marketing Arena</b>  HW: Read Maya Salam, “Why Radical Body Love is Thriving on Instagram” (2017).
3	Thursday, February 1	<b>Instagram as Personal and Professional Space</b>  HW: Craft a rough draft of thesis and introduction. Bring a copy to class to be signed off on for credit.
4	Tuesday, February 6	<b>Essay Drafting, Day 1: Thesis Statements, Introductions, Outlines</b>  HW: Craft a rough draft of body paragraph 1. Bring a copy to class to be signed off on for credit.
4	Thursday, February 8	<b>Essay Drafting, Day 2: Body Paragraphs, Quote Integration</b>

		<b>HW:</b> Begin drafting Essay #1.
5	Tuesday, February 13	<b>CLASS CANCELLED:</b> Mandatory conferences with instructor.  <b>HW:</b> Craft a rough draft of Essay #1.
5	Thursday, February 15	<b>Peer Workshop 1.0:</b> Bring two printed copies of your Essay #1 draft.  <b>HW:</b> Continue drafting Essay #1.
6	Tuesday, February 20	<b><u>ESSAY #1 DUE</u></b>  <b>UNIT 2: POLITICAL GAIN</b>  <b>Protest Rhetoric: Latinx Comics</b>  <b>HW:</b> Watch “Formation” by Beyoncé (2016).
6	Thursday, February 22	<b>Protest Rhetoric: The Super Bowl and Post-Performance Coverage</b>  <b>HW:</b> Watch N.W.A., “Express Yourself” (1988), Jay-Z, “The Story of O.J.” (2017), AND carefully read bell hooks, “Ice Cube Culture: A shared passion for speaking truth, bell hooks and Ice Cube in dialogue” (pages 145-168).
7	Tuesday, February 27	<b>The Political Power of Gangsta Rap and Music Videos</b>  <b>HW:</b> Read Patricia Roberts-Miller, “Characteristics of Demagoguery,” watch <i>Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix</i> , AND complete Portfolio 07: Magical Demagogues Worksheet BEFORE coming to class.
7	Thursday, March 1	<b>Who’s Ministering the Magic? Fudging Up Demagoguery</b>  <b>HW:</b> Watch <i>The Hunger Games</i> OR <i>Divergent</i> depending on your team’s assignment. Complete Portfolio 08: Dystopian Demagogues Worksheet BEFORE coming to class. Carefully prepare for

		the demagoguery game on Tuesday to try to win extra credit points towards your Midterm Paper!
8	Tuesday, March 6	<b>GAME DAY: Demagoguery Divas!</b>  <b>HW:</b> Read Richard Spencer, “Long Live the Emperor!” (2016).
8	Thursday, March 8	<b>Contextualizing the Alt-Right Brand</b>  <b>HW:</b> Craft a rough draft of thesis and introduction. Bring a copy to class to be signed off on for credit.
9	Tuesday, March 13	<b>Essay Drafting, Day 1: Thesis Statements, Introductions, Outlining</b>  <b>HW:</b> Craft a rough draft of body paragraphs 1 and 2. Bring a copy to class to be signed off on for credit.
9	Thursday, March 15	<b>Essay Drafting, Day 2: Body Paragraphs, Quote Integration</b>  <b>HW:</b> Craft a rough draft of Midterm Paper.
10	Tuesday, March 20	<b>Peer Workshop 2.0:</b> Bring two printed copies of your Midterm Paper draft.  <b>HW:</b> Continue drafting Midterm Paper.
10	Thursday, March 22	<b><u>EARLY MIDTERM PAPER SUBMISSIONS ACCEPTED DURING CLASS TODAY:</u></b> If you would like to receive your essay grade during spring break, submit your paper at the beginning of class.  <b>Open Coffee Hour: Optional class session.</b>  <b>HW:</b> Continue drafting Midterm Paper.
11	Tuesday, March 27	<b>SPRING BREAK -- No Class</b>
11	Thursday, March 29	<b>SPRING BREAK -- No Class</b>

12	Tuesday, April 3	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>MIDTERM PAPER DUE</u></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>UNIT 3: COMMUNITY GAIN</b></p> <p><b>Developing Digital Identity: The Politics of Commenting</b></p> <p><b>HW:</b> Watch Kat Blaque, “DON’T READ THE COMMENTS” (2016).</p>
12	Thursday, April 5	<p><b>Agency in Collective Digital Space</b></p> <p><b>HW:</b> Read Allum Bokhari and Milo Yiannopoulos, “An Establishment Conservative’s Guide to the Alt-Right” (2016). Begin drafting Creative Project.</p>
13	Tuesday, April 10	<p><b>Digital Citizenship: Trolls as Checks &amp; Balances?</b></p> <p><b>HW:</b> Read Marina Watanabe, “Why I Delete Comments (And Why It Isn’t ‘Censorship’)” (2016). Continue drafting Creative Project.</p>
13	Thursday, April 12	<p><b>Complexities of Commenting: Censorship versus Creator’s Choice</b></p> <p><b>HW:</b> Complete Creative Project.</p>
14	Tuesday, April 17	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>CREATIVE PROJECT DUE</u></b></p> <p><b>Screens as Mirror Surfaces</b></p> <p><b>HW:</b> Begin researching potential topics for Final Paper.</p>
14	Thursday, April 19	<p><b>Argumentative Rhetoric, Part I: Researching/Selecting a Topic</b></p> <p><b>HW:</b> Identify three potential topics and generate a brief description of the argument you may craft for each one.</p>
15	Tuesday, April 24	<p><b>Argumentative Rhetoric, Part II: Drafting a Paper</b></p>

		<b>HW:</b> Begin drafting Final Paper. Bring a copy to class to be signed off on for credit.
15	Thursday, April 26	<b>Open Coffee Hour:</b> Optional class session. <b>HW:</b> Continue drafting Final Paper.
16	Tuesday, May 1	<b>Argumentative Rhetoric, Part III: Refining the Claim</b> <b>HW:</b> Craft a rough draft of the Final Paper.
16	Thursday, May 3	<b>LAST DAY OF CLASS</b> <b>PORTFOLIO DUE</b> <b>Peer Workshop 3.0:</b> Bring two printed copies of your Essay #2 draft. <b>HW:</b> Continue drafting Midterm Paper.
16	Friday, May 4	<b>FINAL PAPER SUBMISSION OPTION #1:</b> <u>Physical versions</u> of Final Papers may be submitted to my mailbox by 3:00 p.m. @ Storm Hall West 141.
17	Tuesday, May 8	<b>FINAL PAPER SUBMISSION OPTION #2:</b> <u>Digital versions</u> of Final Papers may be submitted to my email by 10:00 a.m. @ <a href="mailto:ksweeney@sdsu.edu">ksweeney@sdsu.edu</a> .