

COMM 3001: RHETORIC & CIVIC CONTROVERSY

ONLINE | Spring 2026

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Samantha "Sam" Guajardo

Email: smgjardo@memphis.edu

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1 PM - 3 PM

Location: Art and Communication Building, Room 113

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Rhetoric shapes how people argue, how communities make decisions, and how public controversies take form. This course introduces students to rhetorical concepts through the study of civic controversy. Across the semester, we will examine how public arguments are constructed, circulated, and contested in contemporary public life.

Each module focuses on rhetorical concepts and applies them to real-world controversies, helping students understand how rhetors frame problems, mobilize audiences, and exercise power in public discourse. Through readings, discussions, quizzes, and projects, students will develop analytical tools for ethical civic judgment.

ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR

Welcome, everyone! My name is Samantha Guajardo, a Ph.D. candidate in Communication, specializing in rhetoric and media studies. My research examines how contemporary Latina leaders use rhetoric to organize communities and imagine social change.

My teaching philosophy centers on inclusion and community. I believe that every student brings valuable lived experience to the classroom, and this course encourages you to draw on your own perspective when analyzing rhetorical life. I respond to emails within 24 hours, and I'm available on Tuesdays and Thursdays between 1 - 3 PM in my office (ACB 113).

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Explain and apply key rhetorical concepts to civic controversies
- Analyze how rhetors respond to audiences, constraints, and public problems
- Identify framing and narrative strategies in public discourse
- Evaluate arguments, evidence, and persuasive reasoning
- Examine how power shapes visibility and voice in civic debate
- Produce ethical, well-supported rhetorical analyses
- Communicate clearly and respectfully in online public settings

COURSE MATERIALS

All readings, media, weekly modules, and assignment instructions are available in Canvas. No textbook purchase is required. Students must have reliable internet access and the ability to submit written work online.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

DISCUSSION POSTS (100 POINTS)

Ten discussion posts worth 10 points each. Posts must be between 500-1000 words and should assess the assigned readings while connecting them to a current civic controversy. In addition to the original post, students must respond thoughtfully to at least one classmate.

Due: Sundays at 11:59 PM

QUIZZES (100 POINTS)

Ten quizzes worth 10 points each assess understanding of weekly readings and lecture material.

Due: Sundays at 11:59 PM

MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS (300 POINTS)

Rhetorical Ethnography (100 points)

Analysis of an online community as a rhetorical environment. Length: 8-10 pages.

Comparative Rhetorical Analysis (100 points)

A comparative essay analyzing two rhetors responding to the same civic issue. Length: 8-10 pages.

Rhetorical Analysis Final Paper (100 points)

A comprehensive rhetorical analysis of a single public artifact. Length: 10-15 pages.

Total Course Points: 500

GRADING SCALE

- **A:** 450–500
- **B:** 400–449
- **C:** 350–399
- **D:** 300–349
- **F:** 0–299

LATE WORK POLICY

Discussion posts and quizzes close one week after the due date and receive a 10 percent per-day penalty during that window. Major assignments may be submitted up to one week late with a 10 percent per-day penalty. After one week, late work is not accepted unless arrangements are made through the Dean of Students.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

Participation in this online course includes completing weekly modules, contributing thoughtful discussion posts, submitting assignments on time, and engaging respectfully with classmates. Academic integrity, accessibility, religious accommodations, and student support services follow university policies outlined in the standard syllabus.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

WEEK 1 (01/20–01/25)

Module: What is Rhetoric? / The Rhetorical Situation

Readings: McNally (1970), Bitzer (1968), PowerPoint (Defining Rhetoric & The Rhetorical Situation)

Due Sunday: Discussion Post 1, Quiz 1

WEEK 2 (01/26–02/01)

Module: Models & Canons of Rhetoric

Readings: Purdue Owl Handout (Toulmin Model), Walton College Handout (Five Canons), PowerPoint (Rhetorical Appeals)

Due Sunday: Discussion Post 2, Quiz 2

WEEK 3 (02/02–02/08)

Module: Defining Civic Controversy / Civic Problems as Rhetorical Problems

Readings: McMurray (2007), Crittenden & Levine (2007), PowerPoint (Defining Civic Controversy)

Due Sunday: Discussion Post 3, Quiz 3

WEEK 4 (02/09–02/15)

Module: What is Rhetorical Ethnography?

Readings: Chevrette et al. (2023), Calafell (2010), PowerPoint (Defining Rhetorical Ethnography)

Due Sunday: Discussion Post 4, Quiz 4

WEEK 5 (02/16–02/22)

Module: Writing a Rhetorical Ethnography

Readings: Villenas & Foley (2011), Isoke (2018), PowerPoint (Argument Strategies and Evidence)

Due Sunday: Discussion Post 5, Quiz 5

WEEK 6 (02/23–03/01)

Module: Work on Rhetorical Ethnography

Readings: N/A

Due Sunday: Rhetorical Ethnography

WEEK 7 (03/02–03/08)

Module: Rhetorical Devices

Readings: Fengjie et al. (2016), David (2014), PowerPoint (Rhetorical Devices)

Due Sunday: Discussion Post 6, Quiz 6

WEEK 8 (03/09–03/15)

Spring Break

WEEK 9 (03/16–03/22)

Module: Dramatistic Pentad / Introduce Comparative Rhetorical Analysis

Readings: Pandey (2025), Mavrodieva (2020), PowerPoint (Dramatistic Pentad and Comparative Analyses)

Due Sunday: Discussion Post 7, Quiz 7

WEEK 10 (03/23–03/29)

Module: Identification & Consubstantiality

Readings: Day (1960), Burke (1945 & 1950), PowerPoint (Identification & Consubstantiality)

Due Sunday: Discussion Post 8, Quiz 8

WEEK 11 (03/30–04/05)

Module: Work on Comparative Rhetorical Analysis

Readings: N/A

Due Sunday: Comparative Rhetorical Analysis

WEEK 12 (04/06–04/12)

Module: Terministic Screens / Introduce Rhetorical Analysis Final Paper

Readings: Comprone (1978), King (2021), PowerPoint (Terministic Screens & Final)

Due Sunday: Discussion Post 9, Quiz 9

WEEKS 13–14 (04/13–04/26)

Student-instructor online meetings

Readings: N/A

Due Sunday: Reflection Discussion Post 10, Reflection Quiz 10 (open-ended)

WEEK 15 & FINALS (04/27–05/03)

Due during Finals Week: Rhetorical Analysis Final Paper