Welcome!
In this independent study, we will explore, investigate, interrogate, and survey foundational and emergent theoretical concepts relevant to the discipline of Rhetoric & Composition and to the adjacent field of Critical Discourse Studies. Our primary reason for this approach will be to guide the develop of students’ own — independent — research and writing projects, which will be designed for public audiences and relevant to student-selected political issues.

The course is scheduled to meet once a week during the semester, although those meetings will vary between whole group and individual meetings. This detailed syllabus provides a comprehensive overview of the course, its assignments, and expectations.

Overview & Expectations
Writing, Response, Revision
Independent study requires engagement with writing, reading, and discussion, each of which require significant time and effort. You likely expect as much.

While all of these skills are necessary for conveying your thoughts, ideas, and questions with intention and meaning, for this course, we’re mostly concerned with further cultivating your effective and transferable writing process. This extends beyond disciplinary ethos, as it is through writing, through composing in a variety of modes, that you will be able to learn articulate your ideas with thoughtfulness and to the widest range of audiences. Writing, too, serves an epistemological function. In other words, writing is just how to show what you’ve learned, but it is the exacting process through which you create meaning. You learn by writing.

With that in mind, one of my main goals when I teach is to help students develop a sense that writing is a work of process. That is, impactful writing begins well before you type your first word of a given project, and it continues until well after you’ve typed your last. To help make your writing the best that it can be,
you should expect to meet with me and your peers, individually and in small group, at various points during the semester. While I will not assign grades to each stage of the writing process, you will be required to rethink and revise parts or all of every piece of writing based on the feedback you get. As you work on your drafts, you will need to keep track of the feedback you receive, as well as the revision and editing changes you make with each successive draft. In doing so, you will create a track record of your work that spans the entire course and semester.

In spite of our better efforts, however, it can be difficult to estimate your course grade throughout the semester. If you’d like to have an idea of where you stand after you’ve completed a substantial amount of writing and revision, please make an appointment to meet me outside of class, and I will review your work with you and give you a better sense of where you are, grade-wise. It will be entirely your responsibility to set up a meeting if you’re curious or concerned, and it’s important that you not wait until the last week or so to start asking about grades. At that point, it will likely be too late for you to do what needs to be done to significantly raise your overall course grade.

**Course Readings & Discussions**
The course sequence will be divided according to a series of objective-based units: Overview, Theoretical Foundation, Invention & Research, Composition (including writing, feedback, revision, and editing), and Presentation. The bulk of assigned readings for this course will take place during the first two units. Those readings will be culled from academic journal articles, book chapters, and other scholarly discourses. Occasionally, we will venture outside of the academy to read particularly insightful content that may be culled from popular, political, and academic culture. The readings are meant to be intensive, and at times, difficult. Note that readings will not be limited to traditional text-based sources, and may occasionally involve watching videos, listening to podcasts, viewing images, and making sense of other multimodal discourse.

All course readings will be freely available via the course wiki. Please contact your instructor if you have any issues accessing any of the assigned readings. Likewise, if at some point you are asked to assign a supplemental reading to the class, you should be sure to prioritize accessibility and disciplinary relevance.

The expectation for this course is that students will complete each assigned reading (read, annotated, and prepared for discussion) by the dates specified in the course calendar. In other words, readings listed on a particular date are due on that date. This goes for whole group and hybrid course meetings, whether synchronous or asynchronous. Mostly, we will meet and discuss the course readings during the regularly scheduled class time. Often, we will meet online (via the course wiki). At times, we will meet in some other space entirely, including office space for small group and individual consultations, and off campus for some of our assignments. If you’ve made it this far into the syllabus, please pause to email me a picture of a dinosaur.

**Accessibility**
This class is designed with the goal of being accessible for all students. If you have a documented disability (physical, psychological, learning, or other disability which affects your academic performance) and would like to receive academic accommodations, please inform your instructor and contact **Student Accessibility Services** to schedule an appointment to initiate services. Students with a documented disability (physical, psychological, learning, or other disability which affects academic performance) who would like to receive academic accommodations should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) as soon as possible to schedule an appointment to initiate services. Accommodations can be arranged through SAS at any time, but are not retroactive. Students who suffer a broken bone, severe injury or undergo surgery during the semester are eligible for temporary services. Brownsville Campus: Student Accessibility Services is located in Cortez Hall Room 129 and can be contacted at (956) 882-7374. Edinburg Campus: Student Accessibility Services is located in 108 University Center and can be contacted at (956) 665-7005 or via fax at (956) 665-3840. You can contact the SAS office via email at accessibility@utrgv.edu.
Similarly, I’m happy to work with you to provide any pregnancy, pregnancy-related, and parenting accommodations. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination, which includes discrimination based on pregnancy, marital status, or parental status. Students seeking accommodations related to pregnancy, pregnancy-related condition, or parenting (reasonably immediate postpartum period) are encouraged to contact Student Accessibility Services for additional information and to request accommodations. If you have an issue or concern that falls outside the purview of SAS, please contact your instructor.

Support Services
This is a writing intensive course, and writing, of course, is a collaborative process - even if you’ll be individually assessed on your writing. Fortunately, the UTRGV Writing Center offers tutoring, instruction, and support for all things writing based. Best off, it’s free (or, more accurately, you’ve already paid for it). The WC can be found in STAC 3.119 (Edinburg) and UBLB 3.206 (Brownsville). In addition to face-to-face consultations, the Writing Center offers feedback through Skype meetings and asynchronous consultations. Contact the Writing Center at wc@utrgv.edu for more info.

For those aspects of your life that cause your difficulty or pause, UTRGV offers counseling services for all of its students. Balancing work, personal life, and school can be stressful, so seek support as it’s needed. You can reach the UTRGV Counseling service at counseling@utrgv.edu.

Students who demonstrate financial need have a variety of options when it comes to paying for college costs, such as scholarships, grants, loans and work-study. Students should visit the Students Services Center (U Central) for additional information. U Central is located in BMAIN 1.100 (Brownsville) or ESSBL 1.145 (Edinburg) or can be reached by email (ucentral@utrgv.edu) or telephone: (888) 882-4026. In addition to financial aid, U Central can assist students with registration and admissions.

Other UTRGV student support services include:
- Learning center: BSTUN 2.10 (Brownsville) or ELCTR 100 (Edinburg)
- Advising center: BMAIN 1.400 (Brownsville) or ESWKH 101 (Edinburg)
- Career center: BCRTZ 129 (Brownsville) or ESSBL 2.101 (Edinburg)

Sequence
Readings
The assigned readings for this course can be found on the “Readings - Discourse Analysis - Spring 2019” and “Calendar S19 Discourse Analysis” pages on the course wiki (http://rclrgv.pbworks.com)

Assignments
Participation & Discussion
150 points - 15% of final grade
Objective: Students are expected to attend all class meetings and to participate in all discussions and workshops. The class discussions will help you understand the course content and improve your writing. Class workshop days will incorporate guided discussions of a sample student project (sometimes yours, sometimes one written by a classmate). As you should expect of an independent study course, you need to be in class and at meetings on time, with the readings prepared and your work completed.

This class is scheduled to meet as a whole group on Wednesday afternoons throughout the semester, but a more accurate way of understanding the class would be think of it as a continuous hybrid course. In other words, students will be expected to participate in the class throughout the week, through a variety of spaces. If you cannot attend the whole group meeting in person, it is your responsibility to join the rest of the class to Skype or Google Hangout into the class meeting. In addition, this It is vital that students consistently check in and participate via the course wiki. In addition, students will occasionally be required
to meet on hybrid days to participate in library research, technology workshops, presentations, individual and small group consultations, or other activities.
Form: Varies.

**Issue Analysis**
50 - 5%
Objective: Through contextually-appropriate secondary research, the learner will develop an understanding of the confluence of factors contributing to a self-selected, contemporary political issue.
Form: Annotated bibliography, <500 words.

**Discourse Analysis**
50 - 5%
Objective: Students will apply an approach to critical discourse analysis in order to better understand how discourse functions within a context relevant to their selected issue.
Form: Scholarly essay, <500 words.

**Rhetorical Analysis**
50 - 5%
Objective: Students will analyze their selected issue for its rhetorical situations (audience, constraints, context, exigency, forms, resources; ethos, pathos, logos, kairos, telos, techne).
Form: Scholarly essay, <500 words.

**Public Discourse Analysis Framework**
300 - 20%
Objective: Students will collaborate on the design of a theoretical framework that is applicable for public use and transfer across public contexts.
Form: Infograph.

**Contextual Project**
300 - 20%
Objective: In order to demonstrate an understanding of course concepts as well as the applicability of said concepts in a broader, public context, students will create a multimodal project that allows public users to assess and analyze the reliability, truthfulness, and usefulness of political discourse.
Form: Varies according to audience and context.

**Contextual Project Presentation**
50 - 5%
Objective: Students will share the results of the contextual project with two audiences: their intended publics and a committee of peers and disciplinary faculty.
Form: Whole group presentation.

**Assessment**

*Rubrics*
Assignments in this course will be assessed using a combination of holistic, analytic, and single-point rubrics. In doing so, we will discuss the contextual applications, rationales, and dis/advantages of each of these approaches. Participation & Discussion assignments will be assessed on a largely quantitative basis. (That is, if you’re present and participating, you’ll receive credit.)

*Scoring*
There are a total of 1000 possible points available to students to earn in this course. This shift from the traditional 100-point scale provides the instructor with a more efficient way to organize and track student
data, while providing students with a greater assurance that you are being assessed and credited for each task they complete. It also makes relative weights of the assignments clearer.

For example: Let’s say a class meeting that is 60 minutes long has 12 points available, and during that class meeting, there are three different activities taking 15, 30, and 15 minutes each. The available points for each activity will be 3, 6, and 3, respectively.

This will allow me a chance to let you know how you’re doing in different areas and how you can improve throughout the semester. At the end the semester, there will be a total number of possible points. Your specific grade will be determined by what percentage of the total points you have accumulated. For example:

- 1000-900 total points; 90-100% of total possible points = A
- 899-800 total points; 80-89% of total possible points = B
- 799-700 total points; 70-79% of total possible points = C
- 699-0 total points; 60-69% of total possible points = F

**Formatting**

In order to ease the peer review and submission processes, please use a font and text size that will make it easy and efficient for your readers to print and respond to your work. Rough drafts should be submitted in whatever format it appropriate (for examples, a storyboard for a video, a sketch for a flier, or an early draft for a written composition). Final drafts must be submitted in PDF format or as a link to web hosted content. For security and software limitation concerns, I will not respond to or assess work that is not submitted in another format, unless specifically noted. When you save your drafts, use the following naming convention: first initial last name, assignment initialism, draft, submission date. For example: RWMonty DA revised draft 03.17.19

*A note on grades…*

You will earn individual scores and a cumulative grade based on your work. Quantity, while important, is no substitute for quality. In other words, simply completing an assignment will not guarantee a certain result – you must produce work befitting a graduate student.

Meeting course and assignment requirements will result in the student earning an average grade for this course, as in “C,” not “A.” Likewise, coming to and participating in every class meeting, and submitting every assignment on time, are not acts that earn extra credit; those are expected by you enrolling in this course. A higher grade of “B” will be based on the distinctive quality, development, and reflective nature of your work, as well as your ability to guide a piece of writing through the various stages of a writing process and your willingness to peer review and explore new readings, genres, and techniques. Work that earns an “A” grade for each assignment will demonstrate exceptional quality, advanced thought, and near-expert production.

**Goals & Outcomes**

**Course Goals**

- Investigate potential career opportunities for English majors
- Apply rhetorical research and writing skills in the composition of public discourse

**Graduate Student Learning Outcomes**

- SLO 1: Students will demonstrate a graduate-level understanding of rhetorical theories, including the history of rhetoric, as these relate to the field of rhetoric and composition.
- SLO 2: Students will demonstrate a graduate-level understanding of contemporary composition theory, such as core issues, debates, research, history, ethics and technology.
SLO 3: Students will demonstrate graduate-level understanding of contemporary composition pedagogy, such as core issues, debates, research, history, ethics, and/or technology.

SLO 4: Students will demonstrate a graduate-level understanding of larger disciplinary issues surrounding writing (for example, the myriad theoretical, pedagogical, and research implications of the “social turn” in writing, and the role of theory or theorizing in the field), not just about the teaching of writing.

Course & Institution Policies

Attendance
Bring your course readings and anything you need to do your writing work to class every day, and be on time for the start of each class. If we start an activity and you don’t have the necessary materials or walk in late, you won’t be able to constructively contribute to the work, and you may not receive credit for that portion of that assignment.

“The student is expected to attend all classes and laboratory sessions. It is the responsibility of the student to inform each instructor of absences. When, however, in the judgment of the instructor, a student has been absent to such a degree as to impair his or her status relative to credit for the course, the instructor may drop the student from the class with a grade of ‘DP’ or ‘DF’” (HOP 5.2.4).

If a student is absent for any combination of more than three (3) whole group class days, hybrid assignments, or group or individual meetings, they will have difficulty passing the course or earning a high final grade. If these cumulative absences occur prior to the university’s stated drop date, the student may be dropped from the class.

Late Work
Late work makes life hard for all of us (you, me, your peers, the program, the department, the institution, the local flora and fauna, etc.), so you should expect and prepare to turn in all assignments by their due dates. Assignments submitted after their due dates may not be accepted. If you know of an upcoming absence, make arrangements to complete and turn in your work early. The hybrid nature of this course allows for some flexibility with regards to completing work and participating in class, even when a student is not physically present. That said, unexpected delays will happen. In any case, a proactive approach will be the most effective.

Course Drops
According to UTRGV policy, students may drop any class without penalty earning a grade of DR until the official drop date. Following that date, students must be assigned a letter grade and can no longer drop the class. Students considering dropping the class should be aware of the “3-peat rule” and the “6-drop” rule so they can recognize how dropped classes may affect their academic success. The 6-drop rule refers to Texas law that dictates that undergraduate students may not drop more than six courses during their undergraduate career. Courses dropped at other Texas public higher education institutions will count toward the six-course drop limit. The 3-peat rule refers to additional fees charged to students who take the same class for the third time.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity Statement (department approved)
Dishonest acts, such as plagiarism (using words or a specific author’s ideas from another source without acknowledging the source) or collusion (having other people write parts of your paper for you), may result in an “F” on the assignment and may lead to a disciplinary hearing conducted through the office of the Dean of Students, which could result in suspension or expulsion from UTPA (this policy is consistent with the Student Conduct Code printed in the UTPA Student Guide). If you have questions about whether your use of other sources (such as books, websites, friends, writing center tutors) is fair or not, please ask before turning in the work that you have a question about.
Sexual Harassment, Discrimination, and Violence
In accordance with UT System regulations, your instructor is a “Responsible Employee” for reporting purposes under Title IX regulations and so must report any instance, occurring during a student’s time in college, of sexual assault, stalking, dating violence, domestic violence, or sexual harassment about which she/he becomes aware during this course through writing, discussion, or personal disclosure. More information can be found at www.utrgv.edu/equity, including confidential resources available on campus. The faculty and staff of UTRGV actively strive to provide a learning, working, and living environment that promotes personal integrity, civility, and mutual respect that is free from sexual misconduct and discrimination.

Course Evaluations
Students are required to complete an ONLINE evaluation of this course, accessed through your UTRGV account (http://my.utrgv.edu); you will be contacted through email with further instructions. Students who complete their evaluations will have priority access to their grades. Online evaluations will be available on or about:

- Module 1         February 13 – 19
- Module 2         April 10 – 16
- Full Fall Semester  April 10 – May 1

Changes to the Syllabus
This syllabus represents a plan for this semester. While the rules and regulations will remain consistent, individual assignments and dates may be modified depending upon the individualized nature and progression of this course section.