

Instructor: Ms. Kassia Waggoner

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 9:30-11:00 (or by apt.) in Reed 402

[Kassia.d.jackson@tcu.edu](mailto:Kassia.d.jackson@tcu.edu)

(email is the best way to reach me outside of class)

20803: Rhetoric and the Cinema

**Materials:**

Lunsford, Andrea A., and John J. Ruszkiewicz. *Everything's an Argument,* 5th. ed. Boston: Bedford, 2004. (abbreviated EA)

Access to Pearson Learning Studio

$$$ for copies and work shopping

$$$ for one movie ticket

Overview:

Welcome to 20803! This class is in many ways an extension of your knowledge from 10803. You will be writing, reading, and learning how to compose an argument. Our focus will be to take a special look at how the media, especially the movie industry, creates and bombards us with these arguments every day. Your task is to understand how they are using rhetorical choices and then to master them, incorporating these arguments into your own work.

Goals and Outcomes:

★Students will be able analyze rhetorical situations

★ Students will demonstrate facility with the language and analysis of argument.

★Students will reflect upon the media’s use of argument in everyday life.

★ Students will demonstrate competency in using sources (primary, secondary, and electronic) in argument construction.

★ Students will demonstrate the ability to work collaboratively on written arguments and oral/visual presentation.

Course Policies:

Attendance: Our class is like a movie in that if you miss sections of it, you will have missed plot lines or character development. In other words, the movie might not make much sense. Our class is a mixture of discussion and work-shopping experiences. Because of the collaborative nature of the course, it is vital that you attend. If you miss more than two class periods, your grade will begin to drop a half letter grade. At six absences or more, I reserve the right to fail you in the course. \*University-related absences are an exception to this rule.

Grades:

We will have a total of four units in this class, and your grade will based on your efforts in all four. The grade breakdown is as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Blogs | 20% 5 blogs at 4% each |
| Visual Argument (movie poster) | 15% |
| Critical Reflection | 20% |
| Implied Thesis | 20% |
| Rep Test | 5% |
| Memes | 5% |
| Trailer, Pitch, and Marketing items | 15% |



Grading Chart

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| A | 4.00 |  |
| A- | 3.67 |  |
| B+ | 3.33 |  |
| B | 3.00 |  |
| B- | 2.67 |  |
| C+ | 2.33 |  |
| C | 2.00 |  |
| C- | 1.67 |  |
| D+ | 1.33 |  |
| D | 1.00 |  |
| D- | 0.67 |  |
| F | 0.00 |  |

You will receive a letter grade score on your papers and projects, which is converted to the 4.0 scale as shown in the above chart. Because I grade on 4.0 scale, I do not use gradebook. So, I have included the 4.0 scale above, as well as the weights so that you can calculate your own grade as we go. If you ever have questions about a grade, please come and meet with me after class or in my office.

Assignments:

Blogs (20%):

We will be creating our own website, similar to rotten tomatoes, where we can critique certain aspects of the films we are examining. I will ask you to post blogs a total of six times to this site as a part of your daily grades. Remember this blog is a public space; keep it PC. Blogs will be roughly 500-700 words with the exception of blog 6 which should be 800-1000 words. Further instructions about posting can be found on ecollege under the unit tabs.

Website: <studentskeepitreel.blogspot.com>

Blog topics:

#1 Movie trailers:

You will choose a movie trailer to examine. You will look for rhetorical devices found in the trailer (ethos, pathos, logos) and try to determine how the trailer attempts to convince people to attend the movie. Can you determine what the genre is? Are the actors recognizable? Are there a lot of action scenes? Etc. Please refrain from using the examples discussed in class.

#2 Movie Soundtracks:

You will choose a soundtrack from a movie of your choice (excluding Disney films and musicals) and analyze how these songs are adding to the scene. How do they help shape the mood or the tone of the movie? Do they emit a certain emotion? What arguments are they making and how? Are these arguments convincing? Why or why not? Please refrain from using the examples discussed in class.

#3 Lights, camera, action: A technical look at movies:

You will choose a film and examine a specific aspect of the movie (the special effects, the camera angles, 3D, etc.) For example, Paranormal Activity was shot from the perspective of a camcorder to make it seem like a home-made video. Decide if the feature you are looking at had a purpose and discuss how it affected your viewership. Based on your observations, you will argue whether or not the movie was enhanced or hindered by this feature. Please refrain from using the examples discussed in class.

#4 Sponsorship in the movies: You will choose a movie and try to find scenes in which clear sponsorship is taking place. For example, In *Eagle Eye*, the main characters walk into a Circuit City. Find a product or store that is clearly advertised in your movie and explain how the movie shapes an argument for the use of this product. Please refrain from using the examples discussed in class.

#5 Hidden Agendas/ Children’s Unit:

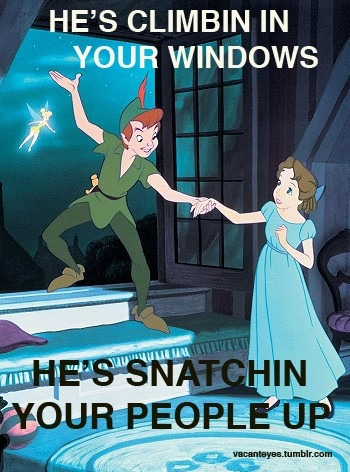
We will be taking a closer look at children’s movies and their messages. While these messages may seem obvious to us, they are not always obvious to the children they target. Most messages in children’s movies tend to be cliché, so we will problematize these. We will watch several clips and discuss the overt and implied messages, and then you will locate a children’s movie you believe to have an implied thesis. You will identify the message and discuss how the movie argues/presents the message to the public. Who was the intended audience? Was the argument effective? Please refrain from using the examples discussed in class.

#6 Representation Test (5%):

You will analyze a movie according to the Rep test found on doc sharing. Score it accordingly and then write about your findings. Were you surprised by the results; why or why not? Explain why the movie received the score it did by pointing us to specific scenes in the film. Overall, is this rating system fair? What do you think it reveals about the movie you watched? The characters? The director? The production company? Because this blog is worth more than the others the word count is higher (800-1000 words).

Memes: Arguments of Ethos (5%)

Memes are visual arguments that normally satirize behavior or in some cases point out implied theses in films. For example, the Peter Pan meme below points out that Peter Pan could be viewed as a kidnapper despite the fact that he is not portrayed in this manner in the film. You will choose a character from a movie and create memes that are based on arguments or actions of that character. You will create a meme mini series of five. Memes will be graded based on the common element, connection to the movie, and evidence of argument (ethos, pathos, and logos). Examples will be shown in class. Memes can be easily made at sites like memegenerator.com. You can choose to create memes for either paper 3 or blog 5 since both writing assignments are geared toward the thesis, but all memes must be turned in by the deadline for paper 3 no matter which option you selected. Memes are graded separately from the writing assignment.



Papers:

You will be asked to analyze different types of media (posters, commercials, music, and movies) in search of an argument. You will write three papers demonstrating your prowess at identifying the argument and constructing your own, arguing whether or not the said argument is effective. Assignment sheets will accompany individual papers.

**Visual Argument (15%):**

You will write a 3-5 page rhetorical analysis of a movie poster, looking for how the poster uses ethos, pathos, and logos effectively. You will want to analyze how the poster uses visual elements, such as color, pictures, and words to convey what the movie is about to an audience. (See more sample questions in Ch. 14.) Can you identify the genre of the movie by merely looking at the poster? You will watch the movie accompanying the poster to determine if the poster adequately represented the movie.

**Critical Reflection (20%):**

You will select a movie from the best motion picture list, (I will provide the list in class), and you will write a 5-7 page (1600 words minimum) paper arguing for against the award. You will examine a range of aspects about the movie including plot, acting, special effects, etc. Identify why you think this movie was selected by the academy. What are its commendable features? Was it entertaining? Was it comedic, dramatic, etc? Is there a certain type of movie that always wins? Does this movie fit the stereotype? I will provide more information about this paper in class. Check ecollege for additional materials. This paper is meant to combine several of the topics we discussed on the blog.

**Implied Thesis (20%):**

You will watch a movie and argue for or against an issue presented in this movie. In a 5-7 page (1600 words minimum) paper, you will explain how this issue emerged in the movie, and examine how the movie makes the argument for or against the issue. Does it do so effectively? Do you see any fallacies in the argument? Explain. You will also do your own research to determine your position on the topic. We will discuss several options in class. These issues could be wide ranging, and the topic is your choice as long as you can associate the issue with a movie and explain how the issue is relevant to a particular audience or time period.

Reading Table:

We will be workshopping our papers together in groups on the days marked “reading table.” On these occasions you should bring a rough draft of your work into class for peer review. (We may be using e-copies on some of these days. I will notify you in advance if this occurs.) This exercise is designed to help you twofold: 1.) It gives you feedback on your work. 2.) It gives you valuable editing skills for your future work. Failing to participate in reading table or make productive comments on your peers’ papers, could result in a lower grade on your final paper.

Revision:

You will be allowed to revise ONE of your three papers for a higher grade. Choose wisely.

Project (15%):

You will work in design teams to develop your own movie pitch. I will assign your team a movie genre. You will create a poster for the film, come up with an accompanying soundtrack, and develop an agenda for getting a message to your target audience or company (Warner Brothers, Disney, etc.). You will make creative decisions about who to cast, what image you want to portray, and how to generate money through sponsorship, which will incorporate all the papers we have worked on prior to the project. This project is designed to meet course outcomes one and five. (\*\*\*Note: This is a hypothetical movie, and you will not be asked to actually film it or to script it out in its entirety.) You will, however, create a trailer for your movie using images and sound effects, and you will present your materials to the class on the week of the final. The pitch will be accompanied by a reflection of your rhetorical strategies. The reflection should be 700-1000 words. Students will be asked to be movie critics of your film pitch. The group will receive a grade according to the criteria on the rubric.



**Tardies**

Please be on time for class. Students who are tardy (five minutes late or more) are a distraction to the whole class. You don’t like it when someone walks directly in front of the movie screen during the show! Keep in mind that in-class work cannot be made up.

**Late Work**

Work will be due at the beginning of class and will be considered late thereafter. If you know you will be missing a class, you need to submit the assignment ahead of time. Please be responsible and keep up with the due dates *Note:* This course relies heavily on technology, so you will need to have reliable access to the internet, which is always available in several places (including the library) on campus. Problems with technology (i.e.: computer crash, printer malfunction, internet connectivity issues, etc.) are not acceptable excuses for submitting late work. Plan ahead to avoid last minute crises related to submittal of your assignments. Also, please note that some assignments related to this course will be submitted online through Pearson LearningStudio, and some of those deadlines will be due before the next day’s class.

**Class Conduct**

All students have the right to freedom of speech, but no one has the right to disrupt other students' relative freedoms to education, peace, and order. Students whose behavior distracts others will be asked to leave and will be counted absent.

Please set cell phones to silent (not merely to vibrate) and put them away during class. If a true emergency requires you to keep your phone on, please let me know before class session starts.

**Office Hours**

During my office hours, I will be at my desk and available to talk with you about any questions, comments, or concerns you have about the course. Please stop by and see me during these hours—that time is yours. If the hours don’t work for you, come make an appointment with me. Note: Email is great way to get in touch with me as I frequently check my mail throughout the day.

**Technologies:**

**Cell phones are delightful, but not when heard in class or at the movies because they are just plain rude and disruptive.** Please turn cell phones and any other electronics **off** during class. You’ll be notified in advance if you should bring laptops to class for work; otherwise, assume you won’t need them. Texting, checking Facebook, etc. from your phone or computer means you’re not engaging in the daily activities of our course. If your use of technology in the classroom becomes a distraction to the rest of the class, you may be asked to leave class.

**Pearson Learning Studio Class Website**

We have a course website and it will be used to record grades, create discussion threads, and submit assignments. Because we are going green, all papers will be submitted to me electronically to the dropbox on the site. Therefore, make sure you are familiar with the site and how to use it.

**TCU Disability Statement** (verbatim from [TCU catalog](http://www.catalog.tcu.edu/))

Texas Christian University complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 regarding students with disabilities. Eligible students seeking accommodations should contact the Coordinator of Student Disabilities Services in the Center for Academic Services located in Sadler Hall, 11. Accommodations are not retroactive, therefore, students should contact the Coordinator as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations. Further information can be obtained from the Center for Academic Services, TCU Box 297710, Fort Worth, TX 76129, or at (817) 257-7486.

Adequate time must be allowed to arrange accommodations and accommodations are not retroactive; therefore, students should contact the Coordinator as soon as possible in the academic term for which they are seeking accommodations. *Each eligible student is responsible for presenting relevant, verifiable, professional documentation and/or assessment reports to the Coordinator*. Guidelines for documentation may be found at <http://www.acs.tcu.edu/disability_documentation.asp>

Students with emergency medical information or needing special arrangements in case a building must be evacuated should discuss this information with their instructor/professor as soon as possible.

**Academic Misconduct (Sec. 3.4 from the Student Handbook):**

Any act that violates the academic integrity of the institution is considered academic misconduct. The procedures used to resolve suspected acts of academic misconduct are available in the offices of Academic Deans and the Office of Campus Life. Specific examples include, but are not limited to:

* Cheating: Copying from another student’s test paper, laboratory report, other report, or computer files and listings; Using, during any academic exercise, material and/or devices not authorized by the person in charge of the test; Collaborating with or seeking aid from another student during a test or laboratory without permission; Knowingly using, buying, selling, stealing, transporting, or soliciting in its entirety or in part, the contents of a test or other assignment unauthorized for release; Substituting for another student or permitting another student to substitute for oneself;
* Plagiarism: The appropriation, theft, purchase or obtaining by any means another’s work, and the unacknowledged submission or incorporation of that work as one’s own offered for credit. Appropriation includes the quoting or paraphrasing of another’s work without giving credit therefore.
* Collusion: The unauthorized collaboration with another in preparing work offered for credit.



**TCU Resources**

**New Media Writing Studio**. | Scharbauer 2003 | www.newmedia.tcu.edu | newmedia@tcu.edu | 817‐257‐5194

The New Media Writing Studio (NMWS) is available to assist students with audio, video, multimedia, and web design projects. The Studio serves as an open lab for use by students during posted hours and has both PC and Mac computers outfitted with a range of design software. A variety of equipment is available for checkout to students whose teachers have contacted the Studio in advance. See their website for more information and a schedule of open hours.

**Center for Writing**. | Reed 419 | www.wrt.tcu.edu | 817‐257‐7221

The William L. Adams Center for Writing is an instructional service with the mission of helping members of theTCU community improve their writing. Consultants offer feedback on writing projects to students, staff, and faculty from all academic disciplines. Consultants work with writers on projects such as essays, theses, dissertations, books, letters of application, articles, and other creative, personal, and academic projects. In addition to serving as a friendly audience, consultants address any issue a writer would like to discuss, though consultations often focus on topic generation, organization of ideas, style, clarity, and documentation. Go to their website to see their hours and make an appointment.

**IC Computer Lab** | Mary Couts Burnett Library | www.ic.tcu.edu

The Information Commons computer lab is an open use lab available to all TCU students. Access is first come, first served, with the exception of four multimedia stations that can be reserved for use at specific times if requested. Assistance is available from the Information Commons desk staff during all open hours, with additional support from either the full‐time Computer Services Librarian or the full‐time Computer Lab Assistant during most hours.

**TCU Computer Help Desk** | Mary Couts Burnett Library (first floor) | www.help.tcu.edu | 817‐257‐5855

The Help Desk provides support for TCU related computing accounts and services.

**Mary Couts Burnett Library** | www.lib.tcu.edu | reference@tcu.edu | 817‐257‐7117

Daily Schedule

* Please note that this syllabus is subject to change; if such a change occurs, the instructor will notify you via email or in class.
* Color coding system: Red signifies homework, purple signifies due dates
* Homework always precedes the class in which it should be prepared.

Week 1

T 8/26

Explanation of syllabus, course website, and documents

Review of ethos, pathos, and logos

Homework: Ch. 14 Visual Arguments and Supplemental Reading from *Understanding Movies*: “Color” (doc sharing)

TH 8/28

Class discussion over Ch. 14

Group Genre activity

Homework: Ch. 3 Arguments based on Character: Ethos and supplemental reading from *Understanding Movies* “The American Star System,” Styles of Acting” and “Casting” (in that order on doc sharing)



Week 2

T 9/2

Ethos, pathos, logos as seen in movie trailers

Celebrity match-up game

Creating our own posters: class activity

Homework: Ch. 5 Rhetorical Analysis

TH 9/4

Assign and discuss paper one/ sign up for conferences

Blog post #1 due by 12am

Homework: Ch. 2 Arguments based on Emotion: Pathos 

Week 3

T 9/9 Convocation: No Class BUT don’t forget about our conference this week!

TH 9/11 Music as Argument: A look at movie soundtracks

Music listening game (most recognizable theme songs)

Homework: supplemental reading from *Understanding Movies* “Sound” (doc sharing) &

Mermelstein, David. "Gabriel Yared.(MUSIC AND MOOD: Film Composers Connect the Spirit and Themes of the Movie)." *Daily Variety* 306.5 (2010)Print. (found on doc sharing)



Week 4

T 9/16 class discussion of music and mood/ examination of scenes including music

movie music mash-ups (youtube)

Grammar lesson

Blog post #2 by 12am

TH 9/18 Reading Table



Week 5

T 9/23 Assign and discuss Paper 2/ video clips from the academy awards

Homework: [“Unmasking the Academy: Oscar voters overwhelmingly white, male”](http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/news/movies/academy/la-et-unmasking-oscar-academy-project-html,0,7473284.htmlstory)

Click on the hyperlink or go to the webliography. & Supplemental Reading from *Understanding Movies* “Special Effects”

\* Dr. May will be visiting our classroom to join in the discussion.

TH 9/25 A closer look at the academy awards: handout of the list/ sign-up for a movie

Discussion of technical aspects of movies.

Homework: Eddie Wrenn’s [“**Avatar: How James Cameron's 3D film could change the face of cinema forever”**](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-1208038/Avatar-How-James-Camerons-3D-film-change-face-cinema-forever.html)

[“Why 3D doesn’t work and never will: Case Closed”](http://blogs.suntimes.com/ebert/2011/01/post_4.html) Roger Ebert’s Journal

click on the hyperlinks or go to the webliography

Paper 1 due



Week 6

T 9/30 Toulman and Rogerian arguments

Homework: Martin J. Smith: The Orange County Register. "ADVERTISING Name-Brand Props in the Movies Consumer Group Wants Labels to Signify Product Placement: MORNING Edition." *Orange County Register*: e.01. Print. 1991. (webliography)

“And Image Based Culture” (doc sharing)

TH 10/2 T discussion of sponsorship in the movies:

Product placement *in Talladega Nights* prayer scene

Game: Where’s Waldo: Can you spot the product/store in these clips?

Homework: Ch. 11 Causal Arguments

Blog #3 by 12am



Week 7

10/7 A two way street: Movies and advertising continued

How does each benefit? What types of arguments are being made?

TH 10/9 Paper 2 outline and discussion

assign and discuss paper 3 discussion of hidden agendas in the movies: Who is targeted and why? Disney and Beyond

Homework: [Michael Smith’s “Skewed Views of Animal Rights: Blame Disney](http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1876&dat=20000728&id=oj8fAAAAIBAJ&sjid=4M8EAAAAIBAJ&pg=6993,5130345)!” from *The Herald* (webliography) and Disney Animal Rights Agenda (webliography)

supplemental reading from *Understanding Movies*, “Ideology” (doc sharing)

Blog #4 due by 12am



Week 8

T 10/14 Fall Break Online Reading Table

TH 10/16 Midterm evaluations/ Movie Rating system skewed? Whose side are you on?

Bechdel Test: Gender in the movies

Homework: Ch. 15 Presenting Arguments

Paper 2 is Due to the dropbox by Friday @ 12am



Week 9

T 10/21 Watch Fern Gully

TH 10/23 Finish Fern Gully/ reflection of agenda/ Discussion of Memes

Homework: George Bush and Pro War Movies (webliography) and “Movies with a Message (webliography) and Korea declares Movie an Act of War (webliography)



Week 10

T 10/28 The implied thesis statement in Adult movies

Cultural implications/ Discussion of Ideology

Homework: Ch. 7 Structuring Argument

The following short articles on the webliography:

“Film Fight Club”

“Nothing New Under the Sun”

“A Case of Plagiarism”

“Did Avatar Rip off Fern Gully”

TH 10/30 Plagiarism in the movies: True or False? You decide!

Blog #5 due by 12am

Homework: Ch. 17 Fallacies of Argument



Week 11

T 11/4 discussion of fallacies / Outline of paper 3

Homework: [Tarancon, Juan A. “Genre matters: film criticism and the social relevance of genres.” CineAction. .80 (Spring 2010) p13.](http://go.galegroup.com.ezproxy.tcu.edu/ps/retrieve.do?sgHitCountType=None&sort=DA-SORT&inPS=true&prodId=AONE&userGroupName=txshracd2573&tabID=T002&searchId=R1&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&contentSegment=&searchType=AdvancedSearchForm&currentPosition=1&contentSet=GALE%7CA229068491&&docId=GALE%7CA229068491&docType=GALE&role=) Click on hyperlink or go to doc sharing

TH 11/6 Rhetoric of Dress/ Superheroes /Reading Table

Homework: Read “Age Gap between Men and Women in Movies” (webliography)



Week 12

T 11/11 Misrepresentation

Homework: A critique of Misrepresentation

TH 11/13 Misrepresentation

Paper 3 and memes due!



Week 13

T 11/18 discussion of Genre /Assign final project

collaborative Workshop

TH 11/20 Collaborative Workshop

Blog #6 by 12:00am



Week 14

T 11/25 Collaborative Workshop

TH 11/27 Thanksgiving Break! Be safe and have fun!



Week 15

T 12/2 Collaborative Workshop

TH 12/4 Collaborative Workshop



Week 16:

T 12/9 Collaborative Workshop

Revised papers due!

TH 12/11 Study Day (I suggest meeting with your group to work on the trailer in the studio)



Week 17:

Finals Week! Movie Pitches

Final TBA (Look online for the final schedule)

