

# ENG 101-K: Written Communication I

## Rhetoric(s) of Trolling and Online Discourse

Instructor	Tim Carter
Location	Hubbard Hall 107 Tuesday 11:30 am to 12:45 pm Thursday online
Email	<a href="mailto:thcarter@utica.edu">thcarter@utica.edu</a>
Office Hours	Tuesdays 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm Doesn't work? Talk to me and we'll arrange a time that does.

### About the instructor

MFA in Poetry from  
Syracuse University.  
Author of *Remains*  
(BOAAT Press 2020).  
Interests include ethics,  
contemporary poetry,  
and metapoetics.



### Goals for the Class

Simply, the goal of this course is for each student to become a more thoughtful, skilled, and confident writer. We'll read different kinds of texts, rhetorically analyze them, and then apply what we find to our own writing. We'll start simple, and work up to more sophisticated forms of writing and analysis.

These goals, put in terms of course objectives, look like this:

- Students will demonstrate competence in conventions of academic writing.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to read accurately and critically.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to write logically, precisely, clearly, and persuasively.

You will practice several different types of writing:

- Microthemes: short, informal, and reflective writing about the things we read.
- Personal: short, reflective, narrative writing that tells a story about your life.
- Dialoguing: short analysis of a text by putting it in conversation with two or more texts.
- Analytic: longer, sustained rhetorical analysis using researched sources.

### Why study rhetoric?

The study of rhetoric is the study of why and how we communicate in public. In this sense, we're like fish, and rhetoric is like water -- whenever we communicate, we're doing so rhetorically. Actually, Zhuangzi, a wonderful and very rhetorically-minded philosopher, speaks of "*swimming in daos*." Patricia Roberts-Miller, a professor of "train wrecks in public deliberation" at the University of Texas at Austin, writes that "Demagoguery is easy; Democracy is hard." The same is true for how we speak to each other. "Bad" rhetoric is easy. "Good" rhetoric is hard. If rhetoric is something we're always doing, we should understand it. Understanding rhetoric can give us control over how we are understood by others, how we appear to others, and how we can avoid being subjected to harmful or limiting perspectives by others. It can help us better engage and navigate a world that is complex, ever-shifting, and full of conflicting perspectives.

### What We'll Read

*Bad Ideas About Writing*, Ball, Loewe, PDF

*Perspectives on Harmful Speech Online*, PDF

*This Is Why We Can't Have Nice Things*, Whitney Philips, PDF

**Note: you don't need to buy these.** The first two are freely available online as PDFs. The third is available through the Utica Library website. You're welcome.

## What You'll Need for Class

Please bring a laptop to class, something that will allow you to access the internet, type, watch videos, etc. Please also bring paper and a writing tool, for times when we're not using our computers. When we're not meeting in person, you will of course need some way to access Zoom.

## What You'll Do

Show up to class as much as possible. Give a good faith effort for all assignments and class discussions. This means not just participating, but understanding that you can contribute positively to the experiences of other students. Be respectful, curious, and compassionate toward others and their ideas. Learn from your mistakes.

## What I'll Do

All the things I said above, but also: I will try to be as transparent as possible about why I'm doing what I'm doing. I will also ask for your feedback periodically during the semester, and I will try my best to adapt how I teach to reflect your needs.

## How You'll Be Graded

Some professors have really stringent policies for late work. There's a reason for that: we don't have a lot of time together. If a student turns in work late, everyone is miserable. Late work will result in points being deducted from your total score. However, you can always do an assignment again and receive a higher grade. I want you to improve your writing. If you improve your writing, even at the very end of the semester, great, you're still improving your writing. If you're worried about completing an assignment, talk to me.

Microthemes (~13):	40 points	100 - 119 points	F
Personal narrative:	40 points	120 - 139 points	D
Dialoguing Texts:	40 points	140 - 159 points	C
Sustained Analysis:	50 points	160 - 179 points	B
Attendance:	30 points	<b>180 - 200 points</b>	<b>A</b>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>200 points</b>		

## What is a microtheme?

Microthemes are short pieces of writing (250-500 words) that you will write in response to each text. They are not formal essays. They are a space for you to react to, question, and synthesize what we read and discuss. Typically, I will give you a prompt or a question to think about, but these should be in addition to your own questions. When we get to the sustained analysis later in the semester, it'll be useful to look back at a question that you've been asking across all of our texts. You're encouraged to engage with the texts in a way that's productive for you. Strong microthemes lead to strong class discussions. Microthemes are also a helpful informal assessment for me; they can show me if you need support.

I will grade these primarily on effort. I won't often give feedback, but I will use them to guide class discussions. Here's how I will grade them in terms of points:

0 points	You didn't submit anything, or you plagiarized (this might earn you an F in the class)
1 point	You didn't submit anything, and you sent me an email explaining why.
2 points	You submitted something that shows a minimal effort.
3 points	You submitted something that shows a good faith effort.
4 points	You submitted something shows a fantastic amount of effort.

Note that you can earn 4 points. This means, if you do all the microthemes, and you do some of them well, you can earn more than the 40 total points, which will boost your overall grade. Nice!

## **Why You Shouldn't Plagiarize**

Plagiarism is the intentional or unintentional use of other people's words, ideas, or factual information without crediting the source. Cheating refers to both the giving and receiving of unauthorized assistance in exams, assignments, or class work. Rhetorically, things like plagiarism and cheating are not tolerated in academic spaces because it corrodes the free exchange of ideas that academia values. Plagiarism or cheating may result in a drastically reduced grade or an immediate failure. If you're struggling, and are considering plagiarizing, I'd much rather you come see me during office hours so we can fix whatever problem you have.

## **Free Tutoring at the Learning Commons**

The Learning Commons offers FREE peer tutoring to all matriculated Utica College undergrads. All tutoring information can be found online at [www.utica.edu/tutoring](http://www.utica.edu/tutoring). Tutoring begins during the *second* full week of classes. Visit the Navigate mobile app to make an appointment with a peer tutor.

## **If You Need Support**

Any student who needs special accommodations in this class due to a documented disability should speak with me as soon as possible, preferably within the first two weeks of class. I am committed to making your time in my class rewarding and positive. You should also contact the Office of Learning Services (315-792-3032) in order to determine eligibility for services and to receive an accommodation letter. If you need any other form of support, like clarification or help on an assignment, please reach out to me, or visit office hours.