OE011: Modes of Writing and Argumentation

Course Description
This is a two-semester course structured to advance your writing and literary analytical skills. We will spend the fall semester studying the thesis statement, paragraph structure, essay structure, narrative and story-telling strategies, genre, “literature,” and, finally, how narratives can be viewed as argument. Your goal will be to press hard with basic writing skills while improving your ability to create a complex thesis and the organization of an argumentative essay. Additionally, your intellectual goal will be to understand how arguments and argumentation appear and function in a variety of modes of writing: hence, you will want to pay special attention to the art of argumentation in advertisements, short stories, poems, bumper stickers, autobiography, plays, and other kinds of writing during the year. In the spring, the course writing projects will end with a major essay in which you will compare and contrast William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* (1601) to Tom Stoppard’s modern play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (1966). For this last essay, students will utilize the intellectual and compositional skills that they have acquired throughout the year.

Skill Objectives

**Fall:**
- Analyze and Critique elements of argument in various Modes of Writing, such as anecdotes (oral and literary), the short story, novels, etc.
- The successful employment of the paragraph unit as a composition of an argument.
- The successful employment of argument in a 5-page paper.
- The successful mastery of vocabulary and literary terminology.
- To develop skills as an editor and commentator on the writing of others.
- To participate in seminar discussions with solid written and oral responses.
- To understand and be able to execute a “close reading” of various “texts” of study.
- To employ textual analysis in oral and written presentations.

**Spring:**
- Mastery of modes of writing: The ability to define and react to the many genres and contexts in which analysis can be performed.
- Argumentation: Students should be able to formulate arguments appropriately designed for particular textual situations.
- The Thesis Statement: Students should be able to devise complex, unexpected, or nuanced thesis statements and to employ the logic of that argument in the body of a paper.
- Mastery of the terms Text, Intertextuality, Textual Analysis, Interpretation, and other analytical terms.
- Mastery of terms appropriate to the study of drama and theatre: such as character, plot, context, structure, and other traditional terms.
Course Themes

**Fall:**
- The Paragraph
- The Thesis Statement
- Argumentative Claims
- Essay Structure and Organization
- Transitions
- Writing Style Review and Application
- Life & Literature: How is the language of daily life like the language of literature? And how is it different? What is “literary”?
- Narrative, Narrator, Narration, and Structure
- Narrative and Argument
- The Literary Anecdote, the Short Story, and the Novel
- Mark Twain’s *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*
- Genre
- Metaphor
- Metaphor and Argument
- Metaphor and Narrative

**Spring:**
- Texts and Intertextuality
- Arguments and Interpretation
- Transforming Texts
- Interpretation Theory
- The Thesis Statement and Your Essay
- Transitions
- Structure: Structure of an Argument with Sub-Claims
- Drafting and Revision
- Carlo Collodi, *Pinocchio*, and Children’s Literature
- Film Adaptations & Intertextual Analysis
- *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare
- Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead by Tom Stoppard

Grading Policy

- **Participation:** 10%
- **Quizzes, Pop Quizzes, Short Essays, etc.:** 40%
- **Major Writing Assignments and Exams:** 50%

Textbooks

*A Writer’s Reference, 6th Edition*  
Bedford/St. Martin’s  
Ed. Diana Hacker

*Writing Through Literature*  
Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2002 (Third Edition)  
Eds. Robert Scholes, Nancy R. Comley, and Gregory L. Ulmer

*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain  
Penguin Books, 1985

*Pinocchio*, Carlo Collodi  
Trans. Geoffrey Brock

*Hamlet*, William Shakespeare  
Yale University Press, 2003

*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, Tom Stoppard  
Grove Press, 1967
Sample Assignments

Sample Homework (Reading Questions):
Read the two pages on hypertext in Text Book, pages 238-239 and the read the Coover pieces. Hypertext will help you understand that the Coover pieces are, in a sense, free-floating: they can be read in any order you want to read them, and each can be read as distinct from the others. Be ready to discuss each closely.

- Please be ready to answer these questions: How would you compare a passage from Coover’s text to a tale by the Brothers Grimm? To Charles Perrault?
- Robert Coover’s units from *Briar Rose* appear to have a similar ambiguity to the modern parables of Italo Calvino. How so? How come?
- What is a hypertext and why is Robert Coover’s *Briar Rose* an example of this literary genre? Again, see pages 238-239. *You might want to look at the website where Coover’s book can be read as an online hypertext.*

Sample Essay:

*Disney Pinocchio Assignment*

Walt Disney's *Pinocchio* went on movie screens in 1940. Please write a two-page essay in which you explain how and why the film acts as integrative propaganda today--in 2011. To do this you must choose one category of individual identity to explore: "race, ethnicity, sexuality...religion, class, age, [or] nationality" (Text Book 191).

- How and why might an audience today identify with Pinocchio? Or how and why might audiences not identify with the film? *Note that while this is not a personal piece of writing students can bring in their own identification, or lack of it, into this assignment.
- Note that the category of "gender" will not be included here so that other less obvious categories can be studied. For good a good discussion of gender in the film, see the "Afterward" in your edition of Collodi’s *Pinocchio.*