

COM 496.01:  
SEMINAR IN RHETORICAL THEORY  
The Rhetoric of Fake News  
Instructor: Dr. Zompetti  
Summer 2019  
MTWR, 1-2:35 pm, Fell Hall 116 and Online

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We will focus on interrogating, criticizing and exploring the rhetoric of fake news. This will necessarily involve a study of rhetorical criticism which focuses on the text. When we say "rhetoric," we will be open to various interpretations, but we will use Aristotle's definition of "any available means to persuasion" as a starting point. We will define "fake news" narrowly, focusing on the way the term and concept are deployed as a rhetorical strategy. The course is primarily reading and discussion-oriented. Except for a couple of "lectures" in the beginning, everyone will participate by reading key primary and secondary sources on fake news and rhetorical theory. In addition to the readings, students will share their own interests in fake news and the concept of "post-truth" as items for discussion. So, we need to discuss essentially two thematic things, which is how I'm structuring the course:

1. What is fake news and post-truth? How can we engage in textual criticism to analyze these concepts?
2. What is rhetoric and what theoretical perspectives help us to interrogate the rhetoric of fake news?

## Required Readings

### Books:

Cloud, Dana (2018). *Reality Bites: Rhetoric and the Circulation of Truth Claims in U.S. Political Culture*. Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press. ISBN: 9-780814-254653.

Grossberg, Lawrence (2018). *Under the Cover of Chaos: Trump and the Battle for the American Right*. London: Pluto. ISBN: 9-780745-337913.

Skinnell, Ryan (Ed.) (2018). *Faking the News: What Rhetoric Can Teach Us about Donald J. Trump*. Exeter, UK: Imprint-Academic. ISBN: 978-1-84540-969-2.

William M. Keith & Christian O. Lundberg (2008). *The Essential Guide to Rhetoric*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's ISBN-13: 978-0312472399

### Optional:

McIntyre, Lee (2018). *Post-Truth*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. ISBN: 9-780262-535045.

### Other Texts:

See below. There will also be articles for our reading pleasure. I am listing them in the tentative schedule so you can know in advance what is expected (plus I list the full citations should you need to cite them). They can be retrieved through Milner's electronic database system, the Internet, or on ReggieNet.

## Course Objectives

1. You should be familiar with the literature concerning rhetoric and fake news and the relevant theoretical literature. You should have a working knowledge about the authors, their theories, and their arguments. You should be able to speak intelligently about the work we read and study, including understanding and using the vocabulary associated with this body of knowledge.
2. You will examine a variety of different rhetorical and critical approaches to this topic. You should be able to apply these approaches to your own investigation of the rhetoric of fake news.
3. You should remember your position as a scholar, student, citizen and activist. You should be mindful of respecting other's ideas, while being self-reflexive of your own.
4. You should be able to recognize the different types of rhetorics that exist around us. You should be sensitive to our need to interrogate them. You should, by the end of the course, have an ability to critically question such rhetorics and analyze them into a meaningful argument.
5. You should be able to produce a publishable research paper relating to rhetoric and fake news. One goal for the course is to publish an article that the entire class produces or several papers from individuals or pairs.

## The Hybrid Nature of the Course

A hybrid course is a course that is partially online and partially face-to-face. I have never done this before, so we will embark on this journey together. For those of you in town, I expect you to meet face-to-face with each other from 1-2:35 on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. If you are away for part of the course, or for its entirety, then obviously you will only participate online. My idea is that we do the readings each day and come to class to discuss them. Students will take turns posting in our discussion forum in ReggieNet the key points, concepts, and arguments that were discussed in our face-to-face conversation from that particular day (they can even do it in real time during class if they desire). The post should appear by 5 pm CST. Then, our online folks can respond and add their thoughts and questions by midnight their time. We can begin the class the next day, if we need it, by discussing the online comments, and then we will move forward with that day's readings. The assignments for the course, as explained below, will be relatively easy to accommodate through this system. If any of you have ideas or suggestions about this process, please let me know! My philosophy for this course is to be super flexible.

## Course Overview

*The course is intended for students with no background in rhetoric as well as rhetorical veterans.* For students not well-versed in rhetoric, we will begin the course with a brief introduction of rhetorical theories and methods of analysis. For the student with previous rhetorical experience, we will highlight key primary and secondary texts of various rhetorical & cultural perspectives for advanced study. If you are unfamiliar with rhetoric, I strongly encourage you to thoroughly read the Keith & Lundberg book (*The Essential Guide to Rhetoric*), as well as other sources of material. But, you should ensure that you do the extra readings **immediately** – a) the quicker you pick up the key elements of rhetoric, the faster the course issues will make sense to you, and b) you won't have the time to do extra readings once we start our weekly readings. Ideally, students should be taking graduate courses for more than just a grade – they should identify and attempt to accomplish their own “learning outcomes.”

## My Approach to Seminars

1. We all learn from each other – you from me, I from you. As such, I do not have a monopoly on truth. I will help guide and facilitate discussion. I will help you in ways that I am able. I will answer your questions to the best of my ability. And, I will speak on subjects that I have some experience. Nevertheless, we will all obtain more from this course if we remember that we can learn from each other (and not just from me).
2. I will provide (hopefully meaningful) comments on the material we discuss in class. However, a seminar is not a "lecture" course, nor is it like the typical undergraduate course. Given that we will be discussing a multiplicity of themes involving rhetoric, you will become the experts on some of these issues and will have to lead the class. I expect all of you to take an active role in your participation in this course. If you do not come to class prepared to speak (meaningfully and intelligently) about the material for that evening's class, you will be failing me, the rest of the class, and yourself. At this point in your academic careers, I shouldn't have to take attendance, or fill-in if you didn't read the material. You will not receive an A or perhaps a B in the course if you are consistently absent, late, or unprepared (that last two are tantamount to skipping).
3. We will discuss a great deal about theory in this course. But, theory is nothing without application and practice. You should remind yourselves about the importance of theory for its use in interrogations and investigations.
4. I am more interested in how you think, rather than what you think. Please don't be afraid to share your thoughts and ideas in class, and don't presume that you know how I will respond if you introduce a concept in class. It is more important that you are reflecting on the material and thinking critically about its relationship to your ideas and interests.
5. You should draw connections with what we read in class to what is occurring in the world. Given the nature of this course, you should be roughly familiar with current events, the news, and the current state of the academic literature on this subject.
6. A seminar is more than just a time for FYIs and descriptive ramblings. You must think reflectively and critically about the material. Don't accept it on face-value. If you find it useful, be able to explain why and how. If you don't find it useful, then you should have thoughtful and meaningful criticisms. In short, you need to be able to APPLY what you read, not just regurgitate it back to me and the class. You should write notes, thoughts, and questions in the margins of the readings. **BRING THE READINGS TO CLASS!!!**
7. You should avoid coming to class saying you didn't understand the material. I don't have much patience for such positions. If you are in graduate school, you can comprehend what you read. If you have some difficulty given your unfamiliarity with the topic or concepts, then you should spend additional time reading the material. Consult additional sources. Form a reading group with other members of the class. If you're still having trouble, you should come see me during office hours.
8. You should come to class always already prepared to discuss the material which is scheduled for that evening. You should also be flexible – in other words, LISTEN to what others say in the class and build your thoughts about the material on what they say. Don't be afraid to debate in class with others, provided that the debate is professional and respectful. Similarly, don't get discouraged if others disagree with your take on the readings – this is graduate school, so we need to take suggestions and criticisms and then rethink our positions.
9. Finally, you should take careful notes throughout the semester. The things we discuss in one class will build on top of things we've discussed previously. You should incorporate previous material, when appropriate, when extending your thoughts on future topics. And, your notes may prove useful when working on the final paper.

## Standard Seminar Questions

Regardless of the topic/readings assigned for each week, I will expect you all to be able to talk about these standard questions:

1. What are the main ideas of the readings? Yes, this means ALL of the ideas in ALL of the readings.
2. How do the readings relate to one another? Are their points of agreement/disagreement between the authors? If so, what are they and what do you think of them?
3. What do you think of each reading? Do you like/dislike it? Agree/disagree with it? Find it useful or not?
4. How can the readings help us to be better, more informed rhetoricians and rhetorical critics?
5. How do the readings we've already read relate to the current reading (if at all)?

## Course Expectations

1. Complete all of the readings as they are assigned. Think about them as you read. Re-read if necessary. I strongly suggest that you complete each reading in a single sitting, rather than breaking it into segments, if possible. This will allow to reflect more accurately on the intricacies of the material.
2. Attend Class. Missing seminars is unacceptable behavior for a graduate student in the absence of illness, university sponsored activities, or family emergency. If you find that for some reason you need to miss class – whether I excuse it or not – please notify me in advance. Obviously this only applies if you are in town.
3. Attend Class on time. It is disrespectful to show up late.
4. Complete all assignments, on time. Late work will be penalized one grade per day of lateness (the next day begins as soon as class is over). I won't write comments/explanations for the grades I give to late work. **Failure to complete all assignments may result in failing the course. Failure to complete the major paper and/or the final exam may also result in a "C" or worse for this course.**
5. ***Do not take another person's work as your own.*** This is plagiarism and will result in a ZERO for the particular assignment. All words in a paper or an exam must be your words, unless they are enclosed in quotation marks. Use direct quotes sparingly and use them to illustrate ideas, never to present or explain an idea. Even when you paraphrase material, it should be adequately cited. Students assume the ultimate responsibility for their work. This liability includes (but not limited to) Academic Honesty. Please note the following excerpt from the University Catalog:

Plagiarism: The Modern Language Association's MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers defines plagiarism as follows: Repeating another's sentence as your own. Adopting a particularly apt phrase as your own. Presenting someone else's line of thinking in development of a thesis [ideas] as though it were your own. In short, to plagiarize is to give the impression that you have written or thought something that you have borrowed from another. Writers may use other persons' words and thoughts but must acknowledge them.

6. When you have questions about the course, assignments, etc., see me or email me. Don't talk to someone else in class and assume it is accurate. If you ask someone else, and they are wrong, then your performance may suffer.
7. Any student needing to arrange a reasonable accommodation for a documented disability should contact Disability Concerns at 350 Fell Hall, 438-5853 (voice), 438-8620 (TDD)."
8. Permission Required to Record: Students must obtain written permission from the instructor if they wish either to photograph classroom lectures or discussions or to record them using audio or video devices. This restriction includes visual materials that accompany the lecture/discussion, such as lecture slides, whiteboard notes/equations, etc. Such recordings are to be used solely for the purposes of individual or group study with other students enrolled in the class. They may not be reproduced, shared in any way (including electronically or posting in any web environment) with those not in the class. Students with disabilities who need to record classroom lectures or discussions must contact Student Access and Accommodation Services to register, request and be approved for an accommodation. Students who violate this policy may be subject to both legal sanctions for violations of copyright law and disciplinary action under the University's Code of Student Conduct.

## Course Assignments

### ASSIGNMENT #1: Participation (minor paper worth 25 points)

This course just has three graded requirements. The first is participation. This will be a small class, so you will not be able to hide behind other's comments or pretend like you did not read. I expect all of you to come to class prepared to discuss all of the readings for that day.

### ASSIGNMENT #2: Online Discussion (worth 25 points)

As mentioned above, we will have an online discussion forum on ReggieNet. For those of you meeting face-to-face, you will take turns posting online the main ideas and questions we generate in class. If you are online, you will add your comments from the readings to the posted comments. I then expect each of you to provide at least one additional comment online so that there is some semblance of a discussion.

**ASSIGNMENT #3: Paper Project** (major paper worth 25 points)

I want you to select a text and a theory of your choice and develop a publishable paper. You should choose a subject matter that interests you. You should then examine, thoroughly, the literature that concerns this area of rhetoric. Based upon your comprehensive review of the literature, determine a specific part of your area that has not been examined, has been examined poorly, or has been examined but deserves further attention. This will set up your argument and thesis. You then should utilize your knowledge of rhetorical theory and criticism to explore a text that concerns fake news and/or “post-truth” or develop a theoretical perspective that relates to rhetoric and fake news. The bulk of your paper (approximately 80%) should be spent on this criticism or theoretical development. Then, conclude your paper with relevant and reflective comments about the significance of your criticism, areas for future research, and the overall importance of the area under investigation. Here is a more detailed breakdown of what I expect:

1. Introduction. Tell me what your topic is and why it is worthy of study. Generally, a rhetorical paper begins with a discussion or declaration of a significant problem area.
2. Literature review; a survey of current thinking on your topic. Choose your literature wisely! This is vital to the creation of a quality research paper.
  - a. Select 15 (at least!) or more pieces of theory/research pertinent to your topic and briefly summarize them. You may use books, journal articles, dissertations, and if relevant, a limited amount of “popular” writing. The materials you choose should be fairly recent but may include ‘classic’ pieces if relevant. This research should be done early in the semester so you can interlibrary loan materials if necessary.
  - b. Tell me the main ideas/conclusions and, if relevant, the theoretic approach taken by each reading you choose.
  - c. Evaluate each reading, and tell me its strengths and weaknesses. Be very specific. Explain your conclusions rather than simply stating them; give me reasons why you believe what you do. If some of the literature is closely related, you may “group” them when you review them [e.g., you may say, “some scholars suggest that X is an important area to study (Long, 2005; Cupach, 2002; Moffitt, 1950; Zompetti, 2004)].
  - d. reach some overall conclusions about the literature you’ve analyzed. Look for gaps in the literature, e.g. things that should be examined but are not. Also look for weaknesses in the literature, e.g. things that are examined but, in your view, are not examined well.
3. Research questions. Rhetorical analysis and/or criticism does not use RQs. However, a quality paper demands an exhaustive treatment of the subject. Instead of questions, you should have one or two solid, declarative statements/contentions/positions in which you will explore in your paper. **Remember, your analysis should be challenging, not pedestrian.** If you or your readers can already ascertain the development of your contentions, then you need to uncover more significant claims and textual evidence. In other words, avoid a shallow, superficial glossing of the text.
4. Method of answering your research questions
  - a. What parts of the text will you use to answer your questions? Why is your choice appropriate?
  - b. What theory/method will you use to examine the text you’ve chosen? Why is your choice of method/theory appropriate?
5. The body of the paper. As I mentioned above, this should constitute the bulk of your paper. You should go to great lengths in analyzing your text(s). Incorporate relevant and insightful historical/contextual information as needed to help inform your analysis. Be liberal in your samples of the text you’re investigating, but remember the majority of this section should be *your* analysis – not lengthy block quotes from some other scholar or the primary text under investigation. In this section, you should frequently ask the “how” and “why” questions. If your answers to those questions – based on what you’ve written – are inadequate, insufficient, or require more elaboration, then you know you need to engage in more analysis.
6. The conclusion. This is perhaps the most important part of the paper. Answer the “so what” question. In other words, why does your study matter? Why is it important? How does it advance knowledge in general and to the field of rhetoric in particular? What important insights should we have learned about the rhetorical implications of feminism and/or gender studies by reading your paper? What areas of future research are there? Etc.
7. The references page. Don’t forget this. You may use whatever style guide that you wish, so long as it is consistent. However, every quote and paraphrased item **MUST** be cited.

NB: I have no idea how long this “should” be. Write until you have achieved a complete explanation of your subject, not until a certain number of pages have been filled. Remember, however, that this should be a publishable quality manuscript (which are usually around 25 pages). Also be mindful of my writing tips. I will grade very carefully and heavily based on appropriate grammatical conventions (**please remember this!**). Finally, the paper is due on the final day of the course.

The idea behind this paper assignment (and the course) is for us to produce publishable papers. We can write a single paper where everyone is a co-author, or you may pair-up or some other permutation. Regardless, this will be collaborative. Each of you will need to demonstrate to me your contributions to the project. This should be relatively easy to do since I will be a part of writing these papers too. Thus, your grade will be based on your contribution (both quality and quantity) to the paper project.

## Grading

### Paper Project

Quantity of your contribution	25 points
Quality of your contribution	25 points
Online Discussion	25 points
Participation	25 points
Total	100 points

Note: **Failure to turn in any of the course requirements may result in failure of the overall course.** For all assignments, work that meets the minimum expectations and is “average” work will earn the grade of “C.” Work that exceeds the minimum expectations and shows initiative, support and is considered “very good quality” will earn the grade of “B.” Work that exceeds “B” level work by being exceptional and outstanding in all areas (high degree of initiative, excellent support, superior quality, etc.) will earn the grade of “A.” Work that has promise but falls below the minimum expectations will earn a “D,” and work that is well below the minimum expectations, needs serious re-crafting and/or is not graduate-level material will earn the grade of “F.” The Grading Scale is an A (4) = 90-100, B (3) = 80-89, C (2) = 70-79, D (1) = 60-69, F (0) = 0-59.



## Readings

Albright, Jonathan (2017). Welcome to the Era of Fake News. *Media and Communication*, 5(2), 87-89.

Allcott, Hunt & Matthew Gentzkow (2017). Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 31(2), 211-236.

American Press Institute (2017, March 20). ‘Who Shared It?’: How Americans Decide What News to Trust on Social Media. Available, <https://www.americanpressinstitute.org/publications/reports/survey-research/trust-social-media/>

Baggio, Antonio Maria (2012). Truth and Politics: The Loss of Authoritativeness in Contemporary Politics. *Journal of Dialogue & Culture*, 1(1), 46-60. [Optional]

Balmas, Meital (2014). When Fake News becomes Real: Combined Exposure to Multiple News Sources and Political Attitudes of Inefficacy, Alienation, and Cynicism. *Communication Research*, 41(3), 430-454.

Block, David (2019). *Post-Truth and Political Discourse*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Pivot. [Optional]

Botei, Mircea (2017). Misinformation with Fake News. *Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Brasov*, 10(59), 133-140.

Breland, Ali (2019, May 9). Fake News Is Getting a Big Boost from Real Companies. *Mother Jones*. Available, <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2019/05/fake-news-advertising-networks/>

Brummette, John, Marcia DiStaso, Michail Vafeiadis & Marcus Messner (2018). Read All About It: The Politicization of “Fake News” on Twitter. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 95(2), 497-517.

Clarke, John (2014). Conjunctures, Crises, and Cultures: Valuing Stuart Hall. *Focaal – Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology*, 70, 113-122.

Del Vicario, Michela, Alessandro Bessi, Fabiana Zollo, Fabio Petroni, Antonio Scala, Guido Caldarelli, H. Eugene Stanley & Walter Quattrociocchi (2016). The Spreading of Misinformation Online. *PNAS*, 113(3), 554-559.

Dewey, Caitlin (2015, December 18). What Was Fake on the Internet This Week. *The Washington Post*.

Easley, Jason (2019, April 21). Mueller Finds Evidence that Fox News Is White House Produced Propaganda. *Politicus USA*. Available, <https://www.politicususa.com/2019/04/21/mueller-fox-news-trump.html>

Ford, Derek, R. (2018). *Politics and Pedagogy in the “Post-Truth” Era: Insurgent Philosophy and Praxis*. London: Bloomsbury Academic. [Optional]

Grier, Peter (2019, April 16). Is America’s Media Divide Destroying Democracy? *Christian Science Monitor*. Available, <https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Politics/2019/0416/Is-America-s-media-divide-destroying-democracy>

Hennefeld, Maggie (2017, February 19). Fake News: From Satirical Truthiness to Alternative Facts. *New Politics*. Available, <https://newpol.org/fake-news-satirical-truthiness-alternative-facts/>



Jordan, Matthew (2016, October 25). In a Post-Truth Election, Clicks Trump Facts. *The Conversation*. Available, <https://theconversation.com/in-a-post-truth-election-clicks-trump-facts-67274>

Kavanagh, Jennifer & Michael D. Rich (2018). *Truth Decay: An Initial Exploration of the Diminishing Role of Facts and Analysis in American Public Life*. Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation. [Optional]

Krugman, Paul (2018, November 12). Truth and Virtue in the Age of Trump. *The New York Times*. Available, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/12/opinion/truth-virtue-trump-loyalty.html>

McComiskey, Bruce (2017). *Post-Truth Rhetoric and Composition*. Logan, UT: Utah State University Press.

McIntyre, Lee (2018, November 19). Lies, Damn Lies and Post-Truth. *The Conversation*. Available, <https://portside.org/2018-11-23/lies-damn-lies-and-post-truth> [Optional]

Meyer, Robinson (2018, March 8). The Grim Conclusions of the Largest-Ever Study of Fake News. *The Atlantic*. Available, <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2018/03/largest-study-ever-fake-news-mit-twitter/555104/>

Montgomery, Martin (2017). Authenticity, Populism and the Electoral Discourses of Donald Trump. *Journal of Language and Politics*, 16(4), 619-639.

Perlis, Mike (2017, March 9). Fake News: It's Just So Un-Civil. *Forbes*. Available, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/mikeperlis/2017/03/09/fake-news-its-just-so-un-civil/#54f89595792e>

Peters, Michael A., Sharon Rider, Mats Hyvönen & Tina Besley (2018). *Post-Truth, Fake News: Viral Modernity & Higher Education*. Singapore: Springer. [Optional]

Prado, C. G. (Ed.) (2018). *America's Post-Truth Phenomenon: When Feelings and Opinions Trump Facts and Evidence*. Santa Monica, CA: Praeger. [Optional]

Sim, Stuart (2019). *Post-Truth, Skepticism & Power*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan. [Optional]

Spielman, Douglas (2018). Marxism, Cultural Studies, and the "Principle of Historical Specification": On the Form of Historical Time in Conjunctural Analysis. *Lateral*, 7(1). Available, <http://csalateral.org/issue/7-1/marxism-cultural-studies-historical-specification-conjunctural-analysis-spielman/>

Van Duyn, Emily & Jessica Collier (2019). Priming and Fake News: The Effects of Elite Discourse on Evaluations of News Media. *Mass Communication and Society*, 22(1), 29-48.

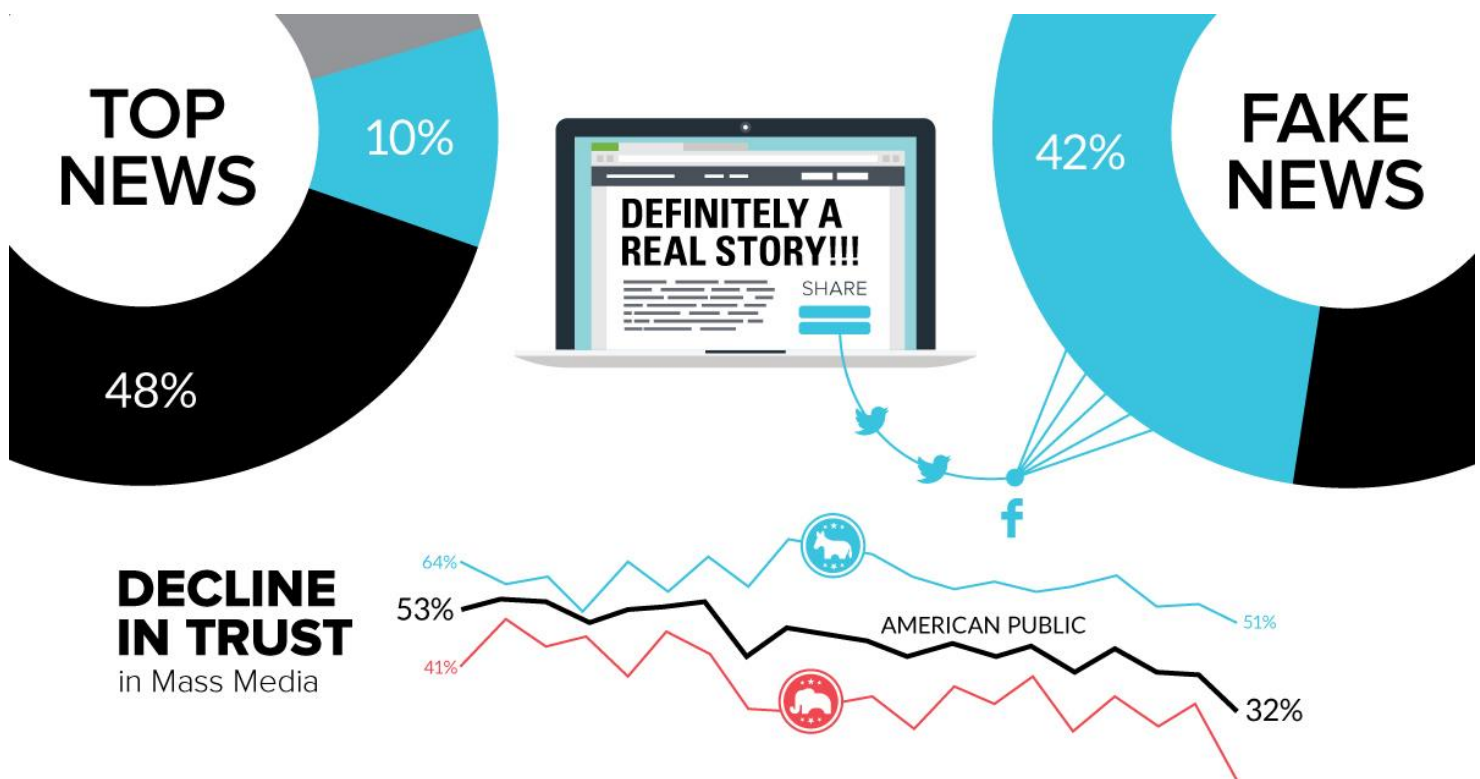
Zollo, Fabiana, Alessandro Bessi, Michela Del Vicario, Antonio Scala, Guido Caldarelli, Louis Shekhtman, Shlomo Havlin & Walter Quattrociocchi (2017). Debunking in a World of Tribes. *Plos One*, 12(7). Available, <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0181821>

Zompetti, Joseph P. (1997). Toward a Gramscian Critical Rhetoric. *Western Journal of Communication*, 61(1), 66-86.

Zompetti, Joseph P. (2012). The Cultural and Communicative Dynamics of Capital: Gramsci and the Impetus for Social Action. *Culture, Theory and Critique*, 53(3), 365-382.

Zompetti, Joseph P. (2019). The Fallacy of Fake News: Exploring the Commonsensical Argument Appeals of Fake News Rhetoric through a Gramscian Lens. Paper presented at the Democracy and Disinformation in the Era of Trump Conference, University College of Dublin; also under review with the *Journal of Contemporary Rhetoric*.

Zompetti, Joseph P. (2019). Rhetorical Incivility in the Twittersphere: A Comparative Thematic Analysis of Clinton and Trump's Tweets During and After the 2016 Presidential Election. *Journal of Contemporary Rhetoric*, 9(1/2), 29-54.





## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

### JULY

M, 1	Syllabus, discussion of course, logistics
T, 2	Rhetoric and rhetorical theory [read Keith & Lundberg] – led by Dr. Zompetti
W, 3	Rhetoric and rhetorical criticism – led by Dr. Zompetti
R, 4	No Class – Independence Day
M, 8	Cultural studies & conjunctural theory [read Clarke (2014); Grossberg, the Appendix; Spielman (2018)]
T, 9	Understanding Gramsci [read Zompetti (1997); Zompetti (2012); & Zompetti (2019) – “fallacy of fake news”]
W, 10	Rhetoric and fake news [read <i>FTN</i> intro, & chapters 1 & 2]
R, 11	Rhetoric and fake news [read <i>FTN</i> chapters 3, 4 & 5]
M, 15	Rhetoric and fake news [read Cloud preface & intro & chapter 1 & chapter 2]
T, 16	Rhetoric and fake news [read Cloud chapter 3 & conclusion]
W, 17	Rhetoric and fake news [read Grossberg, preface & chapter 1]
R, 18	Rhetoric and fake news [read Grossberg, chapters 2 & 3]
M, 22	Rhetoric and fake news [read Grossberg, chapters 6 & 7]
T, 23	Discuss paper ideas
W, 24	Role of the media [read Allcott & Gentzkow (2017); Easley (2019); Grier (2019)]
R, 25	Role of the media [read American Press Institute (2017); Del Vicario et al. (2016); Zollo et al. (2017)]
M, 29	Role of the media [read Breland (2019); Van Duyn & Collier (2019)]
T, 30	Understanding fake news [read Dewey (2015); Hennefeld (2017); Meyer (2018)]
W, 31	Understanding fake news [read Albright (2017); Balmas (2014)]

### AUGUST

R, 1	Understanding fake news [read Botei (2017); Brummette et al. (2018)]
M, 5	Post-Truth [read Jordan (2016); Krugman (2018); McIntyre (2018); Montgomery (2017)]
T, 6	Incivility [read Perlis (2017); Zompetti (2019) – “rhetorical incivility”]
W, 7	Work on paper project
R, 8	Work on paper project

### **DR. Z's WRITING TIPS**

How to use this guide: ***Read this guide carefully.*** Read it now, and read it before you turn-in your work. When you receive my feedback on your writing, I may use acronyms for certain principles in this guide – those acronyms are listed by the tips (e.g., tip #3 below has “EWP” at the end, meaning “ending with a preposition”.)

1. Spend more time on your writing. Proofread, proofread, proofread. Follow my tips. Have someone you trust (and who can be brutally honest) proofread your work as well.
2. Use a Thesaurus. Seriously!
3. Avoid ending sentences and clauses with a preposition (e.g., don't say, “those are the people I will be speaking with.” Instead, say “those are the people to whom I will speak.”) [EWP]
4. Use precise language – avoid vague language.
5. Avoid using conversational jargon, trite phrases, and informal writing. Do not write like you speak. You should write in a formal way and with a formal tone. Avoid using language like “going to,” something is “so” difficult, “whatever,” etc. The best way to do this is to read as much as you can, especially non-fiction (i.e., peer-reviewed journals, books on academic disciplines, etc.). [AWLPS – avoid writing like people speak]
6. Cite material EACH TIME you use it. [cite]
7. Cite evidence when you need to support a position or argument. [cite]
8. Vary your sentence structures.
9. Vary your word choice – don't repeat the same words (or variants of words) over and over again. [WC]
10. As you write, always ask “how” and “why.” If your writing doesn't answer these questions, you need more support (and/or evidence). Also, you should be sure to answer the “so what” and “who cares” questions to accentuate the significance and importance of your topic and your writing.
11. Avoid unclear pronouns. Instead of saying “it comes from pork,” be careful with the word “it” and say “bacon comes from pork.” Other pronouns to watch are: they, he/she/it, people, this, that, these, things, etc. Here's a good rule to follow: Imagine you are walking up to someone on the quad. If you just said, “it comes from pork,” they will have no idea what you mean. If, instead, you go up to them and say, “bacon comes from pork,” they will still think you're a whacko for coming up to them and saying that, but at least they will know what you mean! [UP]
12. Avoid saying “today's society” or phrases like it, such as “the world today.” This is one of my ultimate pet-peeves. It is filler, clutter, and simply just junk writing. Be more specific and clear in your writing. If you are referencing a particular era, date, or period of history, say so. If you are talking about the present condition of things, chances are you have already described that or the reader will understand it. [YUK]
13. Be aware of there vs. their vs. they're.
14. Don't use contractions! Seriously, contractions detract from formal writing.
15. Also be aware of it's vs. its. “It's” is the **contraction** not the **possessive**. So, if you are referring to the stain on the book, you would say “its stain.” You should **never** use “it's” because you should not use contractions in formal writing.
16. Be careful with dates. Often folks confuse 1970s vs. 1970's. More often than not, you will want to just use 1970s. The only time you use an apostrophe is if you want to show possession. E.g., “The 1970's economy was terrible.”
17. Avoid run-ons. These are sentences that require commas to separate two full sentences, but have no commas. For example: “I detest papers that are written poorly and I love chocolate.” The sentence should have a comma before the “and” to read: “I detest papers that are written poorly, and I love chocolate.” [RO]

18. Avoid sentence fragments (such as this). Sentence fragments are phrases or clauses (often complex) that are not full sentences. Be sure all of your "sentences" have subjects and verbs! [FRAG]

19. Be careful with indented quotations. These are the lengthy quotes you may have in your paper that are distinct from the shorter quotations. Every line of indented quotations should be indented (hence their name) and they do not use quotation marks!!! Lengthy quotes that take 4 or 5 sentences should be indented – 1) the entire quote should be indented, 2) it should be single-spaced, and 3) it doesn't use quotation marks. [BQ]

20. Use proper citations. If you don't know how to cite material, you need to purchase an MLA or APA guide. You can always ask me or someone else for help. For in-text citations, you should have the author's last name and year. If it is a direct quotation, you should also include a page number, unless it is from a webpage. If there is no author (which is rare!!!), then you should cite the first couple of words of the title. NEVER put URL addresses in an in-text citation. For Bibliography/Reference citations, make sure that the citation is complete and accurate – this includes the author's name, the date, the title of the article/chapter, the title of the periodical/book, volume number (if a journal article), and if from a web source, include the full URL. The URL should be from a web source – if you are using material from a Milner database, DO NOT include the Milner URL – just cite the source as if it were a hard copy. You do not need to include DOI numbers for written work submitted to me.

21. Use adequate citations. **ANY** material that is not your own, that you quote, that you paraphrase, that you allude to, etc., **MUST BE CITED**. Failure to do so is plagiarism and is unacceptable. Proper citation – you should cite a source EACH time you use it, not at the end of a paragraph.

22. Avoid using the second person "you." Another big pet peeve of mine. This is sloppy writing. At times you may use the first person (e.g., "I"), but never use "you" unless you're quoting someone else. [2P]

23. Avoid writing like you talk. Some common examples are "doing this will be huge" or "like, this is important." Writing is fundamentally different than speaking, and you must be able to know the difference. [AWLPS]

24. Use dashes, not hyphens (-- vs. -). For example, if I say that good writing is important – it helps you get a better job, makes you appear more intelligent, etc., that is different than saying that you're a well-liked person (notice in the beginning the use of dashes, and the hyphen is used only for hyphenated language).

25. Be mindful of proper and appropriate paragraph development. This means that a paragraph should stick to one central point, but it should also be developed – meaning more than 2 or 3 sentences in length. Paragraphs should focus on a single concept or argument. So, while a paragraph should be long enough to develop a single, coherent argument, it should also not be too long – it should not include more than a single argument or unit of thought. Generally speaking, a paragraph should not exceed half or ¾ of a page. [¶]

26. Underline or italicize titles of books, periodicals, movies, TV shows, and musical albums. Use quotations for titles of TV show episodes, titles of articles in periodicals, and individual songs.

27. In general, follow the suggestions for composition in any widely-used manual of style. Pay special attention to the form for footnotes and bibliography entries. You may use whatever style you desire, as long as you use it consistently.

28. Papers should be expository or argumentative in nature. Avoid descriptive material unless it is brief and necessary to your overall argument. Narrative material on how you discovered the topic is neither necessary nor appropriate. Stay away from informal tones. Write your paper with the assumption that the readers are academics and/or scholars.

29. A paper is more than a receptacle for quotations from others. Do not produce a string of quotations held together only by transitions. Also, do not deposit quotations in the paper without preparing the reader with appropriate contextual material which elaborates on the quotation in an appropriate and useful manner. Finally, you should unpack and explain the significance of the quotation immediately after the quote. [SQ]

30. Please **double space**. Do not use 1-1/2 space. Leave ample margins at sides, top, and bottom so that comments may be made on the paper without great difficulty. I prefer Times New Roman, 12-point font.

31. Do not place papers in booklet covers or binders. Use staples to keep your paper together. Please do not dog-ear the pages.

32. Do not leave papers until the last minute. Please have consideration for your reader as well as pride of authorship, and allow enough time to prepare the paper so that your ideas may be expressed in clear, succinct, and stylistically appropriate ways. Poor writing due to last minute preparation will greatly damage the grade.

33. UMSL – "use more sophisticated language." Formal writing should use sophisticated language, not words such as "get" or "a lot"

or “got” or “x is so important.” **Use a thesaurus.**

34. Avoid referencing the class. Don’t say “as we’ve discussed in class” or some other form of referencing. It detracts from the formal nature of your writing.

35. Avoid generalizations – Avoid generalizations when it comes to descriptions of people (e.g., “all college students drink”), but also avoid generalizations when it comes to describing issues (e.g., “the media always criticize Bush”)

36. “Media” and “data” – these words are **plural!!!** This means you must be mindful of correct subject/verb agreement. For example, these are incorrect:

The media **has** discussed the  
election. The data **is** informative.

These are correct:

The media **have** discussed the  
election. The data **are** informative.

37. \* in your paper indicates that a quotation needs a transition to introduce it.

38. URL addresses – First, don’t cite the URL address in the paper. Instead, cite the author or the first couple of words of the title. The full URL is stated in your bibliography page (or footnote). Second, change the color of the URL address to black and underline it. In other words, make it match the destination of the rest of your writing. [URL]

39. Webpaged material – although you should avoid using the Internet for your material, some of you will inevitably do so anyway. If you do, and you cut/paste it directly from the Internet, make sure the font matches the font you’re using for your paper.

40. Support your claims – if you make an argument, back it up with evidence. If you use statistics or complicated explanations for ideas that the average person probably wouldn’t know, back it up. For each claim that needs support, you should find at least TWO sources to support it.

41. If you emphasize a word or phrase in your paper and you feel it should be emphasized even more, do NOT italicize it or underline or put it in apostrophes. Special words should be important simply by reading them. If, however, you are coining a word or drawing attention to a word or phrase used in the literature, place it in quotation marks.

42. Any foreign words used in your writing should be italicized.

43. When citing web-based material, do **NOT** put the URL address in your paper. It should be cited by author or title. The URL address should be in the bibliography page only.

44. Citing material within your paper: Use embedded textual references or footnotes/endnotes – just be consistent with appropriate stylistic conventions. **DO NOT** place the entire title of a book or article in the text of your paper; there is no need for this, it just takes up space, it disrupts the flow of reading, and the full titles should appear in the bibliography/references page. All you need to cite in the text of the paper is the author’s (authors’) name, date and page number. If there is no page number, simply use “n.p.”

45. Citing material at the end of your paper: You must have an appropriate bibliography/references page. It should be listed alphabetically first, then if you have material from the same author, they should be listed by date in ascending order (i.e., the oldest date occurs first). If you have more than one source from the same author in the same year, indicate this by the use of letters at the end of the date (e.g., Zompetti 2010a, Zompetti 2010b, Zompetti 2010c, etc.).

46. Avoid putting titles of books and articles in your paper. They are unnecessary and take up too much space. They will appear in your Works Cited/Bibliography pages, so they do not need to be in the text of your paper.

47. Punctuation – Avoid doing these:

- a. “Smith argues that writing is fun,” (Smith, 2010). [no comma before the quotation mark]
- b. “Smith argues that writing is fun.” (Smith, 2010). [only use one period – should be after the parentheses]
- c. “Smith argues that writing is fun.” (Smith, 2010) [only use one period – should be after the parentheses]

48. All papers must have a thesis statement, and then the subsequent paragraphs of your paper should support that thesis statement. A thesis statement is a one-sentence, declarative contention of yours about the position you will be advocating.

49. Please note that titles of books, journals, albums, TV shows, and anything that is a “stand-alone” product should be *italicized* or underlined (you may use either, but don’t use both – be consistent and only use italics or underlining). If you are citing a chapter of a book, an article in a journal or magazine, a specific song, or an episode of a TV series, then those should be placed in “quotation marks.”

50. Embedded references in the paper itself – The punctuation of the sentence should occur after the reference, and there should not be any punctuation before it. For example:

Incorrect: writing is fun. (Zompetti, 2009). [there should not be a period before the embedded reference]

Incorrect: writing is fun, (Zompetti, 2009). [there should not be a comma before the embedded reference]

Correct: Is writing fun (Zompetti, 2009)?

Correct: writing is fun (Zompetti, 2009), but it can be challenging.

51. Introductory prepositional phrases should be offset with a comma. For example, “Although the course was challenging, I still learned a great deal” or “In the United States, apple pie is yummy.” Notice the comma after the phrases.

52. Generally, you should avoid “so” in your writing. For example, avoid saying things like “I was so hungry.” Instead, simply say, “I was hungry,” or “I was very hungry.”

53. Items in a series use parallel structure. Example:

A. Incorrect: The student argued that they were busy, people said they were poor, and became ill after eating Avanti’s.

B. Correct: The student argued that they were busy, poor, and ill from eating Avanti’s.

54. Adverbs generally end in -ly and answer the question “how.” Thus:

A. Incorrect: I felt bad.

B. Correct: I felt badly. [I felt how? I felt badly.]

55. WMF – write more formally. This is similar to UMSL, but simply put, it means to write in a more formal way, as opposed to a journalistic or creative writing style.

56. Hyphenation – when two words (typically adjectives) function together to modify or describe a proceeding noun, then the two words should be hyphenated. For example:

A. Hyphenate: A well-read student knows the difference between philosophy and religion.

B. Don’t hyphenate: A yellow, high post designates the height of the bridge. [“yellow” and “high” do not function together to create a single modifier – they are two separate adjectives]

57. Capitalize proper nouns – if a word also functions as the name or official label of an entity or group, it should be capitalized. For example, the words Republican and Democrat should be capitalized. However, the word democrat – a person who believes in democracy – is not capitalized because it refers to a general belief, not a particular political party.

58. Internet -- capitalize the “I” so that the word is spelled “Internet.”

59. All written work should be in Times New Roman, 12 point font.

60. Avoid words the end with “wise,” like “economy wise” or “culture wise” or “business wise.” This type of writing falls under AWLPS.

61. Avoid using the word “being” (as in “being that such and such....”) and “having” (as in “having to do something”). You can avoid these typically very easily. Instead of using “being,” use the word “since.” Instead of “having,” use the verb that follows it (e.g., “having to drive to the store,” could simply be “driving to the store”).

62. Punctuation when there are quotation marks.

A. [incorrect]: “The cat was black”, and I loved it.

B. [correct]: “The cat was black,” and I loved it.

63. Web citations when there is no author:

A. In the text of your paper, you should cite the source by its title if there is no author, such as this (Glenn Beck Biography, 2016, np).

B. Then, in the References Page, you should cite it like this:

Glenn Beck Biography (2016). Available: <http://www.biography.com/people/glenn-beck-522294> (accessed 4/22/16).

64. What constitutes a “scholarly source”?

A. From Dr. Darby Ray at Millsaps College:

In general, a **"scholarly" source is one that is written or edited by a "scholar"** – that is, a person who has earned a graduate degree in the field they are writing about. Having such a degree (usually a Ph.D.; synonym: a doctorate) means the person has had to prove that they have studied the field extensively and have mastered it well enough to be considered an expert in it. This doesn't mean that the person's interpretation of their field is beyond question or debate; rather, it means that they at least know enough about the field to have an INFORMED interpretation (in other words, one that others ought at least to consider).

People who are **professors at a college or university** may safely be considered "scholars" because they have usually earned a graduate degree in their field of knowledge.

**People who publish books** can usually be considered "scholars" because most publishers only publish books that have been reviewed by two or more experts in a field, which means that at least a couple of experts have agreed that the author of the book is well enough informed about their chosen subject matter to be considered a scholar. Hence, a book may usually be considered a "scholarly" source.

**Articles in a journal published by a college or university** can be considered "scholarly" because "scholars" have approved those articles.

**Articles in a journal published by a scholarly group** such as the American Medical Association or the American Bar Association or the Modern Language Association can be considered "scholarly" because, once again, such articles have been reviewed by experts in the field.

**If you aren't sure** whether or not the group that publishes a journal is "scholarly" or not (for instance, maybe you've never heard of the Modern Language Association and so don't know that it is the association of college and university English professors), you can look at the section in the journal where the list of editors is given. Scholarly journals usually list not only the editors' names but also their academic credentials (what degrees they have earned, or where they are a professor). If a journal offers no such list, then chances are it is NOT a scholarly journal because if it were, it would list the names and credentials of its scholars. You can find this information by looking at a hard copy of the journal or by visiting the journal's webpage and searching for its list of editors.

**If you run across a random article on the Internet**, you need to ask at least two questions:

- Who wrote the article, and is that writer a "scholar" (see definition of scholar above)? If no credentials of the author are listed, then he or she is probably NOT a scholar. If no author is listed, then the source is definitely NOT a scholarly source.
- Is the article sponsored by a scholarly organization (such as a university or college or scholarly journal)? If so, it can usually be assumed to be a scholarly source.

Magazines like *Time* and *Newsweek* often have good information in them, but because they usually do not document how they got that information (whether it came from reliable, well-informed sources or not), and because the authors of their articles are not usually "scholars" (refer to definition above), they are not considered scholarly sources.

([http://www.millsaps.edu/academics/heritage\\_how\\_to\\_identify\\_scholarly\\_sources.php](http://www.millsaps.edu/academics/heritage_how_to_identify_scholarly_sources.php))

B. From Michael Engle, Cornell University: **“Scholarly or peer-reviewed journal articles** are written by scholars or professionals who are experts in their fields. In the sciences and social sciences, they often publish research results.

(<http://guides.library.cornell.edu/scholarlyjournals>)

65. **Each** word should have purpose. Think carefully about the words you choose – is there a better word? Can you say what you mean more succinctly? Have you checked a thesaurus to review synonyms?

66. Review multiple drafts. Do not just print off your work as soon as you finish it. Go over it. Then, go over it again. Ask someone else to proofread it as well. Be sure to review my writing tips to double-check easy-to-fix problems (e.g., do a “search” of your document for words such as “you” or “get” or “getting,” etc. Those are easy to find and replace).

67. Use multiple examples from multiple sources!

A. If I try to convince you to vote in the election (assuming you haven't decided yet), are you just going to take my word for it? Or, if I just say, “hey, you have a civic duty,” is that reason alone sufficient to convince most people? Of course not! I should also say things like this election is super important, by not voting you may be jeopardizing something you care about, voting requires that you become educated about the candidates and issues which are important to be engaged in your community, etc. The more reasons I use, the more likely I'll persuade with one or more of them.



B. We all know that some sources are just bad. Recall the examples I placed on ReggieNet that appear to be from ABC News but are actually bogus. Or, what if you were writing a report on climate change and you only found one source to support your claims – and that source happens to be a climate change denier?!? Your entire position would be based on just one source, and that source would be disputed by over 1700 of the world's leading experts! If you research multiple sources, you avoid this problem.

68. Avoid “filler” words that are vacuous in meaning, such as “true,” “truly,” “literally,” “do,” and “does.” This can also occur with the word “had.” For example:

- A. Avoid: “In order to develop a true understanding of politics, I read the newspaper.”
- B. Correct: “In order to develop an understanding of politics, I read the newspaper.”
- C. Avoid: “I do believe that climate change is happening.”
- D. Correct: “I believe that climate change is happening.”
- E. Avoid: “I had discovered that politics is interesting.”
- F. Correct: “I discovered that politics is interesting.”

69. Avoid the word “amongst.” This is a word commonly seen in British English, and many Americans incorrectly assume it is a formal word. Instead, we should simply say “among,” which is still considered formal in American English.

70. Similarly, we should avoid the word “judgement.” This is the British way of spelling the word. In American English, we simply spell it as “judgment.”

71. Avoid the word “towards.” In American English, we just spell the word as “toward,” without the “s.”

72. Avoid the problem of “apart” vs. “a part.” When discussing division or separation, we use the word “apart,” as in “politics is splitting us apart.” When discussing groups or categories, we use “a part,” such as “we all like to be a part of something bigger, which is why I am a Republican.”

73. Possessives – In today's texting generation, apparently the use of apostrophes for possessives (showing ownership) no longer occurs. This is a HUGE mistake. In proper writing – and even in normal, everyday, professional/business writing – the use of apostrophes to show possession is still required. Thus, you MUST use apostrophes accurately in your writing for this class:

- A. Avoid: “Trumps rhetoric about the economy is interesting.”
- B. Correct: “Trump's rhetoric about the economy is interesting.”
- C. Avoid: “We are looking at Democrat's position on this” (when speaking of multiple Democrats)
- D. Correct: “We are looking at Democrats' position on this” (when speaking of multiple Democrats)
- E. Avoid: “The Joneses house is beautiful”
- F. Correct: “The Jones' house is beautiful”

**74. If you have questions, ask ME, not someone else who may not know about my grammar tips or who may not be knowledgeable about writing mechanics.**

**\*\*Note:** You may think that grammatical conventions such as these are restrictive, perhaps even colonizing. You might be correct. However, they are also perceived as being important, particularly among scholars and potential employers. Therefore, it is in your best interest to master these NOW!!!