

GUIDE TO WRITING THE SENIOR THESIS



Cartoon courtesy of Michael Chambers, from Fletcher's Cave series.

Thanks to Nathaniel I. Córdova, Ph.D.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

GUIDE TO WRITING THE SENIOR THESIS.....	1
Table of Contents.....	2
I. Introduction & Basic Description	3
What should your paper accomplish?	3
II. Conducting Research.....	4
Framing Your Research Question (narrowing the scope of the project, developing a good research focus)..	4
Making Sense of the Data Collected	4
Articulating Findings and Insight	4
III. Some Foundational Questions on Rhetorical Analysis.....	4
What kind of text should I select? What kind of rhetorical criticism method should I use?	4
Identify the Text/Artifact You Want to Analyze	5
What Makes the Text Significant?	6
What Am I Supposed To Do As A Critic?	6
IV. Writing The Paper	7
Writing Conventions	7
Writing Mechanics	8
Writing Schedule & Stages.....	8
Blocking Steps	9
To whom should your paper be addressed?	10
What specific material or content should your paper cover?.....	10
How is the paper going to be evaluated?.....	10
V. Basics Of Revision	12
Revising Mechanics	12
Structural Revision.....	12
Substantive Revision	12
VI. Academic Integrity	12
VII. Conclusion	13

I. INTRODUCTION & BASIC DESCRIPTION

The thesis is an **original** analysis monograph of considerable length that deploys a systematic analysis and criticism of a rhetorical artifact or situation. The framework for your paper may come from any of your previous courses in rhetoric, or you may choose to make use of a critical perspective that you have not used previously but which is widely used in rhetorical studies. An alternative is to choose a combination of perspectives that allows you to explore the text and yield significant insight, but be sure the methods can be effectively combined. The framework should be appropriate for the artifact you have chosen, and for the questions you wish to answer about it. You will be expected to engage theory deeply, so you should be comfortable working with whatever theoretical perspective you choose. You will have to demonstrate engagement with primary texts and journal articles pertinent to your chosen theoretical approach. If you choose a critical approach that you have not studied deeply in a class, you will have considerable catching up to do before you can master that body of knowledge and can wield it cogently. Your work should demonstrate mastery of the rhetorical criticism and theory concepts studied throughout your course of study. One of our goals this semester is to produce a work of publishable quality.

One of our expectations is that the senior thesis will represent the culmination of your course of study in Rhetoric. As such, it should be evident from the quality of the finished product that you have worked for many weeks on the various tasks associated with this paper, including but not limited to: discovery and refinement of a research question, selection of an appropriate method(s), literature review of appropriate scholarship, the analysis itself and the preparation of the manuscript, conducting research, revising drafts, discussing your arguments with others, and asking colleagues to read sections of the paper as you write it. **It will be noticeable if your paper appears to have been written hastily.**

What should your paper accomplish?

Your paper should be a systematic **description, interpretation and evaluation** of a rhetorical text or artifact. As such, we expect that you will select a text, argue for its significance, describe and interpret it by using a particular critical methodology (or combination thereof) learned throughout your course of study, and offer critical insight derived from your analysis. Your paper should be clearly structured and argued, and must be **significant and relevant as criticism**. The paper should demonstrate your mastery of at least one particular critical approach for conducting rhetorical criticism. The paper should also demonstrate your rhetorical sensitivity as a critic. For the purposes of this paper, **rhetorical sensitivity** means your ability to recognize significant texts, to select an appropriate critical methodology, to structure your argument effectively, and to draw out insightful interpretations from your analysis.

Although the paper is a critical analysis of an artifact/text it should also examine context carefully. Your analysis should interrogate the text for traces of how context gives shape to the artifact, influences the artifact's emergence, values, strategies of rhetors, etc. This approach requires sophisticated research into the rhetorical field in which the artifact appears, including other rhetorical action (visual, mediated, bodily, etc.) that may have contributed to the text under scrutiny.

A critical analysis paper seeks to understand and explain the rhetorical power of a text. One perspective is that the rhetorical critic seeks to "unmask" or demystify how a text works or is put together to achieve particular purposes. At a **minimum** this approach looks carefully at the text, target audience (or constructed audience [think "second persona"]), and context in order to make determinations about what is it that "a text does and how it does it." Another way to think about your task without the baggage that the notion of "intent" carries is that rhetorical critics seek to understand and explain what a text "wills as it works," in other words, what is the social power of discourse and of the text. We will speak about this in great detail during the first few weeks of class.

II. CONDUCTING RESEARCH

In general the task of research involves some common processes in all disciplines: **1) posing clear and relevant questions, 2) selecting or constructing a method to identify, collect, analyze, and evaluate relevant data, 3) careful evaluation and interpretation of the data, and sources of evidence, and 4) clearly articulating your findings.** However, there are some crucial skills that all writers should master in order to conduct effective research. Some basic research skills that appear to be the source of significant frustration for students are:

Framing Your Research Question (*narrowing the scope of the project, developing a good research focus*).

Remember that a good paper requires that you think beyond the content of your class discussions, notes, and reading. Your research should move you toward making a concise claim *and developing* the critical apparatus to support that claim. A good place to start is by doing some exploratory writing on an issue of interest to you. Good questions you can ask to help you frame your focus include: *How do I feel about this issue? What are the most common positions others take in relation to this issue? What seems to be the critical point around which arguments about this issue revolve? Why is this issue significant or of interest? What are some underlying assumptions that I (or others) make about this subject? What would happen if I (or others) did not make those assumptions? What do my friends think about this issue? What do I think about their insights?*

Making Sense of the Data Collected

A key thing to keep in mind is to analyze, not summarize, your data. Your paper is not a report, but an argument you make. In order to make an effective argument you need to carefully consider other people's perspectives, their claims, reasons, and evidence. You should also think deeply about what is revealed by facts you may uncover in your research. *What relationships can you establish between what you have found and what you have learned in your coursework? What linkages are others making regarding the subject? Why are certain relationships made and not others? Will the data you found fit in the categories provided in particular theories or methodologies? Are there any contrary stances regarding the data?*

Articulating Findings and Insight

Besides expressing your insight, other concerns here include what to include or leave out, how to organize the findings, what logical sections to include, to what depth should you answer specific issues, what needs to be cited, how much textual evidence to include, and what evidence best supports your claims. We suggest you think about your paper as a story you want to tell. A good story should be coherent and effective in moving forward its plotline. Instead of cutting and pasting into your screen the bits and pieces you find when conducting research, ask yourself what story your findings tell. Now proceed to weave into a narrative those insights that will most effectively help you tell the story you want to tell. Always strive to make your story simple and straightforward for your reader to follow.

III. SOME FOUNDATIONAL QUESTIONS ON RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

What kind of text should I select? What kind of rhetorical criticism method should I use?

These choices are entirely up to you and are part and parcel of what reveals your rhetorical sensitivity. You can choose any method you like. As you explore the artifact you have selected you might get a sense that one critical method might be better than another one in explaining the power of the text. On the other hand, you might feel that no one method is best suited for engaging texts critically, and that instead, you

prefer to combine critical approaches. Our preference is that critics don't put on a methodological straightjacket before engaging a text. You should however, have a critic's confidence and understanding in matters of critical sensitivity that allows you to see method as a disciplined way of exploring a text, while remaining flexible enough to yield insights that materialize when looking at a text unconstrained by rigid pre-formulated schemes.

Think about why one critical approach strikes you as most appropriate. What do you see in the text that points in the direction of a particular methodology? Is there a better approach to criticism than pre-selecting a method and filtering the text through it? What do you gain when you engage a text critically and derive insight from a deep understanding of the power of discourse and what it "wills as it works?"

Feel free to select any strategic public discourse (advertisement, speeches, political discourse, images, monuments, etc.). We caution you against selecting texts that fall within the category of "literature" or poetry. Such "literary" artifacts have rhetorical significance, but since traditionally we don't conduct sustained analysis of such works, they are likely to take a bit longer for you to fully work into a proposal and finished thesis. If you find compelling a non-traditional artifact, or if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to check with the course instructor.

Identify the Text/Artifact You Want to Analyze

What brings you to that text? What kind of text is it? What drives your interest in that text? Does it accomplish something really well? Does it present you with a rhetorical problem, dilemma, or question you want to explore? Are you curious about its effects, apparent popularity or unpopularity? Here's an example:

One of the ads in the latest ad campaign for Victoria's Secrets shows a scantily clad woman dressed in black lingerie apparently walking through dark semi-deserted city streets. As the woman walks, a wind comes out of nowhere that pushes against her hair and outfit revealing more of her body. The lighting in the ad is never quite direct except during certain moments when it is used to spotlight the woman's body. Throughout the ad other images make quick appearances: a silhouette of a car, a man, another woman, some bursts of light. The phrase "What is sexy" written in big bold blocky letters, white against a black background, is flashed -- each word once. The ad ends with the stylized words Victoria's Secrets, large and white against the black background, receding slowly from the "front-most" part of the screen. The ad never once directly identifies a product to purchase, pricing information, or locations for a retailer nearest you.

First, you might consider an ad campaign rather than a single ad. Yet, for the purpose of this example: this ad seems to be different from other ads you might have encountered. It is not clear what the ad is trying to "sell" to the audience. The ad never asks us to purchase anything, nor gives us a clear sense of products we ought to purchase. Given that the ad airs during primetime and that the purpose of such advertising is to encourage consumption by the television audience, you might suspect the ad treats you as a consumer. But what is it that you are supposed to consume? You might be intrigued by how the ad is supposed to achieve its intended purpose as advertisement. **Therein lies your rhetorical question and curiosity.**

Systematic analysis of the ad's images, lighting, musical score (if any), time when it airs, messages flashed, camera angles, potential audiences, and other rhetorical elements might reveal that the purpose is not to present identifiable products for the consumer to purchase, but rather to imprint brand recognition in the mind of the audience. Moreover, ad designers seem to want the audience to identify the brand with a particular quality: "sexyness." You might not respond well to this ad. You might find it objectifying of

women. In effect, this ad requires the audience member to become a sort of “peeping tom.” As a budding rhetorical critic you may ask yourself questions about how the ad tries to establish such identifications, how it accomplishes such “imprinting” in the audience. You might also be interested in exploring the power of such visual images to motivate an audience, and how the concept of “sexy” is defined and linked to the brand Victoria’s Secrets. What about the power of mediation to put the audience member “in place?” Are you an audience member for this ad? How are the advertisers defining or imagining their audience? Finally, does this type of advertising function to prime audiences for subsequent messages? How so?

The above are only a small part of the questions that come to mind when first engaging that single ad. These questions will necessarily multiply as you study the Victoria’s Secrets ad campaign, and as you start to develop more theoretically and critically informed insight. Your desire to obtain answers to such questions drives your rhetorical interest in that artifact, and points to the kind of “unmasking and demystifying” that as rhetorical critics we seek to accomplish.

What Makes the Text Significant?

There are many ways to answer this question but you can frame your understanding of significance according to the following questions:

- a. **Is the text/artifact historically significant? Does the artifact emerge during a particularly important moment in history? Does it occasion or motivate changes? Is it a manifesto that defined a social movement or collective identity? Was it created or delivered by an important person? Does it encapsulate or reflect important historical circumstances?**
- b. **Is the text/artifact rhetorically significant? To a great extent it is your task as a critic to argue for the rhetorical significance of the text or artifact you select. Historical significance might add to rhetorical significance, but you should be prepared to argue for your own rationale of rhetorical significance. Rhetorical significance might entail the power of the text to effectuate changes in society, how well it meets expectations or requirements, its participation within cultural discourses, its status as carrier or condenser of cultural values, its specific use to motivate particular courses of action, participation in a particular genre, ethical or aesthetic dimensions that add depth to its rhetorical function, media of transmission and its implications, form it takes, and, of course, whatever claims you make regarding its rhetorical effectiveness. You might also want to think about how a given situation contributes to making a text or artifact rhetorically significant.**

What Am I Supposed To Do As A Critic?

In a **very basic** sense, your task as a critic is to read texts carefully so that you can describe, interpret, and evaluate their messages and implications. As a rhetorical critic the texts you select are bounded by what we’ve defined as “strategic public discourse.” Such texts can include visual representations, speeches, advertisement, films, political cartoons, the built environment (monuments, memorials), and more. Critics seek to explain how texts work in society because they understand that there is much power in rhetorical activity. As a rhetorical critic you will be making a sustained argument about the power and implications of a text. Your thesis is an attempt at making a case: deploying a claim and supporting it with sound evidence and reasoning. (*Please read the “What is a Text” and “What is Discourse” handouts for a thorough definition of those concepts*)

IV. WRITING THE PAPER

In its final form, your monograph should achieve a number of goals. It is important to note that you need not--and probably should not--write the paper in the order that these goals are listed (although the final version of the paper will present them in some approximation of this order). **Keep in mind that the structure should help you deploy your argument and bring your reader along, not straight-jacket you and frustrate the reader.**

Writing Conventions

Introduction: The introduction of a paper should at the very least accomplish the following: 1) describe the problem or situation to which the paper responds. Often this is part of setting up the context for the case you will deploy. You will likely also hear me tell you to add “tension” to your description. Good rhetorical criticism highlights the underlying forces or contestation that shape the artifacts, that constitute the rhetorical response (text), or from which the text is “motivated” (see Burke); 2) Clearly state what you intend to prove, demonstrate, or argue. In other words the introduction should contain a clear thesis statement; 3) Explain the significance of the text/artifact and the situation (see below for an explanation of rhetorical significance); 4) Orient the audience by providing a clear overview of the project, including how you will proceed in deploying your argument, and goals you want to accomplish. This last step amounts to describing a structure for your paper.

Body: The body of the paper usually includes three main subsections.

First, it should describe the critical perspective or assumptions that you will use to analyze the artifact. This discussion should link the perspective with the goals of the analysis in some fashion. Why is this approach appropriate for this artifact, or for your particular ends? It should also make explicit the steps that will be followed in the analysis to be performed.

Second, the body should locate the artifact in the context appropriate for the analysis that will follow. This step, usually referred to as a **literature review**, is properly an explanation of how your argument fits with/within existing literature in the field. The literature review “gathers in” a coherent account the most salient arguments (literature) that inform your study. It should help you describe the knowledge that exists concerning the issues you are treating, including approaches taken by others to examine those issues. **It should also point to interrogatives that emerge from such an account.** Quite often your argument emerges out of those questions (interrogatives) raised by the body of work you are reviewing (or is shaped by it). Remember that a literature review is not supposed to gather all the threads that exist regarding the issue you want to treat. **Only select those items that you consider most salient, and that help you make your way through the terrain you want to explore.** An easy way to write a literature review is to craft a narrative that explains who has done what in the field, what issues were they trying to understand or explain, what problems are solved **and remain extant, and how are we poised to continue the inquiry (how your argument fits).**

Third, the body should analyze the artifact using the critical perspective that it has described. This section should walk the reader through the analytical process in some systematic fashion, drawing on evidence from the artifact to support the observations or conclusions reached. This third section should constitute the bulk of the body. If you think it is appropriate you can divide the analysis into various subsections with different headings. Make sure the headings help you move your argument forward. So, instead of having a section heading labeled “Point Two,” think

of a better way to convey what argument you make in that section. Remember that you are a rhetorical critic. Don't just "tell us," instead "show us."

Conclusion: A conclusion should do more than simply close off the paper. It should not only summarize your thesis and supporting points, it should reinforce it by deriving consequences from your analysis. You should also answer the "so what?" question in this section of the paper. In other words, what do we get for all this flurry of activity? Bear in mind that conclusions are as important as any other section of the paper. Don't expect that a one-paragraph conclusion will do the trick. Oftentimes you start tying together your argument before the conclusion proper. Discuss the implications of your analysis. What have you found, and why does it matter? What are the implications for the questions you asked in beginning the project? How do your findings fit into the existing body of knowledge? Are they consistent with current theories? Do they provide new insights? Do they suggest a need for a new theory? It may help to think of this section as a "discussion" rather than "conclusion."

Writing Mechanics

The final version of your thesis must be submitted in hard copy and electronic copy in Microsoft word, **single side of page only**. If you want the final thesis returned, then you must submit 2 hard copies.

1. The paper must be **typed** and **double spaced**, using a 10 point typeface (preferably Helvetica)
2. Margins must be one inch all around.
3. A **header** with the student's last name followed by page number must be placed on the upper right hand corner of each page (half an inch from the edge of the paper).
4. Include a cover page for your paper. Center the title of the paper one-third of the way down the page. One inch below that, write your full name, course, and section number.
5. Most papers are submitted electronically, but when they are turned in in hard copy, staple the paper in the upper left corner. Do not turn in your paper on a "binder" or presentation "jacket" of any sort.
6. Make sure that I received your email and that I was able to successfully open any attachments included.
7. You may choose either MLA or APA for your format and referencing rules; whichever you choose, follow it carefully. Spell-check and proofread all submitted material carefully. After marking 10 grammatical or spelling errors on a submission, I will return the paper to you for correction and resubmission; the corrected paper will be graded as late.

Writing Schedule & Stages

I expect you to be responsible for your own research and writing process, and to meet with me as scheduled. You will be assigned a time that is yours to work one-on-one for the semester with me after the first few weeks of discussion are over. Before you come to these meetings, think about how we can best spend those thirty minutes working on your project.

Pre-writing/Research: You should turn in a document that includes the following: two topics that you consider promising possibilities for your thesis; a list of the rhetorical artifacts that you have secured which are related to each topic (it is not enough to know that the materials exist; you must have them in your possession); a preliminary bibliography of articles that pertain to your subject(s); a thorough list of preliminary research questions and issues related to each topic (these questions should serve to clarify the rhetorical significance of your topics). From here we might be able to discern specific lines of argument, and a general thesis for each option. As you come up with questions, ideas and issues it might be good to write brief descriptions of the situations that give rise to those problems or concerns. Such descriptions

might serve as set-up context for the introduction of your paper. **This document is due on: September 5, 2007. Weight: 5% of final grade**

Prospectus: This document explains the "prospects" or possibilities of your chosen subject. The prospectus should present the thesis topic, provide appropriate background on the topic, justify the subject as rhetorically significant, clarify what theoretical approach will be employed in studying the document and explain why that approach is suitable, and outline the questions that your study will seek to answer. The purpose of a prospectus is to demonstrate: **1) significance**, scope, and originality of the study, **2) your competence** in conducting the study, and **3) a concise and "tight" argument**. A prospectus will further include a **review of the scholarly literature** in rhetoric and fields related to your topic; this should demonstrate that you are not simply rehashing an issue that others have already studied in the same way.

You might ask, how do I do all of this in seven pages? Consider the prospectus a six- to eight-page paper in which you explain what motivates this study (context, rationale), lay out your thesis, what issues (critical and theoretical) are of key relevance in understanding your arguments, and the approach you will take to demonstrate and support your claims. If you were to write a little more than a page for each of those sections, and included a conclusion, you would end up with five or six pages. The key to a prospectus is to have as clear an argument, rationale, and plan of action, as possible. A preliminary bibliography must be included listing the artifacts to be analyzed and related theoretical and critical research. **Due on September 21, 2007. Weight: 15% of the final grade.** Please make sure this prospectus is no more than 8 pages.

Blocking Steps

Critical Perspective & Theoretical Insight Section: At this point you submit 4-6 new pages which explain the suitability of the critical perspective and theoretical insights you have chosen for your topic, the assumptions underlying those perspectives, and the key theoretical concepts as they relate to your chosen subject. You should have completed and refined your scholarly literature review. This is not the time for analysis proper, although it perforce includes your critical assessment. As you work with further drafts of your paper some of the theoretical and critical insights that you introduce here may be moved to a later section of your paper as you use those concepts to build arguments. If there are controversies about your perspective or insights that your study should help clarify, now is the time to bring that up. If you are working with concepts from several different theoretical perspectives, you should now offer a working explanation for how those concepts fit together. **Due on October 5, 2007. Weight: 10 % of the final grade.**

Argument Analysis I: For this step you offer 5 or more pages in which you use your critical and theoretical constructs to analyze your chosen subject. Good work at this point will do more than merely describe your subject; good work will build arguments either about the way your rhetorical texts work or about how the critical and theoretical constructs facilitate insight. **Due on October 12, 2007. Weight: 5% of the final grade.**

Argument Analysis II: This is not a revision of what you turned in the previous week. This is instead an extension of that work. A further five or more pages of argument-centered analysis should be submitted. **Due on October 18, 2007 (you can turn this in earlier if you are leaving for break early). Weight: 5% of the final grade.**

Preliminary Draft: At this point the paper is completely written, but still needs editorial work. You have extended your analysis, connected all the parts, linked theory throughout your analysis, and drawn your preliminary conclusions. Perhaps I can suggest where more theory needs to be included, where there is a

weak application, or whether you need to do significant reorganization. This **preliminary draft is not graded but is crucial for successful completion of the thesis project. Due on October 26, 2007.**

Draft Stage: By this point, you should have a polished draft of the entire paper, including all the trimmings (page numbers, title, bibliography, etc.). This is essentially a completed product, albeit one that will be revised based on input from peers and from me. This version should be at least as polished as the final work you would turn in for an ordinary class. As such, this is the most important step in determining your final grade. **Two copies of the draft due on November 9, 2007; one is posted to Hand Ins and the second is posted to exchange or e-mailed to your peer respondent. Weight: 25% of final grade.**

Peer Review: You will be asked to read and critique the drafts of two members of the group and to **post those drafts with comments on November 16, 2007.** A second copy of your critiques should be posted to Hand Ins. **Weight: 5% of final grade.**

Final Version: This version will be revised significantly based on critiques from the peer reviewer and from me. **This version is due on November 30, 2007. Weight: 25% of final grade.**

Oral Presentation: This is an oral presentation of your thesis (approximately ten minutes long), open to a departmental audience. **Due: TBA. Weight: 5% of final grade.**

To whom should your paper be addressed?

Your paper should be addressed to a **general audience** composed of your peers and other members of the academic community (staff and faculty). Above all, you should consider your paper to be of the quality necessary to submit to a journal in our field. You should meet the highest professional standards in writing your paper.

What specific material or content should your paper cover?

At a minimum, the paper should cover:

1. Context for the text, artifact, or situation you have selected to analyze
2. A careful description of the text or artifact along with its intended purpose and its intended audience (and any other audiences)
3. A detailed explanation of rhetorical strategies employed, and methods for dissemination of the text (including media channels)
4. An explanation of what literature (theoretical and critical) has been published that bears significantly on your analysis
5. Your critical analysis explaining the text
6. Your conclusions

Please see below for further detail.

How is the paper going to be evaluated?

We will evaluate your paper (including electronic/online submissions) for responsiveness to the assignment, correctness (**grammatical, structural and substantive**), adherence to stated guidelines, and demonstration of mastery of the material assigned and covered. Grades represent the degree to which the papers, **in my estimation,** manifest these qualities.

We will grade for correctness in use of your chosen critical approach. We will examine your analysis carefully for argument logic (see the critical thinking rubric handout on the website) and appropriate use of textual evidence. In addition, we will also carefully examine the depth of research you have conducted in order to contextualize and make your argument, and the level of insight you generate from your analysis. Finally, we will also take seriously into consideration grammatical errors (punctuation, sentence structure, number, tense, conjugation, etc.).

In evaluating depth of research we expect you to have at least ten different sources, and that those sources include relevant books, and journal articles. Remember that your literature review must demonstrate your depth of research. For instance, we expect that as you conduct research to write your literature review, you will seek academic journals and books and not rely solely on websites. **Tip: *we don't much like websites as sources for research (check with us on exceptions).*** **Part of evaluating depth of research will include a determination, to the best of our ability, of your knowledge of the source material.** Therefore, read thoroughly any source you decide to use substantially to support your case. We will ask you questions about your research during the weekly meetings.

What constitutes an A/A- paper?

The B paper meets all the standards stipulated in this guide. The A/A- paper exceeds the expectations stipulated in this guide in two primary ways: 1) the quality of the insight derived from the analysis; and, 2) the depth of rhetorical significance evident in the paper. Both of these points evidence a concern for rhetorical sensitivity and mastery of the literature at your disposal, of the theoretical and critical apparatus that you deploy in your analysis, and of their effective integration.

A Few Things to Keep in Mind

1. Remember that the writing process includes a set of interrelated activities. Some of those activities are: brainstorming, free-writing, outlining, and revision. Give yourself plenty of time to engage fully in this writing process.
2. The thesis is the longest piece of writing you will do for this major. Consequently, in order to generate a good paper you should start the writing process early.
3. Do not wait until you have "it" (the idea or paper) all ironed out in your head before you start to write. There might be sections of your paper that you can start to write (or write about) fairly early in the process. Do not think of writing as something that comes after you have "figured it all out." Such a perspective conceives of writing merely as communication and not as a process of critical thinking and inquiry.
4. As you move from outlining to writing feel free to start the paper anywhere and with any idea. You don't have to start "at the beginning."
5. Give yourself enough time to visit your instructor and ask questions about the assignment, run ideas by him/her, or submit drafts for revision. As a corollary, remember to schedule a visit to the writing center for help with the writing process.
6. The thesis demonstrates your mastery of the subject matter covered in your course of study. As such, it requires that you bring knowledge acquired through discussions, readings, and research together into a coherent whole and that you extend that thinking beyond the confines of the classroom. The thesis is a synthesis of knowledge that demonstrates your ability to integrate, critique, and apply your understanding of specific subjects.

The thesis should be free of grammatical and mechanical writing errors. You should make every effort to ensure that the paper you turn in to the instructor and peer evaluators excels in all respects.

V. BASICS OF REVISION

The first thing to remember is that the editing and re-writing process does not mean that what you wrote was awful. First drafts of papers are just that, first drafts. All writers edit, rewrite and revise their papers substantially. Essentially, your editing might take any or all of the following four tasks: 1) **adding material**, 2) **cutting material**, 3) **replacing material**, or 4) **moving material around**. Although you can do all those tasks easily in a computer, we recommend that you do at least one revision in printed form. Your eyes are likely to catch things in print that they might skip over on the screen. In addition, remember to give your paper to another person to read. The insights of another reader regarding all aspects of your paper can be invaluable. You might want to start by dividing the revision process into three categories: **mechanical, structural, and substantive**.

Revising Mechanics

Revisions concerning the “mechanics” of your paper should focus on spelling, grammatical correctness, proper usage, subject-verb agreement, consistency in names, titles, reference style, citation, bibliographic format, page formatting, and making sure that your paper meets all instructor requirements. Is everything that should be cited referenced appropriately?

Structural Revision

Structural revisions should focus on the structure or organization of the paper. This usually includes how ideas are organized, how you deploy your arguments, the flow of the arguments within subsections, and in particular how the argument hangs together across the whole paper. Does your title give the reader a good idea of what you want to argue? Does your conclusion gather the threads of your arguments and summarize them effectively, drawing insight for your readers? Are the subheadings helpful in conveying the flow of your argument to the reader? Are your topic sentences or meta-statements helpful in connecting your thoughts and carrying your argument forward?

Substantive Revision

Finally, **substantive revision** refers to careful consideration of your argument, your reasoning, use of evidence, depth of analysis, appropriate use of critical methodology, and insight derived from your research. **We suggest you start with higher order concerns like structure and arguments and leave the mechanical revision process for the end.**

A simple technique for checking argument flow: Outline your thesis and the topic sentences (sub-theses) of all paragraphs. Read them carefully. Do they correspond to the argument you want to make in your paper? Does your argument flow, or are there leaps in logic, bad transitions, and tangential points? Do you need to revise your thesis in light of your sub-points and findings?

VI. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

As a student in Willamette University you are a member of a community that values excellence in academic, personal and professional pursuits. Since our community at Willamette University is dedicated to achieving excellence in all of those areas we require that all members of our community (students, faculty, administrators, and support staff) accept and live up to the highest standards of personal, ethical and moral conduct. The Center for Academic Integrity has defined academic integrity as “a commitment, even in the face of adversity, to five fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility.”

In order to live according to such values we are required not to engage in any type of academic or intellectually dishonest practice. A commitment to high personal integrity, and recognition of the fact that our actions have repercussions for the community at large is required of us all.

These expectations are not only the result of our specific mission as an academic community and institution of higher learning. Cheating, plagiarism and other acts of academic dishonesty are selfish, community disintegrating practices. All of us, individuals and communities, require trust in order to flourish. Our actions help to shape the world in which we live, and that which our children will inherit. To the extent that we engage in dishonest practices we lay the groundwork for an uncivil society.

Willamette University is held in the highest regard across the nation. Its students and faculty are considered top-flight. Much of that high regard stems directly from our commitment to excellence and our dedication to the highest principles of academic integrity. The value of our student's education, and the reputation of our faculty and University are measured directly by the trust placed in the quality and integrity of our academic community. Hence, as we affirm the value of our community, we see failure to honor high ethical standard as a significant offense.

As students of Rhetoric we understand that our field of study requires a high emphasis on moral character. Quintillian's definition of Rhetoric, "the good man [person] speaking well," reveals a recognition of the fact that in all pursuits a commitment to high ethical standards is the foundation from which excellence can emerge and thrive. Our expectation is that our students will live up to that commitment. Our commitment is to making a difference in the lives we touch, and to the development and enrichment of academic, personal and professional excellence.

VII. CONCLUSION

As a student in Rhetoric and Media Studies your thesis reflects not a simplistic or popular rhetorical analysis, but a scholarly one that facilitates our understanding of rhetorical activity.

As a critic you are supposed to make a case that describes, interprets, and evaluates the power of a text. However, since your argument is itself an interpretation that others can contest you are expected to demonstrate the significance and relevance of your critique. So always operate with the following questions in mind: Who cares? Why is my case significant or important to anyone? So what? What are the consequences of my argument (for society, for rhetorical criticism, for the understanding of rhetoric, etc.)?

For example, having written a wonderful critique of the **Victoria's Secret** ads you might argue that your perspective highlights the power of certain strategies to position the television viewer in relationship to a brand. Such an understanding might be liberating in helping audiences be more careful about their viewing practices, and in recognizing strategies by which marketers seek to exert influence. You also might argue about the consequences of the objectifying gaze that uses an overt sexualization of a woman's body in particular ways. We leave the analysis up to you. The important point is that as a critic you are widening the scope or frame for understanding the implications of rhetorical activity.

It is our expectation that the semester paper will represent the culmination of your course of study in Rhetoric, and that it will be a product of publishable quality.