

RHET 4950: DISASTER RHETORIC (SPECIAL TOPIC, SPRING 2022)

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MWF will vary based on week
Class time: TR 12:30-1:45

What are office hours? A chance to get questions answered, a time for me to get to know you a little better, a place to discuss careers, graduate school... and lots of other things too. I tend to be around a lot more than "official" hours. So if these hours don't work, let me know. We'll figure out some better times. I encourage you to stop by!

Course Description

(for this particular section of RHET 4950):

Study of advanced approaches to rhetorical criticism. The class examines cultural and political responses to a variety of different kinds of disasters. The genre of disaster rhetoric is further defined.

Course Objectives

1. To learn different approaches in the field of rhetorical studies and to learn how to choose which approaches are appropriate for a given critical text.
2. To argue effectively for why a particular text should be considered a critical text, and thus, worthy of analysis.
3. To write a rhetorical analysis that synthesizes a variety of theoretical perspectives and places the critical text appropriately.
4. To support claims about a critical text using effective arguments.

Do you really want to know how your professors think? Read the syllabus!

WHY DISASTERS?

There are several reasons why I first came up with this particular class, and why I continue to teach it:

1. Disaster rhetoric sits at the intersection of several disciplines: communication, psychology, political science, sociology, and government. It's essentially the perfect example of the liberal arts.
2. Disaster rhetoric is relevant. Disasters impact all parts of our world. I began my doctoral program by meeting up with a hurricane named Andrew. I've been struck by the ways in which we have talked about disasters: past, present, and future. FEMA notes that Georgia has averaged a major disaster per year since 1953. If indeed we're more likely to see more frequent and more serious disasters, we really should seek to understand how they impact us, because how we discuss them and report about them impacts how we choose to act (or not act).
3. Disaster rhetoric isn't just about crisis -- otherwise, you'd be in my Crisis Communication class next fall. There's an important future orientation that we'll explore: how much risk are we willing to accept to prevent or mitigate disasters, and how we make arguments about situations that likely will happen, but we're not quite sure when. And as you'll see, rhetoric impacts culture.

Textbook and Readings:

There is one textbook, and additional readings that will be in Georgia View:

Montano, Samantha. *Disasterology: Dispatches from the Frontlines of the Climate Crisis*. New York: Front Row, 2021.

Cost: about \$25 at the bookstore and \$15 for an e-copy. The Montano book is a first-person account of being a disaster and emergency management researcher. Her book is concerned with the "so what" about this class, and your reflections about the book will be part of your participation grade. The other readings are designed to give you tools to better analyze disaster rhetoric.

SO WHAT WILL WE DO?

The course is divided into four basic parts:

1. Introduction to rhetorical criticism. If you've had one of the rhetorical criticism courses (RHET 4500, RHET 4305 or RHET 4315), this should be review. For those who have not, then this will serve as a basic introduction to the field of rhetorical criticism.
2. Learn a bit of history of some of the larger disasters to have taken place within the United States, particularly in the 20th and 21st centuries. Much of this history will come in the form of addresses, songs, and other texts.
3. Apply theory and text. Application – Throughout the course, specific artifacts will be examined through a close textual analysis of an artifact of the class's and/or the instructor's choosing. Students will be doing mini rhetorical criticisms in class on most days, with our goal to extend the previous readings to particular types of rhetorical artifacts. The best way to learn rhetorical criticism is to learn by doing.
4. Completing a rhetorical analysis, which we'll do in stages.

MORE OF WHAT YOU REALLY NEED TO KNOW: CAN I SKIP THIS CLASS? (ALSO KNOWN AS THE CLASS ATTENDANCE POLICY)

Our predominant mode of learning will be through class discussion. This class will succeed to the extent that everyone comes to class ready to discuss, whether it's through participating in various activities, or engaging in post-class discussion.

I want to strike a balance between too much grace and being too strict. And since we don't know what will happen with COVID or other diseases, I also want to balance safety with your attendance. Accordingly, here is my attendance policy (note: if you had me last semester, this is VERY different):

- You get **2 free absences** for which you don't have to provide any reason.
- If you're sick, let me know. Email/call/etc. I'm like most professors: if you let me know ahead of time, I'll probably move mountains to help you. But if you wait until several weeks after the fact, well, I'm probably not going to be as accommodating. If you let me know right away, I'll consider the absence excused as long as it's not habitual. In other words, if you're absent 8 days in a row, I'm probably going to ask for some kind of medical documentation. But if you have a fever and can't make it to class, or if you're showing some kind of symptoms, then just tell me that ASAP. Those absences won't count toward the 2 free absences, provided you let me know in a timely way.
- **Official Georgia College activities are considered excused.** If you're in a sport or other officially sanctioned activity, just have one of your coaches or advisor send me your schedule.
- If there's something else that's going on, let me know. I'll let you in on a couple of secrets: (1) *Honesty is the best policy. If you're straight with me, I'll be much more amenable to err on the side of grace.* (2) *If something comes up, and you're sitting at your 2 absences, again - let me know ahead of time.* Things happen, and I'm much more likely to work with someone who tells me what's happening as opposed to someone who I haven't seen in weeks.
- Anything after the 2 free absences could result in a 2% penalty on your final course average. For example, missing 5 times *without letting me know* = 2 1/2 weeks of the semester. That means you're not available to be a part of the class discussion nearly 20% of the time, which impacts how you're able to participate in the class and ultimately what you can learn in the class.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS (AKA, HOW WILL I BE GRADED?)

- **2/3 of your grade will be based on your written assignments (drafts and the final paper)**
- **1/3 of your grade will be based on your preparation for class and class discussion.**

The written assignments will be the various parts of your final paper. Instead of doing the paper at once, you will do the paper in 6 different portions:

- **Stage 1:** Your argument for your topic. In this part of the paper, you'll pick some kind of catastrophe or disaster, either from the past, present, or future disaster. Essentially, you'll answer the question: "So what?" Why is this worth examining?"
- **Stage 2:** You'll do an annotated bibliography of what has been discussed about your particular topic. I'll expect a minimum of 6 sources that discuss your topic. I look at this stage as a chance for you to discover what's out there, and I fully expect that you'll add to your list of sources as the semester goes on. This will then be refined into an actual literature review when you turn the final draft in.
- **Stage 3:** You'll describe the rhetorical approach you wish to take, and why that approach is an appropriate one. You'll also tell me how you've limited the topic - what specific part of the topic are you going to explore?
- **Stage 4:** Conducting the analysis. You'll apply your method to your topic. This will be a significant portion of the paper.
- **Stage 5:** Implications/conclusion: You'll consider the implications of your analysis. In other words, "So what? Where do we go from here?"
- **Stage 6:** The final version of the paper. The final paper will be 12-15 pages, and will consist of what you've done in stages 1-5, with appropriate style and content edits based on previous feedback, as well as what you have learned throughout the course. The final paper will also have a minimum of 6-8 sources.

Please note: My expectation is that you'll write a paper of sufficient quality that it could be submitted to regional academic conferences (i.e., Georgia Undergraduate Research Conference, Southern States Communication Association, etc.).

You'll also present on your paper *before* you turn it in. This is by design. In most cases, when one presents their final version of a project, it's too late to make substantive changes. I want you to do the presentation at a time when you still have the time to make changes. This is more of a *formative rather than a summative* presentation. In other words, I don't expect that you have all the answers as of the time of the presentation. Rather, it's a chance for you to try out your ideas and analysis, and to see if they make sense to others. My guess is that most of you will present for 5-7 minutes, which will then leave us about 5-7 minutes or so to discuss each of the presentations afterward. We'll space out the presentations over three days to allow us time to discuss each paper.

You'll find the rubric for the final paper on the last page of the syllabus. When considering all course requirements, grammar will be considered in evaluating the final grade. Should there be excessive errors, particularly if those errors impact understanding, I reserve the right to return the assignment ungraded and ask for it to be done correctly and/or to lower the grade on the assignment. This is an upper-level course in the department; I do expect that your attention to detail will be greater than that of a 100-level course. I strongly encourage you to read the paper before you turn it in. I expect good papers from you!

TELL ME MORE ABOUT THAT PARTICIPATION PART... WHAT IF I DON'T LIKE TO SPEAK UP IN CLASS? WILL I STILL DO WELL?

The short answer: Yes.

The longer answer: I believe in both pre-class and post-class discussion. I've refined my thoughts over the years, but here's how I think about this topic: as professors and teachers, we typically have you read an assignment, then file it away and go on to something else. That just teaches you how to check items off a list. You'll find that I'm a very big proponent of what's called "spiral learning" -- we may talk about something at the beginning of the semester in a small amount of detail, and then come back to it with progressively more depth later on. Part of what makes a class interesting is how you make connections between items that we discuss throughout the semester, and how you make sense of what we do in this class in conjunction with what you do in other classes. So I don't consider each class day "one and done." So you'll find on occasion post-class discussion topics on Georgia View.

However, I have found that students have sometimes abused this policy, and have waited until the very last week of the semester to turn in discussion posts. That's not spiral learning. That's just procrastination.

Accordingly, here's my new policy: if you have responded to the initial question(s) in the post-discussion in a timely way (within two class periods after the initial question), you can then add on to your discussion afterwards.

In some cases, they'll be regular discussion board posts open to a full class discussion. In other cases, they'll be questions you submit to me. Expect that I'll regularly provide you opportunity to bring up questions that you have about the readings -- after all, for many of you, this will be a way of approaching communication that you've not really done before, and I figure there will be lots of questions. And I encourage you to come to me individually as well, whether it be through office hours, email, or other ways.

I'll let you know in class if we'll have post-discussion forums, and let you know where to find them as well.

Expect that most of our class discussion won't be just going over the readings, but rather, *applying* the readings to contemporary issues, using the readings as examples of how to do rhetorical analysis, and so forth.

Should I find that y'all aren't coming to class prepared and willing to participate, I reserve the right to offer unannounced reading quizzes, and the right to change my grading policy to allow for such quizzes. (And yes, I've done that before. I'd rather not do it again.)

JOURNALING... WHAT AND WHY?

I will have you doing some journals for this class, but they're going to be quite different than what I've done in the past. The expectation is that you'll turn in something **before class*** with the following frequencies:

- 90% of the time = A
- 80% of the time = B
- 70% of the time = C
- 60% of the time = D
- Less than 60% of the time = F

**Before class doesn't mean 12:29 p.m. I want to make sure that I have time to read through your entries before class so that I have time to incorporate the questions and ideas you bring up into our discussion. I recognize that's not always possible, but getting those entries to me by 9:00 a.m. gives me the best chance to look over them and adapt what I do to where you are (as an individual and as a class).*

What I'm calling journals really consists of what we might consider traditional journaling (i.e., I give you a prompt that you write about before class), as well as a more free-form place to share questions or thoughts that you have (since I'm the only one who will see these journals, feel free to ask questions about the readings, struggles/concerns, or observations and ideas you want me to see). If I have a specific question/questions about the readings I want you to think about, I'll put that on Georgia View. *Otherwise, if I don't tell you otherwise, then use the "journal entry" as a place to tell me what you found most interesting, most confusing, or something you want to make sure that we discuss when it comes to the readings.*

Since I recognize that not everyone is comfortable sharing in a large group setting, I want you to have a place where you can show me, "Hey, Dr. Dreher, I am really engaging with the readings, and just because I don't say much in class doesn't mean that I don't care...."

Also, I know that some of you write more quickly than others, and I know that what we call "pre-writing" (such as having you write at the beginning of the class) is easier for some than others. By using this format, I am trying to give you a little more time to think and reflect.

I won't put letter grades on each journal entry. Rather, if you've put in reasonable effort (i.e., more than a sentence or two), I'll call it good. To be honest, I want the journals to help you focus in for the discussion we'll have in class. And my guess is that you'd rather have journals than pop quizzes every day. :)

Georgia College Official Policies...

Religious Observance Policy

Students are permitted to miss class in observance of religious holidays and other activities observed by a religious group of which the student is a member without academic penalty. Exercising of one's rights under this policy is subject to the GC Honor Code. Students who miss class in observance of a religious holiday or event are required to make up the coursework missed as a result from the absence. The nature of the make-up assignments and the deadline for completion of such assignments are at the sole discretion of the instructor. Failure to follow the prescribed procedures voids all student rights under this policy.

Assistance for Student Needs Related to Disability

If you have a disability as described by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504, you may be eligible to receive accommodations to assist in programmatic and physical accessibility. The Student Disability Resource Center can assist you in formulating a reasonable accommodation plan and in providing support in developing appropriate accommodations to ensure equal access to all GC programs and facilities. Course requirements will not be waived, but accommodations may assist you in meeting the requirements. For documentation requirements and for additional information, we recommend that you contact the Student Disability Resource Center located in Russell Library 109 at 478-445-5931.

Academic Honesty

The integrity of students and their written and oral work is a critical component of the academic process. The submission of another's work as one's own is plagiarism and will be dealt with using the procedures outlined in the GC Catalog. Remember that allowing another student to copy one's own work violates standards of academic integrity.

Student Rating of Instruction Survey

Given the technological sophistication of Georgia College students, the student opinion survey is being delivered through an online process. Your constructive feedback plays an indispensable role in shaping quality education at Georgia College. All responses are completely confidential and your name is not stored with your responses in any way. In addition, instructors will not see any results of the opinion survey until after final grades are submitted to the University. An invitation to complete the online opinion survey is distributed to students near the end of the semester. Your participation in this very important process is greatly appreciated.

Student Use of Copyrighted Materials

As a student your ability to post or link to copyrighted material is governed by United States copyright law. The law allows for students to post or link to copyrighted materials within the course environment when the materials are pertinent to course work. Students are expected to adhere to the stipulations of the Georgia College Honor Code, which addresses plagiarism. Violations are subject to disciplinary action. Policy recognizes that exclusive rights of copyright holders are balanced by limitations on those rights under federal copyright law, including the right to make a fair use of copyrighted materials. The absence of a copyright notice or symbol on a work does not denote a lack of copyright. Failure to comply with this policy, including federal copyright laws, may result in restriction or loss of university network access and/or disciplinary action through the Office of Student Life. For questions involving copyright issues, please consult the GC Office of Legal Affairs. Refer to the USG Policy on the Use of Copyrighted Works at <https://www.usg.edu/copyright>.

Georgia College Official Policies... continued

Electronic Recording Policy

Electronic video and/or audio recording is not permitted during any class unless the student obtains permission from the instructor and every student present. If permission is granted, any distribution of the recording is prohibited. Violation of this policy is grounds for removal from the class and referral for disciplinary action. Students granted specific electronic recording accommodations from Disability Services do not require special permission; however, the instructor must be notified. Any distribution is prohibited.

COVID-19

The health and safety of our community will always remain our top priority. Although not required, we strongly encourage students to get a COVID-19 vaccine. Similarly, unvaccinated individuals are also strongly encouraged to continue wearing a mask or face covering in the classroom as well as at social gatherings. Vaccinated individuals may also want to consider wearing a mask or face covering while indoors.

Please consult the [university's website](#) for COVID related updates and resources. (Updated January 6, 2022)

Academic Grievances or Appeals

An academic grievance or appeal is an allegation by a student of substantial and/or unjustified deviation, to the student's detriment, from policies, procedures and/or requirements regarding admission, grading policies, special agreements, instructor's requirements and academic requirements of the University. Students shall have the right to file academic grievances or appeals according to the procedures approved by the University and outlined in the University Catalog.

Fire Drills

Fire drills will be conducted annually. In the event of a fire alarm, students will exit the building in a quick and orderly manner through the nearest hallway exit. Learn the floor plan and exits of the building. Do not use elevators. If you encounter heavy smoke, crawl on the floor so as to gain fresh air. Assist disabled persons and others if possible without endangering your own life. Assemble for a head count on the front lawn of main campus or other designated assembly area.

SO WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT ELECTRONICS IN THE CLASSROOM?

There are times where they can be helpful. We may want or need to look up particular facts together. That said, use the power for good. If I find that you're using your laptop/tablet, phone for shopping, YikYak, Instagram, etc., I will note that in terms of your class participation, and may ask you to read aloud what's on your screen...

WHAT ELSE SHOULD YOU KNOW ABOUT ME?

- *One thing you'll find about me is that my attitude isn't about "Let's see how I can take away points," but rather, "Let's talk about what you're thinking about. How can I better help you refine your thinking and help you to make better arguments and write better papers?"*
- *How do I get an "A" in this class (the question that always seems to be asked)? Participate, whether it's through in class or your journals, and make good arguments. It's really that simple.*

MORE ABOUT THIS CLASS... AKA WHY DISASTERS, PART 2...

The American experience when it comes to a variety of disasters has been tremendously mixed. Some areas recover quickly; others take years and sometimes decades to return to where they were. There are a variety of different reasons for the difference, many structural and political, some even based on the type of disaster, but communication also plays a role. We'll explore that role together.

I'll admit up front that your instructor has a special passion for the people of Louisiana post-Katrina. I have relatives who live in Louisiana and have been touched by multiple hurricanes. Louisiana alone has suffered through two major hurricanes in 2020, and of course, Hurricane Ida in 2021. For some Gulf area residents, even 15 years later, Katrina has not gone away, and it never will. And since Katrina is arguably the disaster talked about the most in our discipline's literature, we'll spend a little more time on Katrina as opposed to other disasters. Given that FEMA's own disaster declaration page lists 4,632 emergency declarations in the United States since 1953, Katrina isn't the only thing we'll discuss. (<https://www.fema.gov/disaster/declarations>)

When former U.S. Representative Dennis Hastert asked the question, "Is it worth rebuilding New Orleans?" he was trying to link the disaster to a political objective. When New Orleans mayor Ray Nagin proclaimed his desire to see New Orleans become, in his words, "a chocolate city," that also was an important rhetorical moment. This is part of the reason why studying disasters belongs within the discipline of communication studies, and is of interest to rhetoricians.

When we look at disaster rhetoric, we have to consider that the study of communication and disaster touches a variety of different disciplines: history, sociology, political science, psychology, and geography, just to name a few. John M. Barry's *Rising Tide: The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 and How It Changed America* and John McPhee's *The Control of Nature* are helpful to understand how issues of geography and culture intersect. Disaster rhetoric also touches the rhetoric of science literature and social movement rhetoric. Disaster rhetoric also sits at a connection point between organizational communication and rhetorical studies, especially when outbreaks are involved.

Additionally, we'll look at the future of disaster rhetoric. I'd contend that this is a genre that will potentially become more significant moving forward. *Business Week* nearly 10 years ago devoted a cover story to the possibility of a country getting overrun by rising ocean tides (see the November 25, 2013 issue). Countries such as Kiribati are contemplating a full-scale evacuation, and parts of the United States are also considering relocation, the genre of disaster rhetoric has clearly moved from the realm of specialists to the public consciousness.

Remember my statement on page 1 of the syllabus?

This is exactly what I'm talking about... if you want to know more about what to expect over the course of the semester, how I approach this topic, and the "so what," this page will tell you a lot of what you need to know.

COURSE SCHEDULE: SPRING 2022

This is our plan for how we'll progress through our material this semester. However, we may change this schedule based on our progress and/or student interest. Also, it's possible that we may have candidates for department faculty positions that may present during our class. Updates to our schedule will be discussed in class and posted on Georgia View. Readings are listed for the day we'll discuss them, and you'll find the links ON THE PREVIOUS DAY in Georgia View AND on the day we'll discuss them. (Why? Because I'll preview them at the end of the previous class.)

This is **version 1.2** of the schedule, last updated April 11, 2022, and may not reflect our final progress through the course.

Date	Topic(s)	Readings	Assignments
(1) Tuesday, January 11	Introduction to the course, disaster rhetoric		
(2) Thursday, January 13	History of disaster rhetoric	Meko Miller	
(3) Tuesday, January 18	Introduction to rhetorical criticism (1)		
(4) Thursday, January 20	Introduction to rhetorical criticism (2)		
(5) Tuesday, January 25	Early 20th century disasters	Cox or Kitchen Sisters	
(6) Thursday, January 27	Introduction to rhetorical criticism (3)		
(7) Tuesday, February 1	Cold War prep	"Bomb Drills" video Graff "Duck and Cover" video	Stage 1 Paper Due
(8) Thursday, February 3	Apocalyptic rhetoric	Foust and Murphy	
(9) Tuesday, February 8	Katrina: Pam simulation	Globalsecurity.org "A Failure of Initiative"	
(10) Thursday, February 10	Katrina (2)	Government Executive Rodriguez and Dynes	
(11) Tuesday, February 15	Katrina (3)		Stage 1 Paper Returned
(12) Thursday, February 17	Other hurricanes (esp. 2020-2021)	Milman, RAND Corporation, National Hurricane Center, (see Georgia View for updates)	
(13) Tuesday, February 22	Environmental disasters (1): Wildfires	Duane	
(14) Thursday, February 24	Environmental disasters (2): Flint, Michigan and others	Robertson	Stage 2 Paper Due

Date	Topic(s)	Readings	Assignments
(15) Tuesday, March 1	Rhetoric of potential disasters (1)	Barlow and Hahn Jackson County (MO) Rusch	
(16) Thursday, March 3	Rhetoric of potential disasters (2)	Raim	
(17) Tuesday, March 8	Rhetoric of development	Kotkin and Gattis	Stage 3 Paper Due
(18) Thursday, March 10	Humor and Disaster Rhetoric	Analyses to be done in class	
March 15, 17	SPRING BREAK!		
(19) Tuesday, March 22	Music and disaster rhetoric	Analyses to be done in class	
(20) Thursday, March 24	Commemorating disasters (especially Presidential rhetoric)	Schrader	
(21) Tuesday, March 29	Commemorating disasters	McClure	
(22) Thursday, March 31	American exceptionalism and disasters	Motter	
(23) Tuesday, April 5	Community pride and restoration	Darr and Strine Griffin-Padgett and Allison	
(24) Thursday, April 7	COVID-19	Peckham Smith and Cubbon Ceccarelli	Stage 4 Paper Due
(25) Tuesday, April 12	Paper Presentations		Presentation Day 1
(26) Thursday, April 14	Paper Presentations		Presentation Day 2
(27) Tuesday, April 19	Paper Presentations		Presentation Day 3, Stage 5 Paper Due
(28) Thursday, April 21	Religion and Disaster Rhetoric	Newman Winston	
(29) Tuesday, April 26	Makeup day/class choice topic		Rough Draft of Final Paper Due
(30) Thursday, April 28	Course wrapup		
Final Exam: Tuesday, May 3, 1:00-3:15 p.m.	Discussion of final papers		Final Papers Due no later than Thursday, May 5.

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- Kotkin, Joel and Tony Gattis. "Doing Houston Wrong." *City Journal*, 13 December 2017. Available at: <https://www.city-journal.org/html/doing-houston-wrong-15604.html>
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Rubric for papers and written assignments

	Outstanding	Good	Fair	Poor
	4	3	2	1
Explanation of issues	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated clearly and described comprehensively, delivering all relevant information necessary for full understanding.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated, described, and clarified so that understanding is not seriously impeded by omissions.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated but description leaves some terms undefined, ambiguities unexplored, boundaries undetermined, and/or backgrounds unknown.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated without clarification or description.
Evidence Selecting and using information to investigate a point of view or conclusion	Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a comprehensive analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are questioned thoroughly.	Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are subject to questioning.	Information is taken from source(s) with some interpretation/evaluation, but not enough to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are taken as mostly fact, with little questioning.	Information is taken from source(s) without any interpretation/evaluation. Viewpoints of experts are taken as fact, without question.
Influence of context and assumptions	Thoroughly (systematically and methodically) analyzes own and others' assumptions and carefully evaluates the relevance of contexts when presenting a position.	Identifies own and others' assumptions and several relevant contexts when presenting a position.	Questions some assumptions. Identifies several relevant contexts when presenting a position. May be more aware of others' assumptions than one's own (or vice versa).	Shows an emerging awareness of present assumptions (sometimes labels assertions as assumptions). Begins to identify some contexts when presenting a position.
Student's position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis)	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) is imaginative, taking into account the complexities of an issue. Limits of position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) are acknowledged. Others' points of view are synthesized within position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis).	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) takes into account the complexities of an issue. Others' points of view are acknowledged within position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis).	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) acknowledges different sides of an issue.	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) is stated, but is simplistic and obvious.
Control of syntax and mechanics	Uses graceful language that skillfully communicates meaning to readers with clarity and fluency, and is virtually error-free.	Uses straightforward language that generally conveys meaning to readers. The language used has few errors.	Uses language that generally conveys meaning to readers with clarity, although writing may include some errors.	Uses language that sometimes impedes meaning because of errors in usage.