Description: This course is theoretical and practical. We will examine the features of argument, largely through Edward Corbett and Robert Connors’ discussion of classical rhetoric; the grounds for argument, through Chaim Perelman’s theory of argumentation in his “new rhetoric”; and the relations of rhetoric to both grammar and logic, these being the three “arts of discourse” in the trivium. But we also practice the craft of written argument and, at the end of the semester, work on style. The course will make you more aware of the range of what you can do in constructing a persuasive argument and will increase your creativity and mastery in practicing this craft. Read this entire packet of information carefully.

Required Texts:
Dobbs. Dr. Syntax, http://www.grinnell.edu/individuals/dobbs/DrSyntax/

Syllabus
WEEK

1 A Introduction to rhetoric
   Introduction to Dr. Syntax
   Course plan and requirements

   B Dr. Syntax 1 (We’ll go over the explanations together in class.)
   Dr. Syntax: Syntactic Exercise 1 (We’ll do this exercise together in class.)
   Submit best argument and short commentary

   Kinds (deliberative/political, judicial/legal, ceremonial) and Parts of Persuasive Discourse
   Quiz on Dr. Syntax 1 definitions
   Dr. Syntax: Syntactic Exercise 2

   B Invention: C&C, “Discovery of Arguments” (27-84; skim 38-52 and 65-71)
      Modes (rational, ethical, and emotional appeals)
   Dr. Syntax: Syntactic Exercise 3
   3:30 Initial Conferences (Establishing your aims for the course)

3 A Invention: C&C, “Discovery of Arguments” (84-120)
   Common Topics
   Topics 1 & 2: Definition and Comparison Arguments (similarity; difference; degree)
   Dr. Syntax 2 and exercise
   3:30 Initial Conferences (Establishing your aims for the course)

   B Practicing analysis of common topics: analyze the main topics Rachel Carson uses in “The Obligation to Endure” (C&C, 185-90) and only then compare your analysis to the topic analysis on C&C, 190-95.
   Dr. Syntax 3 & 4 and exercises
   3:30 Initial Conferences (Establishing your aims for the course)

4 A Structure: C&C, “Arrangement of Material” (256-92)
Topic 3: Relationship Arguments
Group discussions of arguments (1a: Definition and/or Comparison)

B Individual Conferences

5 A Practicing analysis of **structure**: analyze the main features of arrangement/structure of Martin Luther King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail." (C&C, 301-14) and only then compare your analysis to that on C&C, 315-19.

Dr. Syntax 5 & 6 and exercises
Group discussions of arguments (1b: Definition and/or Comparison)

B Individual Conferences

6 A **New Rhetoric**: Perelman, Introduction (by Carroll C. Arnold; skim); 1. "Logic, Dialectic, Philosophy, and Rhetoric"; 2. "Argumentation, Speaker, and Audience" (1-20)
Evaluation Arguments (Combination of Topics 1, 2, and 3)
Group discussions of arguments (2a: Relationship)

B Individual Conferences


Dr. Syntax 7 and exercise
Group discussions of arguments (2b: Relationship)

B Individual Conferences

Arguments for Proposals (Combination of Topics 1, 2, and 3)
Read Dr. Syntax 8 and 9, but don’t do exercises
Group discussions of arguments (3a: Evaluation)

B Individual Conferences

Spring Break

9 A Short exam on Dr. Syntax

**Style**: C&C, 337-69
Group discussions of arguments (3b: Evaluation)

B Individual Conferences

10 A **Style**: C&C, 377-412 (Skim this material. I simply want you to be aware of possibilities.)
Practice analysis of **style**: write a brief analysis of Virginia Woolf’s style (C&C 473) and only then compare your analysis to that on C&C, 474-77.
Exercise: Sentence Combining and Rearranging (See C&C 444-48 for example imitations that will be helpful in doing the sentence exercises over these three weeks.)
Group discussions of arguments (4a: Proposal)

B Individual Conferences (**Analysis of your style**. For this conference, you must also bring a written analysis of your own style, as you find it in your first three arguments; use the features listed in C&C 360 for this analysis.)

11 A Practice analysis of **style**: write a brief analysis of style in John F. Kennedy’s “Inaugural Address (C&C 459-61) and only then compare your analysis to that on C&C, 461-72.
Exercise: Varying Sentence Pattern Exercise
Group discussions of arguments (4b: Proposal)

B Individual Conferences (Analysis of your style. See instructions at 10B.)

Exercise: Sentence Pattern

Group discussions of arguments (5a: Style: Imitation. Please include 1) a single page of text from the writer whose style you’re imitating, 2) a brief description of the stylistic features you see as characteristic of your writer, and 3) a few sentences setting out those particular features you are trying to imitate.)

B Individual Conferences (Discuss revision choice.)

13 A Group discussions of arguments (5b: Style: Imitation. See instructions at 12A.)

B Individual Conferences (Discuss revision choice.)

14 A Complete work on your revision (6)

B Revision due in my office by noon

Notes on Arguments

Using the Writing Lab. You should not take your arguments to the Writing Lab, until I have commented on and returned them. If it seems appropriate, I’ll include specific suggestions in those comments about ways you could use the Lab.

Number and Kind. You will write six arguments, the sixth being a substantial revision of one of your first four. Those first four will be different in kind—definition (or comparison), relationship, evaluation, proposal—but you’ll see that these kinds are not exclusive; your fifth argument (an imitation) will focus on style. Starting in the fourth week, you’ll have an argument due every other week. The sixth argument, the revision, will be due in my office by noon of class 14B. The revision should be as thorough as you can make it—it might even involve a radical re-thinking of your first effort. It will certainly be more that simply addressing what I noted in my comments or what was discussed in class. My evaluation will be based equally on the amount of movement from the first version and the success of the new version.

Subject Matter. The subject matter of each argument will be up to you, although the kind will vary according to assignment. I expect you’ll write about something in which you’re interested and which suggests itself from reading you’re doing in other courses. You may not, however, turn in papers written for another course; doing so would constitute academic dishonesty.

Length. Arguments will also vary in length, but will be between 500 and 1250 words. I think short assignments can be effective in learning to write persuasive arguments. I’ve tried to arrange the syllabus so that, assuming you set aside four to five hours of preparation for each of our scheduled classes, you have a minimum of six hours to devote to each of the arguments you write. In some cases, you could have up to ten hours. The fact that I mention these amounts of time should indicate how much time I’m expecting you to put into writing your arguments.

Formatting. I assume you will be typing your arguments in some computer text-editing program. Set your format up so that you have page numbering (except on your first page), about 1.7 line spacing—that’ll give me room to comment—and about 1” side margins. Please set your program so that the lines do not justify. Your name and the title of your argument (formal papers should have titles) should appear in the upper left-hand corner of your first page. Please note the number of words in each argument at the top of the first page.
Proofread! The grade of an argument with an average of more than two elementary errors (these are marked with an “x” on my abbreviations sheet further on) per 250 words will be lowered one-third of a grade (e.g. B to B-).

**Required Outline.** You must also turn in a one-page outline of your argument with the thesis—just as you have it stated in your argument—set at the top of the page. Major divisions of this outline should be the actual topic sentences of your paragraphs. Support for these topic sentences will be subdivisions under these divisions. You do not have to use a formal outline form, but you should attempt to make all your divisions parallel in grammatical form. Once you get through Dr. Syntax, you’ll know just what this means!

**Submission.** E-mail a copy of your argument and outline to me (dobbs@grinnell.edu) no later than noon on Monday of the week in which you have an argument due. Because this deadline is crucial to our cycle of discussion, there are severe penalties for any argument that arrives after noon: during each hour after noon, the grade is dropped one full grade (e.g. between noon and 1 PM, A to B; between 1 PM and 2 PM, B to C). I will send you a return note, no later than 12:15, to let you know I’ve received your argument and have been able to print it.

**Return.** At the end of our Tuesday class, I’ll return to you a copy of your argument with comments, some of which I will ask you to respond to before our individual meeting on Thursday. I’ll send you your grade through e-mail at the end of the week.

**Group discussions of arguments.**
Beginning with week four, we’ll divide into two or maybe three groups, and on Tuesdays each group will discuss one or two of the arguments written each week. The discussion of each argument, as you’ll see below, will be moderated by one member of the class. I’ll act primarily as a resource person.

**Writers of arguments to be discussed.** On the week when your argument will be discussed by your group (once the class membership has stabilized, I’ll make up the groups and the schedule), e-mail a copy of it and your outline to each member of the class no later than noon on Monday. (Do it at the same time you send me a copy.) Carefully review your argument and be prepared to defend what you’ve done during the class discussions on Tuesday.

**Discussants of arguments.** Your job is to prepare a careful and complete analysis of the arguments to be discussed and to take part in the discussion. I suggest that you allow at least one hour of your preparation time for the analysis. In a couple of weeks, I’ll give you a list of specific points and a form that you must consider in your preparation. I’m looking for a fairly detailed analysis, but you do not turn in your written analysis or your noted copy of the argument. I evaluate your preparation by wandering around, looking at notes, and listening to what’s being said. Participating in these discussions is an important part of your own development as a writer; this importance is reflected in your final grade for the course.

**Moderator of discussion.** At least twice during the semester, you’ll be the moderator of the discussion of an argument in your group. Again, as soon as the class enrollment stabilizes, I’ll make up a schedule for moderators, so you’ll know in advance when you are to moderate. Your general task will be to figure out a strategy for leading the discussion of the argument you’re assigned. This job can be tricky: you shouldn’t be the primary commentator on the argument, although you’ll certainly share your thoughts with its author. Rather, you should try to take your group through an analysis of the argument in the 20-30 minutes available by asking questions and by involving all of the members of your group. One strategy might be to ask each member of your group to open with a statement of both a strength and a weakness of the argument; you could then rely on those comments to guide the discussion.

**Individual conferences.** I’ll confer with each of you individually for twenty-five minutes every two weeks; we’ll discuss the argument you’ve written for that week and the topic of your next argument. Prepare by
carefully reviewing the choices you made in writing your argument and by completing any assigned tasks I've given you in my comments. We'll also use these conferences to design assignments that meet your needs and interests.

**C&C and Perelman Readings**
Assigned readings should be done thoughtfully. Come to our discussions with good notes and questions.

**Exercises**

**Practice Analysis Exercises.** I've assigned four practice analyses of the rhetorical strategies used in published arguments. Such analysis is useful in enlarging your repertoire of strategies. Corbett and Connors in fact provide analyses of all these arguments. Don't look at an analysis until you've already written out your own.

**Dr. Syntax and Exercises.** The primary way I teach syntax, that most important part of grammar, is through Dr. Syntax, a series of explanations about syntactic relations and of exercises on those relations. You should complete, in writing, each of the exercise, and we will review them in class. Note also that I will prod you to learn the crucial definitions found in Dr. Syntax I by giving you a quiz. Once we've completed Dr. Syntax, I'll give you a short (20-30 minute) exam on all of the material contained in it.

**Sentence Pattern Exercises.** I have also assigned some short sentence pattern exercises that you also need to write out for our discussion.

**Summary of Requirements**
- thoughtful preparation of C&C and Perelman reading assignments (come with notes!) and
- thoughtful participation in discussions on them (5%);
- satisfactory completion of Dr. Syntax, practice analysis, and sentence pattern exercises (5%);
- Dr. Syntax exam (5%);
- five newly-created arguments (50%);
- careful analysis of arguments in preparation for discussions in class and
- thoughtful participation in those discussions (10%);
- moderating argument discussions (5%);
- careful preparation for your individual conferences with me (10%);
- substantial revision of one of your five arguments as your final (10%)

**First writing assignment.** For class 1B, bring me a xeroxed copy of your best (so far!) argumentative paper (preferably under ten pages; even better, under five) and a thoughtful one-page, typed explanation of what you see as both its "virtues" and "vices." 250-words is fine for the explanation, and I don't care what the grade was.

**Initial conference.** During part of the class period on 2B, 3A, and 3B, I'll have a 15-minute conference with each of you to discuss the argument you've turned in on 1B and also to discuss your personal writing objectives for the semester.