

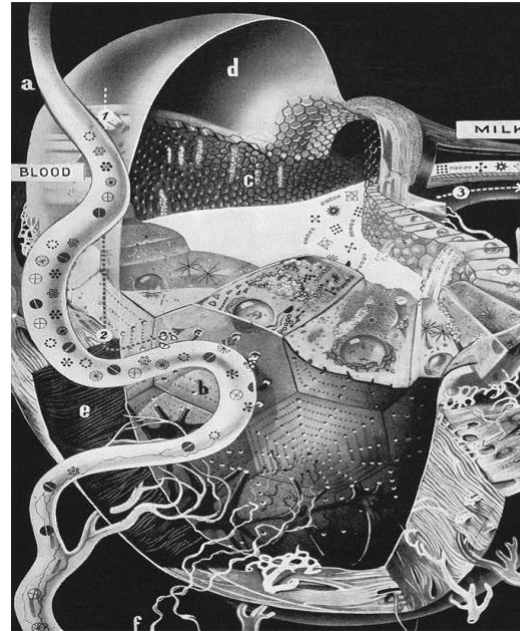
WRIT 408/508: “Rhetoric and Science”

Spring 2025 | Catherine Gouge | cgouge@wvu.edu | Tuesday 4-6:50pm

This course will be worthwhile for anyone interested in learning more about persuasion in arguments about science. ENGL 408 can be taken in fulfillment of the requirements of an English Major, PWE Minor/Concentration, or as a core course for the new “Medical Humanities and Health Studies” minor. No expertise in rhetoric or science is required. All interested students are welcome and encouraged to enroll.

Course Description

“Rhetoric and Science” will explore the audiences, purposes, and conventions of scientific arguments as well as the role of specific texts in shaping scientific debates. Throughout the term, we will look at controversies in science studies and consider the following questions: Why do scientific controversies exist? How do people argue “science”? How do they establish authority in scientific arguments for other scientists and with the public? What are the roles of different texts and rhetorical practices in shaping scientific knowledge?



Sample Texts

Harker’s *Creating Scientific Controversies*, Schone’s *Contested Illness in Context*, Schimel’s *Writing Science*, Ceccarelli’s “Manufactured Scientific Controversy,” Booher and Jung’s *Feminist Rhetorical Science Studies*, and Prelli’s “The Rhetorical Construction of Scientific Ethos.”

Note: This course meets once a week. WRIT 408 (undergrad section) and WRIT 508 (grad section) are taught concurrently. That means that the course will be a vibrant, mixed, and relatively small class of both advanced undergraduate students and graduate students who will complete and discuss overlapping reading and graded work assignments. Because this is a split-level upper-division undergrad/graduate course that meets once a week, students who enroll should expect to be present, engaged, and prepared for all class meetings. This will be a course that requires a good bit of reading and active engagement with the material in class and so is not a good one to add if you are not interested in the material or just need another elective to graduate.