# I. ASCRC General Education Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Group VIII Ethics and Human Values</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dept/Program</td>
<td>Applied Arts and Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course #</td>
<td>WTS 240E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Title</td>
<td>Rhetoric and Ethics: Writing Arguments about Contemporary Issues</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

## II. Endorsement/Approvals

Complete the form and obtain signatures before submitting to Faculty Senate Office.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructor</th>
<th>Mark Medvetz</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phone / Email</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Mark.medvetz@umontana.edu">Mark.medvetz@umontana.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Chair</td>
<td>Cathy Corr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean</td>
<td>Barry Good</td>
</tr>
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</table>

## III. Description and purpose of the course:

General Education courses must be introductory and foundational. They must emphasize breadth, context, and connectedness; and relate course content to students’ future lives: See Preamble: [http://www.umt.edu/facultysenate/gened/GEPreamble_final.htm](http://www.umt.edu/facultysenate/gened/GEPreamble_final.htm)

As an advance writing course, WTS 240 asks three things of students: to learn and use the techniques of persuasive writing and argumentation, to read critically and strategically, and to write prolifically. These three goals are situated in conversations about contemporary issues and how to approach these issues ethically. Although this is not a formal class in ethically theory, an understanding of commonly used ethical approaches—equal rights, virtue, fairness and justice, and common good—will help students shape discussions and arguments. While constructing verbal and written arguments, students will consider how human values influence their thinking and the positions they take on issues, both locally and globally. Discussions, in-class writing, and completing all required assignments will support student’s development as a well-rounded critical thinker and writer, not only for academic success but also for participation in business and civic communities.

## IV. Criteria:

Briefly explain how this course meets the criteria for the group. See: [http://www.umt.edu/facultysenate/ASCRCx/Adocuments/GE_Criteria5-1-08.htm](http://www.umt.edu/facultysenate/ASCRCx/Adocuments/GE_Criteria5-1-08.htm)
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| V. Student Learning Goals: Briefly explain how this course will meet the applicable learning goals. See: [http://www.umt.edu/facultysenate/ASCRCx/Adocuments/GE_Criteria5-1-08.htm](http://www.umt.edu/facultysenate/ASCRCx/Adocuments/GE_Criteria5-1-08.htm) | Learning goals Upon completion of an Ethics and Human Values course, students will be able to:
1. correctly apply the basic concepts and forms of reasoning from the tradition or professional practice they studied to ethical issues that arise within those traditions or practices;
2. analyze and critically evaluate the basic concepts and forms of reasoning from the tradition or professional practice they studied. |

| Learning goals | Upon completion of this course, students should be able to
- Apply a working understanding of central and commonly used ethical norms of society: equal rights, virtue, fairness and justice, common good, etc.
- Analyze the scope and potential impact of the possible ethical choices
- Construct a clear and effective argument representing a moral position
- Cope with ambiguity and disagreement between opposing views
- Recognize that ethical debates require conscious decision-making
- Comprehend and analyze a variety of written, electronic, and visual texts
- Develop or improve methods for conducting electronic research
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VII. Syllabus: Paste syllabus below or attach and send digital copy with form. The syllabus should clearly describe how the above criteria are satisfied. For assistance on syllabus preparation see: http://teaching.berkeley.edu/bgd/syllabus.html

WRT 240
Ethics and Rhetoric: Writing Arguments and Contemporary Issues

UM - Department of Applied Arts and Sciences
Mark Medvetz
mark.medvetz@umontana.edu

"Once the student becomes engaged with the problem of what kind of person to be, and how to become that kind of person, the problems of ethics become concrete and practical and, for many a student, moral development is thereafter looked on as a natural and even inescapable undertaking.

"Teaching the Virtues" Christina Sommers

Course Description and Objectives
If the scaffolding for this class is a broad treatment of ethical principles, then the mortar and bricks will be analysis and argument. The goal is to build and to refine student’s ability to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize assigned texts and to construct effective arguments. The course will follow an issues-driven seminar format, and students will assemble their own ethical lens to view contemporary issues presented in written texts as well as explored in film. In addition to positing that critical thinking is an embedded process within the larger writing process, the course will help students build a working knowledge of rhetorical analysis and general problem-solving strategies. As they develop these skills, students will build their own arguments in response to the issues raised in class.

The approach in terms of the study of ethical principles is very modest. The intent is not to become ethical theorists; the aim is to become clear and critical thinkers and writers who can apply certain ethical approaches such as utilitarian, virtue, and fairness and justice. As thinkers and writers students will employ analysis and synthesis as we read and consider the writings from numerous authors who write about ethical issues and/or matters of moral choice. Students will begin to construct and shape a moral code from which they can take an ethical stance on contemporary issues. For students who have an established framework, they may continue to construct and/or to reshape an existing set of moral principles. A primary goal is to begin or to continue to articulate reasoned arguments explaining and advancing an ethical position on any given issue. The arena for these efforts is the world of contemporary issues. There is one point to be made about those students who have a strong commitment to a particular religion. Although it seems impossible to deny some kind of Christian influence on all of us as individuals in our society (We have a Christian slogan stamped on our money.), we do not all share the same level of commitment to these Christian influences. When
constructing academic arguments in an academic arena, writers usually avoid appeals to a
divine authority, and they do this for good reason. In order to construct an argument, those
involved--writer and audience--must share some common assumptions or no positive argument
can be made. If one person believes in a Christian divinity and another does not, there is no
common assumption that the two share, and there can be no argument--only silence or
shouting. If the question of divine authority is set aside, there is still a great deal of possible
discussion among members of society because there are share certain assumptions such as the
need to protect human life, the need to defend human rights, the need to develop a sense of
social responsibility, and the need to obey civil laws for the safety and care of all.

Required Text
1. Although there is no “traditional” text, there is a substantial amount of reading. All readings
will be available as electronic documents --on Blackboard or UM Electronic Reserve -- or as
hardcopy on reserve at the UM-COT Mansfield Library Circulation Desk. Please download a
copy of an electronic reading or photocopy a hardcopy as it is assigned for class. The expense
for this should not be greater than 1/3 the cost of a traditional text.
One caveat: this is not a computer course; however, students will be expected to work with
computers for class assignments, and most correspondences will be conducted via
email/Blackboard. With the exception of some initial explanations and practice during the first
classes, please do not expect extra time in class for any learning curve the use of technology
might present. Likewise, please do not expect any extensions on due dates for assignments
because of any technical difficulties not conquered. All electronic readings will be available
24/7, and hardcopy material will be available during regular library hours. Before a first
attempt with an off-campus download of electronic materials, be sure of all necessary
passwords, etc.
2. Daily reading of the Missoulian  [Daily copies are available in the library…and, usually, at
some table in the cafeteria. Do not rely on the online edition.]
3. Daily reading of the Kaimin -- available daily on campus or online

Outcomes
An outcomes statement lists proficiencies that students should attempt to develop and/or
improve during the semester. Although the list below is tailored for WRT 240, it reflects UM
standards for general undergraduate writing courses.

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to
• comprehend and analyze a variety of written, electronic, and visual texts
• cope with ambiguity and disagreement between opposing views
• construct a clear and effective argument representing a moral position
• recognize that ethical debates require conscious decision-making
• analyze the scope and potential impact of the possible ethical choices
• apply a working understanding of central ethical norms of society
• develop or improve methods for conducting electronic research
• understand argument as something that grows from “truth-seeking” and
  from an awareness of writing as a social act
**Required Work**
- one 'discovery/reflect' paper (1200 words+)
- one argument paper: taking a stance on a moral issue
  - subject: student's choice
  - research optional 1800 words+
- one paper which may be a combination of the first two assignments
  - subject: student choice (With prior approval, this paper may be on the same subject from an earlier assignment)
  - research required 2200 word minimum total -- 85%
- one-page responses as assigned
- journal entries
- electronic writing: discussion boards and blogs
- final exam total -- 15%

**Grading Criteria**
WRT 240 employs a plus/minus grading system. Valid grades and their point values per credit under the traditional grading system will be:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
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<td>2.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>1.67</td>
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<td>D+</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>1.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>0.67</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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Because students will be asked to do both expository and argumentative papers, the standards and rubrics for grading will vary. One staple of consistency will apply: the three elements of the rhetorical situation—message, audience, and writer—represent criteria connected inextricably to any act of writing.

A Board of Regents mandate requires that new freshman and other students governed by the 2005-2006 catalog must earn a C- or better in all courses used for General Education and all courses that are required for their major, option, or minor. An exception at UM-Missoula/COT is a minimum grade of C or better is required in English Composition.

**Please Note:** To complicate matters—and to indicate to students the complexity of assessment and grading—all students should be familiar with the “Evaluative Criteria Used in the Upper-Division Writing Proficiency Assessment” The criteria may be viewed at the following web site:

[http://www.umt.edu/provost/writingassessment/criteria.htm](http://www.umt.edu/provost/writingassessment/criteria.htm)

Several grading rubrics will be posted on Blackboard and should provide students with a firm indication of my grading process.
For grading purposes, I do not attach percentages to the following requirements and assignments. Preparation and participation are organic elements in my teaching model; therefore, no grade is assigned. However, a lack of preparation and participation always begets lower grades. End-of-semester grade must reflect the level of proficiency students demonstrate as critical thinkers and writers.

Please note: All writing--except in-class work--will be typed following standard MLA formatting.

Reading Assignments and Informal Writing
Daily reading.
Informal writing: 1 or 2 pp. responses
Journal responses
Discussion boards and blogs
Small Group Work: there will be extensive use of small-group work environments.

Course Policies:
Regular attendance is mandatory and factors into the final grade. Students are expected to arrive on time and to participate constructively in class discussion. It may be possible to perform well in some courses by simply reading the texts and taking tests, but that is not the case in a course. Although the reading assignments create a forum, students will come to understand the expectations for class participation and for the writing assignments through the lectures, discussions, writing activities, and peer responses that occur in class. Much of the course depends on collaborative work, so students must be present to contribute their insights as well as to receive feedback.

Because the class enrollment is small and because the class is shaped around a seminar model, attentive and active participation in class discussion and in group work are required as it is essential for accomplishing the course goals. Students will be able to do this if they read the assigned material carefully and respond thoughtfully to that material. Keep current with the readings and writing assignments.

[Please note: Everyone suffers a certain amount of reticence when it comes to speaking to a group. Although this is a writing class, expressing individual ideas as well as entertaining other points of view in a discussion forum never fails to create at least some fodder for writing. Students are expected to take a strong interest in group discussions.]

Absences: 2 (two) absences for any reason throughout the semester. Absences beyond the two will affect a final grade. Students will not be able to pass the class if they accrue more than 4 (four) absences. The bottom line: plan to attend class everyday. Save the 2 allowable absences for true emergencies.

I will be available to meet with students during office conferences and by appointment. Conversations about encouraged. Feel free to email me. I will respond as soon as possible. (I will post assignments and responsibilities on Blackboard.) If a student wants to discuss any specific grade, please wait 24 hours to consider my assessment and a response. Please bring all drafts (with or without grades and/or comments) to any conference about papers/grades.
All writing should follow the Modern Language Association (MLA) format. An example of MLA format and links to websites for such formatting will be available on Blackboard. Unless otherwise directed by me, all writing assignments will be submitted as attachments. We will review procedures in class.

Keep copies of all drafts of an assignment. Always keep an [electronic] copy of any work. Drafts and final papers are to be stapled in the left hand corner. Do not use a title page or any plastic folders.

At least one written assignments will go through a in-class workshop. We will discuss specifics near the time of the workshop.

Please read the policy statement on plagiarism in the University Catalogue. http://www.umt.edu/studentaffairs/CODE.htm

In brief, plagiarism is any attempt to misrepresent another writer's work a student’s own text. This includes scooping something off the Internet. Plagiarism of any sort will result in a course grade of F, and I will follow the disciplinary procedures as stated in the Student Conduct http://ordway.umt.edu/sa/VPSA/index.cfm/page/1321

Students may be asked for their research or sources at any time.

Auditors of WRT 240 must meet all requirements established for traditional-grade students.

Reminder: The dates for the last days to drop this class with and without a refund are posted on Cyberbear: http://cyberbear.umt.edu/instructions/directions.htm

Students are responsible for all academic dates and deadlines for the semester.

Revision Policy
Excluding the stated revision policy above, there will be no opportunities for rewrites.

Final Exam
There is a final exam: Please consult the course schedule booklet and make summer plans accordingly. Alternative scheduling is not negotiable.

Disability Services: I am willing to provide accommodations for students with disabilities with the proper verification.

*Please note: As an instructor of a general education course, you will be expected to provide sample assessment items and corresponding responses to the Assessment Advisory Committee.