

English 976: Seminar in Rhetorical Theory: Argument and Emotion (Shari Stenberg)

Description: Beginning with Lynn Worsham's 1998 argument that we learn through "pedagogies of emotion," where emotion is socially constructed and culturally scripted, Composition and Rhetoric has seen an outpouring of scholarship examining emotion's interplay with rhetorical practice and pedagogy, students' and faculty members' writing processes, writing program administration, and writing center consultations. This scholarship challenges the commonplace assumption that emotion is distinct from--and lesser than--reason or logic. In this class, we will explore what Sarah Ahmed calls "the cultural politics of emotion" to examine how we learn through emotion, how emotion is part of the rhetorical situation, how emotion circulates and coalesces or "sticks," and how--in the words of Laura Micciche--emotion is an "analytical, rhetorical, and performative act." In so doing, we will consider how affective economies (Ahmed) interface with race, gender, sexual identity, body size, and (dis)ability. Our inquiry will span multiple sites: rhetoric, writing studies, pedagogy, and more mainstream treatments of emotion, which feature notions of "emotional intelligence" and resiliency.