English Students Present at National Conference

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(L to R) Jonathan Toronto, Tyler Grow, & Miranda Lorenc

The National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR) is an annual conference that promotes undergraduate research and creative activity. Thousands of undergraduate students across the country participate by demonstrating their research through presentations or posters. This year NCUR was held at Memphis University in Memphis, Tennessee. Three of the ten students representing USU were English students: Tyler Grow, Miranda Lorenc, and Jonathan Toronto. Each of them gave a 15-minute presentation on an application of a rhetorical theory. The presentations stemmed from research done in Dr. Jared S. Colton’s Fall 2016 Modern Rhetorical Theory Course.

Tyler Grow
“Rhetorical Theory and *South Park*”
Most viewers readily see the irreverence that marks the television series *South Park*. Tyler applied the rhetorical theory of Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca to show how *South Park* is actually making moral arguments through its use of extreme metaphors and irrational characters. Tyler concluded that *South Park* can inspire viewers to be more accepting of diverse social groups—even those groups *South Park* aims to offend.

Miranda Lorenc
“A Feminist Perspective on Helen of Troy in Greek Mythology”
In ancient Greek mythology, the tale of the Trojan war has long been blamed on the actions of a single woman known as Helen of Troy, or Helen of Sparta. Through this century long tradition of blame, many writers have used Helen’s character as a cautionary figure. Miranda applied a feminist perspective to this famous ancient story to argue that such narratives still have force in shaping gender roles today, centuries later.

Jonathan Toronto
“Language in Politics: A Philosophical and Rhetorical Analysis of How Language Shaped the Clinton Email Debate”
Jonathan drew upon Ludwig Wittgenstein’s philosophy of language games and Kenneth Burke’s rhetoric of identification to analyze the language used by political commentators and others, including FBI Director James Comey, when discussing Hillary Clinton’s use of a private email server to conduct official communications as Secretary of State. Jonathan concluded that how audiences identified Clinton’s actions—as “criminal” or “careless”—had an impact on how audiences viewed Clinton as a viable candidate for President of the United States.