ENG 4931 “Alternative Rhetorics: Women’s and African American Rhetorical Practice”

(3 Credit Hours)

12:30-1:45 Tuesday & Thursday: CPR 339

Fall 2018

Prof. Carl G. Herndl Office Hours

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CPR 293

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**Introduction**

This course will explore the rhetorical practices of women and African American speakers and writers in America from the nineteenth century through the present. Since a person’s social identity and position condition what she can say and how she can speak, women and African Americans developed alternative rhetorical practices in their efforts to galvanize social change. An African American woman in the nineteenth century, for example, could not assume that she had the authority to speak in public; she had to construct that identity through her practice. Thus, Sojourner Truth’s famous speech “Ain’t I a Woman” begins by explicitly rejecting the assumption that her race excludes her from the community of women. We will take up the rhetorical practices in the abolitionist movement and reconstruction era (e.g. , Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Ida B. Wells) and the suffrage and temperance movements (e.g. Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucy Stone) of the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, we will examine the contrasting rhetorical practices in the civil rights movement (e.g. Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and Angela Davis) and the early feminist movement (e.g. Gloria Steinem, Shirley Chisholm, Bella Abzug). We will also compare the contemporary #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter movements with these earlier rhetorical traditions.

While we will examine the details of these historical rhetoricaltraditions, we will consider them in the context of the general question of how people speaking from the margins of society can create social change. Thus, throughout the course, we will be looking for answers to the following questions:

What does it mean to speak from the cultural, social and political margins?

How do social identity and position shape not only *what* a rhetor says, but also *how* they speak or write?

What catalyzes social change?

How should we understand the ways race and gender are expressed and negotiated in rhetorical performances?

My sense is that the rhetorical issues that surround the earlier periods continue to shape contemporary movements such as Black Lives Matter and that the answers to these questions apply across historical periods.

We will read original texts from the nineteenth century and twentieth century social movements as well as scholarly analysis of some of these texts and their rhetorical significance (e.g. K. K. Campbell, J. J. Royster, K. Wilson, J. Lucaites).

**Instructor Goals/Objectives**

I want students to:

Know the historical tradition of rhetorical practices in the African American and women movements of the 19,th 20,th and 21st centuries;

Comprehend the rhetorical challenges, strategies and tactics used by rhetors in the African American and women’s movements;

Understand the concept of speech from the social margin;

Understand the play of race, gender, power and position in shaping public rhetoric about race and gender;

Develop “rhetorical listening” (In Ratcliffe’s terms) as a strategy to understanding the speech of “others” and explore the possibility of cross cultural communication.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

At the end of the course, students should be able to:

Understand alternative rhetorical performances within the history and cultural logics that shape those performances;

Describe the history of and major rhetorical figures within the nineteenth and twentieth century African American and Women’s movements;

Analyze spoken or written texts against the rhetorical, material and political conditions within which they circulate;

Listen to speech form the social margins in productive ways.

**Required Texts**

All required course texts are uploaded onto the course Canvas site. There are no books to be purchased.

**Assignments**.

1. **Daily “Quotation-Comment-Connection-Question” (QCCQ) response to assigned readings.** **(3 points each and 30% of the course grade)**

This assignment asks you to do four things:

1. Select and quote a passage from the assigned reading that you think is especially important or interesting because it is central to the reading’s argument, it reflects the writer’s rhetorical strategy or challenges, it exemplifies the writer’s response to their historical context, it connects to an important idea in other readings, or it suggests general observation about the challenges of writing and speaking from the cultural margins.
2. Write a brief comment exploring the importance or relevance of the passage in the ways suggested in 1) above.
3. Make a connection between the passage or your analysis of it and other writers, concepts or reading in the course or in other rhetoric courses.
4. Formulate a question about the ideas, problems or connections to other readings which you think would be a useful topic for class discussion.

**These QCQs will be due by 10:00am on the day we discuss the relevant reading**. That way I can read your QCQs and build some of them into my plans for that day’s class so that we address some of the topics and questions you guys find most interesting. **Because these QCCQs are class preparation, I will not accept late submissions for the QCCQ unless you have a documented illness.**

There are 15 QCCQs due by 10/16 (one for each day we have readings). I expect there to be 7 or 8 student groups ding oral report projects (see assignment 3 below). You have a QCCQ due on the readings for each student-lead class. I have set Canvas to drop your three lowest grades on QCCQs so that if you are absent three times, you do not have to make up the QCCQs for those three days. After that, you may not make up QCCQs unless you have a documented major illness. I will calculate QCCQ grades by counting the number of QCCQs due and multiplying that by the point percentage articulated on the grade scale. So, if there are 7 student groups and, thus a total of 22 QCCQs due, that is 66 potential points (22 x 3 = 66). 0.9 x 66 = 59.4. So 59 points on QCCQ is the lower end of the A- range.

1. **Class Participation (10)**

Participating in class discussion is a required part of this class. Not only does participation allow you to shift the course towards things you are interested in, it is pretty clear that commenting on readings and responding to what others say helps people understand and internalize what they read. Besides, if you don’t talk, you’ll end up listening to me all day and, while I consider myself a font of wisdom, a repository of arcane humor, and an all-around totally fascinating dude, you may get tired of me sucking all the oxygen out of the room.

**If you are present every class but do not talk, your participation grade will be a “C.”** If you talk, your participation grade will go up. As always quantity and quality combined define good participation; thoughtful questions and comments are more valuable than lots of less-than-compelling participation. Note that absences will lower your participation grade; if you aren’t here, you aren’t participating.

1. **Group oral reports: Understanding rhetorical performance in historic context (30%)**

Working in small groups (2 or 3 people), students will choose a reading/rhetor on which they will report to the class. Student groups will choose their own topic for this assignment. I have set aside class on Thursday, September 20th for a brainstorming session on this assignment. That day you should all come to class with ideas or a choice about what topic you would be interested in working on for this assignment. Our goal will be to have groups and topics decided by the end of the period.

The group reports will begin on Thursday 10/18 and cover the material on the nineteenth century suffrage movement, and the civil rights and women’s movements in the twentieth century. If a group feels strongly about working on African American rhetoric from the nineteenth century, I’ll certainly accommodate that choice too. Because I can’t predict what each group will select as a topic, the schedule for the last month of the semester is somewhat fluid; it has general periods and suggested topics, but the precise readings and specific dates will depend on groups’ choices.

The presentations should explore the historical context so we can begin to understand what is significant in the performance and how the text does or does not achieve its goals. The presentation (complete with PowerPoint slides) should address not only *what* the text says, but *how* it does so and *why* it takes that form. While this is a very tall order, you will have a few examples to follow in your analysis. Kirt Wilson’s analysis of W.E.B. Dubois (Wilson “Toward a Discursive Theory of Racial Identity”) describes the historical context to which DuBois responds and the rhetorical form DuBois uses and why. Similarly, John Lucaites’ analysis of irony in Fredrick Douglas, “The Irony of ‘equality’ in Black Abolitionist Discourse: The Case of Fredrick Douglas’ ‘What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?’” explains how Douglas uses irony as a rhetorical tool to criticize the inequality in American in a speech (not) celebrating the fourth of July. Campbell’s article on Sojourner Truth, Moses’ writing about black jeremiad, and Royster’s “Analytic Model” provide additional models for how you might analyze your text. Though these are professional publications, they demonstrate what it might mean to connect what a text does to how it does it and to the historical context that shapes it. Essentially, you will be helping the class understand what the text is trying to do, how it goes about doing so, and how the contest shapes both the *what* and *how* of the performance.

To do this, the presentations should do four things:

1. describe the rhetorical context of the text: what were the most relevant political, social or economic conditions that the text responds to?
2. Identify the major features of the text/performance: ideas, arguments, or claims;
3. describe the rhetorical features or strategies that the rhetor uses: how did the rhetor shape their performance to address the problems, opportunities and constraints of this context?
4. Present some of the interpretation or analysis of the text/performance developed by scholars.

Each group will lead a class on the text or rhetor they are studying in which they present their analysis and lead a class discussion. At least a week before your group facilitates the class, you should provide me one or more original texts for the class to read and the best single piece of criticism or interpretation you found on the text/performance/rhetor. I’ll post these two things on the course Canvas site and everyone in the class will have read them and done a QCCQ (see above) on them before you facilitate the discussion.

1. **Final project (6-8 pages)** **(30%)**

Choose one of these options for your final project.

1. Pick a specific figure in women’s or African American rhetorical history

and write a paper about their performance/production (texts), its rhetorical challenges, strategies and achievements and include at least five pieces of scholarship about them, their work, or the critical analytic that opens their work up. This may include course readings in addition to outside readings. And this may be an extension of the group project you did earlier in the semester. If you want to collaborate on this paper with one or more members of your group, you may do so, but the paper should be 10-12 pages long in that case.

1. Pick a historic or contemporary movement in women’s or African American culture (e.g. suffrage, temperance, abolition, civil rights, NOW, #MeToo, Black Lives Matter) and explore the rhetorical performances/texts in a political and historic context and help us understand what, why and how they are making social change. So, rather than focus on an individual person, focus on a movement and its rhetoric.
2. Survey the most significant scholarship on a topic (e.g. women’s rhetoric, African American Rhetoric, or narrower by time, e.g. nineteenth century women rhetors, rhetorical listening) and identify the major critical issues and question in the field, explain what scholars are doing and argue for the significance and importance of the general topic of study. So what if someone asked you “What were women doing to make political or cultural change in the nineteenth century and why is that important?” how would you answer?
3. Make me a proposal. If you have an idea for an individual or creative project that engages the materials and issues in the course in a way that excites and intrigues you, write me a proposal for a final project that you design.

**Grades and Grading**

The values of each assignment in the final course grade are:

QCCQ 30%

Class Participation 10%

Group class facilitation 30%

Final project 30%

Grade scale

A+ = 97-100

A = 94-96

1. = 90-93

B+ = 87-89

B = 84-86

1. = 80-83

C+ = 77-79

C = 74-76

1. = 70-73

D+ = 67-69

D = 64-66

1. = 60-63

As with individual assignments, I award plus (+) and minus (-) grades on final course grading.

**Course Policies**

**Attendance** I expect you to be in class and engaged in discussion every day. I will not deduct points for the first three absences. *After you miss three classes, I will deduct two points from your semester participation grade for each absence***.** If you have a major illness or accident that makes it impossible for you to be in class, give me documentation, and we will work out a suitable accommodation. Do not use your three “free” absences for trivial things and then expect to get additional “excused” absences later because you are sick, throwing up or have a fever. Save the three freebies for real necessities*. If you miss more than 8 classes, a month of the semester, I will enter a grade of “F” for you unless you have medical documentation of a major health crisis and arrange some accommodation with me.* I take roll at the beginning of class, so if you are late, it is your responsibility to come up after class and make sure you are marked late and not absent.

**You are excused from class** for major observances of your religion. Inform the instructor at the beginning of the term when you expect to be absent for these events.

**Students with a disability** and thus requiring accommodations are encouraged to consult with the instructor during the first week of class. See Student Responsibilities: http://www.sds.usf.edu/Students.htm. Each student making this request must bring a current “Memorandum of Accommodations” from the office of Student Disabilities Services. I will accommodate your specific needs in any and every way I can and keep these arrangements confidential. If you have a disability that makes it difficult for you to leave the building in case of emergency, please let me know.

**Plagiarism** See http://www.usg.usf.edu/catalogs/0405/adap.htm for *USF Undergraduate Catalog's* definitions and policy, and consult with the instructor if you are uncertain. Essentially, plagiarism refers to using another writer's words or ideas without proper citation. This boils down to doing your own work and giving credit to others when you copy and use their words. You can’t copy and paste materials from the web into your writing without acknowledging the source of the materials. And buying a paper off the internet is the equivalent to an academic felony. If I catch someone plagiarizing, I will give them an “F” in the course and turn them over to the university’s disciplinary mechanism.

**Electronics in class** Many of you will work on a laptop computer in class; it is a useful tool. It can also be a problematic distraction for you and those around you. You need to know when to pay attention to the computer and when to pay attention to the class. The first time I find you surfing the web in ways unrelated to class, doing email, shopping, posting on Facebook, etc. during class, especially during class discussion, I’ll ask you to stop. The second time, I’ll mark you absent for the day and ask you to leave. If you’d rather do email, Facebook, stream movies, shop or any internet or social media activity unrelated to class than pay attention to class, that is fine; just skip class, avoid being rude, and you can FB away. Many people believe in “multi-tasking,” but all the research in learning and cognitive psychology concludes that multi-tasking harms both learning and cognitive development.

**Similarly, either silence or turn your cell phone off.** Class is at least as important as watching a movie in a theater. If you absolutely have to take an emergency call during class, please go outside the classroom. I realize that you guys have lives and emergencies do happen. Some of you have kids (I do) or take care of elderly parents. But, please, don’t disrupt class with personal phone calls.

**Schedule**

**Week 1**

Tues. 8/21 Introduction

**Contemporary Protest Rhetoric**

Thurs. 8/23 & #MeToo:

Hesse. “Centuries of Male-Dominated History”—*Washington Post*

Hudson. “Forget the Backlash”—*The Verge*

Brockes. “The G2 Interview”—*The Guardian*

Hill. “Statement of Prof. Anita F. Hill to the Senate”—*The Black Scholar*

Graham. “The Clarence Thomas Exception”—*The Atlantic*

**Week 2**

Tues. 8/28 Black Lives Matter

Harris. “The Next Civil Rights Movement”--*Dissent*

Yancey & Butler. ”What’s Wrong with All Lives Matter?”—*The Stone*

Sands. “What Happened to Black Lives Matter?”--*Buzzfeed*

**Three central rhetorical issues; Anger, Speech from the Margins, Rhetorical Listening**

Thurs. 8/30 Kenneth S. Zagacki and Patrick A. Boleyn-Fitzgerald. “Rhetoric and Anger.” *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, 39.4 (2006), pp. 290-309.

**Week 3**

Tues. 9/4 Anzuldua. from *Borderlands/*La Frontera: The New Mestiza.

Thurs. 9/6 Ratcliff. from *Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, Whiteness* p. 1-2 and 23-46.

**Feminist, African-American, and Disciplinary Roadmaps**

**Week 4**

Tues. 9/11 K.K. Campbell. “Consciousness-Raising: Linking Theory, Criticism and Practice.” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 32.1 (2002) 45-64.

Thurs. 9/13 Watts, Wilson, McPhail, & Terrill. “African-American Rhetoric.” *Oxford Encyclopedia of Rhetoric*.

**Week 5**

Tues. 9/18 Royster. “Disciplinary Landscaping, or Contemporary Challenges in the History of Rhetoric.” *Philosophy and Rhetoric*. 36.2 (2003) 148-167.

Thurs. 9/20 Brainstorming and choosing group topics.

**Rhetorical and Contextual Analysis**

**Week 6**

Tues. 9/25 W.E.B. DuBois. *Souls of Black Folk*, Chapter VI to VIII (pages 48-86)

Thurs. 9/27 Wilson. “Toward a Discursive Theory of Racial Identity: The Souls of Black Folks as a Response to Nineteenth-Century Biological Determinism.” *Western Journal of Communication*. 63.2 (1999) 193-215.

**Week 7**

Tues. 10/2 in class group project work

Thurs. 10/4 Meet in LIB 209 at 12:30-1:45: (Nancy Cunningham 12:30-1:00)

Royster. “Toward and analytic Model of Literacy and Sociopolitical Action” **only pages 58-73**

**Week 8**

Tues. 10/9 Sojourner Truth. “Speech at the Woman’s Rights Convention” and K.K. Campbell “Agency: Promiscuous and Protean.” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*. 2.1 (2005) 1-19.

Thurs. 10/11 in class group project work

**Week 9**

Tues. 10/16 Douglas Headnote from *Rhetorical Tradition* 1061-1069and“What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?”

 Bell “The African American Jeremiad”

Thurs. 10/18.

John Lucaites. “The Irony of ‘equality’ in Black Abolitionist Discourse: The Case of Fredrick Douglas’ ‘What to the slave is the Fourth of July?” from *Rhetoric and Political Culture in Nineteenth Century America*.

**Week 10**

Tues. 10/23 individual meetings with Prof. Herndl about final project

Thurs. 10/25 in class group project work

**Group presentations start here**

**Week 11**

Tues. 10/30 Nina, gricey, dela Rosa et al.: “Act UP”

Thurs. 11/1 Vincent, clopton: Toni Morrison

**Week 12**

Tues. 11/6 Dakota, Fisher, Cody : Speech of African Americans in the Military

Thurs. 11/8 Angela. Lymaris, Matt, Alexis White.: Seneca Falls and Susan B. Anthony

**Week 13**

Tues. 11/13 Jillian, Betsy, David Soto Dorta. : Harlem Renaissance and Allain Locke

Thurs. 11/15 Cotton, Clint, Spataro et al.: Angela Davis

**Week 14**

Tues. 11/20 Schwab, Fuhr, Ellerbee: Black Panther rhetoric

Thurs.11/22 Thanksgiving Break

**Week 15**

Tues. 11/27 in class drafting conferences (bring drafts of final paper to class)

Thurs. 11/29 No class: USF reading days

Exam week: Final projects are **due by midnight on Tuesday, 4 December**, the day scheduled for the course final exam:.