

CMST 7967: Contemporary Rhetorical Theory

Thursday, 3:00 – 5:50

153 Coates Hall

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Course Description

This course tells one version of the story of rhetorical theory in the contemporary period. Our version begins with the efforts of prominent rhetorical scholars to devise “new” rhetorical theories that would better account for the many, diverse, and unruly rhetorical events of the mid-to-late-1960s. We then track the major theoretical preoccupations and critical orientations of rhetorical scholars from the 1970s to the present. We will do so always with an eye to historical and sociopolitical contexts, minding how these tend to anticipate and condition the sorts of critical questions that rhetorical theorists feel compelled to ask. My hope is that by the end of the course you will be sufficiently equipped and empowered to add your own voice to the ongoing conversation in rhetorical theory.

Goals and Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Understand the role that theory has played and continues to play in shaping the discipline of rhetorical studies.
- Comprehend and engage critically with the questions and controversies that motivate contemporary rhetorical theorizing.
- Undertake theory-informed analyses of rhetorical artifacts.

Required Texts

Contemporary Rhetorical Theory: A Reader, 2nd edition. Edited by Mark J. Porrovecchio and Celeste Michelle Condit. New York: Guilford Press, 2016. [CRT]

Other required readings will be made available through the course Moodle page [M].

Assignments and Evaluation

Listed below are the major assignments of this course. Additional information regarding each assignment will be provided in class.

- Produce an original paper –or– Take midterm and final exams (60%)

Students will have the choice to produce an original research paper or to take two exams. The paper track offers students an opportunity to develop a project for presentation at conferences and for publishing in

rhetorical studies journals. The exam track offers students an opportunity to outline their own narrative of contemporary rhetorical theory, as well as prepares them for taking comprehensive exams. Additionally, exams written for this class can become the basis for a literature review in a future rhetorical theory-related project. Students will commit to a track in class on September 1. Paper proposals are due September 29.

Students on the paper track will complete the following tasks:

1. Paper proposal. Describe your object. Locate your project in the context of an ongoing and theory-related conversation in rhetorical studies. Identify a journal that might be a good spot for publication of your project. Provide a brief literature review and bibliography. 2,000 – 3,000 words. (15%)
2. Writing workshop. Students on the paper track will meet to workshop their final papers while others are taking the mid-term exam. (5%)
3. Final paper. Complete an original research paper with a length between 6,000 – 9,000 words. Due the final day of class. (40%)

Students on the exam track will complete the following tasks:

1. In-class midterm examination. This exam will ask students to recall and apply the concepts covered in the first half of the semester. (15%)
2. In-class final examination. This exam will ask students to recall and apply the concepts covered over the first and second halves of the semester. (40%)
3. Midterm and final exam study guides. Produce study guides for both the midterm and the final exams. Upload the guides to the appropriate forum on Moodle. (5%)

- Adapt the reader (20%)

In groups of three, students will adapt a new section for the contemporary rhetorical theory reader. These new sections (introduction + suggested further reading + articles selected) will address an area not currently or sufficiently covered by the reader, and will provide the material for one week's readings. Groups will also lead class discussion on the day of their reader update.

Groups are required to meet with me two times: once, in the process of crafting your proposal; again, in the lead up to the scheduled in-class presentation of the new section. Proposals for reader adaptations are due September 22. Proposals should include a 1-page, single-spaced description and rationale for your group's proposed new section, as well as a bibliography of works you are considering for inclusion in the section.

Completed adaptations (introduction, list of readings, and suggested readings) are due October 20.

Possibilities for adapted sections include:

- Rhetoric's sensorium
- Rhetoric, gender, and sexuality
- Rhetoric and race
- Rhetoric and post-humanism
- Rhetoric and new materialism
- Rhetoric, space, and place
- Rhetoric and public memory
- Rhetoric and violence

Guidelines for new sections:

- Sections should include 4-6 article-length monographs.
- Readings for new sections should be drawn primarily from rhetoric journals. Single book chapters and review essays are acceptable but should not make up the bulk of the section. Full books may be included in the "suggested reading" section.

- Readings gathered from rhetoric journals ought to count as “contemporary”; the more recently published, the better. Most articles included in the adapted sections should have been published in the last 10-15 years.
- New sections may also include one or two articles from the *CRT* reader that we are not scheduled to cover in class. If your group needs inspiration or guidance, looking at the *CRT* articles we will not cover would be a good starting place.

- Reaction papers (15%)

Students will write three, 2-page, single-spaced, reaction papers that engage with one or more of a given week’s readings. These papers are due before class on the day for which the readings “reacted to” will be discussed in class. Any of the readings from September 1 through October 20 count as material for reaction papers. Put differently, *reaction papers must be completed before “adapt the reader” presentations begin*. Students will share from their reaction paper at the beginning of class on the day we read the essay(s) with which they are engaging.

Reaction papers should accomplish three things: (1) Demonstrate that you have engaged carefully and critically with the readings in question; (2) Extend, complicate, and/or provide an example to support the authors’ arguments; (3) Pose one or more critical questions inspired by the reading for in-class discussion. Beyond these three criteria, there are no other requirements for reaction papers. In other words, feel free to get creative.

- Participation (5%)

You are expected to show up for and contribute to every seminar meeting. Please let me know in advance if you can’t make a session.

TITLE IX & Sexual Misconduct Policy

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is a comprehensive federal law that prohibits discrimination based on the gender of students and employees of educational institutions that receive federal financial assistance.

In accordance with Title IX and other applicable law, Louisiana State University (“LSU”) is committed to providing a learning, working, and living environment that promotes integrity, civility, and mutual respect in an environment free of discrimination on the basis of sex and sexual misconduct which includes sex discrimination, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and retaliation. LSU prohibits sex discrimination and sexual misconduct. This policy applies to all persons without regard to sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression.

Sex discrimination and sexual misconduct violate an individual’s fundamental rights and personal dignity. LSU considers sex discrimination and sexual misconduct in all of its forms to be serious offenses. This policy has been developed to reaffirm these principles and to provide recourse for individuals whose rights have been violated. This policy establishes a mechanism for determining when rights have been violated in employment, student life, campus support services, LSU programs and/or an academic environment.

Reasonable Accommodation

The Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973: If you have a disability that impacts your work in this class and for which you may require accommodation, please see a Coordinator in the Office for Disability Affairs (112 Johnston Hall). After you receive your

accommodations letters, please meet with me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations as soon as possible.

Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Readings	Due
Aug. 25	Introductions		
Sep. 1	Situating Contemporary Rhetorical Theory, Locating “the Tradition”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>CRT</i>, Preface and Introduction ▪ <i>TVRT</i>, Introduction + Chapters 1-3 ▪ Conley, Chapters 1, 9-10 (M) ▪ Aune, “Coping with Modernity” (M) ▪ Benson, “History, Criticism, and Theory” (M) <p><i>Suggested:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Biesecker, “Coming to Terms” ○ Kohrs Campbell, “Biesecker Cannot Speak for Her, Either” ○ Gaonkar, “The Revival of Rhetoric, the New Rhetoric, and the Rhetorical Turn” (M) 	
Sep. 8	Prospecting Rhetoric	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>CRT</i>, Introductions for Sections 1-8 ▪ Black, <i>Rhetorical Criticism: A Study in Method</i>, Chapters 1, 2, & 6 (M) ▪ Bitzer, “The Rhetorical Situation” (<i>CRT</i>) ▪ Kohrs Campbell, “The Rhetoric of Women’s Liberation” (<i>CRT</i>) --- ▪ <i>The Prospect of Rhetoric</i>, selections (M) ▪ Scott, “On <i>Not</i> Defining Rhetoric” (M) <p><i>Suggested:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fisher, Review of Black’s <i>Rhetorical Criticism</i>, reissued (M) ○ Ehninger, “On Systems of Rhetoric” (M) ○ Sillars, Review of <i>The Prospect of Rhetoric</i> (M) ○ Scott and Jellicorse, Review of Black’s <i>Rhetorical Criticism</i> (M) ○ Lundberg, “On Letting Rhetoric Be” (M) 	
Sep. 15	Prospecting Rhetoric, Again (and again)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Weaver, “The <i>Phaedrus</i> and the Nature of Rhetoric” (M) --- ▪ <i>CRT</i>, Epilogue ▪ <i>Making and Unmaking the Prospects for Rhetoric</i>, selections (M) ▪ Poulakos, “Toward a Sophistic Definition of Rhetoric” (<i>CRT</i>) ▪ Leff, “The Habitation of Rhetoric” (<i>CRT</i>) ▪ Foss and Griffin, “Beyond Persuasion” (<i>CRT</i>) 	
Sep. 22	Burke & Symbolic Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Burke, “The Rhetoric of Hitler’s <i>Battle</i>” (M) 	“Adapt the reader” proposals due

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Brummett, “Burke’s Representative Anecdote as a Method in Media Criticism” (CRT) <p><i>Suggested:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Brock, “Evolution of Kenneth Burke’s Criticism and Philosophy of Language” (M) 	
Sep. 29	Epistemology & Ontology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Scott, “On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic” (CRT) ▪ Gaonkar, “Rhetoric and its Double” (CRT) ▪ Harpine, “What Do You <i>Mean</i>, Rhetoric is Epistemic?” (CRT) ▪ Schiappa, “Second Thoughts” (M) --- ▪ Kohrs Campbell, “The Ontological Foundations of Rhetorical Theory” (M) ▪ Hariman, “Status, Marginality, and Rhetorical Theory” (CRT) ▪ Benson, “Rhetoric as a Way of Being” (M) <p><i>Suggested:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Leff, “In Search of Ariadne’s Thread” (M) ○ Cherwitz & Hikins, “Rhetorical Perspectivism” (CRT) ○ Cherwitz & Darwin, “The Paradox of Rhetoric as Performance” (M) ○ Whitson and Poulakos, “Nietzsche and the Aesthetics of Rhetoric” (M) ○ Scott, “Rhetoric as Epistemic 10 Years Later” (M) ○ Scott, “Where Barry Brummett Goes Wrong” (M) 	
Oct. 6	No Class – Fall Holiday		
Oct. 13	Publicity & Spectacle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Goodnight, “The Personal, Technical, and Public Spheres of Argument” (CRT) ▪ Charland, “Constitutive Rhetoric” (CRT) ▪ Warner, “Publics and Counterpublics” (CRT) --- ▪ Deluca and Peeples, “From Public Sphere to Public Screen” (M) ▪ Pfister, “The Logos of the Blogosphere” (M) ▪ Harold, “Pranking Rhetoric” (CRT) <p><i>Suggested:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Farrell, “Comic History Meets Tragic Memory: Burke and Habermas on the Drama of Human Relations” (M) 	<i>Paper writers: proposals due</i>
Oct. 20	Power, Agency, & Materiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ McGee, “A Materialist’s Conception of Rhetoric” (M) ▪ McKerrow, “Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis” (CRT) --- ▪ Aune, “Cultures of Discourse,” (CRT) 	<i>Adaptations (introduction, readings, suggested readings) due</i>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cloud, “Materiality of Discourse as Oxymoron” (M) ▪ Greene, “Another Materialist Rhetoric” (M) ▪ Greene, “Rhetoric and Capitalism” (M) ▪ Gunn, “Refiguring Fantasy” (CRT) ▪ Cloud, Macek, & Aune, “The Limbo of Ethical Simulacra” (M) <p><i>Suggested</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cloud, “The Affirmative Masquerade” (M) ○ Cloud, “The Matrix and Critical Theory’s Desertion of the Real” (M) ○ Aune, “An Historical Materialist Theory of Rhetoric” (M) ○ Gunn, “Materialism and the Magical Rhetoric of Feet” (M) ○ Greene, “Orator Communist” (M) ○ Blair, “Symbolic Action and Discourse: The Convergent/Divergent Views of Kenneth Burke and Michel Foucault” (M) ○ Chesoboro, “Kenneth Burke and Jacques Derrida” (M) ○ Condit, “Kenneth Burke and Linguistic Reflexivity” (M) 	
Oct. 27	Midterm / Workshop		<p><i>Exam takers:</i> <i>Post study guides to Moodle</i></p> <p><i>Paper writers:</i> <i>circulate, read, and comment on rough drafts</i></p>
Nov. 3	Adaptation I		
Nov. 10	No Class - NCA		
Nov. 17	Adaptation II		
Nov. 24	No Class - Thanksgiving		
Dec. 1	Adaptation III		
Dec. 6	Final		<i>Final papers / Final study guides due</i>