

COM 607: Rhetorical Methods

Arizona State University
Fall 2022

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Office Hours: W 10am-12pm and by appointment
Office Location: Stauffer A428

Course Time: M 6:00-8:45pm
Course Location: Stauffer A431

Seminar Assistant: Drew Finney, MA
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces and interrogates the role of method in rhetoric, particularly as it relates to structures of coloniality, racism, cisheteronormativity, and ableism. What does it mean to do rhetorical criticism in times of global neoliberal capitalist empire? How do we understand the critic, and how does our understanding affect the ways we relate to text and contexts? What constitutes a text or delimits a context? How have traditional rhetorical understandings of the boundaries of text and context replicated unjust power relations? How might we use rhetorical methods to reveal, trouble, and undermine injustice rather than reinforce it? In this course we follow the trajectories set by such questions to find ways of engaging in rhetorical methods that aim at liberation.

The course begins by engaging with the three primary parts of rhetorical criticism: text, context, and critic. After situating ourselves within differential understandings of these terms, we examine various loci where these three intersect, providing an initial and incomplete exploration of the spaces in which rhetorical criticism is done: representation, field, technology, embodiment, sound & silence, subjectivity & collectivity, affect, and imagination. By the end of the course, students will have a robust understanding of rhetorical methods and how to apply them in multiple contexts.

The Student Learning Objectives are as follows. By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Identify different approaches to, forms of, and contexts for rhetorical criticism
- Constitute and delimit texts and contexts for criticism, keeping in mind the fields of power that affect normative boundaries around these terms
- Reflect over their role and relations as critic, and position themselves in a way that is politically and ethically mindful relative to texts and contexts of study
- Synthesize methodological and theoretical approaches to evaluate a text
- Analyze a text in relation to historical, cultural, geographical, and political contexts, attuned to their position as critic
- Understand the process of journal submissions in rhetoric and critical/cultural studies

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS

- Alexis Pauline Gumbs, *Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons From Marine Mammals* (Chico: AK Press, 2020).
- E. Cram, *Violent Inheritance: Sexuality, Land, and Energy in Making the American West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2022).

- Online readings on the syllabus or announced in class, which will be posted to Canvas.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

All written assignments must be typed in Times New Roman 12 pt. font, double-spaced, with 1 in. margins (check these—sometimes margins are automatically set to 1.25 in, and must be changed) using Chicago style references (use footnotes/endnotes, no bibliography necessary).

I am happy to provide extensions if needed, so long as you notify me before the assignment is due.

Participation

100 pts.

This class is heavily based in discussion, and as such attendance is required. After one unexcused absence, each following absence will result in a 20-point deduction from your participation grade. In order to earn participation points, you are expected not only to be present, but to contribute to class discussion through analysis of the readings, thoughtful questions, and respectful responses to other students.

Classroom discussions offer a unique opportunity and environment to “unpack” complex questions about rhetorical methods and social justice work. Participation will be based on: understanding and application of the readings; how attentive/engaged you are; how well you listen to other participants; how respectful you are of others’ views when disagreeing; and how well the points you make, questions you ask, and ideas you introduce contribute to the overall discussion. To earn participation points, you must read, attend, and contribute respectfully.

Readings must be completed on the day they are listed on the course schedule. I expect you to come to class having read thoroughly and formed incisive questions and/or applications about the topics being investigated in class that day. Note: Whether or not you “agreed” with the reading does not make for good discussion. I want to hear in-depth analyses of what particular methodological stances can and cannot do; what is brought into focus and what is outside of the purview. That does not mean you have to understand everything you read; we will work through complex concepts and situations in class.

Methodology Application Facilitation (Adapted from Dr. Joshua Gunn)

25 pts.

Once during the semester, you will facilitate discussion over a text, media clip, or current event example of your choosing that exemplifies or relates to one or more of the readings being discussed that week. In particular, these facilitations are meant to provide the students in class with an opportunity to practice rhetorical criticism of some sort of “text.” Your facilitation should thus include a visual and/or media aid to orient the audience, particular quotes or concepts from the reading that may assist in application, and discussion questions that help the other students to apply methodological practices that we are learning to the exemplar text. Your job is to facilitate a 20(ish) minute class discussion using your example and the questions. A sign-up sheet will be distributed the first day of class.

Rhetorical Criticism Project (Adapted from Dr. Lisa Flores)

375 pts.

As this is a methods class, most of the assignments for the course will be oriented around putting rhetorical methods into practice. We will be doing scaffolded assignments over the course of the semester that culminate in a full-length rhetorical criticism paper. Then, we will practice submitting that paper to an imaginary journal, edited by myself and our seminar assistant, Drew Finney. We will

send the papers out to peer review (to two other students in the class). You will write reviews of each other's work, and we will provide editorial feedback that merges the comments, giving you a chance to revise and resubmit. The resubmission is your final paper for the course. I provide an overview of each assignment below; detailed criteria will be forthcoming.

Please speak with me as soon as possible if you:

- **would like to adapt the assignment to a performance rather than a paper.**
- **plan to engage in rhetorical field methods that would require IRB approval for human subjects research.**

The Rhetorical Criticism Project will:

- 1) Internal Analysis (50 pts.)
In this assignment, you will introduce/constitute the text that you be analyzing throughout the course, and provide an initial analysis of the themes found within the text itself using methodological approaches constellated from the readings in the course and your own external reading. The Internal Analysis should be 4+ pages, and can later be incorporated into your full-length paper.
- 2) External Analysis (50 pts.)
In this assignment, you will explore the political, temporal, geographical, cultural, etc. context that the text exists within, responds to, and acts upon. Here, you will decide what contextual factors are most important to your analysis of the text, and explore how they impact the meaning of the text. The External Analysis should be 4+ pages, and can later be incorporated into your full-length paper.
- 3) Critic's Statement (50 pts.)
In this assignment, you will examine your positionality and relations as a critic in relation to this specific text and context, explaining how this impacts the way that you engage with the analysis and the way you construct an argument regarding the meaning of the text. The Critic's Statement should be 2+ pages, and can later be incorporated into your full-length paper.
- 4) Initial "Journal" Submission (100 pts.)
For this assignment, you will be submitting a rhetorical criticism to the Journal of Rhetorical Awesomeness, edited by Dr. Jenna N. Hanchey and Drew Finney, MA. The Journal of Rhetorical Awesomeness accepts papers up to 9000 words all-inclusive and uses Chicago style references. You will need to anonymize your paper for submission, as well as include a cover letter briefly summarizing your essay and explaining why it is a good fit for the Journal of Rhetorical Awesomeness.
- 5) Two Reviews of Classmates' Work (25 pts.)
After your essay is submitted to the Journal of Rhetorical Awesomeness, you will receive two essays by classmates for peer review. You will be expected to write a rigorous yet kind review of each of your classmates' work and return it to the editors. We will examine different reviews in class to see how this can be done well (and poorly).
- 6) Revised "Journal" Resubmission (100 pts.)

Each of you will receive a “revise and resubmit” decision on your manuscript, and be provided feedback from the two reviewers as well as the editors. For your final paper in the course, you are expected to use this feedback to revise your paper for resubmission. When you resubmit your paper, you will also need to provide a letter detailing what changes you made based on the feedback you received, addressing each specific point raised by reviewers/editors, and explain what (if any) suggestions you declined to implement and why.

GRADING

Grades are determined based on the number of points earned out of a maximum of 500 points. There is no extra credit given in this class, and there will be no rounding or curving of grades. Final grades are calculated as follows:

A	93%-100%	465-500 pts
A-	90%-92.9%	450-464 pts
B+	87%-89.9%	435-449 pts
B	84%-86.9%	420-434 pts
B-	80%-83.9%	400-419 pts
C+	77%-79.9%	385-399 pts
C	74%-76.9%	370-384 pts
C-	70%-73.9%	350-369 pts
D+	67%-69.9%	335-349 pts
D	64%-66.9%	320-334 pts
D-	60%-63.9%	300-319 pts
F	0%-59.9%	0-299 pts

COURSE POLICIES

Do your best to approach our texts with an open mind toward each author’s disposition and message. This means trying to understand how and why they are arguing what they are, which is typically more time-consuming than simply comprehending an author’s argument. Give each author a generous reading!

Communication for this course will be maintained exclusively through Canvas and email. Please make sure you are checking it often for updates from me, as well as readings, assignments, and grades.

Discussion of Graded Assignments

It is your right and responsibility to take an active interest in how you are evaluated in this or any class. If you believe you have been graded unfairly, please come visit me in office hours to talk about it. Be prepared to make a well-developed case regarding the evaluation. Your argument must be related to your assignment as presented, and based on how it compares with the criteria for the assignment (not how hard you tried, how you think it compares with someone else’s work, or how it will affect your final grade in the class or GPA). Any grade appeals must occur or be scheduled no sooner than 24 hours after but no later than one week after receiving the evaluation.

Attendance

You are expected to only miss one class a semester. **In order to be excused from a day of class, you must contact me before the class, unless it is a case of emergency.** Excused absences may include illness, emergency, institutionally approved activities (sports/clubs), and religious holy days. You must provide documentation for all absences within a week of their occurrence. You will not be excused for doctor's appointments, work, or transportation issues (unless they are emergency related). Coming in significantly late or leaving class early will be equated with an unexcused absence. As noted above, each unexcused absence after the first will result in 20 points being taken off your Participation grade.

Classroom Behavior

I expect us all to treat people and ideas with decency and respect. Give others, particularly those present with us in class, the benefit of the doubt. Privilege inquiry over defensiveness. At the same time as we should be generous with one another, this class seeks to undermine systems of oppression; when such systems are being reinforced through our language or actions, we also must be ready to be accountable to requests for transforming our thoughts and approaches.

In graduate classrooms, one of the most pernicious ways that disruptive behavior happens is through name-dropping. Contrary to what some might think, it is **not** impressive to talk extensively about a theorist or scholar you have read with whom the rest of the class is unfamiliar. Everyone has read things that other people have not. Unless there is a clear tie to someone's specific question or research project, please keep your personal readings to yourself. Useful contributions to discussion will be focused on what *everyone* has read and may competently comment on.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Student Comportment

Familiarize yourself with the [Student Code of Conduct](#) and comport yourself accordingly; this includes, specifically, refraining from threatening behavior per the [Student Services Manual](#). To be certain, ASU is committed to providing an environment free of discrimination, harassment, and/or retaliation. In particular, ASU prohibits discrimination, harassment, and/or retaliation based on any protected status: race, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, and genetic information as outlined in the [Academic Affairs Manual](#). This is a critically-oriented class, and discussion/speech concerning issues of race, class, size, gender, nation, citizenship, religion, age, and so forth are encouraged and will certainly be addressed as communication is a key component to the construction and maintenance of our culture(s). Come to class with an open mind and due expect to be challenged on y/our communicative conventions; I expect to be held equally accountable for my communicative choices.

Title IX

Title IX is a federal law that provides that no person be excluded on the basis of sex from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity. Both Title IX and university policy make clear that sexual violence and harassment based on sex is prohibited. An individual who believes they have been subjected to sexual violence or harassed on the basis of sex can seek support, including counseling and academic support, from the university. If you or someone you know has been harassed on the basis of sex or

sexually assaulted, you can find information and resources at <https://sexualviolenceprevention.asu.edu/faqs>.

As a mandated reporter, I am obligated to report any information I become aware of regarding alleged acts of sexual discrimination, including sexual violence and dating violence. [ASU Counseling Services](#) is available if you wish to discuss any concerns confidentially and privately.

Academic Integrity

Honesty is expected of all students. The possible sanctions for academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to, grade penalties, course failure (indicated on the transcript as a grade of E), course failure due to academic dishonesty (indicated on the transcript as a grade of XE), loss of registration privileges, disqualification and dismissal. For more information, see <http://provost.asu.edu/academicintegrity>.

Accessibility

If you have any need for accommodation, please notify me as you are able so that we might make the appropriate arrangements. Formal accommodations can be made through the Disability Resource Center (DRC). For additional information, visit: www.asu.edu/studentaffairs/ed/drc.

Intellectual Property

As outlined in the Academic Affairs Manual course content, including lectures, are copyrighted materials. Students may not share outside the class, upload, sell, or distribute course content or notes taken during the conduct of the course. For more information, see <https://www.asu.edu/aad/manuals/acd/acd304-06.html>.

Canvas and Technology Support

Students can navigate directly to the course Canvas website via myASU or <http://canvas.asu.edu>. If you need technical assistance, it is available via the Canvas “Help” icon located on the left-hand navigation menu and phone and live chat support are available 24/7 at <http://contact.asu.edu>. ASU Tech Studios provide a variety of walk-in support services on all ASU campuses: <https://uto.asu.edu/services/campus-it-resources/techstudio>. To learn the basics, refer to the Student Guide: <https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10701> and the Canvas Glossary: <http://links.asu.edu/student-canvas-glossary>.

COURSE SCHEDULE

(Subject to change with sufficient advance notice.)

Date	Topic	Readings	Assignments & Speakers
INTRODUCING RHETORICAL CRITICISM			
M 8/22	Introduction and Course Expectations: What is Rhetorical Criticism?	(1) McKerrow, "Critical Rhetoric" (2) Morris, "(Self-)Portrait of Prof. RC" (3) Flores, "Beyond Abundance and Marginalization" (4) Chávez, "Beyond Inclusion" <i>Meditation: Gumbs, Introduction</i>	
M 8/29	How Should We Engage as Critics?	(1) Ono & Sloop, "Commitment to <i>Telos</i> " (2) Murphy & Lechuga, "The Role of the Critic" (3) Madison, "The Labor of Reflexivity" (4) Stuedemann, "Own Your Complicity, Then Fix It" (5) Bahrainwala, "Responding to White Fragility" (6) Bahrainwala, "The Web of White Disengagement" (7) Nautiyal, "Tease and Persist" <i>Meditation: Gumbs, Chapter 2 – Breathe</i>	Guest Speaker: Dr. Lamiyah Bahrainwala, Southwestern University
M 9/5	Labor Day (No Class)		
M 9/12	What Constitutes a "Text"?	(1) Wanzer-Serrano, "Delinking Rhetoric" (2) Gutierrez-Perez & Andrade, "Queer of Color Worldmaking" (3) Lechuga, "An Anticolonial Future" (4) Baugh-Harris & Wanzer-Serrano, "Against Canon" (5) Finnegan, "Critic as Curator" <i>Meditation: Gumbs, Chapter 3 - Remember</i>	Guest Speaker: Dr. Robert Gutierrez-Perez, California State University San Marcos
M 9/19	How Do We Delimit Context?	(1) Na'puti & Cruz, "Mapping Interventions" (2) Cruz & Sodeke, "Debunking Eurocentrism" (3) Chirindo, "Micronations and Post-national Rhetoric" (4) Cisneros, "Free to Move, Free to Stay, Free to Return" (5) <i>Quarterly Journal of Speech</i> forum on "#RhetoricSoWhite" <i>Meditation: Gumbs, Chapter 12 – End Capitalism</i>	Guest Speaker: Dr. Tiara Na'puti, University of California, Irvine Internal Analysis due Sunday Sept. 25 at 11:59pm
LOCI OF ANALYSIS			
M 9/26	Representation	(1) Gunn, "Maranatha" (2) LeMesurier – "Race as Supplement" (3) Cloud – "To Veil the Threat of Terror" (4) Kelly – "The Manpocalypse" (5) Schwarze – "Environmental Melodrama" <i>Meditation: Gumbs, Chapter 11 – Respect Your Hair</i>	Guest Speaker: Dr. Joshua Gunn, University of Texas at Austin

M 10/03	Field	<p>(1) Middleton et al., “Introduction” (2) Hess et al., “Participatory Critical Rhetoric Critiqued and Reconsidered” (3) Na’puti, “Archipelagic Rhetorics” (4) Pezzullo, “Resisting ‘National Breast Cancer Awareness Month’” (5) de Onís, “Fueling and Delinking from Energy Coloniality in Puerto Rico”</p> <p><i>Meditation: Gumbs, Chapter 10 – Honor Your Boundaries</i></p>	<p>Guest Speaker: Dr. Aaron Hess, Arizona State University -Downtown Campus (Tuesday 8 am on Zoom)</p> <p>External Analysis due Sunday Oct. 9 at 11:59pm</p>
M 10/10	Fall Break (No Class)		
M 10/17	Technology	<p>(1) Carter, “Millennials vs. Old Economy Steve” (2) Aunspach, “Discrete and Looking (to Profit)” (3) Hartzell, “Whiteness Feels Good Here” (4) Goltz, “It Gets Better” (5) Browne, “Everybody’s Got a Little Light Under the Sun”</p> <p><i>Meditation: Gumbs, Chapter 13 - Refuse</i></p>	<p>Guest Speakers: Dr. Jonathan Carter, Georgia Southwestern State University and Chase Aunspach, University of South Carolina, Sumter</p> <p>Critic’s Statement due Sunday Oct. 23 at 11:59pm</p>
M 10/24	Embodiment	<p>(1) Chávez, “The Body” (2) Chevrette & Hess, “The FEMEN body can do everything” (3) Bahrainwala, “Blind Submission” (4) Otis, “Intersectional Rhetoric” (5) West, “PISSAR’s Critically Queer and Disabled Politics”</p> <p><i>Meditation: Gumbs, Chapter 4 - Practice</i></p>	<p>Guest Speaker: Dr. Roberta Chevrette, Middle Tennessee University</p>
M 10/31	Sound & Silence	<p>(1) Edgar, “Blackvoice and Adele’s Racialized Musical Performance” (2) Booth & Spencer, “Sitting in Silence” (3) Gunn, “Canned Laughter” (4) Morris III, “Pink Herring and the Fourth Persona” (5) Macharia, “On Being Area-Studied”</p> <p><i>Meditation: Gumbs, Chapter 1 - Listen</i></p>	<p>Guest Speaker: Charles E. Morris III, Syracuse University (IN PERSON)</p> <p>Initial Submission due Sunday Nov. 6 at 11:59pm</p>
M 11/07	Subjectivity & Collectivity	<p>(1) Ogunfeyimi, “The Grammar and Rhetoric of African Subjectivity” (2) Hanchey, “All of Us Phantasmic Saviors” (3) Wanzer-Serrano, “Dirty Love” (4) Hsu, “Resilience as/in Homing” (5) Aswad, “Radical Rhetoric”</p> <p><i>Meditation: Gumbs, Chapter 5 – Collaborate; 7 – Be Present</i></p>	<p>Guest Speaker: Dr. Jo Hsu, University of Texas at Austin</p>

M 11/14	Affect, Part I	(1) Cram, <i>Violent Inheritance</i> (pp. 1-129) (2) Ritchie, "Feeling for the State" <i>Meditation: Gumbs, Chapter 8 – Be Fierce</i>	Reviews due by Sunday 11/20 at 11:59pm
M 11/21	Affect, Part II	(1) Cram, <i>Violent Inheritance</i> (pp. 130-206) (2) Watts, "Postracial fantasies, Blackness, and Zombies" <i>Meditation: Gumbs, Chapter 6 – Be Vulnerable</i>	
M 11/28	Imagination	(1) Lechuga, "Intimate Borders and the Sense of Never-Quite-Being" (2) Hanchey, "Desire and the Politics of Africanfuturism" (3) Eshun, "Further Considerations on Afrofuturism" (4) <i>Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies</i> forum on "Speculative Fiction, Criticality, and Futurity" <i>Meditation: Gumbs, Chapter 15 – Go Deep</i>	Guest Speaker: Dr. Michael Lechuga, University of New Mexico Revised Resubmission due Sunday 12/04 at 11:59pm
M 12/05 6:00-8:00	Final Exam Period – Class Potluck / Dinner - Location TBD (Attendance is completely optional)		