

CMST 7966: Rhetoric & Intersectionality¹

Professor Bryan McCann, PhD
Location: 153 Coates Hall
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Course Catalogue Description

Survey of historical and theoretical elements of intersectionality, its intellectual contributions, and role in critical practice.

Additional Description

Rooted in the intellectual traditions of black feminism, intersectionality has experienced growing traction in rhetorical studies and cognate fields. This course will approach intersectionality as an orientation toward critical practice at the level of disciplinary history, canonical politics, metaphysics, and method.

As with all graduate seminars, this is a survey course that will not make you a “master” of the subject matter. Our goal is to gain a broad and nuanced understanding of what intersectionality is and how it informs critique. The course is simply a starting point for one’s engagement with this intellectual tradition.

Course Objectives

- Understand the history of intersectionality as a political and intellectual movement
- Understand the ways in which intersectionality informs critiques of the canon, theory and method, and metaphysics
- Appreciate the role of intersectionality in the historical development of rhetorical studies
- Operationalize intersectionality in the service fo critical practice
- Produce high quality rhetorical scholarship suitable for publication

Required Texts/Materials

Collins, Patricia Hill. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. London: Routledge, 2008.

¹ I am indebted to Ashley Mack for her many suggestions for the development of this syllabus, as well as Joshua Gunn for inspiration in the organization of this and other graduate seminars.

Reddy, Chandan. *Freedom with Violence: Race, Sexuality, and the U.S. State*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2011.

Sandoval, Chela. *Methodology of the Oppressed*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2000.

Snorton, C. Riley. *Nobody Is Supposed to Know: Black Sexuality on the Down Low*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2014.

Standing in the Intersection: Feminist Voices, Feminist Practices in Communication Studies. Edited by Karma R. Chávez and Cindy L. Griffin. Albany: SUNY Press, 2012.

Wanzer-Serrano, Darrel. *The New York Young Lords and the Struggle for Liberation*. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2015.

Weheliye, Alexander G. *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2014.

Additional readings (listed at the end of the syllabus) will be posted on Moodle.

Recommended Text

Hancock, Ange-Marie. *Intersectionality: An Intellectual History*. London: Oxford UP, 2016.

ASSIGNMENTS²

Final Essay This 7,000-10,000 word essay represents the culmination of the semester. You must complete a project that, in the spirit of this course, illuminates the relevance of social theory for rhetorical studies. This may entail employing one of the authors and/or traditions we've discussed in a particular way, or incorporating new literature that nonetheless "gets at" one or more of the key problematics we have discussed. The essay will ideally be a textual analysis, but can also focus solely on theory.

Topic Proposal This 2-3 page essay should briefly describe your topic and make a case for its relevance.

Short Responses Two times during the semester, you will turn in a short (4-6 pages) paper exploring intersectionality and rhetoric. This can be a short piece of criticism or a theoretical essay engaging a specific theoretical conversation we have explored.

Show and Tell Each class period, you will be required to come to class with some example that illustrates a theoretical tension or concept(s) in the reading(s) for that week. Please come prepared to present the artifact and provide one or two questions during the second half of the seminar. The questions should be designed to propel class in engaged and focused discussion of the readings for

² Please submit all written work via email. Unless otherwise noted, all assignments should be in my inbox before class starts on the due date.

that week. However, the discussion questions should be focused on theoretical investigation or the application of the theories to the artifact or example.

Minutes For the sake of continuity, one enrolled participant will provide a summary of the previous week's class at the beginning of every seminar (I will distribute a sign-up sheet on the first day of class). While this need not be an exhaustive regurgitation of all that was said and done, it should provide sufficient set-up for the proceeding discussion. A good minute-taker will take especially rigorous notes the week prior and describe highlights from the opening discussion/lecture, as well as the response paper presentations and ensuing discussion.

Participation I recognize and respect a variety of learning styles and, therefore, do not have a particularly dogmatic approach to participation. The ideal seminar, in my view, entails robust discussion. We learn best when we play off of each other's ideas, challenge each other, and, in some cases, simply think out loud in order to work out a difficult concept. That said, participation also includes work and communication outside the classroom. It is my hope that the expectation of strong participation goes without saying in a graduate seminar setting.

AVAILABLE POINTS
(TENTATIVE)

Assignment	Actual Points	Possible Points
Short Essay #1		10
Short Essay #2		10
Show and Tell		5
Topic Proposal		25
Final Essay		75
Minutes		5
Participation		20
Total		150

Grading Key

Excellent achievement relative to requirements

142-150 = A+

139-141 = A

134-138 = A-

Good work relative to requirements

130-133 = B+

124-129 = B

Unsatisfactory work relative to the expectations of a graduate course

119-123 = B-

115-118 = C+

109-114 = C

104-108 = C-

100-103 = D+

94-99 = D

89-93 = D-

88 and below = F

COURSE POLICIES

Office Hours and Availability If, for whatever reason, my posted office hours do not work for you, please do not hesitate to contact me and arrange an alternative meeting time. After one year of working at LSU, I still have no clue how to operate my office voicemail. Therefore, email is your best bet. Please allow up to 24 hours for a response to emails. I do not generally respond to emails on weekends.

The Communication Environment The study of rhetoric engages a wide range of philosophical, political, and ethical questions that cut to the very core of what it means to be a citizen, even a human. I am committed to ensuring that our classroom is a hospitable environment where we can respectfully discuss and debate a wide range of relevant issues. Everyone should feel comfortable to speak their minds, but must do so in a way that enables others to do the same. As one of my mentors is fond of saying, “You may curse ideas and authors, but never each other.” You should also prepare to be held accountable for anything you say in class.

Participation and Attendance This graduate class is discussion-oriented and practice-centered. Preparation for class and faithful attendance is directly correlated with success.

Readings I expect you to arrive to class each week having completed all required readings and prepared to engage in thoughtful and mature discussion.

If you are aware of readings, television clips, etc. that reflect the day’s discussion, you should feel free to share them with the class (provided they are appropriate) via Moodle or during the designated class session.

Workload Students are expected, in addition to time spent in class, to spend a minimum of an additional 6 hours per week reading and thinking about material and putting forth effort toward the completion of course assignments. Thus, students are expected to devote at least 9 hours per week toward the successful completion of CMST 7965.

Incompletes Incompletes are reserved for extraordinary circumstances such as personal emergencies that can be documented. An incomplete is granted when, in my judgment, a student can successfully complete the work of the course without attending regular class sessions. Incompletes that are not converted to a letter grade by the end of the following semester will automatically revert to an F (failing grade).

Academic Integrity I trust students in this class to do their own original work. Students are responsible for adhering to the college's standards for academic conduct. If you are ever confused about how these policies apply to your own work, please play it safe and consult me. For more information on this important issue, please look online at <https://grok.lsu.edu/Article.aspx?articleId=17072>

With very few exceptions, I expect that the work you submit for this seminar will not be an adaptation of work you have submitted for previous classes. If you are interested in refining an earlier essay, you must meet with me for approval.

Drops/Withdrawals If you wish to drop this class, you must do so by 4:30pm on TBD. After this point, you will be issued a withdrawal grade.

Religious Observances It is LSU's policy to respect the faith and religious obligations of students, faculty and staff. Students with exams or classes that conflict with their religious observances should notify me well in advance (at least 2 weeks) so that we can work out a mutually agreeable alternative.

Special Needs Louisiana State University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. The syllabus is available in alternate formats upon request. Any student with a documented disability needing academic adjustments is requested to speak with Disability Services and the instructor, as early in the semester as possible. All discussions will remain confidential. This publication/material is available in alternative formats upon request. Please contact the Disability Services, 115 Johnston Hall, 225.578.5919.

E-mail All students must obtain and regularly check an email account. Expect periodic updates from me about what's happening in class via Moodle as well.

I will not, under any circumstances, communicate grade information via email or over the phone.

Moodle Please check Moodle for updates to the class schedule, assignment guidelines, grade information, etc.

Commitment to Conversation I believe in the right and responsibility of students to take an active interest in their education. If there is anything inside or outside this class that you care to discuss with me, please do not hesitate to do so.

I understand that "life happens" and will work with you to make REASONABLE accommodations for issues that may be negatively impacting your performance in this class. The sooner you consult me on such matters, the better.

I am also happy to discuss grades on individual assignments throughout the semester.

Contractual Agreement Your acceptance of these conditions, as well as the policies outlined in this document, is implied by your continuance in the class. To maintain the integrity of everyone's grade, and ultimately, degree, all course policies are non-negotiable.

Everything in this document, including the daily schedule, is subject to revision or modification due to unforeseen circumstances.

PROJECTED SEMESTER SCHEDULE³

Date	Topic	Readings	Due/Notes
<u>Part I: Introduction to Intersectionality</u>			
August 22	Course introduction	Combahee River Collective, K. Crenshaw, Lorde, Griffin & Chávez (SITR)	
August 29	Foundations	Collins	
September 5	Critiques of intersectionality	Bilge, Lugones, Hayden & Hallstein (SITR), Tompkins	Topic Proposal
<u>Part II: Intersectional Critiques of Metaphysics</u>			
September 12	Questions of method	Sandoval	
September 19	The subject	Weheliye	
September 26	Who we leave for dead	Reddy	Short Essay #1
<u>Part III: Intersectional Critical Practice</u>			
October 3	Disciplinary provocations	Rowe, Davis, Flores, Houston, Biesecker	
October 10	Intersectional methods	Hahner (SITR), Woods (SITR), King, Calafell,	
October 17	Intersectional voices	Rogness (SITR), Reid-Brinkley (SITR), Doss & Jensen, Olson	
October 24	Intersectionality and power	Morin, McKinnon (SITR), C. Crenshaw, McCann, Johnson, Dunn	Short Essay #2
October 31	Intersectionality and identity	Snorton	

³ "SITR" denotes readings from the edited volume *Standing in the Intersection*.

November 7	Intersectional mobilization	Wanzer-Serrano	
November 14			NO CLASS
November 21			NO CLASS
November 28	Intersectionality and coalition	Chávez	
December 5			Final Essay Presentations
December 8			Final Essay Due

Additional Readings

Biesecker, Barbara. "Coming to Terms with Recent Attempts to Write Women into the History of Rhetoric." *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 25 (1992): 140-61.

Bilge, Sirma. "Intersectionality Undone: Saving Intersectionality from Feminist Intersectionality Studies." *Du Bois Review* 10 (2013): 405-24.

Calafell, Bernadette Marie. "(I)dentities: Considering Accountability, Reflexivity, and Intersectionality in the I and the We." *Liminalities: A Journal of Performance Studies* 9 (2013).

Combahee River Collective. *The Combahee River Collective Statement*, 1978.
<http://circuitous.org/scraps/combahee.html>

Crenshaw, Carrie. "Women in the Gulf War: Toward an Intersectional Feminist Rhetorical Criticism." *Howard Journal of Communication* 8 (1997): 219-35.

Crenshaw, Kimberle. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* 43 (1991): 1241-99.

Davis, Olga Idriss. "A Black Woman as Rhetorical Critic: Validating Self and Violating the Space of Otherness." *Women's Studies in Communication* 21 (1998): 77-89.

Doss, Erin F. "Balancing Mystery and Identification: Dolores Huerta's Shifting Transcendent Persona." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 99 (2013): 481-506.

Dunn, Thomas R. "Playing Neoliberal Politics: Post-Racial and Post-Racist Strategies in 'Same Love.'" *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 13 (2016): 269-86.

Flores, Lisa A. "Creating Discursive Space through a Rhetoric of Difference: Chicana Feminists Craft a Homeland." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 82 (1996): 142-56.

Houston, Marsha. "The Politics of Difference: Race, Class, and Women's Communication." In *Women Making Meaning: New Feminist Directions in Communication*, edited by Lana F. Rakow. New York: Routledge, 1992.

- Johnson, Julia R. "Cisgender Privilege, Intersectionality, and the Criminalization of CeCe McDonald: Why Intercultural Communication Needs Transgender Studies." *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication* 6 (2013): 135-44.
- King, Clare Sisco. "Hitching Wagons to Stars: Celebrity, Metonymy, Hegemony, and the Case of Will Smith." *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 14 (2017): 83-102.
- Lorde, Audre. "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference." In *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (pp. 114-23). Freedom, CA: Crossing Press, 1984.
- Lugones, María. "Toward a Decolonial Feminism." *Hypatia* 25 (2010): 742-59.
- McCann, Bryan J. "Proletarian Blackface: Appropriation and Class Struggle in Mike Judge's *Office Space*." *Communication, Culture & Critique* 9 (2016): 362-78.
- Morin, Aysel. "Victimization of Muslim Women in *Submission*." *Women's Studies in Communication* 32 (2009): 380-408.
- Olson, Lester C. "The Personal, the Political, and Others: Audre Lorde Denouncing 'The Second Sex Conference.'" *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 33 (2000): 259-285.
- Rowe, Aimee Carrillo. "Subject to Power—Feminism without Victims." *Women's Studies in Communication* 32 (2009): 12-35
- Tompkins, Joe. "'It's about Respect!': College-Athlete Activism and Left Neoliberalism." *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*. Forthcoming.
<http://nca.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/14791420.2017.1348610?needAccess=true>
- Watts, Eric King. "Border Patrolling and 'Passing' in Eminem's *8 Mile*." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 22 (2005): 187-206.