COMM 5440: Rhetoric & Inequality  
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Office – 320A GAB  
Hours – MW 12-2PM

Course Description
As its title suggests, this course explores the rhetoric of inequality through a focus on deliberations over U.S. public policy. The major goals of the class are twofold. First, this seminar has been designed to impart a broad familiarity with the public discussions of inequality in the United States starting after the Civil War and proceeding to the present. Second, this course examines those discussions of inequality through the scholarly frame of rhetoric as it is applied to deliberations (broadly construed) over public policy. Ideally, Rhetoric & Inequality will provide graduate students with the opportunity to imagine and design scholarly projects that either involve the analysis of inequality, public policy, or both.

In pursuit of that end, Rhetoric & Inequality unfolds in phases beginning with a series of readings on the analysis of public policy from differing academic perspectives. Then, the course asks students to read and reflect on historical examples of public policy advocacy from the early, middle, and late twentieth century. Finally, the class will read a series of eight monographs from prominent rhetorical scholars all of whom address the rhetoric of public policy broadly construed, and most often in relation to issues of inequality. In other words, we are going to work with what rhetorical studies in communication has produced so far, but also try together to imagine its best future.

To make the class a productive scholarly experience, each student is asked to choose a public policy topic to focus on during the semester and to design a scholarly project that explores the rhetoric of inequality in relation to that arena of public policy. Ideally, the class should serve as a space for each student to advance his or her academic and/or professional interests, so creativity in topic selection and project design is encouraged, especially in consultation with the professor. In the end, the highest goal of the course is to create a class experience that leaves each student with a sense of how he or she can make use of and/or contribute the study of the rhetoric of public policy and inequality in the U.S. context.

Course Materials

- Copies of the monograph reading from weeks 7-14.
- 1 of the readings from weeks 4-6.

Course Assignments
The following are rough descriptions of each of the assignments. More specific requirements will be made available during class. *None of the assignments in COMM 5440 are optional. If a student does not complete and submit any of the assigned work for COMM 5440, he or she will fail the course.*
Seminar Paper Proposal (5%) – Due M 2/1
In 1-2 double-spaced pages, the seminar paper proposal should describe the paper project each student plans to pursue during the semester. These paper proposals should: (1) identify an issue of inequality and a relevant body of public policy that will be the topic of the paper; (2) identify a primary text or set of texts—be they legislation, public discourse, policy documents, speeches, debates, etc.—that will serve as objects of rhetorical analysis; (3) at least speculate about a possible approach to the rhetorical analysis of the chosen texts drawing on the first four weeks of methodologically-oriented reading; and (4) present a rationale of what contribution the paper’s analysis will make for what audience. Students will be asked to read their proposal aloud and the class will be asked to help talk through the idea for 20 minutes.

Rhetoric of Inequality Class Facilitation (20%) – Due M 2/8, 2/15, 2/22
During weeks 4-6, each student will choose one book total (two students per week) from the list of nine books (three will be addressed per week) to read closely, research, and present. These presentations will lead the class both lecturing and facilitating discussion for 50min. Students are encouraged to think of this assignment like preparing a class session for a course they are teaching. The goal of the session is to teach the chosen text, its author, its context to the rest of the class, and to suggest directions that could be taken for the analysis of the book’s rhetoric using the perspectives on the rhetoric of public policy and inequality from the first two weeks of class.

Class Discussion Questions (20%) 3/1 – 4/26
From weeks 7-14, we will read a series of book-length studies of the rhetoric of public policy and inequality. During these weeks, each student is expected to bring 3 discussion questions to class. The discussion questions should be typed and do not need to exceed a single double-spaced page front and back. Each discussion question must identify a particular passage from that week’s reading that is relevant to the question being posed. These questions will be used to stimulate class discussion. They should demonstrate engagement with the course materials, but they do not necessarily need to demonstrate mastery. In other words, if you are confused about something, try to write a question that will create a discussion that works through your confusion. Each set of questions is worth 2.5% of the overall course grade.

Seminar Paper Introduction (5%) – Due M 3/22
In 4-7 paragraphs, the seminar paper introduction should: (1) introduce and make a case for the importance of the topic of the paper; (2) characterize the state of the existing scholarship to which the paper will contribute; (3) present a thesis; (4) preview the major sections of the paper’s argument, and (5) adhere to the Chicago Manual of Style format for academic articles including endnotes.

First Draft of Seminar Paper (10%) – Due M 4/12
First drafts are a minimum of 15 double-spaced pages adhering to the Chicago Manual of Style format for academic articles including endnotes. First drafts are meant to improved upon. All can be forgiven except failing to complete an entire first draft including an introduction, sections of analysis, conclusion, and endnotes.

Seminar Paper Presentation (10%) – Due R 5/3
Each student will present his or her seminar paper as a ten-minute conference presentation at our final meeting. We will break into two panels. The primary goal of the paper presentations will be to practice the skill of presenting research in a professional setting. Each student may choose his or her means of presentation: extemporaneous, manuscript reading, power point, etc. Grades will be based on: (1) the overall clarity and organization, (2) the quality of audience adaptation, and (3) the degree to which the presentation makes a convincing case for the importance of the research it represents.

Final Seminar Paper (30%) – Due M 5/8
Final papers are a minimum of 18 double-spaced pages, not including notes, adhering to the Chicago Manual of Style format for academic articles. The seminar paper should exemplify the habits of mature rhetorical scholarship, but in particular each final paper should demonstrate a depth of research into the student’s
chosen topic. In addition, each paper should engage in analysis commensurate with the texts chosen for analysis, demonstrating a thorough rhetorical understanding of the object of study. Finally, the paper must perform an analysis that draws, not exclusively, but at least in part upon the course readings. These can be challenging or even confusing expectations to meet, so students are encouraged to meet with their professor to discuss how their projects will achieve these goals.

Course Policies
Please note that the University of North Texas boasts several great resources for rhetorical humans:

- UNT Writing Lab (http://ltc.unt.edu/node/362)
- COMM Library (http://communication.unt.edu/research/library)

As you find cause to seek help along the way in COMM 5440, do not forget that these are available to you.

Guidelines for Submitting Assignments
Chicago Manual of Style or Modern Language Association Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. Get one. Read it. Do it. Alternatively or simultaneously, have a look at the submission page for Rhetoric & Public Affairs, the Quarterly Journal of Speech, and/or Rhetoric Society Quarterly. Even better, pick up the latest issue you can get your hands on of any of these, have a look how they are doing things these days, and then make your version double-spaced.

Attendance
Seminar participants are expected to approach attendance as professionals. Any absence aside from an emergency should be communicated in advance. Overall, absences should be minimal and explicable. In the unfortunate event that you face an emergency that is likely to remove you from class for an extended period, please get in contact with the Dean of Students office (https://deanofstudents.unt.edu). They can provide you with support and options for managing your academic career during an extended emergency.

Classroom Citizenship
Scholarship is fundamentally a collective enterprise. Bear this in mind in all that you say and do.

Academic Integrity
Dishonesty of any kind is unacceptable in this course. Dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting the work of another person, submitting work turned in for credit in a previous course, or tampering with the academic work of other students. Academic dishonesty will result in academic sanctions, which may include automatic failure of the course. For more complete information on UNT’s procedures and policies regarding academic integrity, follow this link to check out your Student Handbook: http://policy.unt.edu/sites/default/files/untpolicy/pdf/7-Student_Affairs-Academic_Integrity.pdf.

Disability Access
The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at: http://www.unt.edu/oda. You may also contact them by phone at 940-565-4323.
Course Schedule


R – 2/1 Paper Proposals

R – 2/8 Theodore Roosevelt, “The Man with the Muck Rake,” also presentations:
- Ida Tarbell, *The History of the Standard Oil Company*
- Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives*
- Lincoln Steffens, *The Shame of the Cities*

R – 2/15 Richard Hofstadter, “The Paranoid Style in American Politics,” also presentations:
- Michael Harrington, *The Other America*
- Jonathan Kozol, *Death at an Early Age*
- Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*

R – 2/22 Bruno Latour, “Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam?” also presentations:
- Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the 21st Century*
- Matthew Desmond, *Evicted*
- Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*


R – 5/3  Seminar Paper Presentations

T – 5/8  Final Draft of Seminar Paper Due