

COMM 4220

Seminar in Rhetorical Studies

Gender & Communication

Monday/Wednesday 2:00 - 3:20 GAB 406

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Office Hours: Mondays 3:30-5:00
Tuesdays 2:00-4:30
Other times by appointment

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Course Overview

Welcome to COMM 4220 – Gender & Communication. This class will provide a venue through which to explore connections between gender, rhetoric, and public culture widely conceived. We will be talking about a range of issues including constructions of feminism and women’s rights, the fluidity of gender and sexuality, questions of identity, and a variety of gender-related issues that interest you. The approach to this class will be to think about the rhetorical constructions of gender in American discourses through the optics of four particular issue clusters—Politics & Public Life, Intersections of Race & Gender, Sex, Sexuality, & Unruly Bodies, and Masculinities. We will use these areas as a means of tracing the rhetorical development of arguments offered to improve (and challenge) gendered lives. In general, this class will approach topics from two different vantages—exploring voices who challenge representations and expectations of gendered identities and examining those who reinforce hegemonic gender roles.

As a course offered by Communication Studies, we will take seriously the intersections of rhetoric with performance, media, and lived identities. While the emphasis will be on rhetorical methodologies for thinking about constructions of gender, we will discuss a wide array of location in which such arguments are articulated—public protests, speeches, acts of disobedience/resistance, movies, poetry, television, websites, music, etc. Additionally, although the particular focus of this course will be on inventions of arguments and subject positions germane to gender, the lessons learned about social movements more generally should be applicable to a wide variety of marginalized groups agitating for inclusion in the U.S. socio-political-cultural arena.

****Please note****

This is a course taught from rhetorical perspectives. While there are undoubtedly connections between what we study in this course and the general study of interpersonal communication, the approach of this course is rhetorical.

Course Objectives

As a collective, we will pursue a number of objectives. While all classes are expected to be responsive to the needs and expectations of students, this is the type of class that truly does ebb and flow based on the contributions of all class members. In general, the goals we shall seek in this course will include the expectation that each student achieve the following by the end of the term.

1. To gain an understanding of gender as a social, historical, and cultural construction rather than a natural, biological “given.”
2. To gain an appreciation of how gender interacts with other social constructions (race, ethnicity, class, etc.).
3. To gain an ability to use the critical methodologies of rhetorical theory and feminist scholarship to analyze how gender constructions shape the realities of our lives, particularly in contemporary U.S. society.
4. To cultivate an ability to translate complex theoretical concepts into public educational efforts.
5. To improve our understandings and validations of the achievements, experiences, and perspectives of non-dominant individuals and groups.

Assignments

Active Participation (10% – 100 points) This course will be a challenging one. This class will benefit students who are motivated to read, write, and engage in discussion. This class is motivated primarily through dialogue, discussion, and engagement; Thus, your **active** participation in discussions (both in class and on the course blog) is essential. Merely attending class is not the same as actively participating in the course. If you attend every day but rarely engage in the materials in a way that is responsive to others in the class, you will earn a poor participation grade by the end of the semester. Likewise, if you are not in class, you certainly cannot engage our discussions fully. In short, come to class **prepared** (meaning having read and ready to speak about what you have read in an engaged manner). Please, speak out, speak often, and speak intelligently.

In-class Quizzes & Assignments (15% – 150 points) In addition to your respectful contributions to class dialogues, this grade will take into consideration various assignments not listed on the syllabus (e.g., reading quizzes, reading prompts, in-class group work, homework assignments).

Article Review Essays (20% or 200 points – 4 essays x 5%/50 points each) You will complete four 2-3 page assessments of a critical article; one assessment for each of the 4 sections of the course. These papers should always address the critical/scholarly article listed for the day (pay attention to the article for which you sign up, not just the date). Each paper should be divided into a ratio where about 2/3 of your paper is a review of the primary arguments of the article and detailing of how these arguments are supported through evidence and reasoning. The remaining 1/3 of your paper should critique the article—did it make a compelling argument? Why? For this latter part of the paper, you must make an argument that employs reason and evidence for your argument. There is no expectation for additional research for these papers. At the top of each paper should be your name and the citation for the article you are reviewing (no need for a works cited page). **At the end of each paper, you should append at least 2 questions that might be used to guide discussion for the next day of class.**

During the first two weeks of class, you will sign up for the readings that you plan to review for each section. **These review essays & discussion questions are always due by 5:00 pm on the night before class. Papers are to be submitted through Turnitin on BlackBoard.**

Collective Project (30% – 300 points)

In an effort to bring the lessons of this class to the wider university and public community, we will decide as a class on a collective public project. This project will be educational, public, and designed to provoke some sort of controversy. Much more information about this project will be provided as we settle into our class routine.

Final Paper (20% -- 200 points) Each student is expected to write an 8-10 page paper that theoretically analyzes some artifact of popular/public culture. This will be a rhetorical analysis in line with the types of articles you will have read in class. This paper will be due during the final exam period via Turnitin on BlackBoard.

Proposal for Paper (5% -- 50 points) Prior to the end of class, each student will turn in and have approved a proposal for the final paper.

All formal written assignments need to follow these basic guidelines:

- Your layout should include 1” margins, a 12 point font, and be double-spaced.
- Use quotations meaningfully. While I *strongly* encourage you to incorporate helpful quotations and passages, they do not substitute for your analysis of the materials.
- Proofread your paper carefully for language choices, grammar, and spelling.
- Include a bibliography that follows the APA format (in line with the expectations of the department).

Readings

The readings for this course vary in length, difficulty, and origination. Many readings are theoretical in nature and are drawn from journals in the fields of communication/rhetoric. Other readings will be primary documents (speeches, letters, etc.) selected from various time periods of U.S. history; working with primary sources, especially ones whose language that seems outdated, can be challenging but also quite rewarding. And still other readings will not be “readings” at all and will be visual texts (pictures, quilts, movies, etc.). Due to the diverse nature of our texts, there will be some day-to-day variation in terms of your reading load. Some of the essays are complex and will likely challenge you – they are not included to frustrate you – they have been chosen because they are strong examples of the positions we are discussing, and they lay out arguments in ways that are especially nuanced and sophisticated.

Our activities in class will be based upon the assumption that you have read and thought about the material. With this in mind, you should plan to give yourself plenty of time to read carefully, take notes appropriately, and be prepared to ask questions when necessary. Students are expected to complete and process, to the best of their ability, any assigned readings before coming to class and to **bring that reading to class with them**. Do not give up on a reading just because you’re feeling challenged by it; read the entire assignment and come to class with questions. Quizzes will be used as necessary to ensure that students are reading all assignments.

Required Readings:

To keep your costs at a minimum, all course readings will be posted on BlackBoard.

You can print out essays either from your home computers or in a General Access Lab on campus. Please see this website, <http://www.gacl.unt.edu/pol.php>, for more information about where to find labs, print quotas, etc. There are two labs in the General Academic Building (GAB 330 and GAB 550) along with quite a few labs spread throughout campus. It is expected that you will bring your readings to class each day as we will actively use them in class.

COMM Library Copier Use Policy

Students conducting research in the Communication Studies Library associated with departmental coursework have access to a printer/photocopier located in the office adjacent to the library. We encourage students to make use of this resource to print research accessed online in the library or to copy essays from any of the department’s holdings. Students may not use this resource for other purposes, such as printing courses assignments, class notes, scripts, etc. Students who use the copier for uses other than those outlined above will lose copying privileges.

Class Climate

The types of issues we will discuss in this class range from the writings of 19th Century activists to the politics of the breastfeeding and representations of raced and sexualized bodies. Some of you will undoubtedly have strong reactions to some of our readings and discussions—strong reactions are not discouraged. However, the ways in which reactions get framed and presented must be respectful and civil. In order for us all to glean the most from this course, we must create an environment in which individuals feel comfortable speaking their minds and relaying their experiences. Constructive criticism and responses are welcome (and expected). Disrespect of any kind will not be tolerated.

UNT Acceptable Student Behavior Statement:

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at www.unt.edu/csrr

Accountability

We will spend the bulk of our time *discussing* the ideas raised in the readings and in class and presenting arguments to one another. Especially where presentations are concerned, having an audience in active attendance is essential to the success of this class. I will act primarily as a facilitator and *each* of you will bear some responsibility for the educational experience of the entire class. If you are not here, you will not gain as much from or contribute as much to the class; your experiences are important to our collective learning experience. Therefore, there will be a strict accountability policy. You have **2 personal days** (one academic week) to use as you need/wish. These days should be saved to account for illnesses, interviews, upcoming trips, holiday break plans, etc. If you take more than two days off of class, your final grade will reflect a **full letter grade deduction for each class missed** (10%/100 points). However, if you are here for **every class meeting** (i.e., if you take no personal days) your final grade will reflect a **grade increase** of 2.5% (25 points). I do not discriminate between “excused” and “unexcused” absences (in other words, you don't need to get doctor's excuses, etc). Use your personal days wisely!!

There are only two exceptions made to this policy. The first exception is in line with the state of Texas regarding observations of major religious holy days (as identified by Section 11.20 of the Texas state tax code) – these absences do not count against your personal days. Additionally, “University Authorized Absences” (i.e., travel in accordance with a University-sponsored event) do not count as personal days. HOWEVER, it is your responsibility to alert me by the **second week** of class, in writing, if you plan to miss class due to a University Authorized Absence or religious observation over the course of the semester. In this memo, you must include specific dates and your reason for absence. If you are traveling for a University Authorized event, I will also need official documentation from your campus advisor.

Regardless for your reason for missing class, you are still responsible for that day's materials and deadlines.

Crisis Contingency

In the event of the university closing for weather-related reasons or illness outbreak (e.g. swine flu), please visit the course website on Blackboard. I will provide instructions on how to turn in assignments and how the class will proceed utilizing BlackBoard's announcements function.

Cell Phones/Text Messaging

We all use them and love them. Use them and love them before class and after class. Please don't make me answer your phone!

Academic Integrity

It is expected that all students have read and understand the Center for Student Rights & Responsibilities expectations regarding Academic Dishonesty and Integrity. If you have misplaced your copy of their code, please surf the net to <http://www.unt.edu/csrr/development/dishonesty.html>. It is of utmost importance that you understand what is meant by cheating, facilitating academic dishonesty, fabrication, plagiarism, etc. It is also important for you to understand your rights should I or any other instructor accuses you of academic dishonesty. Every graded assignment, unless otherwise indicated, requires you to do original, independent, and creative work. In addition to copying someone else's words or ideas, reusing your own work (from other courses) is considered academic dishonesty—you might be permitted to extend research from other classes, but you must clear this with your professors before proceeding with such research. Frequently, you will be asked to summarize and synthesize various course readings and additional research; if you are using more than **3 words of that text**, they need to go in quotation marks and **include the corresponding page number(s)**. Even if you are not quoting text directly, you need to indicate when you are using another scholar's thoughts/ideas/concepts/paradigms/etc by putting their name in parentheses after their idea. Violation of these expectations will result in swift and severe consequences (typically, failure for both the assignment and the course).

Disability Concerns

The University of North Texas is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of federal equal opportunity legislation; reference Public Law 92-112 – The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. With the passage of new federal legislation entitled Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA), pursuant to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, there is renewed focus on providing this population with the same opportunities enjoyed by all citizens. In accordance with the ADA and Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA), I will gladly provide reasonable accommodation to students who need it. Students who wish to self-identify and request assistance under this policy should register in room 318A of the University Union by the **second week** of class.

E-Mail & BlackBoard

Students are expected to check their preferred e-mail quite frequently in order to stay current with course communications. If you have a question outside of class and can't make it to my office hours, please contact me via e-mail (either my UNT or Gmail account -- do **not** e-mail me through the BlackBoard site). In addition, this course will employ the BlackBoard system—plan to check this **often** for course reminders, announcements, updates, assignments, and readings in addition to the course gradebook.

SETE Evaluations

The Student Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness (SETE) is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. This short survey will be made available to you at the end of the semester (Nov. 29-Dec. 17), providing you a chance to comment on how this class is taught. I am very interested in the feedback I get from students, as I work to continually improve my teaching. I consider the SETE to be an important part of your participation in this class.

Meetings

I am willing to meet with you ahead of time and talk about your assignments. I am more than willing to read drafts and outlines ahead of time to offer suggestions for improvement. I will be maintaining a 24/7 policy with regard to talking about grades – Once I have returned an assignment with a grade, please wait at least 24 hours to talk with me about the grade (this will allow you time to reflect on the feedback and constructively determine questions for our meeting). Any meeting regarding grades on particular assignments must be scheduled within 7 days of the return of that assignment – it is never good to wait too long to discuss a potential problem. I will not discuss grades over e-mail or telephone, and I will not discuss your grades in reference to anyone else in the class. You are not graded against others in the class and everyone is evaluated based on their individual contributions. Indeed, students who have found success in this class in the past have realized the importance of keeping an open dialogue with me

Deadlines

Please pay close attention to deadlines as you will be held to them. This policy is in place to assist you in your life—deadlines are important and reflect on your credibility and professionalism (please treat this course as a priority). We all depend upon machines to get our work done. We all know that machines break down. When they do, it does not constitute an “excuse” or an “emergency.” It is expected that you will prepare your assignments far enough in advance so that when your computer malfunctions (as it inevitably will), you will still have time to rectify the problem and turn in the assignment on time. Since you will turn your papers in to Turnitin on BlackBoard, you must abide by all deadlines. Turnitin on BlackBoard has an automatic submission cutoff and will not accept late work. If you miss the deadline (by even a second), your paper will not be uploaded and will not be accepted.

“On Time” means at the beginning of class on that specific due date. If you are taking a personal day or observing a religious holy day, you can still turn an assignment in on time by turning it in EARLY to Turnitin on BlackBoard.

There are very few circumstances in which makeup assignments are applicable to this class. Since you will have most major assignments well in advance, you will always have the opportunity to turn in work early. Again, plan accordingly to account for interviews, travel (University Authorized, religious, and personal), and illnesses. If you miss an in-class assignment (e.g., quiz) due to a University Authorized Absence or religious observation, you can write a make-up essay to take the place of that in-class assignment. If you miss an in-class assignment because you are taking a personal day for any other reason, the assignment cannot be made up.

Academic Research (or, why you should avoid becoming a Google Monkey)

It is expected that you are capable of performing (and willing to perform) collegiate level academic research. Often, this will require a trip to the brick and mortar building called a “library” – this may seem arduous, but all of your research needs are not always available on your home computer. The only time you should be using Wikipedia or Google is to help you brainstorm—googling a topic or doing a Wikipedia search should **never** constitute an end result of your research. Wikipedia and Google should **never** show up on your bibliography. In your presentations, phrases such as “according to Wikipedia.com ...” and “as explained on Google.com...” should **never** escape from your mouth.

Bottom line: Run away from Wikipedia and Google.

The UNT Library website has the option “Communication & Mass Media Complete” – this search engine should be your friend. While it does not catalogue all journals in the field of Communication, it does search a good number of them and offer many of them in pdf format. Select “Find Journal Articles” under Electronic Resources. On the left side of the page, select “C” at the top of the page (it’s the third letter from the left in the alphabet). There you will find the link to “Communication & Mass Media Complete.” You might also try “ComIndex,” “ComAbstracts,” or “Communication Abstracts.” Also, under “G” you will find the “Gender Studies Database” and under “W” the “Women’s Studies e-books via Greenwood.”

Regardless of which database you select, you need to find either a pdf of the source (this is the equivalent of the article photocopy) or the physical journal at the library. You will be told often that “internet sources” are not acceptable research. Finding journal articles that are catalogued online **is not** the equivalent of an “internet source.” When I say “no internet sources,” I mean something that only exists online and is not peer-reviewed. There are some exceptions to this “no internet source” rule; please consult with me if you think you have encountered an exception.

Grading/Quality of Work

All grades will be in the form of a letter grade (A-F) and weighted according to the demands of the specific assignments. In the end, your final grade will be accounted in the following manner:

A: Exemplary: work or performance that goes well beyond the basic expectations of the assignment to the point of providing a model of excellence to others.

B: Commendable: work or performance that not only meets all requirements but exceeds them, demonstrating depth, originality, and other marks of quality that give the work distinction.

C: Satisfactory: work or performance that fully meets all requirements competently and shows the ability to function as a college student.

D: Marginal: work or performance that either (1) fails to meet all requirements though what is done is considered competent, or (2) meets all requirements but not at a basic level of competence or (3) both of the above but not poor enough to be considered failing.

F: Failing: work or performance that falls significantly short of requirements or basic competence or both. And, of course, work not done.

Incompletes

In accordance with university policy, a student can only receive a course grade of "I" if the student 1) has completed at least 75% of the coursework, 2) is passing the course, and 3) has a justifiable and documented reason beyond the control of the student for not completing the work on schedule (e.g., serious illness, military service).

Disclaimer

This syllabus should not be considered a binding contract on the part of the professor, who reserves the right to change any aspect of the course without prior notice.

Schedule of Readings

It is expected that you will read the text(s) **BEFORE** coming to class for the day, that you will take notes on your readings, and that you will bring the readings with you to class so we can discuss them fully. Please use your printing privileges and bring all readings with you with notes to enable quick consultations. We may alter some of the readings as the semester progresses depending on the needs of the class.

All Readings Will be Available via BlackBoard

Mapping Some Terrains of the Course

Aug 30 Introduction to Course

Why are you here? Let's get to know each other ...

Sep 1 Getting a Handle on Sex, Gender, & Sexuality

- Dale Spender, Selections from *Man Made Language*
- Allan G. Johnson, "Patriarchy, The System: An It, Not a He, A Them, or an Us"
- Judith Lorber, "The Social Construction of Gender"

Sept 6 No Class -- Honor the Laborers in Your Life

Feminism and Public Life

Sep 8 An Entrance into Feminism

- bell hooks, Selections from *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*

Sep 13 1st Wave Feminism

- Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "Introduction" to *Man Cannot Speak for Her: A Critical Study of Early Feminist Rhetoric*
- Sheryl Hurner, "Discursive Identity Formation of Suffrage Women: Reframing the 'Cult of True Womanhood' Through Song"

Sep 15 Feminine Style

- Bonnie J. Dow & Mori Boor Tonn, "'Feminine Style' and Political Judgment in the Rhetoric of Ann Richards"

Sep 20 Media Framing of Women in Politics

- Diana B. Carlin and Kelly L. Winfrey, "Have You Come a Long Way, Baby? Hillary Clinton, Sarah Palin, and Sexism in 2008 Campaign Coverage"

Sep 22 3rd Wave Feminism -- What Counts as Political?

- Stacey K. Sowards and Valerie R. Renegar, "Reconceptualizing Rhetorical Activism in Contemporary Feminist Contexts"

Sep 27 No Readings -- Work on Public Project in Class

Intersections of Race and Gender

Sep 29 **Intersectionality**

- Kimberle Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color" (*THIS IS A LONGER READING, GIVE YOURSELF TIME*)

Oct 4 **Intersectional Resistance**

- Stacey Sowards, "Rhetorical Agency as *Haciendo Caras* and Differential Consciousness Through Lens of Gender, Race, Ethnicity, and Class: An Examination of Dolores Huerta's Rhetoric"

Oct 6 **Racialized Resistance**

- Sojourner Truth, "Ain't I a Woman?"
- Roseann M. Mandziuk, "Commemorating Sojourner Truth: Negotiating the Politics of Race and Gender in the Spaces of Public Memory"

Oct 11 **Race and Popular Culture**

- Amy Adele Hasinoff, "Fashioning Race for the Free Market on America's Next Top Model."

Oct 13 **Race and Popular Culture**

- Celeste Lacroix, "Images of Animated Others: The Orientalization of Disney's Cartoon Heroines from *The Little Mermaid* to *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*"

Oct 18 No Readings -- Work on Public Project in Class

Sex, Sexuality, & Unruly Bodies

Oct 20 **Introduction to Queer Theory**

- Michael Warner, "The Ethics of Sexual Shame" from *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life*
- Michael Warner, "Introduction" of *Fear of a Queer Planet?*

Oct 25 **The Potential For and Problems With Bodily Resistance**

- Amy Koerber, "Rhetorical Agency, Resistance, and the Disciplinary Rhetorics of Breastfeeding"
- Visit the Facebook page: "If Breastfeeding Offends You, Put a Blanket Over YOUR Head!"
- Special Guest Star Speaker Extraordinaire – Karen Kimball

Oct 27 **Representing the Female Body**

- Eve Ensler, Selected monologues from *The Vagina Monologues*
- Michele L. Hammers, "Talking About 'Down There': The Politics of Politicizing the Female Body through *The Vagina Monologues*"

Nov 1 **Queering (Inter)Sexed Bodies**

- Suzanne Kessler, "The Medical Construction of Gender"
- John M. Sloop, "Disciplining the Transgendered: Brandon Teena, Public Representations, and Normativity"

Masculinities

Nov 3 Introduction to Considering Masculinities

- Michael Kimmel, “Men at Work: Captains of Industry, White Collars, and the Faceless Crowd” from *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*

Nov 8 Managing Masculinities

- Helene Shugart, “Managing Masculinities: The Metrosexual Moment”

Nov 10 Masculinities & Violence

- Rachel Hall, “‘It Can Happen to You’: Rape Prevention in the Age of Risk Management”

FRIDAY Nov 12 Paper Proposals due through Turnitin on BlackBoard by 5:00 p.m.

Nov 15 No Class Scheduled -- WORK ON FINAL PUBLIC PROJECT!!!

Nov 17 No Class Scheduled -- WORK ON FINAL PUBLIC PROJECT!!!

Nov 22 The Male Body

- Susan Bordo, Selection from *The Male Body: A New Look at Men in Public and in Private*

Nov 29 Final Public Project

Dec 6 Final Public Project

Dec 8 Final Public Project

Final Papers due through Turnitin on BlackBoard by Wednesday, December 15 at 5:00 p.m.