Seminar in Contemporary Rhetorical Theory:
Rhetoric and Culture

COMM 6320
Fall, 2013

T/Th 2-3:15
Hellems 77

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Office Hours: T: 10-10:55/Th 4:30-5:30 and by appt

Course Description

This iteration of Contemporary Rhetorical Theory is focused upon cultural turns in rhetorical study since the late 1960s. Over that time, culture has served the field as invention topos, methodological orientation, theoretical problematic, and contested terrain of practice and politics. This has been true across other disciplines as well, with history, sociology, media/communications research, and all manners of literary studies in particular experiencing their own cultural turns. Anthropologists, meanwhile, whose domain has always included culture, have developed rhetorical sensibilities in making sense of both the ethnographic writing and the social production of culture. Their rhetorical turn has also been mirrored across other disciplines, reflecting broader attention to the social construction of knowledge and shared realities. In scope and significance, the rhetorical turn has not rivaled the cultural, but they have emerged in the same broad historical moment, reflecting the ascendance of constructivist and interpretive paradigms. That moment may be showing signs of coming to an end, as we’ll touch upon.

This seminar is designed to familiarize you with different cultural approaches to rhetorical study and provide you with resources for critical and empirical research. It will provide overarching historical orientation to recent cultural turns and longer traditions and predecessors. More extensively, it will expose you to different intellectual movements marked by different theoretical orientations, methodologies, styles, and conceptions of rhetoric and of culture. We will read from work informed by intellectual history, evolutionary biology, pragmatism/symbolic interactionism, Marxism/critical theory, liberal-democratic/civic republican political theory, feminism, performance studies, anthropology, comparative rhetoric, ethnography of communication, cultural history, and post-humanism (in approximate order of appearance). Along the way, we’ll assemble a heterogeneous toolbox of concepts, frameworks, and provocations that are potentially useful to your theoretical, empirical, pedagogical, and practical work in rhetoric and culture.

The reading list includes articles but emphasizes books. I’ve done this partly because books are increasingly the standard of scholarship in rhetorical studies. If you are a student in rhetoric, you
would do well to start thinking of your dissertation project as the draft of a book and notice models that began as dissertations (e.g. Pezzullo, Boromizsa-Habashi, and Goodale on our reading list). I also want to give you practice in reading books efficiently, intelligently, productively, and critically. Try to develop habits of reading that address these five *topoi*:

1. What is the project? (genre, scope, aspirations, assumptions, style, politics);
2. What is the argument? (claims, supporting reasons, evidence);
3. What is useful in it? (to you, to others; in what ways?);
4. What are its limitations? (conceptual, empirical, rhetorical, political, ethical, aesthetic);
5. How does it compare to other works (actual or possible ways of addressing the same topic or analogous phenomena?).

We’ll cycle through these questions throughout the semester as we make sense of the readings.

**Course Requirements**

Course requirements involve weekly participation and a final paper or comprehensive-style take-home exam.

a. **Participation** (40% of your final grade) means coming prepared to discuss the readings: to characterize their projects, summarize their arguments, raise questions about their meaning, explore their implications, evaluate their limitations, compare them with other readings, and apply them to real-world examples and potential research projects. Each week I’ll raise these sorts of questions, and everyone should take part in answering them. I like to try to get everyone involved in discussions, so come prepared every class period.

b. **Final Paper or Comps-Style Exam Question** (60% of your grade)
   - If you’re an advanced doctoral student with an ongoing empirical project, then you can choose the Paper Option: 20-30 pages that draw upon and meaningfully engage with readings from the course. You need to **approve** this option with me by the third week of the semester (Sept 10-12), submit a formal 150-250-word **proposal** by the fifth week (Sept 24-26), and get me the final paper by Thursday of Finals Week (Dec 18).
   - Everyone else, including advanced students who would prefer this option, will write a take-home **Comprehensive Exam-Style Question**: 20-25-pages, based on readings from the entire semester but also tailored to your particular area of intellectual focus. I will distribute these questions before Thanksgiving break, and they will be due the Tuesday of Finals Week (Dec 16).
   - The class will not meet during the last week of classes, giving you time to focus exclusively on your paper/take-home.
Required Books and Other Readings


Articles will be available as PDF’s on the D2L site for the course: [https://learn.colorado.edu](https://learn.colorado.edu).

Course Schedule

(Readings discussed that day are noted parenthetically)

Introduction: Historical Orientations

*Readings:*

Peter Simonson, “On the Chiasmus of Rhetoric and Culture: History and Theory.” MS, Department of Communication, University of Colorado, Boulder


John Sloop and Mark Olson, “Cultural Struggle: A Politics of Meaning in Rhetorical Studies,” in Rosteck, 248-265.


Aug 27 Introduction to the Course (Simonson)

29 Rhetoric and Culture: The Long View (Fahnestock; Meyer; Eagleton)

Sept 3 Rhetoric and Culture: Shorter Views from NCA Circles (Blair; Schiappa; Rosteck; Sloop & Olson; Hay)

**Dramatism and Cultural Pragmatism**

*Readings:*


Sept 5 Dramatism (Burke: “Defintion of Man,” “Terministic Screens”)

10 Pragmatist/American Cultural Studies (Munson & Warren; Carey: “Cultural Approach,” “Culture in Question”)

**Critical/(Neo-)Marxian Cultural Studies**

*Readings:*


Sept 12 Basic Concepts (Williams, 1-71)
Sept 17 Cultural Theory (Williams, 75-141)
19 Literature (Williams, 145-212)
24 Contemporary Inflections I (Grossberg, 1-77, 90-100)
26 Contemporary Inflections II (Grossberg, 169-259, 289-94)

Rhetoric and Civic Culture

Readings:

Oct 1 Normative Dimensions of Rhetorical Culture I (Bitzer; Farrell, 1-100)
3 Normative Dimensions II (Farrell, 187-293)
Oct 8 Visual Dimensions of Rhetorical Culture I (Hariman & Lucaites, 1-48, 93-136)
10 Visual Dimension II (Hariman & Lucaites, 137-170, 208-242, 287-305)
Oct 15 Performative Dimensions of Rhetorical Culture (Pezzullo, 1-105)
17 Performative Dimensions II (Pezzullo, 106-193)
Oct 22 Feminist Practices in Rhetorical Culture (Royster & Kirsch, 1-68)
24 Feminist Practices (Royster & Kirsch, 71-151)
Anthropological and Comparative Approaches

Readings:
Michal Mokrzan, “The Rhetorical Turn in Anthropology,” MS, Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, University of Wroclaw, Poland
Ivo Strecker and Stephen Tyler, selections from Culture & Rhetoric, op cit (1-3, 21-30)
Susan Romano, “Rhetoric in Latin America,” Handbook of Communication History, op cit, 397-411.

Oct 29 Rhetorical Turns in Anthropology and the Rhetoric-Culture Project (Mokrzan; Strecker and Tyler; Carrithers, ed., 1-52
31 Rhetoric-Culture Project II (Carrithers, ed., TBA)
Nov 5 Comparative Rhetoric I (Hum and Lyon; Swearingen; Mao)
7 Comparative Rhetoric II (Wang; Garrett; Romano)
Nov 12 Rhetoric and the Ethnography of Communication I (DBH, 114-117; 1-63)
14 Ethnography of Communication II (DBH, 64-113)

Rhetoric and Cultural History


Nov 19 Rhetoric and Sonic Cultures (Goodale, all)
21 No Class: NCA Convention
Post-Humanist, Post-Cultural?


Dec 2 Ambient Rhetoric I (Rickert, 1-40, 99-155)

Dec 4 Ambient Rhetoric II (Rickert, 159-164, 191-193, 204-219, 271-285)

Reflecting and Writing

Dec 9-11 No Class. Work on your Take-Home Exam or Paper.

Dec 16-18: Take-Home Final Option due 5pm Tuesday, December 16; Paper-Option due 5 pm Thursday, December 18.

UCB Student Information

(1) If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact: 303-492-8671, Willard 322, and http://www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see guidelines at http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices/go.cgi?select=temporary.html

(2) Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, if you let me know in advance of a religious obligation, I can accommodate you. See full details at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html. A comprehensive calendar of the religious holidays most commonly observed by CU-Boulder students is at http://www.interfaithcalendar.org/

(3) The University of Colorado at Boulder policy on Discrimination and Harassment, the University of Colorado policy on Sexual Harassment and the University of Colorado policy on Amorous Relationships apply to all students, staff and faculty. Any student, staff or faculty member who believes s/he has been the subject of sexual harassment or discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. Information about the ODH, the above referenced policies and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be obtained at http://www.colorado.edu/odh
All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-735-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Other information on the Honor Code can be found at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html and at http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. See policies at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html and at http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code