

WRA 848 American Cultural Rhetorics

Spring 2017
Th 3:00-5:50
222 Bessey Hall

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Acknowledgement: A version of this syllabus was developed originally by faculty in the Department of Writing, Rhetoric and American Cultures at Michigan State University. This syllabus has been adapted and modified by Trixie Smith.

Required Texts

Black Skin/White Masks. Frantz Fanon
Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza. Gloria Anzaldua
Critical Autoethnography: Intersecting Cultural Identities in Everyday Life. Boylorn and Orbe, eds
Feminist Rhetorical Practices: New Horizons for Rhetoric, Composition, and Literacy Studies. Jacqueline Jones Royster and Gesa Kirsch.
House on Mango Street. Sandra Cisneros
Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods. Shawn Wilson (pdf provided)
The Truth about Stories: A Native Narrative. Thomas King
The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts. Maxine Hong Kingston
Other readings will be posted on D2L as pdf files.

Course Description

This course is a basic introduction to the theories and methodologies useful to research and scholarship in Cultural Rhetorics. In fact, I am viewing this course as a methodologies course and you should do the same. Consequently, you will be asked to experience the process of theorizing cultural rhetorics through small weekly activities and experiences as well as a sustained project throughout the semester. By the end of course, you should be able to map relationships between/across/among various intersecting theories, methodologies, disciplines, practices, and questions that comprise scholarship in cultural rhetorics.

So we're going to read a lot, both theoretical and praxis-based texts. We're going to tell stories. We're going to practice the methodologies and methods we read and discuss. We're going to debrief and deconstruct our practice(s), and then do it all again. We're also going to figure out some of what we need as we go, so expect things to change based on our readings, our questions, and our interests.

ASSIGNMENTS

You must submit all assignments to receive credit for the course.

Weekly Reading Responses (20%)—These 12 (-13) responses will serve several purposes: (1) to record your reactions/responses/questions about the assigned readings, (2) to practice assigned methods or the use of assigned tools/practices, (3) to list the issues from the readings that we should discuss in class, (4) to begin dialogue about the readings and then continue discussions from class, (5) to relate readings to your individual projects. I am asking you to post all responses in D2L so you can read and respond to each other. Reading responses do not always have to be written papers; in fact, at times, the “assignment” or topic may call for something else, likewise your response may call for some other multi-modal, multi-media form, so be flexible. You also have the option to pass one week; use it wisely and do let me know when you’re making that choice.

Due weekly by noon on Wednesdays.

Class Participation (15%)—This is a seminar class, so you will be expected to be present, prepared, and engaged each day. Class discussion will focus on the readings and the issues you bring to class each week, as well as your ongoing projects. We will also have a number of presentations/facilitations throughout the semester; when you miss someone’s presentation/ facilitation, you miss important information and interaction that cannot be duplicated so you will lose a point every time you miss a presentation. This will include being a weekly discussion leader (see explanation below). If you are not in class, you cannot participate; therefore, tardies and more than three absences will reduce your final grade. If you must be absent, please let me know beforehand and check with your classmates to get missed notes.

Weekly Discussion Leaders—Each person will be asked to facilitate the class’s discussion of one or more related articles or chapters each week. You will sign up for these in advance. How you approach this task is up to you, but remember to have the class involved and to let them know ahead of time if they need to do anything or bring anything to be prepared for class on your day. You will typically have 20-30 minutes for your portion of the class.

Mid-term Analysis/Critique Paper (15%): More about this assignment later, but you will be analyzing an article of your choosing from the AutoEthnography collection. You will be thinking about how to apply a CR lens to this topic/paper—what other questions to ask? What resources to find? What approaches to take? Etc? We will determine a set of guiding questions for this as a class. Due March 5th via email.

Literature Circles (15%)—In small groups (of 3), you will read a book-length ethnography. This is a chance for you to pursue a topic of interest to you, a topic that we may not be able to cover in class otherwise. It's also a chance for you to introduce this topic to the rest of the class. In a formal oral presentation/facilitation—with a handout—you will summarize the text for the rest of the class and explain what it has to offer to CR methodologies, and perhaps what CR methodologies could have offered it. What can we learn from this text, as theorists, researchers, educators, activists, etc? You will assign (and provide through D2L) an excerpt from this text, an explication of this text, or a published response to this text for the class to read in order to aid class discussion the night of your presentation. Please sign up for your book and group by March 2nd. Presentation date is March 23rd.

Self-designed Final Project (35%) --Projects should reflect a cultural rhetorics methodology or lens in some way and may be multi-modal or nontraditional. They can be connected to conferences and publications, but absolutely no annotated bibs. Project ideas should be discussed with me early in the semester; written proposals are due after spring break and a progress report is due April 13th. Final projects are due at the end of the term and will be shared with the class in lieu of a final exam. Thursday, May 4th, 3pm.

Academic Honesty

The university has firm policies regarding academic honesty and you will be held to these policies. You may not present another person's work or ideas as your own—including pictures and other images, you may not allow another person to write an assignment for you, and you must properly acknowledge source materials. Be sure to save all notes and drafts that lead up to a finished piece, so you can avoid problems and correct errors if they exist. If in doubt about how to document source materials or about the originality of your work, please feel free to discuss it with me.

Please Note: Students with disabilities that may require assistance or who have questions related to any accommodation for testing, note takers, readers, etc., must inform the instructor and provide certification from the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities (RCPD), 120 Bessey Hall, 517/353-9642 or TTY 517/355-1293.

This syllabus serves as a contract between you, the student, and me, the professor, and should serve as your guideline for the semester. By staying in this class, you are agreeing to follow all the guidelines given above and to be responsible for your own actions.