

CMN 538-CF: Rhetoric in Context

Spring 2018

Wednesdays, 2-4:50 pm

4103 Lincoln Hall

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Course Web Site: <https://learn.illinois.edu/course/view.php?id=27057>

Library Resources for Rhetorical Studies:

<https://www.library.illinois.edu/commedia/guides/course/rhetresource/>

Course Description

This seminar takes up the role of context in rhetorical research. Notions of context play a foundational role in rhetorical scholarship. Yet context itself has served, as Charles Morris and Kendall Phillips put it, as “rather a silent partner, presumed and to varying degrees practiced but not theorized, not an articulated methodological issue.” Our goal in the course will be to explore aspects of rhetoric’s history of approaches to context and to map contemporary ways that scholars place rhetoric “in context.” We will then use what we learn to inform our own collaborative, context-building research project. Topics and concepts we will take up include the text-context relationship, effects, panhistoriography, rhetorical biography, archives, fieldwork, circulation, and rhetorical/performative traditions.

Learning Outcomes

As a result of taking this course, you will:

- Gain an understanding of the history of conversations about context in the field of rhetorical studies (primarily the Communication side of RS);
- Reflect on the assumptions that rhetorical scholars bring to inquiry;
- Thoughtfully analyze the work of contemporary scholars for their various approaches to context;
- Assess your own exposure to and comfort with a wide variety of research skills and tools used by rhetorical scholars;
- Learn about the variety of sources available to rhetorical researchers;
- Learn how to do concrete, specific, substantive historical research about a particular rhetorical event;
- Use your growing expertise in rhetorical research to produce knowledge that others may learn from;
- Improve your academic writing skills;
- Consider the range of contexts for which one might produce a research project;
- Gain experience designing, managing, and executing a collaborative humanities research project.

Assignments (total of 500 points)

- (1) *Response papers.* Across the semester, you will write five 4-page (12-point font, double-spaced) response papers in which you respond to a theme, issue, or question that you identify and synthesize from that week's readings. A good response paper will offer a clear, coherent argument and adequately develop it with evidence from all or most of that week's readings. Response papers may reference and link ideas to the ongoing development of the Anthony project (see below). The first three response papers must be turned in before Spring Break (no exceptions). Only one paper may be turned in per class period, and you may not write a paper about readings that we have already discussed in class. I will stop reading and evaluating response papers after the fourth page. 40 points each for 200 points total.
- (2) *Compare/contrast paper.* Select three articles in peer-reviewed rhetoric journals that treat the same figure/topic/period/text. Read them, then write a 7-8 page paper that compares/contrasts the ways that each contextualizes its objects of study. 75 points. Due Feb. 7 via Moodle (no class that day).
- (3) *"Rhetoric Scholar's Toolbox" assessments and reflection.* Download from Moodle, fill out, and bring to class this self-assessment designed to help you identify the research tools and skills you already have and those you would like to develop further. At the end of the semester, you will fill it out again to see if anything has changed and write a 1-2 page reflection on your assessments. Due Jan. 24 and May 2. 25 points total.
- (4) *Anthony Project.* (Soon to be given a cooler name by all of you.) This collaborative project to be designed, researched, and produced by the whole class will contextualize a speech Susan B. Anthony delivered in downtown Champaign in April 1870. The class will collaborate to identify relevant areas for contextual inquiry, formulate a research plan, execute it, and produce a final project to be publicly shared on the last day of class (May 2). 200 points (175 points group grade, final 25 points assigned via your classmates' collective assessments of your individual contributions to the project).

Seminar Participation

You are successfully participating in the seminar when you (a) read carefully and bring detailed reading notes and questions to class; (b) engage productively in class—that is, ask questions, raise issues, deliberate with others in the room; (c) listen and respond to others critically yet charitably; and (d) avoid behaviors that block productive classroom conversation, such as monopolizing discussion, remaining silent, or offering comments that are merely informational or (un)appreciative.

Readings

M. Hogan and S. Parry-Giles, eds., *The Handbook of Rhetoric and Public Address* (Blackwell, 2010). We are reading selected chapters. Available as e-book in UIUC library.

Maegan Parker Brooks, *A Voice That Could Stir An Army: Fannie Lou Hamer and the Rhetoric of the Black Freedom Movement* (U Mississippi Press, 2014). Obtain on your own.

Robin E. Jensen, *Infertility: Tracing the History of a Transformative Term* (Penn State Press, 2016). Obtain on your own.

We will also read articles via a collection of PDFs and web links found on our Moodle site.

These sources review key concepts in rhetorical studies; you may wish to have on hand as you move through our rhetoric curriculum. All are in our library.

- James Jasinski, *Sourcebook on Rhetoric* (Sage, 2001).
- Thomas Sloane, ed. *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric* (Oxford, 2000).
- Andrea Lunsford et al, eds. *Sage Handbook of Rhetorical Studies* (Sage, 2009). Available as e-book in UIUC library.

Administrative Miscellany

- (1) Use *Chicago Manual of Style* (17th edition) for all class writing. For CMS help see <http://guides.library.illinois.edu/citingsources/chicagostyle>.
- (2) I will refuse to read work that does not conform to minimum standards of grammar, spelling, mechanics, and citation for graduate-level work. Proofread all writing carefully. Double-space everything.
- (3) All written work should be turned in on paper and in person unless announced on the syllabus or we have mutually agreed otherwise. I do not accept graded assignments via email.
- (4) Students who are found to have violated the University's academic integrity policies should expect to fail the course.
- (5) Barring serious family or medical emergencies, I will give no incompletes for this course.
- (6) If you may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, I am glad to discuss your specific needs.
- (7) Laptops, tablets, etc. are welcome in class for notetaking, referring to readings, and other activities directly related to class discussion. I reserve the right to declare "screens down" at any point during class. Please turn off your phone or set it to silent mode when you come to class. No text messaging during class.
- (8) We will take a 5-minute break roughly halfway through each our seminar meetings. If you need to step out of the classroom briefly outside of that time, feel free to do so quietly.

Schedule of Readings

All readings are on Moodle except those listed as in Hogan/Parry-Giles book (HPG).

Reading assignments are listed according to the day we will engage them in class. For example, for the Jan. 24 class you should read the articles listed under Jan. 24.

- Jan. 17 Introduction to the course and opening activities
No reading assignment ahead of today's class
- Jan. 24 Early-Mid Twentieth Century Contexts for Scholarship
Background (read first): Medhurst, "The History of Public Address as an Academic Study" (in HPG)
Hochmuth, "The Criticism of Rhetoric" (1955)
Yoakam Twitchell, "Susan B. Anthony" (1955)
Crowell, "FDR's Audience Persuasion in the 1936 Campaign" (1950)
Due: Rhetoric Scholar's Toolbox assessment (download from Moodle; fill out, print, and bring to class)
- Jan. 31 Late 20th Century: Western Special Issues on Criticism part one
Leff, "Interpretation and the Art of the Rhetorical Critic" (1980)
Leff/Sachs, "Words the Most Like Things" (1990)
McGee, "Text, Context, and Fragmentation of Contemp. Culture" (1990)
Condit, "Extremes of McGee and Leff" (1990)
Class meets only from 2-4 pm today
- Feb. 7 NO CLASS. CF at NCA retreat.
Compare/contrast paper due. Post to Moodle by 5 pm.
- Feb. 14 Early 21st Century: Western Special Issues on Criticism part two (+1)
Jasinski, "Status of Theory and Method in Rhetorical Criticism" (2001)
Dow, "Criticism and Authority in the Artistic Mode" (2001)
Morris, "(Self) Portrait of Prof. R.C.: A Retrospective" (2010)
Wilson, "The Racial Contexts of Public Address" (in HPG)
- Feb. 21 Rhetoric and Effects
Edwards, "Presidential Rhetoric: What Difference Does It Make?"
Kiewe, "FDR's First Fireside Chat: The Case for Studying Effects"
Jasinski and Merceica, "Analyzing Constitutive Rhetorics" (in HPG)
Demo, "Online Documentaries and Offline Impact"
- Feb. 28 Archives
Houck, "Textual Recovery, Textual Discovery" (in HPG)
Ray, "Rhetoric and the Archive"
Finnegan, "What Is This a Picture Of?"
- Mar. 7 Rhetorical Biography
Brooks, *A Voice That Could Stir an Army*

- Mar. 14 Field Methods
Blair, “Reflections on Criticism and Bodies”
Senda-Cook, Middleton, Endres, “Interrogating ‘The Field’”
de Onís, “Experiences with Co-Presence in Puerto Rico”
- Mar. 21 NO CLASS - SPRING BREAK
- Mar 28 Conceptual Histories
Hawhee and Olson, “Panhistoriography”
Jensen, *Infertility*
- Apr 4 Traditions
Jasinski, “Instrumentalism, Contextualism”
Murphy, “Inventing Authority”
Hawhee, “Beast Fables”
- Apr 11 Circulation and Reception
Finnegan, “Studying Visual Modes” (in HPG)
Gries, “Obama Hope Case Study”
Finnegan, “Managing Magnitude”
- Apr 18 Context Building in Your Dissertation
Irwin, selections from “Feminism from the Farm” (chapters 1-3)
(Katie Irwin Skype visit)
- Apr 25 Scholarly Contexts: Thinking Through Citational and Research Practices
Hayot, “Citational Practice”
Ahmed, “Making Feminist Points”
“Men Who Admire Their Own Work”
Mott and Cockayne, “Citation Matters”
Lubienski et al, “Sex Differences in Doctoral Publication Rates”
Nelson et al, “Signaling Safety”
- May 2 Last class period: Public presentation of Anthony Project