

Feminist Theory and Rhetorical Criticism
Professor Dana Cloud
Office hours: Mondays 9-12.

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CMA 7.220, 471-1947 dcloud@mail.utexas.edu
Please make an appointment via email.

Introduction: The purposes of this course are to survey modern variants of feminist theory, to extract the implicit attitudes in feminist theories toward and beliefs about the efficacy of rhetoric in the project of women's liberation, and to read a variety of current feminist works whose primary objects of scrutiny are rhetorical. We undertake these tasks in order to enable you to read rhetorical texts from a feminist standpoint, to be specific about which feminism you are working with, to recognize implicit rhetorical theories in feminist (and other) discourses, and to determine which feminist approaches are appropriate to various kinds of texts. The course assumes a basic sympathy but welcomes critical engagement with the feminist goals of gender equity, self-determination of women, and sex/gender freedom. We will also how these aims are complicated and challenged in the contexts of racism, nationalism, and class-based exploitation.

Requirements:

- Completion of weekly reading and preparation of notes for discussion: 10%
- Two short critical papers: 20% each (40% total)
- In-class presentation based on readings, with examples: 10%
- Seminar paper (25 double spaced pages, in APA or Chicago footnote style, with title and abstract, and in well-organized, eloquent, and thoroughly edited prose): 40%

Texts (please note additions to book list):

- Bryson, Valerie. *Feminist Political Theory* (New York: Palgrave-MacMillan, 2003).
- Cornell, Drucilla. *Feminism and Pornography* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000).
- Cvetkovich, Ann. *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003)
- Duran, Jane. *Eight Women Philosophers: Theory, Politics, and Feminism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006).
- Halberstam, Judith. *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: NYU Press, 2005).
- Harding, Sandra (ed.). *The Feminist Standpoint Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2004).
- James, Joy and T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, eds., *The Black Feminist Reader* (London: Blackwell, 2000). [out of print?]
- McCann, Carole R. and Kim Seung-Kyung. *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2003).
- Nicholson, Linda. *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory* (London: Routledge, 1997).
- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).
- Sloop, John M. *Disciplining Gender: Rhetorics of Sex Identity in Contemporary U.S. Culture* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004).
- Triage, Mary. *On the Picket Line* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007).
- Weigand, Kate. *Red Feminism: American Communism and the Making of Women's Liberation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001)

Schedule of Topics, and Readings:

date	topic	assigned reading
September 8	Rhetorical feminisms: Introduction	course packet #1
September 15	Early feminisms	Bryson, intro & Ch. 1 Duran part I
September 22	Liberal and radical feminism	Bryson Ch. 2, 9, 10, 11 Duran 5, 8 Nicholson, 1,2,3,5,9,10
	Pornography (reports)	Cornell selections
September 29	Marxist and socialist feminism	Weigand, 3, 6, 7, 13 Nicholson part 2, & 13 McCann section II (class)
	Standpoint theory (reports)	Harding selections
		McCann section III (standpoints) & ch.37,40
October 6	Black feminism & feminisms of color	Nicholson 4, 14, 16, 17
	Identity politics (reports)	McCann section II (race & nation), ch.41
October 13*	Post/anti-colonial feminisms	Mohanty, Nicholson 21, 23
October 20	Postmodernism and gender performativity	Sloop, Bryson 14 McCann ch. 35, 38
October 27	Recent works (reports): Cvetkovich	
November 3	Recent works (reports): Halberstam	
November 10 [†]	Recent works (reports) Triage	
November 17	Anti-feminist rhetoric (reports)	course packet #2 McCann ch. 39
November 24	NO CLASS--NCA	
December 1	revisit rhetoricians	course packet #1, #3

December 10, 7-10 p.m. CMA 5.156: course wrap, paper presentations

Seminar papers are due December 12 before 5 p.m. via email.

* Paper 1 due: Liberal, radical, and/or critical race feminist criticism

† Paper 2 due: Postcolonial and/or postmodern feminist criticism

Instructions for Assignments:

READINGS AND PARTICIPATION

For each class, please bring copies for the class of reading notes and post them to the discussion board on blackboard. Notes should consist of

- Summary of at 2 of the assigned readings with emphasis on the theoretical perspective of the author(s) and how they relate to rhetoric
- Detailed summary of one other reading
- Response to the reading selected for detailed critique
- Three questions: one question of clarification, one question about the theoretical perspective of the reading, and one question raised from an external (other theoretical) perspective.

SHORT PAPERS 6-8 well-crafted, thesis-governed, well-organized, and well-edited double-spaced pages, with references additional. For each paper, select a rhetorical artifact (speech, tv show, advertisement, web content, visual image, etc.) of interest to you from a feminist perspective. Be sure to include detailed examples from the text to support each point you make about it. Cite all of your sources using a standard bibliographic/citation format.

- In paper 1, please examine your artifact through the lens of liberal, radical, and/or critical race feminisms. What can your perspective tell us about the persuasiveness and significance of this text?
- In paper 2, please examine your artifact through the lens of postmodern and/or postcolonial feminism. What can your perspective tell us about the persuasiveness and significance of this text?

REPORT: Read assigned texts. Prepare a concise presentation of no more than 15 minutes (that's 7 pages, double spaced, in 12-point, MAX—and I will cut you off). Presentations should

- summarize reading, getting very quickly to the main point;
- summarize criticisms (from other authors or reviews) of this work, getting very quickly to what's at issue in the debate;
- provide a quick textual/video example (this comes out of your 15 minutes; if you have video, keep it to 2 minutes or less) for discussion;
- raise several discussion questions that get at the heart of the controversy.
- Prepare and distribute an outline (2 pages max) to the class so they can follow your argument.

SEMINAR PAPER: 25-30 double-spaced, 12-point, thesis-governed, well-edited pages, with a good title and an abstract.

- Focus on a rhetorical text or set of texts that speak significantly to the construction of gender identity or intervene in public controversy around issues of gender or sexuality.
- Provide a thesis paragraph that states your main idea about the text and previews the points to come.
- Introduction should catch reader's attention without being trite and tell us why what you are doing is important.
- Review literature from rhetorical studies and other disciplines on this text and these issues. Identify opposing views and decide where you stand. Develop your theoretical stance.
- Provide background and context for your artifact.
- Conduct a multi-section analysis of the text referring to critical and theoretical concepts as necessary. Use appropriate headings and subheadings.
- Draw a conclusion (which is also your thesis) about the text: what does it do, to whom, in what context, with what consequences?
- Draw a conclusion as to how (which) feminist theory informed your rhetorical criticism and why (this particular) feminist theory is important to this project.
- End by restating (in new words) your main idea, review your sections, and come to a graceful end, in your own words, not a quotation from someone else.

EXAMPLE: Dana Cloud on *The Bachelor* (on Blackboard)

This paper has been submitted for consideration for presentation at the 2009 ICA conference in Chicago. It is also under review at *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*. DO NOT CITE OR CIRCULATE without express permission of the author. Feedback is welcome.