



ENGL 4200 | LANG 205 | MW 2-3:20PM
SPRING 2016 | UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS
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M MODERN RHETORICAL STUDIES

CATALOG DESCRIPTION: Study of theories, practices and questions raised after the “rhetorical turn” of the 20th century.

COURSE OVERVIEW: In Octavia Butler’s “Bloodchild,” a young man, Gan, must make a terrible choice in the face of violence in order to save his family and himself. The story of Gan’s choice is gripping in “Bloodchild;” yet, we find stories of difficult choices everywhere in our society, not only in fiction but also in film, song, and every other imaginable media. Why are we so compelled by narratives of people facing uncertainty? Why do we need to tell stories of people stuck in the middle of hard choices?

Stories of hard choices and decisions are important because they remind us that who we are *ethically*—our habits, choices, customs—is intertwined with who we are rhetorically. Ethics comes from *ethos*, a word meaning habits or customs. If our habits were already hard-wired into our biology, then we would have no need to talk or tell stories about difficult ethical decisions. As it happens, however, humans differ in our understanding of our ethical relationships and obligations. This difference is where rhetoric and ethics meet. The interplay of ethics and rhetoric—of persuasion and morality, of contingency and certainty—will be the primary focus of the 4200 course.

“Aristotle proposes that practical wisdom (phronesis) involves understanding and experience, which together with intuitive reason give some ‘men’ the capacity for equitable judgment. But responsibility, this extraordinarily ordinary obligation played out in any conversation, reverses the Aristotelian order of things. Response involves action before understanding and before judgment” –Diane Davis

Over the course of this semester, we will keep coming back to two big, overarching questions. How has the study and practice of rhetoric changed in relationship to ethics over the 20th century? How do our rhetorical theories and practices affect our ethics—both in how we think about ethics and how we live out our ethics in practice? To address these questions, we will begin the course by discussing the foundations of ethics and rhetoric in works by Aristotle, Kant, and Nietzsche. We will look at the differences in the ethical paradigms of these writers, and we will then carry these differences into our readings of important rhetorical texts from the “modern” period of the early 20th century. Our reading of “modern” rhetorical studies will include texts by I.A. Richards, Kenneth Burke, Stephen Toulmin, and Jurgen Habermas. One of our goals will be to get a wide sense of how rhetoric was conceived and practiced during the mid 20th-century.

We will conclude the course by focusing on postmodern and “radical” ethics—the ethics of alterity or otherness. Reading bell hooks, Diane Davis, Judith Butler, and others, we will ask how both rhetorical theory and ethical practices are altered by a new consideration of “the Other” as center of human interaction and meaning. Overall, this course will give students a solid grounding in significant themes and emphases of rhetorical studies during the “modern” 20th century. The course will also give students the opportunity to understand and apply different ethical theories within several assignments focused on ethics in practice.

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SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS (subject to modification)

Note: Please have all assigned texts read by the date they are assigned. Read thoroughly and carefully, and plan to read each assigned text at least twice.

(BC) = Bloodchild and Other stories. (CP) = Course Packet. (RCR) = Readings in Contemporary Rhetoric

Wk	Date	MONDAYS	Date	WEDNESDAYS
1	18-Jan	MLK Day, no class	20-Jan	INTRO TO ETHICS AND RHETORIC
2	25-Jan	Stormer , "An Appetite for Rhetoric" (CP) 📖 Octavia Butler , "Near of Kin" and "Bloodchild" (BC)	27-Jan	Rhetoric, Ethics, and "Bloodchild" Discuss Case Study 1
3	1-Feb	Aristotle , From Nichomachean Ethics (CP)	3-Feb	Aristotle 📌 Case Study 1 DUE Note: please plan to come to office hours if you are having difficulty in class by this date
4	8-Feb	Kant , from Metaphysics of Morals (CP)	10-Feb	Kant
5	15-Feb	Nietzsche , "On the Genealogy of Morality" (CP)	17-Feb	Nietzsche
6	22-Feb	Unit 1 Review Discuss Case Study 2	24-Feb	📖 UNIT 1 EXAM 📌 Case Study 2 DUE
7	29-Feb	INTRO TO MODERN RHETORIC 📖 Octavia Butler , "Speech Sounds" (BC)	2-Mar	Richards , <i>Philosophy of Rhetoric</i> selection (RCR 1-9) Perelman , <i>The New Rhetoric</i> selection (RCR 57-87)
8	7-Mar	Toulmin , "Theory and Practice" (RCR 110-129)	9-Mar	Toulmin , "Tyranny of Principles" (RCR 93-109)
SB	14-Mar	Spring Break	16-Mar	Spring Break
9	21-Mar	Habermas , "Communicative Rationality and Theories of Meaning and Action" (CP)	23-Mar	Habermas
10	28-Mar	Unit 2 Review Discuss Case Study 3	30-Mar	📖 UNIT 2 EXAM 📌 Case Study 3 DUE
11	4-Apr	INTRO TO RADICAL ETHICS 📖 Octavia Butler , "The Evening and the Morning and the Night" and "Amnesty" (BC)	6-Apr	Hooks , "Choosing the Margin" (RCR 235)
12	11-Apr	Davis , from <i>Inessential Solidarity</i> , Intro (CP)	13-Apr	Davis , from <i>Inessential Solidarity</i> , Ch.2 (CP)
13	18-Apr	Davis , from <i>Inessential Solidarity</i> , Ch.4 (CP)	20-Apr	Butler , from <i>Giving Account of Oneself</i> , Ch.2 (CP)
14	25-Apr	Butler , from <i>Giving Account of Oneself</i> , Ch.3 (CP)	27-Apr	Unit 3 Review
15	2-May	📖 UNIT 3 EXAM	4-May	Discuss Case Study 4
F	FINAL EXAM: Monday, May 9, 1:30-3:30 pm, 📌 Case Study 4 DUE			

REQUIRED MATERIALS: Please have the following texts in hand during the class periods they are assigned.

Octavia Butler, *Bloodchild and Other Stories* (ISBN 9781583226988)

Foss, Foss, and Trapp, eds. *Readings in Contemporary Rhetoric* (ISBN 9781577662068)

Course Packet. Handed out on the first day of the course.

INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES AND EXPECTATIONS: This course has a demanding reading load centered on texts of rhetorical theory and practice. Students will be expected to read each text carefully and to come to class prepared to discuss the texts analytically and critically. I will introduce most of the texts and themes through direct instruction during class. Most of our class time, however, will be spent discussing the course readings and our responses to them. Sometimes we will also engage in collaborative or individual assignments or activities during class. When we talk as a class, I encourage you to move beyond simply talking about what parts of the texts that you "like." Work hard to think about how the texts support and contradict

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one another. Bring experiences and ideas from your own life into the discussion where appropriate. Look for ways that class readings and discussions are relevant in the world around you. Pay attention to what your classmates say and build off of their ideas when you can. Encourage and support, and learn from each other—this is the path of rhetorical studies.

ASSIGNMENT POLICY: All written work needs to be typed and submitted online to our Blackboard site. For written work, include your name and the page number on the top right of each page (i.e. : Heard 1). Please also include a date and the course number (ENGL 4200). Use a text font for all essays (Times Roman or Garamond for example) at 12 points, with all one-inch (1") margins, and double-spacing. Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date indicated by the assignment prompt. Save all assignments as your last name and the assignment name (i.e. Heard Case Study 1). Late work will not be accepted.

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GRADING BREAKDOWN

50% Case Studies (4)

- 1) Case study 1: 5%
- 2) Case study 2: 10%
- 3) Case study 3: 15%
- 4) Case study 4: 20%

20% In-Class Writing, Quizzes, and Participation

30% Unit Exams (3)

ODA POLICY: The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student.

Essential competencies for this course include the abilities to read and interpret rhetorical and philosophical texts; to participate in class discussions about ideas in rhetorical theory and practice; and to write mature, coherent, academic prose. If you have a disability for which you will require accommodations, please register with the Office of Disability Accommodation and present your request for accommodation to me within the first two weeks of class. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at <http://www.unt.edu/oda>. You may also contact them by phone at 940.565.4323.

PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:

The UNT Policy Manual defines plagiarism as: "(a) the knowing or negligent use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgement and (b) the knowing or negligent unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or by an agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials." (18.1.11). I expect your writing in this course to be original: every use of someone else's work in your writing should be marked clearly. The consequences for plagiarism both at UNT and in this course are severe, and may include failure from the course and in some cases dismissal from the university. Don't risk it—come and talk to me about any questionable material before turning in your assignment.

COURSE POLICIES: Note: by remaining in this class, you agree to the conditions stipulated in the syllabus

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT: I want every student to succeed in this class. My commitment is to create a classroom environment in which intellectual diversity and mutual respect for each other are promoted. I expect each student to share in this promotion of a respectful exchange of ideas. Please be sensitive to the views and beliefs expressed during class discussions, and show interest and respect for the contributions of your classmates.

ATTENDANCE and ABSENCE: You have five free absences. Upon missing **SIX (6) classes, you will be dropped from the course**. Coming late to class or not participating in class may result in you being counted as absent. The only excused absences are the ones defined as such by university policy (<http://policy.unt.edu/policy/15-2-5>). Unless your absence fits one of these categories, I do not need to know your reasons for absences. Please do not bring me doctor's notes or other excuses for absences that do not fit the university policy.

DISRUPTIONS: Please contribute to the class environment by giving your classmates and me your full attention at all appropriate times. You should be on time, pay attention, stay awake, remain in your seat until the class is officially over, resist

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texting and other non-class related writing, and refrain from packing up until the end of class. The only books or notes on your desk should be books or notes assigned for this class. Please note that excessive disruptions of our class time—including talking, sleeping, texting, cell phone usage, and doing work for other classes—hurt the class atmosphere and will hurt your grade should you engage in them. I will not warn you ahead of time if I dock points from your participation grade for disrupting class.

BLACKBOARD AND EMAIL

Our course will have a Blackboard site. Please check this site and your university email regularly for messages. Note that if you do not use your UNT email address, you need to have your UNT email forwarded to the address that you prefer. All emails that you send me should identify you clearly as a student in this class in the subject heading (i.e. "ENGL 4200—Student Name"). Remember that when you write an email to a professor, you should assume a professional tone and present yourself well. I want to hear from you, but please communicate as clearly and professionally as possible.

RUBRICS AND SCORING SYSTEMS:

For the purposes of this course,

"A" work will constitute a final score of 90-100% of total points, and will represent an overall response that is impressively sophisticated and illuminating: inventive, balanced, justified, effective, mature, and expertly-situated in time and context

"B" work will constitute a final score of 80-89.99% of total points, and will represent an overall response that is thorough and systematic: skilled, revealing, developed, perceptive, but not unusually or surprisingly original

"C" work will constitute a final score of 70-79.99% of total points, and will represent an overall response that is acceptable but limited: coherent, significant, and perhaps even insightful in places, but ultimately lacking in organization, articulation, perception, and/or effectiveness

"D" work will constitute a final score of 60-69.99% of total points, and will represent an overall response that is incomplete and severely lacking: incoherent, limited, uncritical, immature, undeveloped, and overall not reflective of the performance expected of UNT undergraduates

"F" work will constitute a final score of 0-59.99% of total points, and will represent an overall response that is unacceptable.



ASSIGNMENTS:

CASE STUDIES: The four case studies in this course offer an opportunity to move from discussion of ethics and rhetoric in theory to applications of rhetoric and ethics in practice. Each case study will ask you to analyze the ethics put into play in a specific rhetorical situation: our first case studies will focus exclusively on the ethics of Octavia Butler's *Bloodchild*. The final two case studies will move from *Bloodchild* to more timely and exigent topics of national and global concern. The last case study for the course will be a capstone project, requiring you to write a case study developed on a topic of your choice. Models and rubrics will be provided. All case studies should be typed and submitted electronically to our course Blackboard site. Value: 50% overall.

IN-CLASS WORK: Quizzes and in-class assignments will often take place at the beginning of class and cannot be made-up if missed. Frequent tardiness or disruptions will affect your quiz/assignment grades. Expect quizzes once a week. Value: 20% overall.

UNIT EXAMS: Unit Exams will serve as objective measures of your learning in the course. Each of the three unit exams will focus on terms, ideas, and questions drawn from our class discussions and readings. Value: 30% overall

TIPS FOR READING: The following guidelines will help you read carefully and prepare for discussion

READING:

- Browse the work. Look at the title. Note any chapter titles, subtitles, headings, etc.
- Read the author's intro and conclusion.
- Read the entire work once, then again for comprehension. Note *how* the text works.

PREPARING FOR DISCUSSION

- Identify what is most important to the writer.
- Briefly explain how the writer is responding to what she or he finds important.
- Find the 5-6 most important key terms in the text.

- Note the authors / works the writer uses most often.
- Write out the 3 most important questions that you draw out of the reading yourself.
- Articulate tentative answers to the questions in the previous step. Respond with reference to the writer's ideas, terms, and language.