

# STRANGER RHETORICS

## ENGL 4230: SPECIAL TOPICS IN RHETORIC AND WRITING

Fall 2017 • Prof. Heard  
MW 2:00 pm-3:20 pm •  
LANG 301 •

Office: LANG 409J  
Hours: MW 1:00-2:00 pm

### CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

Specialized, focused study of a particular topic, theme, figure, practice and/or theory within the field of rhetoric and writing studies.

Prerequisite(s): ENGL 3200, ENGL 4200.

### COURSE OVERVIEW:

We spend most our lives developing rhetorical practices that help us navigate our daily routines and habits. Logical argument; ethical appeal; even emotional outbursts: these tactics work in most situations because we perfect them in environments where they are welcomed and expected. What happens, though, when expectations of “normal” rhetorical practices fail—**WHEN THE WORLD IS TURNED UPSIDE-DOWN?** What counts as rhetoric when we find that our usual logics and arguments no longer make sense?

In this course, we will carefully consider the question of what rhetoric looks like when it is practiced outside of the normal boundaries of our comfortable routines and familiar locations. This question invites us to think critically about rhetoric in the context of “strangeness”—the unexpected, unplanned, different, and “other.” It attunes us to the limits of the rhetorical tactics we take for granted, including, how we account for ourselves as rational, singular human beings. It also attunes us to the people, objects, and creatures we make “strange” in order to make our own practices seem normal. **WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE “STRANGER RHETORICS” OF OTHERS?** How can we engage in political and social action with this dialectic of normal and strange rhetorical practices in mind? We will pursue answers to these questions this semester as we study the theories and practices of rhetoric in the context of strangeness.

### 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 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, support, and learn from each other—this is the path of rhetorical studies.

### SCHEDULE OVERVIEW

#### UNIT 1

- Labor Day, no class: Mon. Sep. 4
- Reading: Butler, *Giving Account*
- Unit Project: Book Review
- DUE: Wed. Sep. 27

#### UNIT 2

- DHS Project Visit 1: Oct. 2-Oct. 6
- DHS Project Visit 2: Oct. 23-25
- Reading: Davis, *Inessential Solidarity*
- Unit 2 Project: Community Contact Reflection
- DUE: Mon. Nov. 6

#### UNIT 3

- Unit 3 Project: Rhetorico-Political Artifact (RPA)
- DUE: Wed. Dec. 6
- Final Exam: Mon. Dec. 4, 1:30-3:30 pm

### GRADING BREAKDOWN

- UNIT 1 PROJECT – 20%
- UNIT 2 PROJECT – 20%
- UNIT 3 PROJECT – 30%
- QUIZZES AND IN-CLASS ASSIGNMENTS 30%

# ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

Note: All readings and assignments due by beginning of class period indicated. Please bring books/readings to class on assigned date. Schedule subject to change.

## UNIT 1 – ATTUNING TO STRANGERS: Radical Ethics in Theory

### Wk1

**28-Aug** Course Intro

**30-Aug** Beavers, "introducing Levinas to Undergraduate Philosophers" (READER)

### Wk2

**4-Sep** No Class: Labor Day

**6-Sep** Levinas, "Ethics as First Philosophy"; Lipari, "Rhetoric's Other" (READER)

### Wk3

**11-Sep** Butler, Giving -- Ch. 1 (3-40)

**13-Sep** Butler, Giving -- Ch. 2 (41-83)

### Wk4

**18-Sep** Butler, Giving -- Ch. 3a (83-101)

**20-Sep** Butler, Giving -- Ch. 3b (101-136)

### Wk5

**25-Sep** Butler Review

**27-Sep** Preparing for Community Contact **UNIT 1 Project DUE**

## UNIT 2 – STRANGER RHETORICS: Vulnerability and Hospitality as Rhetorical Habits

### Wk6

**2-Oct** DHS Visit 1

**4-Oct** DHS Visit 1

### Wk7

**9-Oct** Davis, Inessential -- Ch. 1, 2 (1-65)

**11-Oct** Davis, Inessential -- Ch. 3 (66-86)

### Wk8

**16-Oct** Davis, Inessential -- Ch. 4 (86-112) and Ch. 5 (114-143)

**18-Oct** Davis, Inessential -- Ch. 5 (114-143)

### Wk9

**23-Oct** DHS Visit 2; Wrap-up  
Community Contact

**25-Oct** DHS Visit 2

### Wk10

**30-Oct** Community Contact  
discussion and reflection

**1-Nov** Community Contact discussion  
and reflection

## UNIT 3 – A POLITICS OF STRANGENESS: Taking Action, Resisting, Witnessing

### Wk11

**6-Nov** **UNIT 2 Project DUE**; Kittay, "A Theory of Justice as Fair" (READER)

**8-Nov** Rhodes, "Ethical Praxis and the Business Case for LGBT Diversity" (READER)

### Wk12

**13-Nov** Butler, "Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance" (READER)

**15-Nov** Butler, "Street Politics" (READER)

### Wk13

**20-Nov** Oliver, "Witnessing and Testimony" (READER)

**22-Nov** Oliver, "Witnessing, Recognition, and Response" (READER)

### Wk14

**27-Nov** Lee, "Levinas, Breastfeeding" (READER); Macdonald, "Levinas in the Hood" (READER); Vance, Hillbilly --Intro (1-9) and Chs. 1-6 (1-99)

**29-Nov** Vance, Hillbilly – Chs. 7-11 (100-195)

### Wk15

**4-Dec** Vance, Hillbilly – Chs. 12- Conclusion (196-257)

**6-Dec** Review and Discussion; **UNIT 3 Project DUE**

FINALS

**11-Dec** Final Exam: 1:30 pm - 3:30 pm

# ASSIGNMENTS:

**IN-CLASS WORK:** We will have frequent quizzes and in-class assignments throughout the semester as part of a check-up on how much you are understanding. These assignments will usually be given immediately at the beginning of class and they **cannot be made-up if missed**. Consequently, please come to class on time and prepared to discuss/respond to the course readings for the day.

## **UNIT 1 PROJECT (DUE W SEPT. 27); 750 WORDS**

**BOOK REVIEW:** Your first project requires you to write an academic book review of Judith Butler's *Giving an Account of Oneself*, which we will read and discuss in the first 5 weeks of the course. Your review should provide an evaluation of the work (good? Bad? Why?) and address the context of its value to other scholars in your area (rhetoric, literature, journalism, etc.). Citations of 3-5 academic sources are expected.

## **UNIT 2 PROJECT (DUE W NOV 6); 500 WORDS**

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REFLECTION:** Your second project will involve guided, written reflection on your experiences in contact with local community partners for our DHS project. Part of the reflection will require you to submit an online reflection to the UNT E-Portfolio, which I will demonstrate in class. Another part of the reflection will be written in response to questions that I will provide you.

## **UNIT 3 PROJECT (DUE W DEC 6); 5000 WORDS**

**RHETORICO-POLITICAL ARTIFACT:** Your final project represents a culmination of your education as a student of rhetoric, ethics, and politics. You will choose a topic that is important to your community and create an artifact (text, video, podcast, essay) that will change how people perceive the topic. The project will have several components: in addition to the artifact itself, you will analyze the audience you intend to address, explain your intervention, argue for its effectiveness, and demonstrate its value in the context of our class discussions of "stranger rhetorics." The

central research question for this project is, *what do we perceive differently when we attune to the strangeness of our own and others' rhetorical practices?*

# COURSE POLICIES:

**ABSENCE:** You have five free absences. Upon missing six 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.

**DISRUPTIONS:** 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. Please respect the class environment by giving your classmates and me your full attention at all appropriate times. Frequent tardiness or disruptions will affect your quiz/assignment grades.

## ASSIGNMENT POLICY

All written work needs to be typed and submitted online to our Blackboard site, with a paper copy brought to class. For all essays, 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 4230). 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. Secret syllabus keyword: MOANA.

## 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

## DROPPING THE COURSE OR WITHDRAWING

**Nov 6:** The last day to drop this course with either a W or WF

**Nov 22:** The last day to withdraw from the course or receive a WF for nonattendance  
Consult the UNT Registrar "Registration Guide" for full details:

<http://registrar.unt.edu/registration/fall-registration-guide>

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. 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.

## 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 4230—Matthew Heard"). Remember that when you write an email to other professionals, you should assume a professional tone and style. I want to hear from you, but please communicate as clearly and professionally as possible.



## GOALS

While our course together is an upper-division course in English, I try not to take for granted any of the skills, abilities, or proficiencies we employ in this course. I will list some of the explicit goals for learning in this course below. However, if you need help developing any related skills or articulating connections between what we do in class and your own career/professional objectives, please contact me. I will be happy to have that conversation with you.

### Desired Understandings:

- Understand that rhetoric is practiced differently in different contexts, and that the rhetorical practices we use in positions of crisis and difficulty may not typically be “counted” as valuable in mainstream society.
- Understand that engaging with rhetorics of strangeness may help us to recognize and heed the people, creatures, and objects that they bring to attention.

### Desired knowledge

- Know theories of radical alterity/strangeness and know how to apply them to social and political situations
- Know practices of witnessing, vulnerability, and attunement, and know how to apply them to social and political situations
- Know how to

### Desired abilities

- Be able to explore practices of witnessing, vulnerability, and attunement in concrete ways (not only in theory)
- Be able to write and communicate about rhetorics of strangeness

### Desired professional skills

- Develop proficiency in communicating effectively in multiple modes (spoken, written, gesture)
- Develop proficiency in thinking critically and reasoning analytically
- Develop proficiency in analyzing and solving complex problems
- Develop proficiency in making ethical decisions and justifying choices ethically
- Develop proficiency in understanding nuance and complexity in written documents
- Develop proficiency in collaborating effectively in with others in diverse interpersonal settings

## RISK AND LIABILITY

Part of the coursework this semester will ask you to work on an assignment with a community partner. Please be aware that you will need to submit a volunteer application and background check as part of this assignment, as well as arrange transportation to and from the community site. If you have specific questions about the risks and liability for this project or if you want to request alternative accommodations, please contact me. More information will be provided on our course Blackboard site.

## 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 and every use of someone

else's work in your writing to be marked clearly. The consequences for plagiarism both at UNT and in this course are severe, and may include automatic failure 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. I am happy to help you decide how to cite materials that might otherwise be counted as plagiarism.

## CAMPUS CARRY AND WEAPONS

Pursuant to Texas Senate Bill 11 and the UNT Campus Carry Policy, persons with a current legally valid Concealed Carry License may carry a concealed legal handgun on or about their person in this class. All

class members should read the UNT Campus Carry Policy carefully. All legal provisions associated with concealed carry on campus must be followed without fail at all times. One such provision is that any handgun must be concealed, meaning that it cannot be “openly noticeable to the ordinary observation of a reasonable person.” (UNT Campus Carry Policy). If a handgun is visible, or if any other legal requirement is violated at any moment, the person who witnesses the violation should leave the classroom and call 911 immediately. Please be aware that law enforcement officers are prepared to respond to any violations of these legal requirements for Campus Carry. No other weapons of any kind are permitted in the classroom.

## 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 insufficient 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.

