

# Rhetoric, Writing, and Public Discourse

*Chair:* Matthew Bost

Ellen Defossez (on sabbatical, 2023-24)

Lydia McDermott

Kaitlyn Patia (on sabbatical, 2023-24)

*Director of Writing Program:* Lydia McDermott

*Writing Program Faculty:* Sally Bormann, Chetna Chopra, Adeline

Rother, Rob Schlegel, Johanna Stoberock and Jenna Terry

Rooted in the classical art of persuasion, the study of rhetoric encompasses the use and analysis of symbols to share ideas, construct social reality, and make decisions about matters of common concern. Students of rhetoric engage in the critical study and composition of various messages, as well as exploring the dynamics of symbolic action through studying speeches, written and audiovisual texts, and embodied performance.

Through the study and practice of rhetoric, students learn to critique historical and contemporary public discourse, considering the stylistic and persuasive devices that make particular pieces of rhetoric effective. Additionally, students develop skills in written and oral composition, learning to craft messages that account for specific audiences in specific rhetorical situations. Finally, students reflect on the larger dynamics of rhetoric, considering the relationship between discourse and reality, the cultural and ethical power dynamics of communication, and the ways that any public discourse reflects its historical and social contexts.

In addition to serving students in our major and minor, the **Rhetoric, Writing, and Public Discourse Department** (RWPD) teaches written and oral communication as skills necessary for the broader Whitman community. RWPD courses seek to help students across disciplines develop the writing and speaking skills they will use for their coursework and for all types of written and oral communication during and after their time at Whitman. Courses in RWPD help students develop skills for many genres of composition, from research papers, poster presentations and senior theses to artist statements, op-eds and protest speeches.

Majors are welcome to concentrate their studies in areas such as political rhetoric, social justice rhetoric, presidential rhetoric, rhetorical theory, or any area in which they have scholarly interest.

**Learning Goals:** Upon Graduation, a student will be able to

1. Describe and engage central questions and concerns that have shaped the field of rhetoric, and effectively engage core rhetorical concepts and theories.
2. Critically analyze public discourse as it is shaped by composition, audience, genre, rhetorical situation, and systemic power dynamics.
3. Create messages which are shaped by communicative goals and responsive to audience, context, and ethical engagement with difference.
4. Understand and practice written and oral communication as recursive processes.
5. Create written and oral arguments that use clear evidence to support specific claims.

**Distribution:** Courses completed in RWPD apply to the humanities distribution area with the following exceptions:

Fine arts: 110

Cultural pluralism or humanities: 250 and 270

Social sciences or humanities: 342, 365

As part of its commitment to teaching written and oral communication across the curriculum, the department of Rhetoric, Writing and Public Discourse offers RWPD 170, *Language and Writing*. Many students are required to take RWPD 170, and more information about the Writing Proficiency requirement can be found in the General Studies Section of the catalog. In addition to the requirement, all incoming students are encouraged to take the course in their first year. Spring sections are open to all First-year students. This will be particularly helpful

for students in the 3-2 program and students planning on going to medical school, as many of these programs require students to have taken a composition course. RWPD 170 does not count toward the major credit requirement.

**Total credit requirements for a Rhetoric, Writing, and Public Discourse major: 36**

**The Rhetoric, Writing, and Public Discourse Major:**

- 36 Credits
- Required Courses
  - RWPD 230, 330, 387 and 487
- Other notes
  - May include up to 8 credits of 200 level or higher courses outside the department relevant to the student's rhetorical studies that are pre-approved by the student's major advisor
  - All majors will complete RWPD 230 by the end of fall junior year.
  - Junior Seminars: All majors will complete RWPD 387 by the end of their junior year.
  - No courses taken P-D-F
- Senior Requirements
  - RWPD 487 in which students will either:
    - Write an approximately 6,500 word capstone paper and give a ten minute presentation on the capstone paper
    - OR, if qualifying for Honors, write an approximately 4,000 word honors thesis proposal with literature review
  - If a student has applied and been approved for honors, they should enroll in RWPD 498 their spring semester of senior year. Should they not achieve honors, the credits will be listed under RWPD 491.
- Honors
  - Students submit a Honors in Major Study Application to their department
  - The student must propose an honors thesis topic prior to fall semester break of their senior year. Additionally, the student should select a primary thesis advisor and two additional readers for their proposed thesis project. Proposals will be reviewed by the student's chosen thesis advisor.
  - In lieu of a senior capstone paper, the student will revise and expand their initial thesis proposal into an approximately 4,000-word prospectus that includes a description of the student's chosen critical artifact(s), a review of relevant literature and the scholarly conversations the student proposes engaging, a proposed argument for the final thesis project, and a proposed committee. Thesis proposal will be graded by the instructor for RWPD 487 and approved by the student's thesis advisor.
  - If their proposal is approved, and after finishing RWPD 487, the student will take RWPD 498 as an independent supervised research project during spring of senior year, with their chosen thesis advisor serving as the course instructor. During RWPD 498, the student will write and revise a senior thesis of at least 10,000 words.
  - The student will orally defend their thesis at the end of spring senior year. The defense will consist of a 10-15-minute public presentation followed by a short Q&A and a discussion with the student's committee members.
  - In order to be eligible for Honors, Student must have:
    - Accumulated at least 87 credits
    - Completed two semesters of residency at Whitman.
    - Cumulative GPA of at least 3.300 on all credits earned at Whitman College
    - Major GPA of at least 3.500
    - Complete a written thesis or research project prepared exclusively for the satisfaction of this program
    - Earn a grade of at least A- on the honors thesis or project and the honors thesis course.
    - Pass the senior assessment with distinction

- The department will submit the Honors applications to the Registrar’s Office of students pursuing Honors by the specified deadline
- The department submit “Senior Assessment/Major Study Certificate” to the Registrar’s Office no later than Reading Day
- An acceptable digital copy of the Honors Thesis must be submitted to Penrose Library no later than Reading Day

**The Rhetoric, Writing, and Public Discourse minor:**

- 20 Credits
- Required Courses
  - RWPD 230
  - Four credits at 300-level or higher
- Other notes
  - Up to four credits at 200-level from outside the department can be approved to apply toward the minor
  - No courses can be taken P-D-F

**100-103 Special Topics in Rhetoric, Writing, and Public Discourse  
1-4 credits**

Courses in special topics areas within RWPD. Any current offerings follow.

**110 Public Speaking  
Fall, Spring**

**Staff**

**4 credits**

Words matter. If we want to change the world, it is more important now than ever to develop our ability to communicate clearly, effectively, and artfully. In this course, students will learn the fundamentals of public speaking. They will learn how to speak about things that matter to them, and — with practice — to make things matter to others. Students will refine their ability to speak in a variety of settings, situations, and genres to diverse audiences. Through classroom activities, practice speeches, and formal performances, they will learn how to engage the attention, attitudes, and actions of others regarding issues of personal, communal, and civic importance.

**121 Fundamentals of Argumentation**

**Spring**

**Staff**

**4 credits**

This course is an introduction to the theory and practice of argumentation. Argumentation as an area of study explores the ways that evidence-based claims are used to mediate disagreement and controversy in personal, technical, and political contexts, and make decisions when the best course of action is contested or unclear. The course engages four primary topics: we will explore the core theoretical concepts of argument, and think about how different types of argument work and what makes them effective when directed toward particular audiences. We will discuss the ways that different communities of argument (from legal and scientific fields, to local and national debates over political issues, to arguments in mass media forums and online) judge the worth of different claims, and mediate disagreements, and we will think about how those communities interact and what happens when they come into conflict. We will dissect examples of argument in different communities in-depth, and think about how particular arguments are shaped by historical context and specific circumstances. Finally, we will interrogate the limits of argument as a paradigm, inquiring into its foundational assumptions, the ethical issues it raises, and potential alternatives that have been forwarded (ranging from dialogue to invitational rhetoric and consensus-building). In addition to analyzing arguments, students will put course material in practice through written and oral argumentation and debate. Assignments will include papers and presentations addressing different theories of argument, case studies diagramming the evolution of major historical or contemporary public arguments, advocacy and op-ed writing, and in-class dialogues and debates.

## **170 Language and Writing**

**Fall, Spring**

**Fall: Staff; Spring: Chopra**

**4 credits**

A course designed to introduce students to analytical writing through extensive writing practice and revision. The course provides strategies for invention, development, and editing. Emphasis is placed on analysis and synthesis, with additional attention to language use at the sentence level, including grammar, diction, and syntax. Open to first-year and sophomore students; open to juniors and seniors by consent of instructor.

## **175 Persuasion, Propaganda, and Power**

**Not offered 2023-24**

**4 credits**

This course provides an introduction to the relationship between communication, power, and individual and communal identity. We are bombarded with hundreds of communicative messages every day, each of which aims at getting us to take some action, hold some belief, or think of ourselves in a certain way. This course will give students basic tools for critically reading these everyday communicative interactions. We will consider the basic elements of persuasion (speaker, text or argument, the context of a given message, and the ways that appeals to evidence and emotions shape how messages are received). We will consider the relationship between rhetoric and representation, asking how people use rhetoric to represent their own experiences and identities and how they are represented by others, whether to create social change or secure the status quo. We will consider how rhetoric and public discourse are shaped by contemporary communication technologies. Finally, we will consider some of the ethical and practical concerns involved in crafting persuasive messages and communicating with others, paying particular attention to how individuals engage with the above themes. Assignments will include several short critical papers and a presentation on a piece of contemporary public discourse or a critical concept. Open to first-years and sophomores only.

## **180 Processes and Practices of Writing**

**Spring**

**Stoberock**

**4 credits**

This course extends students' practices and understanding of college-level academic writing processes. The course focuses on strategies and structures that support thesis-driving writing and repeated revision. Through extensive and recursive writing practice, the course emphasizes reflection on students' own writing processes and practices. Students will learn from this reflection ways to intervene in their own writing practice to encourage complexity of ideas, careful evidence evaluation and integration, and diverse revision approaches.

## **200-203 Special Topics in Rhetoric, Writing, and Public Discourse**

**1-4 credits**

Courses in special topics areas within RWPD. Any current offerings follow.

### **200 ST: Standing Up: Constructing Identity in Contemporary Comedy Performance**

**Fall**

**Dalebout**

**4 credits**

"Standing Up" examines identity construction and cultural change by exploring mediated stand-up comedy performance. The art of stand-up is to appear unaffected by technology despite being ceaselessly mediated by stages, microphones, cameras, tweets, fashion, and so forth. As such, we will depart from the intuitive view that stand-up comedians are public speakers who fashion comic masks to engage with audiences, masks they also take off. To explore the rhetoric of comedic performance, we will engage with 21st-century comedy specials from stand-ups from diverse intersectional backgrounds. We will also draw on scholarly material from rhetorical theory, comedy studies, film & media studies, performance studies, and fields of knowledge concerned with the construction of race, gender, sexuality, and ability. In considering the rhetoric of standing up, this course illuminates how self-performance mediates our experiences of identity and sociopolitical participation beyond the construction of masks, demonstrating how our acts of artifice produce our profound experiences of the world's possibilities and limits, and our sense of who we are or could be. This course includes a screening section. May be taken for credit toward the Film and Media Studies major or minor. Distribution area: humanities.

### **201 ST: The Fantastic Experience in Film: Rhetoric, Genre, and Collective Imagination**

**Spring**

**Dalebout**

**4 credits**

“Fantastic Films” examines how new worlds of experience arise not only in film, but in life more generally. The cultural resources available to each of us—including the stories we tell, the characters and identities we reenact, our storehouse of values and moral compasses, our conceptual knowledge of the cosmos—shape our collective imagination. As such, their limits and possibilities, including their biases, influence how we inhabit the world with others. This course asks after the extent to which transforming our collective imagination is possible, given that we always begin with problematic resources. We will first discuss conventions and genre, especially in fantasy films that attempt to imagine alternatives to the world we know, and subsequently distinguish fantasy from the Fantastic, an experience of bewilderment through which reality becomes unfamiliar. We will analyze the Fantastic as a mode of psychosensory experience that transcends genres, and explore how Fantastic films exploit our shared cultural resources to transform our collective imaginaries from within. This course includes a screening section. May be taken for credit toward the Film and Media Studies major or minor. Distribution area: humanities.

### **210 Writing for Diverse Purposes**

**Spring**

**Terry**

**4 credits**

This course offers writers the opportunity to focus on expository writing for varying audiences and for diverse purposes. The course will engage students in the study of genre characteristics and conventions, prosodic style, and adaptation of writing for differing audiences.

### **225 Communication in Science**

**Fall**

**Staff**

**4 credits**

Grounded in rhetoric of science scholarship, this course introduces students to both the theory and practice of science communication. Areas of focus will include the role of persuasion within the discourses of science, the rhetorical dynamics of science controversies related to matters of public importance, and effective practices for communicating technical material to general audiences. Students will be given theoretical tools to engage in constructive critical analyses of science communication, and practical tools to engage in the production of rhetorically-informed science communication. Course assignments will include essays and a practical project involving the translation of a matter of scientific complexity for a general audience.

### **230 Introduction to Rhetoric and Public Culture**

**Fall, Spring**

**Fall: Weilert-Pekar; Spring: Bost**

**4 credits**

This course gives students the basic tools for analyzing the ways that symbols shape the world, informing peoples’ fundamental ideas about reality, contributing to our sense of community, and letting us make decisions about urgent matters of common concern. We will examine rhetorical artifacts from presidential speeches and policy documents to film, television, and socially mediated discourse. Rhetorical artifacts are shaped by the identity and social position of those who compose them, the rhetorical situations to which they respond, the audiences they attempt to reach, and the cultural ideologies and power dynamics that underpin them. We will consider the impact of media form (whether a rhetorical artifact is written, spoken, audio-visually mediated) on its composition and reception, and explore some of the major theories of how symbols affect people’s lives, from public memory and body rhetoric to theories of rhetorical performance and representation. Students will write several short papers that critically examine different rhetorical artifacts, and will also write, workshop, and present a longer research project. Students will practice critical writing, academic research, and use of evidence and citation as they develop their projects over the course of the semester.

### **250 Rhetoric, Gender, and Sexuality**

**Not offered 2023-24**

**4 credits**

This class examines the ways that rhetorical practices and theories rooted in gender and sexuality can and do create, reinforce, adjust and sometimes overcome sex and gender based bias in society. The nature of this bias is addressed as a rhetorical construct that continues to serve as a basis for social, political, and economic conditions of existence

for many. In the class, we will critique communication in the media, daily discourse, the law, politics, and in personal experiences. The goal of this examination is to increase awareness of difference and bias in communication based on gender and sexuality, to challenge theoretical assumptions about what constitutes inequity, to analyze the rhetorical practices that constitute gender and sexuality, and to offer new perspectives from which to view gender-based rhetorical practices. May be elected as Gender Studies 250.

### **255 The Rhetoric of Social Protest**

**Not offered 2023-24**

**4 credits**

This class explores the rhetorical grounds of social interaction with an emphasis on the role of communication in social change. The course introduces students to the primary theoretical tools that rhetorical studies uses to examine social protest and change. Theories are illustrated through examination of a set of case studies (e.g., civil rights campaigns, environmental politics, grass-roots social movements, and digitally networked global communities). By studying the phenomenon of social protest and change, we examine how collective identification is created and how groups are motivated to act in concert, particularly in contexts where communication alone may be insufficient to alleviate injustice.

### **260 Rhetoric and Sensation in Civic Life**

**Not offered 2023-24**

**4 credits**

For much of rhetoric's history, scholars have focused on the ways that tropes and textual devices, from metaphor to narrative, influence human communication and civic engagement. This course explores a variety of recent scholarly work that expands rhetoric to account for visual, auditory, tactile and other sensory aspects of rhetoric. We will explore the ways that sensory factors (for example, hearing a speech at a political rally versus reading it on paper) influence the meaning and effects of public discourse. We will also explore a series of basic critical tools for reading images, music and audio, considering communication rooted in touch and exploring the persuasive features of particular spaces (e.g. malls, courtrooms, protest rallies), as well as discuss a variety of other rhetorical artifacts that shape our lived experience of the world. Finally, we will explore the broader implications of rhetoric's effects across the senses for how we think about symbolic action and civic engagement. Assignments will include a mid-length research paper, a discussion assignment, and short responses in a variety of written, visual, and audible forms. May be taken for credit toward the Film and Media Studies major or minor.

### **300-303 Special Topics in Rhetoric, Writing, and Public Discourse**

**1-4 credits**

Any current offerings follow.

#### **301 ST: Sensing the Self: Technology in Human Culture**

**Spring**

**Dalebout**

**4 credits**

“Sensing the Self” considers a variety of theoretical-critical perspectives on the relationship of technology, humanity, and culture in the 20th- and 21st-centuries. We will turn away from a pervasive impression that humans are users who stand apart from instruments, including machines, languages, and other media forms. We will focus instead on the intimacy of the human-technology bond, which not only permits some sociocultural experiences while inhibiting others, but ultimately gives us our sense of self, of who and what we are. Technologies broadly construed cultivate human life by dampening or amplifying our senses, those apparently natural psychosensory capacities given to our form of life. The first unit of this course will explore how technologies enervate, or deaden, the human sensorium; the second unit will elucidate how contemporary digital forms including film, video games, and so forth can be appropriated to innervate, or awaken that same sensorium; and in the third unit, students will create and share critical media products aimed at expanding the psychosocial and aesthetic experiences available within our cultural milieu. May be taken for credit toward the Film and Media Studies major or minor. Distribution area: humanities.

### **310 The Theory and Practice of Tutoring Writing**

**Fall**

**McDermott**

**2 credits**

This course is designed to prepare you to be an effective and confident writing tutor. It will introduce you to major theories on peer-tutoring, debates concerning the teaching of writing, and practical techniques for dealing with difficult situations in the process of tutoring. You will leave the course having conducted genre-specific research, having developed your own tutoring philosophy, and with a portfolio of strategies for tutoring from yourself and your peers. One of our goals is to create a community of knowledgeable and supportive writing center tutors who can then work as a team within the writing center. Not open to first semester students. *Prerequisite:* General Studies 175 or consent of instructor.

### **320 Advanced Writing Studies**

**Not offered 2023-24**

**4 credits**

An advanced course in writing studies for students interested both in advancing understanding of their own writing processes and styles as well as in learning broader theories of composition and rhetoric across the curriculum. Students will study and practice rhetorical devices and genre analysis in order to facilitate flexibility in writing for different academic communities. Not open to first-year students.

### **321 Changing the Subject: Judith Butler and Philosophy**

**Spring**

**Ireland**

**4 credits**

This course will examine the writings of contemporary philosopher and queer theorist Judith Butler in response to seminal texts from the European philosophical tradition. These texts will include selections from Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the "Second Essay" from Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*, Kant's "What is Enlightenment?" as well as Foucault's reply to that essay, and Levinas' "Peace and Proximity." The seminar will focus on, first, the close reading of the primary source philosophical texts, placing those texts into dialogue with Butler's critical interpretation of them. Thematically, it will engage such themes as the constitution of the subject, critique, and the relationship to the Other; methodologically, it will explore Butler's deconstructive and rhetorical style of reading, using it as an exemplar for the theoretical appropriation of traditional philosophical texts. Bi-weekly seminar presentation papers will be required, as well a final presentation and researched paper. The seminar is writing intensive, and emphasizes structured peer feedback. May be elected as Philosophy 321. *Prerequisite:* Philosophy 201, Rhetoric, Writing and Public Discourse 230, or consent of instructor.

### **325 Rhetorics of Health and Medicine**

**Not offered 2023-24**

**4 credits**

This course introduces students to key themes within the rhetorics of health and medicine—a field of inquiry that examines how language and persuasion shape our understandings of health and illness. Topics will include the role of metaphor, narrative and genre in medical discourse, the rhetorical dynamics of medical controversies, the persuasive strategies utilized in public health messaging, the cultural significance of mediated representations of health and illness, and the relationship between identity and illness. Course assignments will invite students to identify the rhetorical dimensions of health discourses, to consider how the cultural meanings of health are rhetorically constructed and contested, and to evaluate the rhetorical strategies employed by patients, advocates, and health professionals across a range of communication contexts.

### **330 Rhetorical Theory and the Human Condition**

**Spring**

**Staff**

**4 credits**

The very question, "What is rhetoric?" prompts consternation and confusion, dialogue and dissent. From its inception in ancient Greece, the study of rhetoric has gone hand in hand with important debates over truth versus belief, the role of persuasion in social change, the relationship between identity, power and civic engagement, and the possibility of democracy. These debates have only become more pressing in the present moment, as our lives and communities are shaped by a ubiquitous array of communicative acts and sources, from cable news to the internet. Beginning with rhetoric's classical origins, this course will explore the primary debates and conceptual

tools that have shaped it as a field, focusing on how authors grappled with rhetoric's power, the links between rhetoric and civic identity, and the role of rhetoric in social change. Throughout the semester, we will assess how rhetoric has been studied in different historical contexts to construct a picture of rhetoric's role in molding the human condition. Course to include a final research project and several short response papers, as well as class discussion and participation. *Recommended prerequisite:* Rhetoric, Writing and Public Discourse 230.

### **332 Coalition, Identity, and Difference in Social Movements**

**Fall**

**Bost**

**4 credits**

Successful movements for social change have almost always relied on strategies of coalition-building that unite movements working toward different goals against a common enemy, or around a common vision of a shared future. This course will examine the ways that social movements have created and maintained coalition in the 20th and 21st-century. We will focus especially on the ways that different perspectives and experiences of race, class, gender/sexuality, ability, and nationality have been negotiated within different social movements, as well as in building bridges between movement groups. In addition to scholarship on the rhetoric of social movements, we will also consider the organizational and interpersonal communicative strategies that movements have used to build successful coalition, the ways that social movements make decisions and negotiate internal conflict, the relationship between conversations within movements and communication between movements and external audiences, and why coalitions collapse. We will consider case studies of coalitional politics including historical and contemporary “poor people’s movements”, activism around welfare, childcare, and “wages for housework”, the relationship between feminist and antiracist struggles in the US and global anticolonial, anti-capitalist, and gender justice struggles, the politics of mutual aid, and coalitions between LGBTQIA+ activists and advocates for more inclusive immigration policy. Assignments will include a self-designed research project, an oral presentation, and several short responses. May be taken for credit toward the Gender Studies major or minor.

### **340 Variable Topics in Rhetorical Methods**

**4 credits**

This course offers an intensive exploration of select approaches to conducting scholarly research in the field of rhetoric. Course offerings will encompass a variety of rhetorical methods, including but not limited to community-based research, archival research, close textual analysis, memory studies, and ideological criticism. Students will read texts that exemplify the selected rhetorical method and hone their skills as critics through various practicum over the course of the semester. Any current offerings follow.

### **342 Rhetoric and Capitalism: Exploitation, Precarity and Social Change**

**Not offered 2023-24**

**4 credits**

From conversations about campaign finance and net neutrality to ethical debates over the labor practices used to produce contemporary communication technologies, capitalism shapes contemporary civic engagement in a variety of important ways. In this course, we will explore some of the key histories and theoretical terms necessary to understand the links between capitalism and public discourse. We will focus on two key trends: capitalism's tendency to translate local human relationships and symbolic actions into abstract, interchangeable processes of exchange (for example through social media, creditor relationships, or monetary exchange), and the ways that capitalism makes some bodies or lives precarious while insulating other bodies or lives from risk and potential harm. Topics covered will include the *Citizens United v. FEC* Supreme Court decision, the increasing global shift to an economy based on communication and information, the relationship between conventional waged labor and other forms of labor (e.g. housework, sex work, black market economies), and the utility of various lenses, from Marxist and anarchist perspectives to feminist, ecological, critical race, and queer perspectives for rhetorically engaging with capitalism's effects. We will also discuss some of the ways that activists have responded to these trends, from traditional labor organizing to the construction of communities removed from capitalism, to digital and social media activism. Assignments will include a mid-length research paper, a series of short reflections, and a discussion assignment.

### **350 Political Campaign Communication**

**Not offered 2023-24**

**4 credits**

This course focuses on the role of communication in U.S. political campaigns. We will examine the history of various features of political campaigns, including candidate debates, advertisements, speeches, media coverage and the traveling press corps, social media and new technologies, crafting candidate image and narrative, deliberative forums, and the role of consultants. Within our exploration of these issues, we will attend to questions of power, access, and identity, including the intersection of race, gender, sexuality, and class in politics. When this course is offered during a presidential election year, it will primarily focus on past and current presidential campaigns. When it is offered in a midterm election year, the course will focus primarily (but not exclusively) on past and current congressional and gubernatorial campaigns. Students will both analyze and create examples of political campaign communication. In addition to regular course sessions students are also expected to watch or attend relevant debates and/or local elections forums. May be taken for credit toward the Film and Media Studies major or minor.

### **353 The Rhetoric of the Black Freedom Struggle**

**Not offered 2023-24**

**4 credits**

This course examines the rhetoric of the Black freedom struggle in the US, beginning with African Americans' efforts to survive and resist slavery and culminating in contemporary struggles for social, political, and economic justice. We will explore the birth of 20th century struggles for civil rights in the radical left of the 1930s, and chart the continuation of these struggles through the lunch counter sit-ins, marches and bus boycotts of the mid-1950s, struggles for voting rights and political representation in the 1960s, and community organizing and advocacy for Black power in the late 1960s and early 70s, as well as examining the ways that all of these movements inform present-day struggles for social change. Assignments will include short analytical essays centered on primary texts, and a final rhetorical criticism paper on a topic of the student's choice. May be taken for credit toward the Indigeneity, Race, and Ethnicity Studies major or minor.

### **360 Variable Topics in the Rhetoric of Social Protest**

**1-4 credits**

This course offers in-depth exploration of historical and contemporary protest rhetorics. Course offerings will encompass a variety of movements for social justice focused on gender, sexuality, race and class, and will explore primary texts produced by social movements, media coverage of social movements, theories of social change, and philosophical works produced in moments of protest. Any current offerings follow.

### **365 Rhetoric and Violence**

**Not offered 2023-24**

**4 credits**

Rhetoric and violence are frequently separated and irresistibly connected parts of contemporary civic life. We bemoan the breakdown of discussion into violent division, and worry over rhetorical incitements to violent action, even as we draw lines between "free speech" and physically violent acts. This course examines key theoretical and historical connections between rhetoric and violence, attempting to make sense of the rhetorical impacts of physical force, the relationship between speech and violent action, and the ways that histories of violence shape subjectivity, interpersonal relationships, and political community. We will begin by studying rhetorical theorists who have posed general questions about the relationship between rhetoric and violence, the definition and scope of the term "violence", and the material power of discourse. We will then engage these theoretical debates through extended discussions of scholarly, activist and journalistic literature around several points of intersection between rhetoric and violence including rhetoric around gun violence and mass shootings, feminist discussions of gendered violence and masculinity, histories of racial violence, "fighting words" and injurious or hurtful speech, and contemporary military and political violence. We will also discuss antiviolence rhetoric that attempts to publicize, counter, or mitigate the effects of systemic violence against marginalized communities. Throughout, the course will link important political discussions with larger theoretical debates, giving us the tools to think violence in connection with rhetoric, and consider the ethics of nonviolence. Assignments will include several short response papers, seminar based discussion, and an oral presentation. May be taken for credit toward the Gender Studies major or minor.

**380 Rhetorical Bodies****Not offered 2023-24****4 credits**

This course examines the rhetorical construction of bodies as well as the ways in which bodies are often used rhetorically. In order to carry out this examination, we will apply a variety of critical rhetorical lenses to written and visual texts. We will be particularly concerned with the intersections of social factors such as gender, race, class, sexuality, and disability and the ways in which these intersections are written on our bodies. We will read texts by classical and contemporary theorists and authors, such as Hippocrates, Quintilian, Judith Butler, Kenneth Burke, Patricia Hill Collins, Debra Hawhee, and Robert McRuer. This course will be writing intensive. May be taken for credit toward the Gender Studies major or minor or the Indigeneity, Race, And Ethnicity Studies major or minor. May be elected as English 377.

**387 Rhetorical Criticism****Fall****Bost****4 credits**

This course teaches students the core methods used to critically analyze texts from a rhetorical perspective. Using a variety of rhetorical artifacts including speeches and court opinions film, public monuments and memorials, and political protest rhetoric, students will consider how individual rhetorical acts are shaped by authorship and composition, audience, and social and historical context. We will think about these factors in conversation with concrete methods for analysis ranging from close textual criticism to ideology critique to affect and public memory analysis. Finally, the course will instruct students in researching and writing an extended piece of rhetorical criticism. *Recommended prerequisite:* Rhetoric, Writing, and Public Discourse 230.

**401, 402 Independent Study****Fall, Spring****Staff****1-4 credits**

Individually directed studies in rhetoric culminating in a presentation, paper, or other creation as arranged between the student and professor. *Prerequisite:* consent of instructor.

**403-406 Special Topics in Rhetoric, Writing, and Public Discourse****1-4 credits**

Courses in special topics areas within rhetorical studies. Any current offerings follow.

**487 Senior Seminar in Rhetoric, Writing, and Public Discourse****Fall****Bost****4 credits**

This course focuses on an advanced analysis of rhetoric, and facilitates independent research on senior capstone papers and senior theses. Course readings will explore the goals of rhetorical theory and criticism, the utility of rhetoric for political advocacy and public life outside the academy, and core skills and strategies for effectively planning and writing original academic research. Students will also assign and teach rhetorical scholarship relevant to their senior research. The goal of the course is to prepare students to perform effective rhetorical criticism, to integrate theory effectively in analyzing rhetoric, and to produce well-organized and well-argued research. Students will either produce a senior capstone paper over the course of the semester, or prepare a thesis proposal that will enable them to pursue honors in the spring semester of their senior year.

**491 Thesis****Spring****Staff****4 credits**

Research and writing of the senior thesis. Open only to and required of senior majors.

**498 Honors Thesis****Spring****Staff****4 credits**

Research and writing of the senior honors thesis. Open only to and required of senior majors. *Prerequisite:* Admission to honors candidacy. Students wishing to be considered for honors must apply to the department during the fall semester of their senior year.