

WST/AFR 494/598 African American Rhetoric

Fall 2019



Instructor: Dr. Ersula Ore
Email: Ersula.Ore@asu.edu

Class: W 4:50-7:35pm Tempe PSH 433
Office Hrs: Wilson 153, T 1-3pm

Course Description

In this upper-level undergraduate/graduate course exploring the African American rhetorical tradition, students will survey the ways African Americans have used various modes of communication and persuasion to construct and reconstruct images of themselves, and to advocate around issues of racial justice and equality. Course readings will consist of both primary texts and criticism, and will include: studies in black language by Geneva Smitherman, Sammy Alim, Elaine Richardson, and Ronald Jackson; the abolitionist rhetoric of David Walker and Frederick Douglass; explorations of the rhetoric of 19th century black women such as Maria Stewart, Ida B. Wells, and Anna Julia Cooper; the rhetoric of civil and human rights as articulated by Fannie Lou Hamer, Ella Baker, Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, and activists of the Movement for Black Lives; and the rhetoric of former President Barack Obama and former First Lady Michelle Obama as they negotiate the precarity of blackness within the historically white space of the U.S. White House and Oval Office.

Course Objectives: Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Define rhetoric in their own terms
- Identify and interpret a wide variety of African American rhetorical practices
- Identify the relationship between rhetoric and ideology
- Identify the rhetorical signatures of movements for racial justice and equality
- Produce substantive written analyses of African American rhetorical practices
- Articulate and develop a lengthy scholarly essay that explores an aspect of African American rhetoric (specific to graduate students in this course)

Required Texts

- Gilyard & Banks, *On African American Rhetoric*
- Howard-Pitney, *The African American Jeremiad: Appeals for Justice in America*
- Brooks, *A Voice That Could Stir an Army: Fannie Lou Hamer ...*
- Alim & Smitherman, *Articulate While Black: Barack Obama, Language, and Race...*

*Selected readings available via canvas

WST/AFR 494/598 African American Rhetoric

Fall 2019

Course Format & Expectations

This course is designed as a survey course in the African American Rhetorical Tradition. We will read a combination of primary and secondary texts with attention to how African Americans use language and action to rhetorical ends. This course will operate as a pro-seminar, which means our focus will be more on reading and discussing texts than producing lengthy analyses. As a result, this course will run as an ongoing conversation in which texts are closely examined, analyses are rendered and reevaluated, and more refined insights and understandings are reached. Course assignments will focus on helping seminar participants synthesize information and map the tradition for future research and study. Seminar participants are expected to attend class with texts read, annotated, and accompanied with a series of insights and/or questions intended to move conversation forward.

Course Assignments

The assignments for this course are designed to deepen your understanding of rhetoric, to help you identify and map the African American rhetorical tradition from the 18th-21st century, and to provide you with a foundational base from which to produce future research.

1. Reading Responses (20%)*

Seminar participants are responsible for submitting a Reading Response (RR) each week. RRs should be 1 page in length, single spaced, 1-inch margins, and should engage the assigned readings in a thoughtful and thought-provoking manner. **RRs are not reading reports, that is, they are not 1pg descriptions of what you read. Rather RRs are investigative reflections that critically engage course readings.** Ideally, these papers will provide explorative space in which to parse out themes and ideas that will culminate in your final project. **RRs are to be submitted as word attachments via Canvas by 11:30pm the Tuesday night before Wednesday's class. This means that you will always submit a RR the night before class.** Items not submitted to Canvas by the deadline will not be accepted.

2. Discussion Leads (15%)*

Each seminar member will be responsible for leading discussion on a selected week. Discussion leads should consist of a ten to fifteen-minute synopsis of the material read and should conclude with 2-4 questions intended to generate class discussion. All course participants are required to meet with me before their scheduled discussion lead. Discussion leaders will be exempt from the week's reading response.

3. Annotated Bibliography (15%)*

Seminar Papers/Literature Reviews must be preceded by an annotated bibliography consisting of 10-12 sources. Annotations are to be no longer than 300-400 words in length and should consist of the following: a brief summary of the assigned text, an explanation of its central argument, an explanation of how it relates to other studies of African American rhetoric, and an explanation of how it contributes to your understanding of

WST/AFR 494/598 African American Rhetoric

Fall 2019

rhetoric.

4. Short Paper/Seminar Paper (30%)*

Short Paper (Undergraduate Students)

Undergraduates in this course will produce a short 8-10pp paper that describes, summarizes, and critically evaluates a topic/issue on African American rhetoric of interest to them. As with reading responses, I will be looking for a clear articulation of argument, integration of evidence, and strong organization.

Seminar Paper (Graduate Students)

Graduate students in this course will produce a seminar paper that should take the form of a scholarly article or dissertation chapter. This paper should make an extended argument engaging a topic of interest as it relates to African American rhetoric. As with reading responses, I will be looking for a clear articulation of argument, integration of evidence, and strong organization.

**Please refer to the Format & Assignment Guidelines Sheet for detailed information for details regarding each of these assignments.*

Grade Distribution

Participation	20%
Reading Response/Writing Assignment	20%
Discussion Lead	15%
Annotated Bibliography	15%
Short Paper/Seminar Paper	30%

Late Work Policy

Late work unless accompanied by a serious, legitimate reason (as determined by me) will not be accepted. For example, missing a deadline because your appendix ruptured may be an acceptable justification but “computer problems” will be scrutinized. Ultimately, I reserve the right to refuse late work.

Attendance Policy

Regular and punctual attendance is imperative for your success in this course. Because this is a graduate course, we expect that the only absences to occur will be due to severe medical and family emergencies or conference attendance. Any more than two absences (regardless of the reason) will affect your grade.

WST/AFR 494/598 African American Rhetoric

Fall 2019

Religious Holidays

If you are going to miss class for a recognized religious holiday, please notify me in writing at least one week ahead of time. It will be your responsibility to make up all missed work within a reasonable timeframe.

Academic Dishonesty

All writing for this course must be the original work of each student. Plagiarism is the intentional or unintentional use of other people's work or ideas without proper citation. If you have any questions concerning this, please come to me. In cases of academic dishonesty, further action within the context of university guidelines may be considered. For more see the Provost's policy on Academic Integrity.

Students with Disabilities

In accordance with ASU's Student Services Manual I will cooperate with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) to make reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. If you have a disability for which you will require accommodation, you must advise me of your needs in writing no later than the end of the first week of class.

Syllabus

Date	Assignment		
Aug 28	WK 1 What is Rhetoric? What is African American Rhetoric?	• Gilyard & Banks, 1 & 2 • *Gilyard, "Aspects of African American Rhetoric as Field." • *Williams-Farrier, "Signifying, Narrativizing, and Repetition" • *Jackson, "Afrocentricity as Metatheory: A Dialogic Exploration of Its Principles" • *Daniel & Smitherman, "How I Got Over: Communication Dynamics in the Black Community"	
Sept 4	WK 2 The African American Jeremiad	• *Pauley, "John Lewis's Serious Revolution Rhetoric, Resistance, and Revision" • Howard-Pitney, Introduction, 1 & 3	RR 1 due by 11:30pm Tuesday (Sept. 3 rd)

WST/AFR 494/598 African American Rhetoric

Fall 2019

Sept 11	<u>WK 3</u> Jeremiad Cont'd	- Howard-Pitney, 6, 7, & 8 - Wright, "God Damn America!" - Obama, "A More Perfect Union"	RR 2 due by 11:30pm Tuesday (Sept. 10 th)
Sept 18	<u>WK 4</u>	Gilyard & Banks, 4-8	RR 3 due by 11:30pm Tuesday (Sept. 17 th)
Sept 25	<u>WK 5</u>	*Pittman, "The Trouble with Ethos," *Logan, "African Origins/American Appropriations: Maria Stewart and 'Ethiopia Rising'" *Pennington, "The Discourse of African Women: A Case for Extended Paradigms" *Hayden, "Michelle Obama, Mom-in-Chief: The Racialized Rhetorical Contexts of Maternity" Bb *Carey, "Tightrope of Perfection"	RR 4 due by 11:30pm Tuesday (Sept. 24 th)
Oct 2	<u>WK 6</u> The Rhetoric of Fannie Lou Hamer	Parker Brooks, Introduction, 1, & 2	RR 5 due by 11:30pm Tuesday (Oct. 1 st)
Oct 9	<u>WK 7</u> (No Class)	Parker Brooks, 3, 4, 5	RR 6 due by 11:30pm Tuesday (Oct. 8 th)
Oct 16	<u>WK 8</u>	- Smitherman, <i>Talkin & Testifyin</i> (selections) - Smitherman & Alim, 1 & 2	Short/Seminar Paper Proposals due by 11:30pm <u>Sunday, October 20th</u> RR 7 due by 11:30pm Tuesday (Oct. 15 th)
Oct 23	<u>WK 9</u> (No Class)	Smitherman & Alim, 3 & 4	Draft Short/Seminar Paper Intro/Thesis due by 11:30pm <u>Sunday, Oct 27^h</u>
Oct 30	<u>WK 10</u>	- Smitherman & Alim, 5 & 6 - Towns, "Black 'Matter' Lives" - Morrissey & Kimball, "#SpoiledMilk: Blacktavists, Visibility, and the Exploration of the Black Breast"	RR 8 due by 11:30pm Tuesday (Oct. 29 th)

WST/AFR 494/598 African American Rhetoric

Fall 2019

		Vats, "Cooking Up Hashtag Activism: #PaulasBestDishes and Counternarratives of Southern Food"	
Nov 6	<u>WK 11</u> Rhetorical Analysis	*Perry, "Barack Obama, Civil Mourning, and Prudence in Presidential Rhetoric" - Letter from Clergy - King, "Letter from Birmingham Jail"	Rhetorical Analysis of King's Letter due by <u>11:30pm Saturday, Nov 9th</u>
Nov 13	<u>WK 12</u> (No class)	Independent Workshop Day	Short/Seminar Paper due by <u>11:30pm, Friday, Dec 6th</u>
Nov 20	<u>WK 13</u>	In-Class Workshop Day	Short/Seminar Paper due by <u>11:30pm, Friday, Dec 6th</u>
Nov 27	<u>WK 14</u> (No Class)	Thanksgiving Holiday	Short/Seminar Paper due by <u>11:30pm, Friday, Dec 6th</u>
Dec 4	<u>WK 15</u>	In-Class Workshop Day	Short/Seminar Paper due by <u>11:30pm, Friday, Dec 6th</u>