Welcome to Feminist Rhetorical Criticism.
In her edited anthology, Reclaiming Rhetorica, Andrea Lunsford establishes her vision for a model of feminist theory as one that will interrupt “the seamless narrative usually told about the rhetorical tradition and to open more possibilities for multiple rhetorics, rhetorics that would not name and valorize one traditional, competitive, antagonistic, and linear mode of rhetorical discourse but would rather incorporate other, often dangerous moves: breaking the silence; naming in personal terms; employing dislogics; recognizing and using the power of conversation; moving centripetally towards connections; and valuing—indeed insisting upon—collaboration.”

This is a course in exploring the relationships among communication theories, community, gender, feminism, and activism. Far from universally agreed upon terms, all of these words have the potential to spark a wide variety of stimulating and consequential debates. This course focuses on intersections between theory and practice, as rhetoric can only be understood through its uses and absences. More productively thought of as heuristics (rather than step-by-step methodologies), this course will explore a range of approaches for critiquing discourse as it relates to critical/cultural theories of gender.

The literature of feminist rhetorical criticism is at once narrow and vast, depending upon your vantage. Certainly, a comprehensive survey of theories relevant to feminist critique and gendered rhetorics (rhetorics of gender?) would be impossible. Instead, this course will explore intersecting thematics, traditions, and touchstones in feminist rhetorical criticism, delving into major theoretical conversations and creating our own dialogues. The course seeks to blend readings often thought to be “canonical” in the arena of feminist rhetorical criticism with essays and perspectives that often get overlooked or ignored by those who might otherwise assert the importance of a “canon.”

As a class offered by Communication Studies, our questions will differ from those situated in the English side of rhetorical studies. Similarly, while we will likely find many allegiances to projects emerging from the fields of Cultural Studies, Women’s/Gender Studies, American Studies, Philosophy, and Film Studies, our course will investigate the ways in which discourse functions persuasively in contingent social contexts. Approaching rhetoric as both a discursive practice and an attitude for critiquing cultural practices, we will speculate about the ideological, material, and relational ramifications of constituting realities through discourse.

Finally, in pairing “rhetorical criticism” with the term “feminist,” this course means follows the lead of Bonnie Dow and Celeste Condit who reserve the term for “research that studies communication theories and practices from a perspective that ultimately is oriented toward the achievement of ‘gender justice,’ a goal that takes into account the ways that gender always already intersects with race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class.” As such, we will pursue rhetorical critique as a form of activist venture, one that takes seriously the role of academics/academia in productively challenging rigid social hierarchies and oppression.

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Course Objectives

1. To demonstrate a firm understanding of the historical development of feminist criticism as an ever-developing body of theory that is interdisciplinary in nature.
2. To explore the nature of canons in rhetorical criticism and feminist theory.
3. To interrogate the rhetorical construction of gender and sex as social ideologies.
4. To survey a wide array of debates and literatures relevant to feminist criticism and consider seriously their critical implications for life in a multicultural world.
5. To become familiar with paradigms and vocabularies for describing, explaining, and shaping the social arena of discourse and rhetoric, especially as they relate to gender.
6. To recognize the explanatory value of contemporary rhetorical theories for communicative and performative events.
7. To identify central figures in the development of feminist rhetorical scholarship and explore their contributions to contemporary understandings of critical/cultural studies of gender.
8. To speculate on the role of rhetoric as a chief element of a robust public culture.
9. To cultivate an appreciation of rhetorical practice and theory as they affect our everyday lives.
10. To position ourselves as active participants within the ongoing scholarly conversation of feminist rhetorical criticism.
11. To investigate the constitutive nature of rhetoric, especially as it relates to bolstering gendered ideologies.

Assignments

All formal written assignments need to follow these basic guidelines:

- Your layout should include 1” margins, a 12 point font, and be double-spaced.
- Use quotations meaningfully. While I strongly encourage you to incorporate helpful quotations and passages, they do not substitute for your analysis of the materials. Please be attentive to the Chicago format for NOTES when citing research directly.
- Proofread your paper carefully for language choices, grammar, and spelling.
- Include a bibliography that follows the Chicago format using the Bibliography style (unless otherwise directed).

Active Participation (10%) First of all (and perhaps obviously), you have to be here to participate. Merely showing up for class is not the same as actively participating in the course. If you attend every day but rarely engage in the materials in a way that is responsive to others in the class, you will earn a poor participation grade by the end of the semester. Likewise, if you are not in class, you certainly cannot engage our discussions fully. A seminar is meant to call forth the critic in each of us so that we may engage in productive dialogue. Although we all possess various backgrounds in rhetorical theory, each of you is expected to raise questions of interest or uncertainty on a weekly basis rooted in questions relevant to feminist rhetorical critique. Inevitably, we will disagree. Disagreement is not a problem from an academic perspective. Rather, disagreement suggests the opportunity for further dialogue and engagement. Instead of aiming to for the “right” answers, we will attempt to grapple with arguments that propel us toward “better” depth of understanding and critique. Thus, your comments should be constructive and aim for specificity (noting a specific passage, a particular comment made in class, an example of a current event, etc.). Your goal should be to produce generative responses: responses that challenge predicating assumptions, that probe theoretical implications, and that interrogate our everyday communication practices. These responses are also intended to stimulate your own thinking by documenting your “conversations” with seminar readings and critics. By contextualizing even our questions, hopefully we will be able to learn from each other—which, I believe, is the primary goal of a graduate seminar.
**Weekly Discussion Questions (10%)** Each week there will be some sort of assignment that goes along with the readings and these will always be due by midnight on the Monday before class. If there is no specific assignment given, the default is to send me one thoughtful discussion question relevant to this course per reading.

For the **second week of class**, each student will be assigned one journal in the field and asked to present an editorial review of this journal relevant to the journal’s publication history on issues germane to feminist criticism and an overview of the journal’s editorial board who would be most likely reviewing scholarship in the area of feminist criticism. Each student should submit a handout of their findings and prepare to speak about her/his journal on our second night of class.

**Book Review (20%)** Each member of the seminar will be responsible for offering an overview of one book that has been influential to the interdisciplinary field of rhetoric as it relates to feminist theories. A book list will be distributed in class during the first week; if there is a book you would like to suggest as an alternative, please feel free to ask. The purpose of this assignment is to write a 1200-1500 word book review. For reference regarding formal conventions of writing book reviews, you ought to consult reviews in scholarly journals, such as *Quarterly Journal of Speech* and *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*. While you may stumble upon a review that has been written on your particular book, please know that your review should reflect your own critical evaluation of this book and not simply replicate what someone else has already written.

In general, understand that the primary function of a scholarly book review is to provide interested scholars with sufficient information about the thesis and supporting arguments offered by the author(s) such that those scholars may judge whether or not the book relates to their research and/or pedagogical interests. What problem is the author addressing? What are the main features of this person's theoretical contributions? How does this person fit her/his arguments into the rhetorical tradition? How does this book fit into broader conversations about feminism, gender, sex, sexuality, race, class, etc.? How has this person's theoretical framework been applied by others and adapted/developed in this particular book? What doesn't this book adequately address? What needs to be added to this book's purview? What does this author's deployment of feminist rhetorical theory contribute to our understandings of symbol use?

In all, your introduction should be an evaluative overview (not just a biographical summary); you need to be constructing an argument regarding the utility and limitations of your book as a critical analysis. At minimum, it is expected that each review will survey the content of the book (either arranged chronologically by chapter or thematically), demonstrate how this book engages the field of rhetorical feminism(s), and provide constructive criticism regarding the book’s arguments. It is expected that these reviews could be publishable given minor revisions.

**One week before** you present your book review, you will forward a representative chapter from your book in the form of a pdf to Dr. Enck. This chapter will then be distributed to all class members for them to read in addition to the week’s already assigned readings.

**On the night of** your assigned book review, you will orally present your review to your colleagues in a structured, polished format. This presentation should last approximately 10 minutes.

Book reviews are due by midnight the night before your assigned deadline and will be distributed to all seminarians.
**Feminist Rhetorical Analysis Project (50% total)**  By the end of the semester, we will have examined many rhetorics of gendered protest, limitations, and progress, a number of theories of gender and sexuality, and myriad definitions of feminist criticism. In general, you're being asked to write a final paper, suitable for publication, that critically analyzes a key artifact through theories relevant to the course. While more specific details will be provided as the semester progresses, the four aspects of this assignment are listed here:

**STEP 1: Meet with Dr. Enck.** Prior to the due date of your proposal, meet with Dr. Enck to discuss the most productive approach to your proposal and final project.

**STEP 2: Proposal (10%)—Due Friday March 8.** This 5 page paper should lay out the basic argument you seek to explore in your final paper. Ideally, at least part of what you write for this proposal should be incorporated into your final paper. As such this paper should address the following questions:

1. What text are you proposing to analyze & how do you propose to make your analysis manageable? (Give this some depth of description, especially as it is relevant to issues of gender & feminist critique).
2. Why is this text culturally significant to the advancement of, or limitations to feminist rhetorical criticism?
3. Into what scholarly conversations are you entering? Include an abbreviated literature review relevant to the problematic you plan to address.
4. What is your preliminary thesis with regard to this project? Specifically, what argument vis-à-vis feminist critique do you intend to make with your final paper.

You should incorporate in a meaningful fashion relevant scholarly research that demonstrates a solid foundation for your final project (be sure that your research is primarily critical/rhetorical in approach).

**STEP 3: Scholarly Presentation of Research (10%)** Consider this a final chance to vet your arguments and analysis through your colleagues (and your professor) and receive feedback. Mirroring a professional conference presentation style, this oral presentation should be 10-12 minutes in length and elicit feedback from your audience. This is your opportunity to make an argument to your audience and demonstrate your original, creative efforts. Certainly, you cannot read your entire paper to the class in this time; however, you should think of this as a conference presentation during which you highlight the most interesting and provocative parts of your project.

**STEP 4: Final Paper (30%)** Building upon the previous aspects of the project, this final paper should represent the culmination of your scholarly engagement with this cultural artifact. Thus, what you submit needs to be a polished paper, appropriate for conference presentation and, with work, publication. I will give you more specific expectations as we get closer to the deadline; for now, know that it should be approximately 20-25 pages in length, draw upon a well developed body of research relevant to rhetoric and critical feminist research, and be submitted via Turnitin on BlackBoard by **Tuesday, May 7 at 5:00 pm**.

Each student is also responsible for turning in a hard copy of her/his paper by this deadline.

**Peer Review of 2 Papers (10%)** You will receive 2 completed papers from peers in this course on **April 23rd** to provide a thoughtful, honest, critical review for – think of these as peer reviews similar to what one would expect if s/he were submitting the work to a journal. Everyone should benefit from this exercise. We will discuss this more as the time draws near.
Readings

Oh, there will be many! This course offers an immersion in the field of Communication Studies vis-à-vis feminist rhetorical criticism. You will be responsible for a good deal of reading – some of it complex, some of it not so much. The readings for this course vary in length, difficulty, and origination. Most readings from this course are theoretical in nature and are drawn from journals and books in the field of Communication/Rhetoric. Due to the diverse nature of our texts, there will be some day-to-day variation in terms of your reading load. Many of the essays are complex and will likely challenge you – they are not included to frustrate you – they have been chosen because they are strong examples of the positions we are discussing, and they lay out arguments in ways that are especially nuanced and sophisticated. With this in mind, you should plan to give yourself plenty of time to read carefully, take notes appropriately, and be prepared to ask questions as necessary. This course will employ a wide variety of reading prompts to help guide your reading and note taking.

There is no expectation that you will come to this class with a strong background in rhetorical theory, communication studies, or gender studies. However, there is an implicit insistence that everyone come to this course with a willingness to engage the readings at a graduate level. No one in the room will have all the answers (your professor included!), together, we can come closer to understanding the breadth of materials that make up this course.

Required Readings:

To keep your costs at a minimum, nearly all course readings will be posted on your course’s BlackBoard site. You can print out essays either from your home computers or in a General Access Computer Lab on campus. Please see the General Access Computer Labs website, http://www.gac1.unt.edu/pol.php, for more information about where to find labs, print quotas, etc. There are two labs in the General Academic Building (GAB 330 and GAB 550) along with quite a few labs spread throughout campus.

*If you should ever find yourself unable to log onto BlackBoard, please use your library privileges to find the article through EBSCO. If the library fails you, e-mail another classmate or me directly and I’ll happily send you a copy via e-mail.

Each student will select one book of which to write and present a book review. Thus, it will be each student’s responsibility to procure this book for your review in a timely manner. Please note: although most of these books are available in the COMM Library, we do not operate a lending library (materials should NOT be removed from the space); you should plan to procure your own copy of the book for this assignment.

Communication Library:

The Department of Communication Studies has an impressive collection of scholarly books relevant to this course. Please take advantage of this perk! Do keep in mind, though, that the Communication Library is not a lending library; you can use the books inside the library space when it is open and make photocopies of particular chapters/essays that would be most helpful to you. To see what the Communication Library has in its collection and find out when it is open for general use, consult the Department’s website: http://communication.unt.edu/research/library

COMM Library Copier Use Policy:

Students conducting research in the Communication Studies Library associated with departmental coursework have access to a printer/photocopier located in the office adjacent to the library. We encourage students to make use of this resource to print research accessed online in the library or to copy essays from any of the department’s holdings. Students may not use this resource for other purposes, such as printing courses assignments, class notes, scripts, etc. Students who use the copier for uses other than those outlined above will lose copying privileges.
**Class Climate**

The types of issues we will discuss in this class range from the writings of 19th Century activists to the politics of the abortion debates and representations of races and sexualities. Some of you will undoubtedly have strong reactions to some of our readings and discussions—strong reactions are not discouraged. However, the ways in which reactions get framed and presented must be respectful and civil. In order for us all to glean the most from this course, we must create an environment in which individuals feel comfortable speaking their minds and relaying their experiences. Constructive criticism and responses are welcome (and expected). Disrespect of any kind cannot be tolerated.

**UNT Acceptable Student Behavior Statement:**

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at www.unt.edu/csrr

**Accountability**

This is graduate school—it is expected that you are here because you want to be and that you are here to contribute to the learning environment of your peers. We will spend the bulk of our time discussing the ideas raised in the readings and presenting arguments to one another. Especially where presentations are concerned, having an audience in active attendance is essential to the success of this class. Your professor will act primarily as a facilitator and each of you will bear responsibility for the educational experience of the entire class. If you are not here, you will not gain as much from or contribute as much to the class; your experiences are important to our collective learning experience. If you must miss class, it is expected that you will talk to me ahead of time to make alternative arrangements for the materials you will miss. **If you miss more than one class, your final grade will reflect a letter grade deduction for each class missed beyond one.**

**Academic Integrity**

It is expected that all students have read and understand the Center for Student Rights & Responsibilities expectations regarding Academic Dishonesty and Integrity. If you have misplaced your copy of their code, please surf the net to [http://www.unt.edu/csrr/development/dishonesty.html](http://www.unt.edu/csrr/development/dishonesty.html). It is of utmost importance that you understand what is meant by cheating, facilitating academic dishonesty, fabrication, plagiarism, etc. It is also important for you to understand your rights should I or any other instructor accuses you of academic dishonesty. Every assignment, unless otherwise indicated, requires you to do original, independent, and creative work. In addition to copying someone else's words or ideas, **reusing your own work (from other courses) is considered academic dishonesty—you might be permitted to extend research from other classes, but you must clear this with your professors before proceeding with such research.** Frequently, you will be asked to summarize and synthesize various course readings and additional research; if you are using more than 3 words of that text, they need to go in quotation marks and include the corresponding page number(s) in an appropriate citation style. Even if you are not quoting text directly, you need to indicate when you are using another scholar's thoughts/ideas/concepts/paradigms/etc. by citing that source. Violation of these expectations will result in swift and severe consequences (typically, failure for both the assignment and the course). We will be using the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 16th Edition in this class—Please learn it well.

**Crisis Contingency**

In the event of the university closing for weather-related reasons or illness outbreak (e.g. swine flu), please visit the course website on Blackboard. I will provide instructions on how to turn in assignments and how the class will proceed utilizing BlackBoard's announcements function.
Cell Phones/Text Messaging
We all use them and love them. Use them and love them before class, on break, and after class. Using your computers/iPads to take notes during class is fine, but please know that I can always tell when you're facebooking or sending e-mails; just don't do it.

Disability Concerns
The University of North Texas is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of federal equal opportunity legislation; reference Public Law 92-112 – The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. With the passage of new federal legislation entitled Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA), pursuant to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, there is renewed focus on providing this population with the same opportunities enjoyed by all citizens. In accordance with the ADA and Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA), I will gladly provide reasonable accommodation to students who need it. Students who wish to self-identify and request assistance under this policy should register in room 318A of the University Union by the second week of class.

E-Mail & BlackBoard
Students are expected to check their preferred e-mail quite frequently in order to stay current with course communications. If you have a question outside of class and can't make it to my office hours, please contact me via e-mail (do not e-mail me through the BlackBoard site).

SETE Evaluations
The Student Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness (SETE) is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. This short survey will be made available to you at the end of the semester (April 15 - May 10), providing you a chance to comment on how this class has been conducted and the quality of the education you received. I am very interested in the feedback I get from students, as I work to continually improve my teaching.

Meetings
I recognize that this course will be challenging in different ways to each seminar participant. Graduate education takes place as much (if not more) outside the classroom as inside. I expect that I will meet with you outside of our official class times. I am certainly willing to offer suggestions for research and offer assistance for grappling with the readings.

While grade disputes are rarely an issue in graduate level classes, I am certainly willing to discuss graded materials with you. However, I will not discuss grades over e-mail or telephone, and I will not discuss your grades in reference to anyone else in the class. You are not graded against others in the class and all students are evaluated based on their individual contributions to the learning environment. If you are concerned about your progress for any reason, please come talk to me so we can determine how best to augment your learning.

Deadlines
Deadlines are important; they keep you on track and they ensure that I can maintain order in my own schedule. I do not accept late work unless there is an especially egregious situation, in which case you should talk to me.
**Academic Research**
(or, why you should avoid becoming a Google Monkey)

It is expected that you are capable of performing (and willing to perform) collegiate level academic research. Often, this will require a trip to the brick and mortar building called a “library” – this may seem arduous, but all of your research needs are not always available on your home computer. The only time you should be using Wikipedia or Google is to help you brainstorm—googling a topic or doing a Wikipedia search should *never* constitute an end result of your research. Wikipedia and Google should *never* show up on your bibliography. In discussing ideas, phrases such as “according to Wikipedia …” and “as I found on Google…” should *never* escape from your mouth. **Bottom line: Run away from Wikipedia and Google.**

The UNT Library website has the option “Communication & Mass Media Complete” – this search engine should be your friend. While it does not catalogue all journals in the field of Communication, it does search a good number of them and offer many of them in pdf format. Also, looking in the “Gender Studies Database” may also provide useful research.

**Grading/Quality of Work**

All grades will be in the form of a letter grade (A-F) and weighted according to the demands of the specific assignments. In the end, your final grade will be accounted in the following manner:

A: **Exemplary**: work or performance that goes well beyond the basic expectations of the assignment to the point of providing a model of excellence to others.

B: **Commendable**: work or performance that not only *meets all requirements but exceeds them*, demonstrating depth, originality, and other marks of quality that give the work distinction.

C: **Satisfactory**: work or performance that *fully meets all requirements* competently and shows the ability to function as a college student.

D: **Marginal**: work or performance that either (1) fails to meet all requirements though what is done is considered competent, or (2) meets all requirements but not at a basic level of competence or (3) both of the above but not poor enough to be considered failing.

F: **Failing**: work or performance that falls significantly short of requirements or basic competence or both. And, of course, work not done.

Please note: There is a perception that most graduate work will likely result in grades of A or B. In fact, graduate work is expected to be at the level of A or B work (i.e., *above and beyond the basic requirements of the assignment*). Please read and understand the above expectations of what constitutes A or B work if this is your end goal.

**Incompletes**

In accordance with university policy, a student can only receive a course grade of “I” if the student 1) has completed at least 75% of the coursework, 2) is passing the course, and 3) has a justifiable and documented reason beyond the control of the student for not completing the work on schedule (e.g., serious illness, military service).
**Disclaimer**

This syllabus should not be considered a binding contract on the part of the professor, who reserves the right to change any aspect of the course as necessary to meet the needs of course participants.

**Schedule of Readings**

It is expected that you will read the text(s) **BEFORE** coming to class for the day, that you will take notes on your readings, and that you will bring the readings with you to class so we can discuss them fully. Please use your printing privileges and bring all readings with you with notes to enable quick consultation.

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<td>Jan 15</td>
<td>Introductions and General Course Overview</td>
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| Jan 22| Writing Criticism |
|       | **Discuss:** Example book reviews (TBA) |
|       | **Presentations of Editorial Review Boards & Practices** |

**Friday, January 25 — Deadline to submit papers to New Voices, New Perspectives Student Research Conference at UNT** [submissions can be sent to Dr. Trudeau: jtrudeau@unt.edu]
Jan 29 Early-ish Debates as to what Feminist Criticism Can (Ought to) Be


Feb 5 Re-writing, Re-membering, and Re-Considering


Book Reviews

Feb 12 Disciplinary and Protective Frameworks

Feb 19  Bodies Do Matter

Book Reviews

Feb 26  Intersections of Race & Gender

Book Reviews

Friday March 1 and Saturday March 2
New Voices, New Perspectives Student Research Conference at UNT

COMM 5445 (Feminist Criticism) 11
March 5  Queering Rhetoric


Book Reviews


FRIDAY March 8  Paper Proposals due through Turnitin on BlackBoard by 5:00 p.m.

SPRING BREAK — March 11-15

March 19  Multiplying Masculinities


Book Reviews

March 26 Questioning the Public/Private Sphere Divide


Book Reviews

- Phaedra Pezzullo, Toxic Tourism: Rhetorics of Travel, Pollution, and Environmental Justice (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2007).


April 2 Gendered Violence


Book Reviews

- Sarah Projansky (2001), Watching Rape: Film and Television in Postfeminist Culture
April 9  The Potential For and Problems With Resistance

April 10-14
Southern Speech Communication Association annual convention in Louisville, KY

April 16  The Power of Empowerment?

Book Reviews

April 23  Presentations of Final Projects
Copy of paper is due to your peer reviewers at this time.

April 30  Readings TBA
Peer reviews due to authors at this time.

FINALS WEEK:
Final Papers due through Turnitin on BlackBoard by Tuesday, May 7 at 6:00 p.m.
Please also turn in a hard copy to Suzanne’s Mailbox by this time