

## CMST 7967: Contemporary Rhetorical Theory

Tuesday, 3:00 – 5:50

153 Coates Hall

Instructor: William Saas  
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Office Hours: Thursday, 10:30-11:30a.m.  
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### Course Description & Objectives

This seminar is designed to equip participants with the historical and technical knowledge necessary to work as ethical and effective rhetorical theorists in 2018. Weekly readings will help us to collectively account for the historical foundations, critical orientations, and thematic preoccupations of contemporary rhetorical theory (i.e., rhetorical theory from [roughly] 1968 to the present). Seminar assignments will both deepen your personal engagement with those readings and compel you to recover, assess, and facilitate constructive discussion of articles not included in the syllabus—that is, to assume the role of rhetorical theorist. By semester's end, you should have a working understanding of contemporary rhetorical theory's major historical moments and movements. You should also be an accomplished theory-builder, having over the course of the fall composed, workshopped, and revised an original, article-length theory essay.

### Required Texts

*Contemporary Rhetorical Theory: A Reader, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*. Edited by Mark J. Porrovecchio and Celeste Michelle Condit. New York: Guilford Press, 2016. Readings from this text are denoted in the readings list by (CRT).

Other required readings will be made available through the course Moodle page, denoted in the readings list by (M).

### Assignments and Evaluation

Listed below are the major assignments for this course. Together, the assignments and participation grades add up to 1,000 available points. Your final percentage grade for the course will correspond with the percentage of total points you accrue from completing these assignments. Additional information regarding each assignment and its standards for evaluation will be provided in class.

#### **- Seminar essay (550 total points)**

For this assignment, you will produce an original essay that engages with one or more ongoing conversations in contemporary rhetorical theory. Your paper will be completed in three stages:

1. Proposal. Compose a short (1,500-2,000-word) proposal for your seminar paper. Describe how you aspire to extend or complicate an existing theoretical perspective. Provide a brief literature review and bibliography of relevant articles. Identify a journal that might be a good spot for publication of your paper, and give a short justification for your choice. Proposals are due via Moodle by **3:00p.m. on September 18<sup>th</sup>**. (100 pts)

2. **Rough draft + workshop.** After receiving feedback from me regarding your proposal, complete a rough draft of your essay. Submit this draft to Moodle by **9:00p.m. the evening before the class period designated for the draft workshop.** In the draft workshop, read and provide both written and oral feedback for two of your peers' essays. (150 pts)
3. **Final draft.** Use feedback given to you during the draft workshop to revise your rough draft and produce a final paper that falls between 6,000 and 8,000 words in length. Due by **5:00p.m. on the final day of class.** (300 pts)

#### **- Reaction papers (x3, 50 pts each, 150 points total)**

Throughout the semester, you will write three, two-page, double-spaced, reaction papers that engage critically with one or more of a given week's readings. Reaction papers should be turned in to the appropriate dropbox on Moodle by **noon on the day for which the readings reacted to will be discussed in class.** You will share from your reaction paper in class on the day we read the essay(s) with which you are engaging.

Reaction papers should: (1) Demonstrate that you have engaged thoughtfully with the essay(s) in question; (2) Pose one or more critical questions inspired by the reading for in-class discussion. Beyond these two criteria, there are no other requirements for reaction papers. In other words, feel free to get creative!

#### **- Rhetorical Theory "How-to" (50 points)**

The object of this assignment is to get to the bottom of what rhetorical theorists do and how they do it. To that end, there are five steps:

1. Select one rhetorical theory essay that was recently published in a communication journal, is not currently assigned on the syllabus for this course, and which you think might be relevant to the paper you will write for this seminar. As you make your selection, take care to consider why you are choosing it and how it qualifies as a theory essay. You may find it useful to limit your search to essays published over the last five-years in *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, *Western Journal of Communication*, and *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*, but you may also consider essays published in other journals. Selections may also be drawn from the bibliographies of readings discussed in class. **Share your selection with me via e-mail by 3:00 p.m. on September 4.**
2. After you've received my feedback on your selection, draft an outline of your selected essay that will be legible to and shareable with other seminar participants. Account specifically for how the essay unfolds, both in terms of form/structure and content/argument, and how it engages in theory-building.
3. Submit your outline to the appropriate Moodle dropbox **by 9:00 p.m. on the Monday prior to your assigned presentation date.**
4. Using both your outline and your response paper as your baseline, lead a discussion of the essay in seminar on the assigned date. Rhetorical Theory "How-to" presentations will be given during the second half of class on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 25<sup>th</sup>.

#### **- Seminar Meeting Facilitation (200 points)**

For this assignment, you will select a theory topic to be covered in a future seminar meeting. You will then work with me to generate a readings list for that topic, and co-lead discussion of those readings in class during the associated seminar meeting. Further details and requirements for this assignment will be discussed in class.

**- Participation (50 points)**

You are expected to show up for and contribute to every seminar meeting. Please let me know in advance if you can't make a session.

**TITLE IX & Sexual Misconduct Policy**

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is a comprehensive federal law that prohibits discrimination based on the gender of students and employees of educational institutions that receive federal financial assistance.

In accordance with Title IX and other applicable law, Louisiana State University ("LSU") is committed to providing a learning, working, and living environment that promotes integrity, civility, and mutual respect in an environment free of discrimination on the basis of sex and sexual misconduct which includes sex discrimination, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and retaliation. LSU prohibits sex discrimination and sexual misconduct. This policy applies to all persons without regard to sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression.

Sex discrimination and sexual misconduct violate an individual's fundamental rights and personal dignity. LSU considers sex discrimination and sexual misconduct in all of its forms to be serious offenses. This policy has been developed to reaffirm these principles and to provide recourse for individuals whose rights have been violated. This policy establishes a mechanism for determining when rights have been violated in employment, student life, campus support services, LSU programs and/or an academic environment.

**Reasonable Accommodation**

The Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973: If you have a disability that impacts your work in this class and for which you may require accommodation, please see a Coordinator in the Office for Disability Affairs (112 Johnston Hall). After you receive your accommodations letters, please meet with me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations as soon as possible.

**Basic Needs Security**

Students who have difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food, or who lack a safe and stable place to live, are urged to contact the Office of the Dean of Students for support. You may also notify the professor if you are comfortable doing so. They should be able to help direct you to available resources on campus.

Learn more about the Office of the Dean of Students here:

<https://www.lsu.edu/deanofstudents/about/index.php>