

**English H591.02, Special Topics in the Study of Rhetoric
“Human Rights, Visual Rhetoric, and the Trauma of Representation”**

Prof Wendy Hesford

This course will focus primarily on contemporary women's literature and documentary films about human rights violations and activism. We will study the fundamental principles of rhetorical criticism as these apply to the study of visual and verbal representations of the politics of war, cultural trauma, global health issues, interpersonal violence, and women's activism. Our project will be to track how particular cultural, rhetorical, and national contexts, conventions of genre, and audiences shape contemporary representations of trauma, violence, and resistance. This course aims to provide students with a broad working knowledge of human rights as both an intellectual discourse and a realm of political action. Course requirements: five reading responses, a group presentation, and a final take-home essay exam.

Required Texts: (listed in the order in which we will read them)

Marita Sturken & Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*, Oxford University Press, 2001

Sonja Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism* (2nd Ed) Waveland Press, 1996

Susan Koppleman, *Women in the Trees: Stories about Women's Battering and Resistance*, Beacon Press, 1996

Toni Morrison, *Beloved*, Plume, 1998

Slavenka Drakulic, *S. A Novel About the Balkans*, Penguin, 1999

Antjie Krog, *Country of My Skull: Guilt, Sorry, and the Limits of Forgiveness in the New South Africa*, Time Books, 2000

Loung Ung, *First They Killed My Father: A Daughter of Cambodia Remembers*, Harper Perennial, 2001

Films (in viewing order)

Midge Mackenzie, *The Sky: A Silent Witness*

Ariel Dorfman, *Speak Truth to Power*

Margie Strosser, *Rape Stories*

Mandy Jacobson and Karmen Jelincic, *Calling the Ghosts: A Story about Rape, War and Women*

Truth is the Victim in Bosnia

Frances Reid and Deborah Hoffmann, *Long Night's Journey Into Day: South African's Search for Truth and Reconciliation*

--Class participation/Attendance: can raise or lower a grade depending on performance. More than 3 absences (excused or unexcused) and your grade will be lowered 100 points (a full grade).

--**Academic Misconduct:** All cases of suspected plagiarism will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. "Plagiarism is the representation of another's works or ideas as one's own: it includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person's work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person's ideas." As a general rule, stay away from the Internet for criticism of the plays. Please ask if you are unclear about what constitutes plagiarism.

--**The Office for Disability Services** in 150 Pomerene Hall provides services for students with disabilities (292-3307).

Reading & Discussion Schedule

Unit I: Introduction to Human Rights and the Rhetoric of Witnessing

- W: 9/19 Introduction: Reading Images & The Documentary Gaze
 HW: Chapter 1 & 2, Practices of Looking pages, 10-69
- M: 9/24 Video: *The Sky: A Silent Witness*
 Rhetoric of Witnessing; Testimonial/Empathic Viewing Practices
 HW: Read Dorfman play *Speak Truth to Power* (CP)
 Read *Declaration of Human Rights* (CP))
- W: 9/2 Video *Speak Truth to Power*
 In-class exercise on Declaration of Human Rights
 HW: Read: Chapter 3 Practices of Looking, pages, 72-106

Unit II: Point of View: Violence Against Women & Women's Resistance

- M: 10/1 Discussion of poems from *Women in the Trees* anthology: "Linoleum
 Roses" by Sandra Cisneros & "The Club" by Mitsuye Yamada
 Analysis of photographic works by Anderson, Ferrato, and Wolin
 HW: Read: Selected Stories from *Women in the Trees*
 "Women in the Trees" Pat Murphy
 "A Jury of Her Peers" Susan Glaspell
 Read: Rhetorical Criticism. Chapter 5, Fantasy-Theme Criticism.
 pages 121-156
 Write: **Reading Response Paper #1:** Fantasy/Theme analysis of
 "Women in the Trees" or "A Jury of Her Peers"
- W: 10/3 Discussion of Stories from *Women in the Trees*

Reading Response Paper #1 Due

HW: Read the following short stories from *Women in the Trees*
 "The Day My Father My Father Tried to Kill Us" Pat Staten
 "Sweat" Zora Neale Hurston
 "Noises" Jane Bradley
 "Wild Turkeys" Beth Brant

Read: Rhetorical Criticism, Chapter 4, Cluster Analysis, 63-79
 Write: **Reading Response Paper #2** Cluster Analysis on 1 story

M: 10/8 **Group Presentation #1** Fantasy/Theme Analysis of "Women in the Trees" & "A Jury of Her Peers"
Reading Response #2 Due Today
 In-class viewing: Video *Rape Stories*

HW: Read Beloved, pages 3-73

Looking Ahead: Reading Response #3 on Beloved (choose among analytical methods: cluster, fantasy/theme, or the gaze--Due 10/22)

Unit III: Signifying Slavery and Historical Memory

W: 10/10 Historical Background Margaret Garner
 Metaphors We Live By

HW: Read: Beloved, pages 74-165
Rhetorical Criticism, Chapter 10, Narrative Criticism, 399-406

M: 10/15 **Group Presentation #2: Narrative Analysis of Beloved pages 1-165**

HW: Read Beloved pages 169-235

W: 10/17 Discussion of Beloved Continued
 Read Beloved pages 235-275

Read: Rhetorical Criticism, Chapter 9, Metaphoric Criticism, 357-365

M: 10/22 Oppression, Madness, and Infanticide
Reading Response #3 Due

HW: Read Country of My Skull pages 1-102

Unit IV: Truth-telling and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation

W: 10/24 Video *Long Night's Journey into Day* (title?)

Setting Context for Country of My Skull

HW: Read: Country of My Skull pages 103-190

Read: Rhetorical Criticism, Chapter 11, Pentadic Criticism 455-462; & 477-479

Looking Ahead: Reading Response #4 (Choose among these methods: metaphoric, cluster, narrative, fantasy/theme, or the gaze) Due 10/31

M: 10/29 **Group Presentation #3 Country of My Skull** (Pentadic Criticism-- covering pages 1-190)

HW: Read Country of my Skull pages 191-388

W: 10/31 **Reading Response #4 Due Today**
Last Day Discussion of Country of My Skull

HW: Read Catherine MacKinnon "Turning Rape into Pornography" (CP)

Read: Rhetorical Criticism, Chapter 8, Ideological Criticism, 291-298 & Chapter 6, Feminist Criticism, 165-173

**Note: Group #4 should view *Calling the Ghosts* ahead of time for presentation in class on Monday

Unit V: Testimonial and Fictional Representations of Rape Warfare

M: 11/5 Video: *Calling the Ghosts: A Story about Rape, War, and Women*

Group Presentation #4: Compare MacKinnon's essay & *Calling the Ghosts* (applying concepts from Practices of Looking and your choice of analytical method(s) from Rhetorical Criticism)

W: 11/7 Comparative Discussion of Narratives of Bosnian War
Video: *The Truth About Bosnia*

HW: Read "S": A Novel About the Balkans

Write: **Reading Response Paper #5:** (choose among ideological, feminist, pentadic, fantasy/theme, cluster, or narrative analysis-- you might also consider the gaze as an analytical framework)

M: 11/12 No class. Veterans' Day

W: 11/14 **Reading Response Paper #5 Due Today**
Group Presentation #5 on "S" (choose among analytical methods)

HW: Begin Reading First They Killed My Father

M: 11/19 Guest Lecturer: Visiting Scholar Renata Jambresic Kirin

HW: Read First They Killed My Father

Write: **Reading Response #6** on First they Killed My Father (choose among analytical methods--due 11/28)

Unit VI: Global Politics: Health, War, & Social Activism

W: 11/21 Class Cancelled for Thanksgiving Holiday

M: 11/26 **Group Presentation #6 Loung Ung** (choose among analytical methods)

W: 11/28 Last Day of Class
Reading Response #6 Due
 Distribution of Final Take Home Essay Exam
 Class Evaluations

Final Take Home Exams (TBA)

Additional Course Information:

Grade Point Breakdown: Total Points: 1000

Reading Responses: five at 100 points (However, six reading responses will be assigned. You may choose to do all six to earn extra points)

Group Presentation: 200 points

Final Essay Exam/Take Home: 300 points

Reading Response Papers (100 points each)

Procedures

We will follow the procedures for each type of analytical method outlined in Rhetorical Criticism. The process of analysis is a four step process:

- 1) formulating a research question and selecting an artifact (text to be analyzed)
- 2) selecting a unit of analysis (a focus point)
- 3) analyzing the artifact
- 4) writing the critical reading response paper

Format

Reading response papers should be 3-4 typed double-space pages, with one inch margins. Please do not provide a cover page; simply include your name, course number, and reading response paper number in the top left hand corner. Please number pages on bottom center or top right hand corner.

Outline

Your reading response paper should include five major components:

- 1) an introduction, in which the research question, its potential contribution to rhetorical theory, and/or its significance are discussed
- 2) description of the artifact (text or film) and its context
- 3) description of the unit of analysis and key terms
- 4) report of the findings of the analysis
- 5) discussion of the contribution the analysis makes to answering the research question

Sample critical response papers/essays are offered in each chapter of Rhetorical Criticism for each analytical method. Please refer to the pages at the end of each chapter for model examples.