

**Class Days:** TTH

**Class Times:** 2:00-3:15

**Class Location:** P 147

**Office Location:** SH 120B

**Office Hours:** T 12:30-1:30, W 10:30-12:30 & by appt.

**Email Contact**: jsheppard@mail.sdsu.edu

Course Overview  
This course will use several rhetorical criticism methods as lenses for examining the complex cultural interactions between media, technology, politics, and race in contemporary (popular) cultural settings. In particular, we will investigate the rhetorical acts and communicative modes used by a range of participants in the current presidential election and in the Black Lives Matter movement. Our objective is to better understand how politicians, activists, and everyday people use rhetoric to educate and persuade others to push forward their desired agendas. Although our readings and discussion will touch on some controversial issues, our focus will be on how rhetorical practices and strategies are enacted by rhetors and responded to by audiences, not specifically on the issues themselves.

## Course Materials

* *The Race Whisperer: Barack Obama and the Political Uses of Race.* By Melanie Price. New York, NY: New York University Press, 2016.
* *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation.* By Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor. Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2016.
* Additional readings in PDF format will be provided by instructor via Blackboard

## Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course, students should be able to:

* analyze arguments and rhetorical strategies of contemporary activists and politicians through the lens of major critical theoretical methods
* understand the affordances and constraints media and technology offer for contemporary rhetors
* interrogate how specific contexts and audiences shape the rhetorical approaches of activists and politicians
* assess the complex rhetorical interrelations between culture, technology, politics, and race

## Assignments and Points

There are **a total of 100 possible points to earn** in this course. No extra credit assignments are available. Detailed assignment directions will be provided for each project later in the semester. Each assignment will offer opportunities to explore your interests and tailor your approach.

* 10% Participation
* 10% Small assignments
* 20% Project #1 (applying media-centered perspectives to rhetorical analysis)
* 30% Project #2 (applying ideological criticism to a text/artifact)
* 30% Project #3 (applying generic criticism to a text/artifact)

A Note about Office Hours- Use Them  
No really, **I hold office hours for you** and I encourage you to talk with me if you need help or have questions or concerns related to class. You’ll be required to conference with me about one of your project draft during the semester, but feel free to stop by in between.

## Attendance, Participation, and Professional Etiquette

This course is run as a **seminar and you are expected to be present and engaged for all class sessions** (except in the case of illness, emergency, or official university-related activity). Learning in a seminar format depends upon **preparation and active participation** by the students as well as the professor. Therefore, it is very important that you not only **read assigned texts** but that you also **think critically about the arguments, concepts, and potential applications of the materials we study**. To do well in this course, you will need to **read all assigned material prior to class**, respond to assigned writing prompts, and engage in thoughtful, critical dialog with your classmates. Although this does not mean speaking up during every class session, it does mean arriving on time, being prepared, asking questions, and being attentive to the activities at hand.

In order to explore a breadth of perspectives on our course themes of rhetoric, culture, race, politics, and new media, we will need to rely on the work and resources each of us brings to this experience. Throughout the semester, we will discuss readings, share collected materials and reading responses, and provide feedback on drafts of one another's work. Your sustained engagement in this process will create a rich learning environment for yourself and your classmates and will help to construct a network of support for your intellectual and professional development.  
  
Although we will sometimes discuss controversial or uncomfortable cultural issues, my goal for the class is to create a comfortable, inviting environment for all students so learning can take place. To this end, **I expect** **professional and respectful behavior in class**. Please be mindful of your behavior, language, and tone in all interactions with classmates and me. Behavior that detracts from the culture of respect and professionalism a class such as this requires will not be tolerated. **Please do not text or talk on phones, use computers for reasons outside of our classwork, or engage in any other behavior that distracts from our work.**

## Helpful Resources:

1. Writers at any level can benefit from discussing their work-in-progress. **The SDSU Writing Center**, located in LLA 1103 in the Love Library (appointments available at the [Writing Center Online](https://writingcenter.sdsu.edu/)) is **a free resource** where you can find support for the writing assigned for this course. Tutors can help you with your assignments at any stage of the writing process--from brainstorming to revision of in-process drafts. You can expect your session to be collaborative: consider your tutor a writing coach who can offer insight into the specific project you are working on, as well as strategies to help you develop your writing skills overall.
2. The [Purdue Online Writing Lab](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/) (OWL) offers comprehensive information on research, citation styles, writing specific genres, and much more.

Problems  
Please get in touch with me immediately if you experience unforeseen circumstances that will affect your performance in the course. My goal is to help you succeed, but we need to communicate to make that happen.

## Late Work

With the exception of presentations or in-class activities (which cannot be made-up), I will accept late work **only if prior arrangements have been made**. All three major projects must be completed to pass this class.

## Students with Disabilities

Every attempt will be made to offer reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities in this course. Students with disabilities who may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to notify the instructor privately and to contact Student Disability Services (SDS) as soon as possible. SDS staff are available in the Capulli Center in Suite 3101 or by phone at (619) 594-6473 (voice) or (619) 594-2929 (TTD/TTY).

If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Student Disability Services. To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you should contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that accommodations based upon disability cannot be provided until you have presented your instructor with an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services. Your cooperation is appreciated.

## Counseling

There are many events and situations that put additional stress on being a student. SDSU has an excellent center for Counseling & Psychological Services that is open to students Monday through Friday from 8am-4:30pm. To set up an initial consultation, call (619) 594-5220. For immediate or emergency help, you are welcome to use San Diego’s free 24-hour counseling access line at (800) 479-3339. C&PS on campus also has a “Center for Well-Being” with multiple stations for relaxation if you are feeling stressed during the semester. C&PS is located in the Capulli Center, Room 4401.

## Academic Honesty

All work in this course must be original. Plagiarism will result in serious consequences ranging from grade reduction to failure in the class to expulsion from the college. For more information on the university cheating and plagiarism policy, please visit: [http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/dept/senate/ policy/pfacademics.html](http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/dept/senate/%20policy/pfacademics.html). SDSU’s library also has an excellent tutorial on how to avoid plagiarism.

## Discrimination and Harassment

SDSU complies with all federal and state laws regarding discrimination and harassment on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender and gender identity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, medical status, veteran status, and disability. Further, the expectation for our classroom is that it is a safe, collegial space where differences of background and perspective are treated with consideration and respect. Disagreement on some issues is expected as part of the learning process, but should always be expressed within a framework of collegiality.

## Course Schedule

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| **Fall 2016** This schedule is subject to change based on student needs. Please check it regularly to stay up-to-date on assignments. | |
| **T 8/30 Week 1** |  |
|  | * Introductions * In-class writing- What’s your definition of rhetoric? * Short discussion of rhetoric and everyday texts Syllabus |
| **TH 9/1** |  |
|  | * **Read PDF-** Sellnow, pp. 1-15, “What Is Popular Culture and Why Study It?” |
| **T 9/6 Week 2** |  |
|  | * Watch in class- CNN “The Seventies” episode 1 “Television Gets Real” |
| **TH 9/8** |  |
|  | * Discuss CNN documentary, popular culture, and the role of media |
| **T 9/13 Week 3** |  |
|  | * **Read PDF**- Brummett chapter 3, pp. 79-103“Rhetorical Methods in Critical Studies” * Watch Obama’s 2004 convention address with voiceover analysis |
| **TH 9/15** |  |
|  | * **Read PDF**- Brummett chapter 3, pp. 104-123 “Rhetorical Methods in Critical Studies” * Project #1 directions * In class discussion of Brummett chapter 3 examples (PDF) |
| **T 9/20 Week 4** |  |
|  | * **Read PDF**- Sellnow, pp. 233-241 (sample essay at the end of chapter on Harry Potter is optional) * Discuss reading * Do activity on page 250 |
| **TH 9/22** |  |
|  | * **Read PDF-** Smith, “Critiquing Reality-based Televisual Black Fatherhood: A Critical Analysis of *Run’s House* and *Snoop Dog’s Father Hood”* * Discuss reading and watch clips from shows analyzed in Smith’s article |
| **T 9/27 Week 5** |  |
|  | * **Due-** Project #1 * Brief presentations/sharing of project text/artifact and analysis |
| **TH 9/29** |  |
|  | * **Read PDF-** Foss “Ideological Criticism” pp. 209-220 * Discuss reading * Look in class at [this summary with example analysis of MLK’s “I have a Dream” speech](http://ideologicalcriticism.blogspot.com/) |
| **T 10/4 Week 6** |  |
|  | * **Read-** Price “Introduction” pp. 1-34 * Discuss reading |
| **TH 10/6** |  |
|  | * **Read** Price chapter 1 “Barack Obama and Black Blame: Authenticity, Audience, and Audaciousness”  pp. 35-70 * Watch in class- Obama’s Dallas Police Officers’ Memorial Speech * Watch in class- Obama’s statement after the Trayvon Martin killing |
| **T 10/11 Week 7** |  |
|  | * **Read** Price chapter 3- “Barack Obama’s More Perfect Union” pp. 93-120 |
| **TH 10/13** |  |
|  | * **Read** Price chapter 4- “An Officer and Two Gentlemen: The Great Beer Summit of 2009” pp. 121-152 |
| **T 10/18 Week 8** |  |
|  | * **Read**- Bouie, “[Trump’s Outreach to Black Voters Isn’t about Black Voters”](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/politics/2016/08/trump_s_outreach_to_black_voters_isn_t_about_black_voters.html) * **Read**- Bouie, “[Trump’s Vision of Black America Is a White Supremacist Fantasy (and His Outreach to Black Voters Is a Dog Whistle for Racists](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/politics/2016/08/trump_s_outreach_to_black_voters_is_a_dog_whistle_for_racists.html)” * **Read**- Bouie, “[Racial Discontent Is Rising, but That’s Not Obama’s Fault (The anti-anti-racism of the Right)](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/politics/2016/07/racism_discontent_is_rising_but_that_s_not_obama_s_fault.html)” |
| **TH 10/20** |  |
|  | * **Read** Price- “Conclusion” |
| **T 10/25 Week 9** |  |
|  | * **Due**- **Project #2 draft** * Peer review |
| **TH 10/27** |  |
|  | * Class cancelled for optional individual conferences |
| **T 11/1 Week 10** |  |
|  | * **Due- Project #2 final** * **Watch in class-** “O. J.: Made in America” ESPN documentary part 1 |
| **TH 11/3** |  |
|  | * **Read PDF-** Bitzer “The Rhetorical Situation” * Discuss reading * Watch clips from “O. J.: Made in America” ESPN documentary part 2 |
| **T 11/8 Week 11** |  |
|  | * **Read PDF-** Blair and Michel “Reproducing Civil Rights Tactics: The Rhetorical Performances of the Civil Rights Memorial” * Discuss reading, civil rights activism of the 1960s, and the rhetorical situation |
| **TH 11/10** |  |
|  | * **Read PDF-** Foss, “Generic Criticism” pp. 137-145 * Discuss reading |
| **T 11/15 Week 12** |  |
|  | * **Read PDF-** Yancey and Bulter, “[What’s Wrong with ‘All Lives Matter’?”](http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/01/12/whats-wrong-with-all-lives-matter/) * Watch in class**-** [*Stay Woke: Black Lives Matter*](http://www.bet.com/video/news/national/2016/stay-woke-behind-the-black-lives-matter-movement-full-show.html) documentary |
| **TH 11/17** |  |
|  | * **Read** Taylor- “Introduction: Black Awakening in Obama’s America” * Discuss *Stay Woke* documentary |
| **T 11/22 Week 13** |  |
|  | * **Read** Taylor- Chapter 1: “A Culture of Racism” * Discuss reading |
| **TH 11/24** |  |
|  | **Class Cancelled for Thanksgiving Break** |
| **T 11/29 Week 14** |  |
|  | * **Read** Taylor- Chapter 2: “From Civil Rights to Colorblind” * Discuss reading |
| **TH 12/1** |  |
|  | * **Read** Taylor- Chapter 4: “The Double Standard of Justice” * Discuss reading |
| **T 12/6 Week 15** |  |
|  | * **Read** Taylor- Chapter 5: “Barack Obama: The End of an Illusion” * **Due: Short written proposal for Project #3** * Discuss reading |
| **TH 12/8** |  |
|  | * **Read** Taylor- Chapter 6: “Black Lives Matter: A Movement, Not a Moment” * Discuss reading |
| **T 12/13 Week 16** |  |
|  | * **Due- Project #3 draft** * Peer review |
| **T 12/20 Finals Week** |  |
|  | * **Due- Project #3 final** |