

English 5380-002: Advanced Problems in Literary Studies
Race, Rhetoric, and Performance
Spring 2021

Tuesday, 6:00pm-9:50pm

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Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday, 3:30pm-4:30pm, or by appointment.

In this interdisciplinary course we will consider what the category “race” means to us at this stage in the twenty-first century and consider at length how the scholarly fields of rhetoric and performance studies provide overlapping critical lenses for interrogating that category. Beginning with a historical set of definitions, we will reflect on the ways that “race” begins with pseudoscientific claims to authority as a purportedly objective set of criteria. From there, however, we will scrutinize how the bearing of “race” on subject formation more often unfolds in rhetorical or performative terms, as an open-ended discursive or cultural process, and occurring at the intersection of many identity categories rather than as a stable influence. With this in mind, we will examine work from BIPOC, feminist, and queer theorists, rhetorical actors, and performers to interpret the diversity of ripostes these figures offer to the problems that “race” as a category enacts.

Statements Regarding Online Modality and COVID-19:

In order to work in a fully online delivery format, students will need to have access to a webcam and microphone, a reliable Internet connection, and a current operating system.

I will expect the following from each student online:

- You will not engage in any other activities (cooking, cleaning, driving, etc.) during class meetings.
- You will participate in class discussions as if you were sitting in a face-to-face class.
- I strongly prefer that students keep their webcams on if they are able to do so, as this helps class discussion and class community.

Etiquette for Zoom meetings

- Keep your microphone muted until you want to speak.
- Please use Zoom’s “raise hand” function and I will call on you. You may also use the text chat to get my attention.
- Try to be in a quiet area with no distractions
- If you would like to use a Zoom background, please choose an image that is not distracting.

Illness-Based Absence Policy

1. If at any time during this semester you feel ill, in the interest of your own health and safety as well as the health and safety of your instructors and classmates, please follow the steps outlined below to ensure that your absence for illness will be excused. These steps apply to missed participation in synchronous online class meetings if you feel too ill to do so. If you are ill and think the symptoms might be COVID-19-related:
 - a. Call Student Health Services at 806.743.2848 or your health care provider. After hours and on weekends, contact TTU COVID-19 Helpline at [TBA].
 - b. Self-report as soon as possible using the Dean of Students COVID-19 webpage: <http://www.depts.ttu.edu/dos/COVID-19Absence.php>. This website has specific directions about how to upload documentation from a medical provider and what will happen if your illness renders you unable to participate in classes for more than one week.
 - c. If your illness is determined to be COVID-19-related, all remaining documentation and communication will be handled through the Office of the Dean of Students, including notification of your instructors of the period of time you may be absent from and may return to classes.
 - d. If your illness is determined not to be COVID-19-related, please follow steps 2.a-d below.

2. If you are ill and can attribute your symptoms to something other than COVID-19:
 - a. If your illness renders you unable to participate in synchronous online classes, you are encouraged to visit with either Student Health Services at 806.743.2848 or your health care provider. Note that Student Health Services and your own and other health care providers may arrange virtual visits.
 - b. During the health provider visit, request a “return to school” note;
 - c. E-mail the instructor a picture of that note;
 - d. Return to class by the next class period after the date indicated on your note.

Following the steps outlined above helps to keep your instructors informed about your absences and ensures your absence or missing an assignment due date because of illness will be marked excused. You will still be responsible within a week of returning to class for completing any assignments, quizzes, or exams you have missed because of illness.

Required Texts:

All readings are available in .pdf form on our course Blackboard.

Course Work, Methods of Assessment, and Distribution of Grades

Blog contributions 10% **ongoing**

Outreach assignment	20%	16 March proposal
Paper abstract (500 words)	15%	30 March
Book review (1000 words)	15%	13 April
Conference paper (3000 words)	20%	end of semester, date TBD
Informed participation in class discussion	20%	

You have two required formal writing assignments for this course: a 1000-word **academic book review**, and a 3000-word **conference-style paper** on a research topic you choose. You are also required to make ongoing contributions to a **reading journal blog** that I have created specifically for the course: <http://racerhetoricperformance.wordpress.com>. (Each of you will want to get a Wordpress account ASAP and email me your user info so that I can add you to the list of contributors to our course site.)

For the **book review**, I want you to select a recent book (i.e. 2019 and later) that relates to our course materials in some way and prepare a 1000-word review for a specialized audience. How you interpret that relationship and the intended audience is up to you. Along with your review, I expect you to suggest **three** possible publication venues to which you might submit your finished piece of writing. **You must consult with me about the book you intend to write about before you submit this assignment.**

For the **blog**, you required to contribute **three** posts over the course of the semester, in response to weekly readings. You must sign up for dates for these posts by **1 February** via the Google Sheets spreadsheet here: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1EaDbxDDtDw1H1LXTMjr76d12S6fD6p_G02klz_hbAX_o/edit?usp=sharing.

In addition, on weeks that you are not posting, you are required to post a substantive comment in response to at least **one** of your colleagues' posts. Overall, for this ongoing online forum, I expect you to record your own observations, interpretive points, questions, connections between materials, and follow-up points to class discussions. The blog is intended to keep you writing throughout the course, but without the burden of having always to produce polished prose. Use it to work through your ideas about the various readings in the course and to provide you with material to bring to class discussions. As well, on weeks that you are scheduled to post I expect you to publish your work online at **the very latest by 5pm on Monday**, to enable each of you to view and consider what other people have written before our class meeting. Also, I encourage you to use blog contributions to stimulate class discussion (e.g. "I wanted to follow up on a point that Student X made on the class blog last week about..." etc.).

As a collective, we will engage in an **outreach assignment**. This assignment is in keeping with the spirit of the political energy at the heart of our reading list and materializes our academic discussions and the intellectual mission of our department's Literature, Social Justice, and the Environment initiative. For this assignment, you will work in **groups of three** to conceptualize how we might bring our critical consideration of race, place, and culture to a population beyond our seminar table. On **16 March**, each group will present a proposal for an **Outreach Event or Activity** to the rest of the class. We will then decide, as a full class, which to pursue and come together to realize that proposal by semester's end. I do not intend for this assignment to be limiting and, in fact, hope to integrate multiple ideas. For example, if one group proposes making posters or broadsides in the department's Letterpress Studio and the winning group proposes a film showing and panel discussion, we might still integrate these various plans into our final outreach endeavor. I encourage you to think creatively about what resources are available to us here on campus and in the area (like the technological resources for podcasting and streaming video in the department's media lab, the print capabilities of the Letterpress Studio, Student Organizations committed to Activism and Awareness, East Lubbock Art House, the Caviel Museum of African American History, the Louise Hopkins Underwood Center for the Arts, etc) as you work on your proposals. We will workshop the logistics for our final plan on **27 April**.

The **abstract** will be a 500-word summary of the critical intervention you'll be making in your conference paper, with a concise statement of your thesis. (I can provide you with sample abstracts as a template if you'd like.) This document should identify the issue, academic problem, or critical lacuna your paper addresses, and the texts with which you will be dealing, and then articulate clearly how your argument redresses said problem and/or engages this context. **I also expect you to identify a real conference to which you might propose this paper for presentation.**

The **conference paper** allows you to engage in recent critical debates on a topic of your design, adapting the ideas and readings from our course to a project that best aligns with your own research. Because I hope to promote critical writing for possible conference presentation and publication, I encourage you to begin thinking about this assignment from early on in the course. The approach that you take is entirely up to you, as long as the paper investigates in detail some critical topic from our discussions. Once you have decided on a topic (or at least have some ideas) I would encourage you to meet with me to discuss it in order to sharpen focus, offer potential critical resources that might be of help, or work through any blocks or challenges you might have.

Informed participation assumes that you will not only read all assigned texts in time for their discussion in class, but also consider that material carefully and be prepared to contribute to our collective contemplation of them.

Course Policies:

Grades and Written Assignments:

1. Grades will be assigned as percentage scores (0-100) throughout the term. Ultimately, your final grade will be converted to the university's letter grade system using this scale:

A+= 97-100	A=94-96	A-=90-93
B+=87-89	B=84-86	B-=80-83
C+=77-79	C=74-76	C-=70-73
D+=67-69	D=63-66	F=62 or below

Please note that I reserve A-range marks for work of superior quality. Marks in the A-range are by no means the default grade for completing all the assignments in this course.

- Late papers will be penalized with a **10%** deduction for each day they are handed in after the due date, including weekend days. Even after deductions have guaranteed that a paper will receive a failing grade, you **must** still submit that paper to pass the course.
- If extenuating circumstances will prevent you from handing a paper in on time, talk to me **before** the paper is due. I am not likely to make allowances after the deadline has come and gone.
- All papers are to be typed (in a font no bigger than 12-point), double-spaced, and printed on one side of the paper. Please adhere to MLA guidelines for formatting and bibliographical citations.
- I do **not** accept email submissions of written assignments.

Plagiarism and Cheating:

I expect you to adhere to the highest standard of honesty and academic integrity. All work that you complete in this course must be your own. All written work must be organized around your own ideas and arguments. (In the interest of aiding the resolution of any potential disputes about plagiarism, I encourage you to retain all drafts of your work until the completion of the course.) Any material that is not your own—including verbatim quotations from outside work or paraphrases of other writers’ ideas or arguments—must be referenced explicitly. Plagiarizing materials will warrant a failure on, at least, the plagiarized assignment, and, likely, the course overall.

Absences:

I will allow each student **one** absence without penalty (though since the class only meets once per week I encourage you not to think of this as a “free” class to miss but one to keep in reserve only if an emergency arises). Each class that you miss after one absence will warrant a reduction of your **overall** course grade by 20%. If you are seriously ill or have another legitimate reason for missing class, you should provide a written explanation for your absence. Absences due to illness can be excused only with a written explanation from a physician. For an explanation of university-approved absences, consult your student handbook.

Withdrawal Policy:

Any student withdrawing after the last date to receive a W who has not been attending consistently will earn an F.

Classroom Civility and Access:

I expect each of you to assist in creating and maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. This class will be discussion-heavy, so always remember to address each other (and me) respectfully.

Any student who because of a disability may require special arrangements in order to meet course requirements should contact me as soon as possible to make necessary accommodations.

Tentative Schedule of Readings and Lectures:

WEEK ONE:

26 *January*: Introduction to the course

WEEK TWO:

2 *February*: David Hume, "Of National Characters" (1753); Thomas Jefferson, "from *Notes on the State of Virginia*" (1785); Sojourner Truth, "Aren't I a Woman?" (1851, 1878) [available at <https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/texts/aint-i-a-woman>]; Louis Agassiz, "Sketch of the Natural Provinces of the Animal World and their Relationship to the Different Types of Man" [from Nott and Gliddon's *Types of Mankind*] (1854); *Indian Appropriation Act* (1871); W.E.B. Du Bois, "Of Our Spiritual Strivings" [from *The Souls of Black Folk*] (1903)

WEEK THREE:

9 *February*: Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Racisms" from (David Theo Goldberg's *Anatomy of Racism*, 1990); Michael Omi and Howard Winant, [Chapters 1-3, "Paradigms of Race: Ethnicity, Class, Nation"] "from *Racial Formation in the United States*" (3rd edition, 2014); Kimberle Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color" (1991); Derrick Bell, "Racism is Here to Stay: Now What?" (1991)

WEEK FOUR:

16 *February*: The Combahee River Collective, "The Combahee River Collective Statement" (1977); Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book" (1987); Claire Jean Kim, "The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans" (1999); Beth Lew-Williams, "The Chinese Question" (*The Chinese Must Go: Violence, Exclusion and the Making of the Alien in America*, 2018); Lee Bebout, "Introduction: Chicana/o Studies and the Whiteness Problem: or, Toward a Mapping of Whiteness on the Border" (from *Whiteness on the Border: Mapping the U.S. Racial Imagination in Brown and White*, 2016)

WEEK FIVE:

23 *February*: bell hooks, "Representing Whiteness in the Black Imagination" (1992); Cheryl I. Harris, "Whiteness as Property" (1993); Richard Dyer, "The Matter of Whiteness" (from *White*, 1997); Sara Ahmed, "A Phenomenology of Whiteness" (2007); Nicholas D. Hartlep and Cleveland Hayes, "Interrupting the Racial Triangulation of Asians: Unhooking from Whiteness as a Form of Coalitional Politics" (2013); George Lipsitz, "The Sounds of Silence: How Race Neutrality Preserves White Supremacy" (2019)

WEEK SIX:

2 March: Lisa A. Flores, “Between Abundance and Marginalization: The Imperative of Racial Rhetorical Criticism” (2016); Lisa M Corrigan, “On Rhetorical Criticism, Performativity, and White Fragility” (2016); Kristina L. Báez & Ersula Ore, “The Moral Imperative of Race for Rhetorical Studies: On Civility and Walking-in-White Academe” (2018); Karriann Soto Vega & Karma R. Chávez, “Latinx Rhetoric and Intersectionality in Racial Rhetorical Criticism” (2018); Martin Law & Lisa M. Corrigan, “On White-Speak and Gatekeeping: Or, What Good Are the Greeks?” (2018); Michael Lechuga, “An Anticolonial Future: Reassembling the Way We Do Rhetoric” (2020);

Also, Recommended Background Reading: James A. Herrick, “A Overview of Rhetoric” (from *The History and Theory of Rhetoric*)

WEEK SEVEN:

9 March: Barack Obama, “A More Perfect Union” (2008, available here: <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=88478467>); Barack Obama, “Press Conference on Jeremiah Wright (2008, available here: <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=90040477>); Robert E. Terrill, “Unity and Duality in Barack Obama’s ‘A More Perfect Union’” (2009); Joshua Gunn & Mark Lawrence McPhail, “Coming Home to Roost: Jeremiah Write, Barack Obama, and the (Re)Signing of (Post)Racial Rhetoric” (2015); Flores & Sims, “The Zero-Sum Game of Race and the Familiar Strangeness of President Obama” (2016); Kristi McDuffie, “Color-Blind Rhetoric in Obama’s 2008 ‘Race Speech’: The Appeal to Whiteness and the Disciplining of Racial Rhetorical Studies” (2017); Ersula Ore, “Whiteness as Rhetorical Space: Obama and the Rhetorical Constraints of Phenotypical Blackness” (2017)

WEEK EIGHT:

16 March: **Outreach project proposals and workshop;** Catherine Prendergast, “The Economy of Literacy: How the Supreme Court Stalled the Civil Rights Movement” (2002); Dwight Conquergood, “Street Literacy” (2004); Karma R. Chávez, “Border (In)Securities: Normative and Differential Belongings in LGBTQ and Immigrant Rights Discourse” (2010); Carmen Kynard, “Teaching While Black: Witnessing and Countering Disciplinary Whiteness, Racial Violence, and University Race-Management” (2015); Gabriela Raquel Rios, “Cultivating Land-Based Literacies and Rhetorics” (2015); Elaine Richardson & Alice Ragland, “#StayWoke: The Language and Literacies of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement” (2018)

WEEK NINE:

23 March: Adam Banks, “Oakland, The Word, and The Divide: How We All Missed the Moment” (from *Race, Rhetoric, and Technology: Searching for Higher Ground*, 2006); Angela Haas, “Wampump as Hypertext” (2007); Tara McPherson, “Why Are the Digital Humanities So White? or Thinking the Histories of Race and Computation” (<https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/projects/debates-in-the-digital-humanities>, 2012); Jennifer Lynn Stoeber, “Introduction: The Sonic Color Line and the Listening Ear” (from *The Sonic Color Line: Race & the Cultural Politics of Listening*, 2016); Neda Atanasoski & Kalindi Vora, “The Surrogate Human Affect: The Racial Programming of Robot Emotion,” (from *Surrogate Humanity: Race, Robots, and the Politics of Technological Futures*, 2019)

WEEK TEN:

30 March: **Paper abstracts due**; Sara Ahmed and Jackie Stacey, "Introduction: Dermographies" (from *Thinking Through the Skin*, 2001); Karma R. Chávez, "The Body: An Abstract and Actual Rhetorical Concept" (2018); Armond R. Towns, "Black 'Matter' Lives" (2019); Hailey Nicole Otis, "Intersectional Rhetoric: Where Intersectionality as Analytic Sensibility and Embodied Rhetorical Praxis Converge" (2019); Jennifer Lin LeMesurier, "Winking at Excess: Racist Kinesiologicals in Childish Gambino's 'This is America'" (2020)

WEEK ELEVEN:

6 April: Augusto Boal, "Aristotle's Coercive System of Tragedy" (from *Theater of the Oppressed*, 1974); Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblet, "Performance Studies" (2004); Guillermo Gómez-Peña, "In Defense of Performance" (2005); E. Patrick Johnson, "Black Performance Studies: Genealogies, Politics, Futures" (2006); Diana Taylor, "Framing [Performance]," "Performance Histories" (from *Performance*, 2016); Stephanie Nohelani Teves, "The Theorist and the Theorized: Indigenous Critiques of Performance Studies" (2018)

WEEK TWELVE:

13 April: **Book Review Due**; William D. Piersen, "A Resistance Too Civilized to Notice" (from *Black Legacy: American's Hidden Heritage*, 1993); Saidiya Hartman, "Innocent Amusements: The Stage of Sufferance," (from *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*, 1997); Daphne A. Brooks, "The Escape Artist: Henry Box Brown, Black Abolitionist Performance, and Moving Panoramas of Slavery" (from *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850-1910*, 2006); Ju Yon Kim, "Introduction: Ambiguous Habits and the Paradox of Asian American Racial Formation" (from *The Racial Mundane: Asian American Performance and the Embodied Everyday*, 2015)

WEEK THIRTEEN:

20 April: José Estaban Muñoz, "Performing Disidentity: Disidentification as a Practice of Freedom" (from *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*, 1999); Nicole R. Fleetwood, "Excess Flesh: Black Women Performing Hypervisibility" (from *Troubling Vision: Performance, Visuality, and Blackness*, 2011); Tanisha C. Ford, "SNCC's Soul Sisters: Respectability and the Style Politics of the Civil Rights Movement" (from *Liberated Threads: Black Women, Style, and the Global Politics of Soul*, 2015); Tavia Nyong'o, "Critical Shade: The Angular Logics of Black Appearance" (from *Afro-Fabulations: The Queer Drama of Black Life*, 2018);

WEEK FOURTEEN:

27 April: **Outreach Project Workshop Day**

WEEK FIFTEEN:

4 May: Tina Takemoto, "Open Wounds" (2001), "Notes on Internment Camp" (2013); Laura G. Gutiérrez, "El derecho de re-hacer": Signifyin(g) Blackness in Contemporary Mexican Political Cabaret" (2012); María Regina Firmino Castillo, "Dancing the Pluriverse: Indigenous Performance as Ontological Praxis (2016); Kristi Soares, "Dominican Futurism: The Speculative Use of Negative Aesthetics in the Work of Rita Indiana" (2020);