

COMS742: Feminist Rhetorical Theory

Raymie McKerrow

➤➤ Course Goals

This course will begin with an initial brief exploration of what it means to “write women into the history of rhetoric.” What is at issue in this discussion is whether, and to what extent, creating a “history of women” merely perpetuates the status quo or provides the means for changing women's condition. Should we “write women into history” or simply “write the history of women?” What is the difference between these expressions? This examination will provide a backdrop for a more focused examination of various approaches to feminist rhetoric. While this is not a “feminist theory” course, it also is not a traditional “rhetorical history” course. Rather, it seeks to ground an examination of contemporary feminist rhetorical theories in an appreciation of the changing condition of women's rhetorical history.

The seminar will be conducted as an exercise in mutual learning. I am not the “repository of ready-made knowledge or history.” I hope to raise questions, and challenge my own understanding of issues in a climate that fosters critical inquiry. We will attempt to arrive at some conclusions about the nature of feminist rhetorical theory, and what it offers as a counterpoint to traditional “accepted theory.” Thus, I will be asking each of us to assume responsibility for the conduct of the course and for the contributions to learning that can occur. The obligation this places on each of us is to arrive at each class having thought about (means more than “reading”) the materials assigned.

The readings that we will undertake provide a starting point for discussion. I will be asking each of you to contribute your own readings, from your own knowledge and research, to augment what is presented in this syllabus. To facilitate this, we will be focusing specific attention on “new theorists/ideas” sessions as part of specific evenings – these will be an opportunity (assigned in advance) to introduce the group to alternative readings—from theorists and/or texts/essays that are not part of the list. These may further specific readings—as adjuncts or additions to specific theoretical positions, or even move us in completely new directions.

The penultimate goal for the course is to produce, through single and collaborative efforts, new insights, new interpretations, new understandings relative to the role women's rhetoric plays or can play in contemporary society.

➤➤ Written Assignments

1. Letters:
3 short “letters” will be written at specific points during the term. These letters – designed to be understood by a close friend, partner, relative – will have as their purpose the explanation of specific issues. The goal is to

explain what you are reading, and your reaction to ideas, in a manner that a person unfamiliar with the issues would find provocative and meaningful in their own lives. You can be as creative as you'd like in representing ideas in ways a friend might understand and find interesting to read. These should run 750-1000 words or so—as a rough estimate.

2. Book Review:

As an alternative to the “Letters” – you may choose to write a book review suitable for submission to a journal. The review must be of a text that has not yet been reviewed by a journal (to the best of your knowledge), and must be written with a specific journal in mind. The length should be 2000-3000 words (roughly equivalent to the “Letters” assignment above). You will need to decide on this choice by the time the first “Letters” assignment is due.

3. Research Paper:

What I envision, at the very least, is a paper suitable for convention submission. The paper may focus on a specific theme or issue, a theorist or genre. The goal will be to emulate the various essays examined and thereby to contribute to the on-going task of advancing theoretical and/or critical studies of women's rhetoric. The paper may extol or critique feminist assumptions or examine shortcomings in particular theoretical positions assumed by one or more feminist theorists/theories. The paper may also utilize a specific theory or theorist as the framework of a critical assessment of a rhetoric (conceived in broad terms as a text that influences social reality in some identifiable manner). The paper should run 15-18 pages of text at a minimum.

4. Creative Project:

I am open to your suggesting an alternative to the research paper (e.g., a collaborative project); it must translate into approx. the same degree of difficulty and work as that associated with a research paper. The decision to move in this direction should be made (as with the research paper, by the 4th class session. A written proposal should accompany this request (long enough to clearly set forth the nature of the proposal and why it is not possible to achieve in a “traditional” format.

➤➤ Oral Assignments

1. Facilitation:

I am asking that specific individuals come prepared to ask questions related to the reading for that evening. This does not lessen the responsibility of others to join in the conversation, but does provide a “starting point” for 2-3 issues that might be raised regarding the reading.

2. Reports:

When assigned, I will be asking for a 1-2 page handout that outlines the issues or themes represented in the work in question. These may be based on materials you bring into the discussion, or on materials assigned to augment or explore topics. The assumption is that we can't all read everything, but we can gain a better understanding of the available literature and issues through reports.

➤➤ Grades

1. Participation: 20% (based on overall rather than graded each time)
2. Reflection Papers: 4 0%
3. Research Paper: 40%

➤➤ Texts

Foss, Foss and Griffin, *Feminist Rhetorical Theories*, Sage, 1999.
(available at Little Professor)

➤➤ Tentative Class Schedule

Session Date Topic/Reading (see list-copied and available at Alden)

- 4/1 Orientation Session—Getting Organized
note: I may not be here—a colleague will meet and distribute materials.
- 4/8 Historical Context (FFG1, 2; Readings - 1,2, 3, 4)
- 4/15 FFG 3-Kramerae (24)
- 4/22 FFG 4 – Hooks (26, 27, 30, 32)
note: also ECA week—I may have to leave Tues for conference; if so, we will merge this session w/ 4/29 session
- 4/29 Alternative Theories/theorists/reports (8, 62)
- 5/6 FFG 5, 6 - Anzald ó a (33, 34); Alternatives (60, 63, 64)
- 5/13 Daly/Alternative Theories/theorists/reports (38, 41, 43)
- 5/20 FFG 7, 8 Starhawk/Allen (44-45)
- 5/27 FFG 9 - Minh-ha – Alternative Theories/theorists (47)
- 6/3 FFG 10, 11 - Gearhart/Johnson (52, 54, 59)
- 6/9 As a possible make-up class day—we might decide to meet a final time during exam week???

➤➤ Readings: Historical Issues (*-copied-check at Alden Reference)

- * McKerrow, R. E. "Corporeality and Cultural Rhetoric: A Site for Rhetoric's Future." *Southern Communication Journal*, 63, 1998, 315-328.
- * Donawerth, J. (Ed.). "Introduction." In *Rhetorical Theory by Women Before 1900*. (pp. xiii-xlii). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002.
- * Ballif, M. "ReDressing Histories: or, On Re/Covering Figures who have been laid bare by Our Gaze." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 22, 1992, 91-98.
- * Biesecker, B. "Coming to Terms with Recent Attempts to Write Women into the History of Rhetoric." *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 25, 1992, 140-61;
- * Rpt. In T. Poulakos, *Rethinking the History of Rhetoric*. (pp. 153-172). Boulder, CO : Westview Press, 1993.
- * Campbell, K. K. "Biesecker Cannot Speak for Her Either." *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 26, 1993, 153-159.
- * Biesecker, B. "Negotiating with our Tradition: Reflecting Again (without apologies) on the Feminization of Rhetoric." *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 26, 1993, 236-241.
- * Ede , L., Glenn, C. & Lundsford, A. "Border Crossings: Intersections of

- Rhetoric and Feminism," *Rhetorica* , 13, 1995, 401-443.
- * Dow, B. J. "Feminism, Difference(s), and Rhetorical Studies," *Communication Studies*, 46, 1995, 106-117.
 - * Blair, C. "Contested Histories of Rhetoric: The Politics of Preservation," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 78, 1992, 403-428.
 - * Lundsford, A. A. (Ed.). *Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition*. Pittsburgh, PA: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1995.
 - * Wertheimer, M. M. (Ed.). *Listening to their Voices: The Rhetorical Activities of Historical Women*. Columbia, SC: Univ. of So. Carolina Press, 1997.
 - * Sutherland, C. M. & Sutcliffe, R. (Eds.). *The Changing Tradition: Womein in the History of Rhetoric*. Calgary, Alberta: Univ. of Calgary Press, 1999.
 - * Glenn, C. *Rhetoric Retold: Regendering the Tradition from Antiquity Through the Renaissance*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1997.
 - * Levin, C. & Sullivan, P. A. (Eds.). *Political Rhetoric, Power, and Renaissance Women*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1995.
 - * Hobbs, C. (Ed.). *Nineteenth Century Women Learn to Write*. Charlottesville, VA: Univ. of Virginia Press, 1995.
 - * Campbell, J. (Ed.). *Toward a Feminist Rhetoric: The Writing of Gertrude Buck*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996.
 - * Croll, E. *Changing Identities of Chinese Women: Rhetoric, Experience and Self-Perception in the Twentieth-Century China*. Zed Books, 1995.
 - * Kochin, M. S. *Gender and Rhetoric in Plato's Political Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2002.
 - * Olson, G. A. & Worsham, L. (Eds.). *Race, Rhetoric, and the Postcolonial*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1998.
 - * Ratcliffe, K. *Anglo-American Feminist Challenges to the Rhetorical Traditions*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1996.
 - * Walker, R. J. *The Rhetoric of Struggle: Public Address by African American Women*. NY: Garland, 1992. *Rhetorical Studies*.
 - * Houston, M. & Krameræe, C. "Speaking from Silence: Methods of Silencing and Resistance." *Discourse & Society*, 2, 1991, 387-399.
 - * Krameræe, C. "Punctuating the Dictionary." *Int'l J. Soc. Lang.*, 94, 1992, 135-154.
 - * Krameræe, C. "Chronic Power Problems," In Wood, J. & Gregg, R. *Toward the 21st Century*. (pp. 209-217). Cresskill, NJ : Hampton Press.
 - * Krameræe, C. "Shaking the Conventions of Higher Education or Appropriated and Appropriated Technology." Paper presented at Women, Information and Technology in Industry and Technology Confernece, Queensland Univ. of Technology, 1997.
 - * Hooks, B. "The Significance of the Feminist Movement." In Hooks, B., *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. (pp. 33-41). Boston: South End, 1984.
 - * Hooks, B. "Changing Perspectives on Power," *Ibid.* (pp. 83-93).
 - * Hooks, B. "When I was a Young Soldier for the Revolution": Coming to Voice." In Hooks, B., *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*. (pp. 11- 18). Boston: South End, 1989.
 - * Hooks, B. "Liberation Scenes." In Hooks, B., *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*. (pp. 1 - 13). Boston South End, 1990.
 - * Hooks, B. "Neo-Colonial Fantasies of Conquest: Hoop Dreams." In Hooks, B., *Reel to Reel: Race, Sex, and Class at the Movies*. (pp. 77-82).

- NY: Routledge, 1996.
- * Hooks, B. "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators." *Ibid.*, (pp. 197-213).
 - * Griffin, C. L. "Angela Yvonne Davis." In Leeman, R. W. (Ed.). *African-American Orators*. (pp. 60-70). Westport, CT : Greenwood Press, 1996.
 - * Anzaldó a, G. "Speaking in Tongues: A Letter to 3 rd World Women Writers." In Moraga, C. & Anzaldó a, G. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. (pp. 165-174). NY: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1981, 1983.
 - * Palczewski, C. H. "Bodies, Borders, and Letters: Gloria Anzaldúa's 'Speaking in Tongues: A Letter to 3 rd World Writers.'" *Southern Communication Journal*, ?? , 1-16.
 - * Anzaldó a, G. "The Homeland; Moviemientos..." In Anzaldó a, G., *Borderlands: La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. (pp. 1-23). San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute, 1987.
 - * Anzaldó a, G. "En rapport, In Opposition; "Towards a New Consciousness." In Anzaldó a, G., (Ed.). *Making Face, Making Soul*. (pp. 142-148; 377-389). San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute, 1990.
 - * Anzaldó a, G. "El Paisano Is a Bird of Good Omen." In G ù mez, A, Moraga, C., & Romo-Carmona, M. (Eds.). *Cuentos: Stories by Latinas*. (pp. 153-175). NY: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1983.
 - * Griffin, C. L. "Women as Communicators: Mary Daly's Hagiography as Rhetoric," *Communication Monographs*, 60, 1993, 153-177.
 - * Daly, M. "Sparking: The Fire of Female Friendship." In Daly, M. *Gyn/Ecolgoy: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*. (pp. 354-384). Boston: Beacon, 1978.
 - * Daly, M. "Breaking Out: Volcanic Virtues." In Daly, M. *Pure Lust: Elemental Feminist Philosophy*. (pp. 260-288; 289-). Boston: Beacon, 1984.
 - * Daly, M. "Spelling: The Casting of Spells." In Daly, M. *Websters' First New Intergalactic Wickedary of the English Language*. (pp. 13-22). Boston: Beacon, 1987.
 - * Daly, M. "Re-awakening the X-Factor/Faculty and Creating the Archaic Future." In Daly, M. *Quintessence: Realizing the Archaic Future*. (pp. 110-147). Boston: Beacon, 1998.
 - * Lorde, A. "An Open Letter to Mary Daly." In Moraga, C. & Anzaldó a, G. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. (pp. 94-97). NY: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1981, 1983.
 - * Starhawk. "The Coven." In Starhawk. *The Spiral Dance*. (pp. 48-68). San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1979.
 - * Foss, S. K. & Griffin, C. L. "A Feminist Perspective on Rhetorical Theory: Toward a Clarification of Boundaries." *Western Journal of Communication*, 56 1992, 330-349. (on Starhawk)
 - * Minh-ha, T. T. "The Totalizing Quest of Meaning." In Renov, M. (Ed.). *Theorizing Documentary*. (pp. 90-107). NY: Routledge, 1993.
 - * Minh-ha, T. T. "Difference: 'A Special Third World Women Issue'" *Feminist Review*, 25, 1987, 5-22.
 - * Minh-ha, T. T. "Other than Myself/my other Self." In Robertson, G., Mash, M, Tickner, L, Bird, J., Curtis, B., & Putnam, T. (Eds.), *Travellers' Tales*. (pp. 9-26). NY: Routledge, 1994.
 - * Minh-ha, T. T. "Surname Viet Given Name Nam." In Minh-ha, T. T., *Framer*

- Framed. (pp. 49-91). NY: Routledge, 1992.
- * Trinh, T. Minh-Ha "Not You/Like You: Post-Colonial Women and the Interlocking Questions of Identity and Difference." In: *Dangerous liaisons: gender, nation, and postcolonial perspectives* / Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti, and Ella Shohat, editors. pp: 415-419. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, c1997. *Cultural politics* (Minneapolis, Minn.) ; v. 11.
 - * Gearhart, S. "WomanPower: Energy Re-Sourcement." In Spretnak, C. (Ed.). *The Politics of Women's Spirituality: Essays on the Rise of Spiritual Power Within the Women's Movement.* (pp. 104-206). Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982.
 - * Gearhart, S. M. "The Womanization of Rhetoric." *Women's Studies Int. Quarterly*, 2, 1979, 195-201.
 - * Gearhart, S. M. "Whose Woods These Are." In Foss, S. K. & Foss, K. A. *Inviting Transformations: Presentational Speaking for a Changing World.* (pp. 127-131). Prospect Heights, IL : Waveland Press, 1994.
 - * Gearhart, S. M. "Notes from a Recovering Activist." *Sojourner: The Women's Forum*, 21, 1995, 8-11.
 - * Gearhart, S. M. "The Gatherstretch." In Gearhart, S. M. *The Wanderground: Stories of the Hill Women.* (pp. 118-132). Boston: Alyson, 1984; orig. pub. 1979).
 - * Gearhart, S. M. "The Chipko." Ms. (Sept-Oct., 1991, 64-69).
 - * Johnson, S. "Who's Afraid of the Supreme Court." In Johnson, S. *Wildfire: Igniting the She/Volution.* (pp. 7-57). Albuquerque, NM: Wildfire, 1989.
 - * Johnson, S. "Ship Ahoy; Meet my Needs, Make me Happy; The Bears and Anarchy." In Johnson, S. *The Ship that Sailed into the Living Room.* (pp. 1-3; 153-166; 263-275) Estancia, NM: Wildfire, 1991.
 - * Miller, D. H. "The Future of Feminist Rhetorical Criticism." In Wertheimer, M. M. (Ed.). *Listening to their Voices: The Rhetorical Activities of Historical Women.* (pp. 359-380). Columbia, SC: Univ. of So. Carolina Press, 1997.
 - * Hegde, R. "Narratives of Silence: Rethinking Bender, Agency and Power from the Communication Experiences of Battered Women of South India." *Communication Studies*, 47, 1996, 303-317.
 - * Hegde, R. "Swinging the Trapeze: The Negotiation of Identity Among Asian Indian Immigrant Women in the United States." In Tanno, D. B. & Gonzalez, A. (Eds.). *Communication and Identity Across Cultures.* (pp. 34-55). Thousand Oaks, CA : Sage, 1998.
 - * Foss, S. K. & Giffin, C. L. "Beyond Persuasion: A Proposal for Invitational Rhetoric." *Communication Monographs*, 62, 1995, 2-18.
 - * Flores, L. A. "Creating Discursive Space through a Rhetoric of Difference: Chicana Feminists Craft a Homeland." *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 82, 1996, 142-156.
 - * Martinez, J. M. "Speaking as a Chicana." In Galindo, d. L. & Gonzales, M. D. (Eds.). *Speaking Chicana: Voice, Power, and Identity.* (pp. 59-84). Tuscon, U. of Arizona Press, 1999.