The Rhetoric of Literature: Women's Travel Writing

Dr. Marguerite Helmers, instructor

Official Course Description

A rhetorical approach analyzes literature as a persuasive device. In this course, students will read a variety of literary works and discuss the personal and social viewpoints and biases that these
works reveal; explore theoretical and psychological studies of the nature of narrative as a discursive act; and discuss the rhetorical power of literature as compared with other forms of discourse that are more commonly thought of as "rhetorical."

**Short Description**

Since the explosion of interest in travel narratives in the 18th century, women travelers have used travel and the occasion it affords to write as a means of exploring the possibilities of gender and identity. This course provides a foundation for students' inquiry into women's nonfiction travel literature and memoir, addressing recurrent themes in travel writing, such as self-fashioning, the body, Orientalism, imaginative geography, Othering, the rhetoric of anticonquest, and the tourist gaze. The particularly rhetorical nature of women's travel writing--how writing the journey provides arguments for future women travelers to explore identity--will be a focal point.

**Required Books & Supplies**

Dervla Murphy, *Full Tilt: Ireland to India with a Bicycle*

Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place*

Faith Adiele, *Meeting Faith*

Robyn Davidson, *Tracks*

*Readings in Feminist Rhetorical Theory*, Sonja K. Foss, editor

**Graded Assignments**

All essay assignments and in-class projects are fully described in separate handouts, which are discussed in class and uploaded to D2L. The information below is only an outline. You will turn in most of your assignments to the D2L Dropbox; I will also post feedback on the essay to the D2L dropbox, so you are responsible for checking the feedback.

Not listed are the large number of in-class assignments, worksheets, and projects that will be completed during our class meetings. These are designed to help you engage with the readings and to develop your writing and analysis skills. They count under “participation.”

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**Six Summary Responses (Brummet, Kramarae, Gearhardt, Anzaldua, Trinh, Mohanty)**

15%

Length: 400-500 words, single-spaced

Due on date that readings are due.

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**Midterm Exam**
25%
April 9

Starhawk Reading: Short Reconsideration of Feminist Rhetoric
Due May 5

Research Essay (35% total)
Proposal 5%, Annotated Bibliography 10%, Essay 20%
Proposal due April 23, Annotated Bibliography due April 30, Final essay due May 13

You are also graded on Participation (10%), which includes:

Things that make you look good:

★ Reading all assignments
★ Bringing your books to class
★ Participation in class discussions and group assignments
★ Taking notes
★ Completing daily assignments, worksheets, questionnaires, etc.
★ Intellectual generosity (listening to others)
★ Positive, hard-working attitude
★ Active participation and contribution to group assignments
★ Bringing full drafts to peer editing sessions.

Things you should avoid:

★ Arriving to class late
★ Ringing cell phones
★ Answering ringing cell phones
★ Wearing iPod or other headphones at the start of class
★ Reading the newspaper during group projects, discussions, and labs
★ Doing work for another course during group projects, discussions, and labs
★ Reading and writing email during lab times
★ Checking NFL, fantasy sports, poker websites or other during lab times
★ Coming to class without a copy of the appropriate text

D2L

Vital information goes onto D2L almost daily: course materials, background research, updates, changes, contact information, office hours. So check it!
Computer Labs

We will be spending several class sessions in the Radford Hall Instructional Computing Lab. The dates are noted on the syllabus; please transfer them into your agenda.

This lab is located in the basement of Radford Hall (the building where the Health Center is located). The instructional lab is located to the right of the doors, in its own, enclosed area. Please wait in the lab or near it until I arrive.

You will need to know your campus email address (the part before the @uwosh.edu; this is called your username) and your network login password (initially, this will be your student ID number or your social security number).

Electronic Resources

If you transfer work from your home computer to the lab, please note that the work should be saved as an MSWord document (.doc or .docx) or as rich text format (.rtf). Any other document files will not open.

To use Universal Borrowing or Interlibrary Loan, you will need your campus ID number.

Food

I have been a student! I understand that sometimes you are tired and need a coffee and a candy bar. Such light food is fine for class; however, I prefer that you do not bring what I call “disruptive food” to class: pizza (unless I order it), bagels and cream cheese, crackling bags and papers, sub sandwiches.

Attendance

I expect you to attend all class sessions. If you are unable to attend, I ask that you explain to me why you will not be in class. For medical absences, please supply a dated, signed excuse from a doctor. After 3 missed hours of class, your final grade will be lowered. Please remember that, if you have the sniffles or you didn’t do the reading or your hair got stuck in your electric dryer and you miss class three times because of this—and then your car breaks down or you have the stomach flu and you miss class two more times because of it, that you will be registered as having 5 absences.

Late Papers

All assignments are due to the D2L drop box by the date specified. The box will close at the end of the day that the papers are due. ★ Late papers are graded one full grade lower. In exceptional circumstances, such as documented illness, I will accept a late paper.
Late Persons

While there are no bells in college, class begins at the time listed in the timetable. You may be late once due to weather; however, repeatedly walking into class late will affect your final grade: it is not constructive, it is disrespectful, and it interferes with students’ ability to learn in a conducive and positive environment. Announcements, such as changes to the schedule, clarification of essay assignments, and announcements of English Department and campus events, are made in the first-10 minutes of class. Missing these will impair your ability to succeed.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a punishable offence, covered by the university rules. I can tell when your writing is not your own and the university now subscribes to Turnitin, which is an authentication tool for all essays. In addition, all essays must be original, which means that, even if you work with someone in class, you should ensure that you turn in individual writing and research. Even duplicated sentences between essays is considered an infringement of the academic honesty codes. If you have any doubts about how to cite research properly, talk to me before you write.

Writing Center

The Writing Center will help you conceptualize your essays (for this class and others). The Writing Center is not a proofreading or editing service. All Writing Center services are free, but you need to schedule an appointment. The Writing Center is located in the basement of Radford Hall. The phone number is 424-1152; you may also email them at wcenter@uwosh.edu.

Daily Syllabus

February

4-6 Welcome, Introductions
11 Read Brummett, “Rhetoric and the Rhetorical Tradition” (photocopy). Summary/Response #1 due.
13
18 Read Kramarae, “Feminist Theories of Communication.” Summary/Response #2 due.
20 Read Tracks
25 Read Tracks
27 Read Tracks

March

3 Read Full Tilt: Ireland to India with a Bicycle
5 Read Full Tilt: Ireland to India with a Bicycle
10  Read Full Tilt: Ireland to India with a Bicycle
12  Read Full Tilt: Ireland to India with a Bicycle

17  Travel-related film screening (film TBD): The Motorcycle Diaries, Rabbit Proof Fence, The Painted Veil, Beyond Borders

19

24-28  Spring Break

April 2  Read Anzaldua, “Speaking in Tongues,” and “La Conciencia de la Mestiza” Select one for Summary/Response #4.

7  Read Kincaid, A Small Place
9  Midterm Exam

14  Read Trinh T. Minh-ha, “Not You/Like You,” Kincaid A Small Place, Summary/Response #5 due on Trinh.

21  Read Meeting Faith
23  Read Meeting Faith. Proposal for Final Essay due.

28  Read Meeting Faith
30  Read Meeting Faith. Annotated Bibliography for Final Essay due.

May

5  Read Starhawk, “Truth or Dare,” “Ritual as Bonding,” and Spiral Dance”. Starhawk commentary due.

7

12  Researched Essay due
14