

ENGLISH 413: Rhetoric, Race, and Culture in Professional Spaces
DR. JESSICA EDWARDS, PROFESSOR

CATALOG DESCRIPTION: STUDY OF RHETORIC AND RACE APPLIED WITHIN PROFESSIONAL CONTEXTS

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Students will learn about race studies (or the study of systemic issues), rhetorical theory, and culture (visual, oral, and written). In addition to analyzing work that other professionals/organizations have created related to culture and rhetoric, students will also produce their own ideas via the application of critical race theory. By the end of the semester, students will consider the function of diversity in professional spaces and will become more familiar with workplace structures/policies. Students will end the semester by holding a small conference to show their rhetorical analyses of current events to practice rhetorical awareness, critical thinking, and oral presentation skills.

COURSE OVERVIEW: Since the election of President Obama, a new term, post-racial, has been added to the national lexicon. Places like NPR and *The New Yorker* began to buzz about a possible transcendence of race after the 2008 election of America's first Black President. Most recently, the happenings in Ferguson, Missouri shook the nation as images of a 2014 America were reminiscent of recognizable photos from the Modern Civil Rights Era.

This class will begin by examining the historical contexts, institutional biases and social practices that shape how race has traditionally been configured in America and how rhetoric has been used to continue the narrative, particularly with how professions advance the idea. It will also delve into a concept called that critical race theory (CRT) to illuminate systemic structures and suggests ways to subvert those structures. CRT gives us a good understanding of how policies about race are often shaped to perpetuate power structures, which, in turn, impact professional writing spaces. The theory also shows us how culture is often perceived through a racial lens and offers a corrective on systematic bias.

COURSE GOALS: In this course, scholars will learn the following:

- to assess audience, purpose, and context in evaluating, designing, writing, and presenting information for differing rhetorical situations;
- to analyze the connections that exist between race studies, diversity and professional contexts;
- to understand more about how language, social interaction, and ethical considerations shape and impact society; and
- to engage rhetorical strategies and critically consider their implications for professional contexts.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Delgado, Richard. *Critical Race Theory: an Introduction*

*Morrison, Toni. *Sula*

Omi, Michael and Howard Winant. *Racial Formation in the US: From the 1960s to the 1990s*. 2nd Edition. New York: Routledge, 1994. Print.

Skloot, Rebecca. *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*.

SUPPLEMENTAL READINGS

***WILL BE PROVIDED AND INCLUDE, BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO:**

Banks, Adam (2005). "Oakland, The Word, and How we all Missed the Moment." *Race, Rhetoric, and Technology: Searching for Higher Ground*.

Embrick, David (2011). "The Diversity Ideology in the Business World: A New Oppression for a New Age." *Critical Sociology*.

Katz, Steven. "The Ethic of Expediency"

Moore, Kristen (2013). Exposing hidden relations: Storytelling, pedagogy, and the study of policy. *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*, 43(1), 63-78.

ASSIGNMENTS

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION: A huge part of engaging in professional situations is being present. Scholars are required to attend the course and engage with in class writing and speaking opportunities in meaningful ways throughout the semester.

RESPONSE QUESTIONS and COMMENTARY: Scholars are required to compose several questions based on readings this semester. These questions should be critical and the commentary that leads up to/follows the question should be reflective. Scholars might consider themes or issues raised in the text. Scholars may think of questions, problems, or quandaries about underlying cultural assumptions, or contradictions in or difficulties with the readings. Scholars should post their questions via Sakai by 11:59pm the night before the scheduled reading. Posts should be at least 150 words and should be posted in the "Forums" section via Sakai.

CRITICAL SUMMARY and DOCUMENT REDESIGN: Scholars should choose a professional document to redesign using CRT as a lens. The document can be a webpage, a pamphlet, a brochure, a commercial, or even a set of directions. Scholars should summarize the purpose of the document and compose a professional e-mail to explain the changes that they made to redesign the product.

RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF A CURRENT EVENT and PRESENTATION: Each scholar should identify one current event (based on our conversations about systemic issues in society). Then, in a 3-4 page document, scholars should analyze that current event and connect it to CRT. Scholars should also make a comparison/connection to readings/viewings from our class. Scholars will present their findings using a multimodal presentation/visual aid in a 5-8 minute pitch to our class.

REFLECTIVE MEMO: Scholars will write a one page final memo, addressed to Dr. Edwards, about the class and its applicability to their professional fields of study. Scholars should use specific examples in their writing.

ASSESSMENT BREAKDOWN

ALL SOURCES MUST BE CITED USING MLA DOCUMENTATION STYLE. Required paper format varies according to the assignment—pay attention to details.

Grading Scale: A: 93-100, A-: 90-92, B+: 88-89, B: 83-87, B-: 80-82, C+: 78-79, C: 73-77, C-: 70-72, D+: 68-69, D: 63-67, D-: 60-62, F: 59 and below.