

# RHE 306 Rhetoric and Writing: Race and Criminal Justice

University of Texas at Austin

Spring 2016

## Course Instructor and Class Information:

Fatema Amijee

email: famijee@gmail.com

Office Hours and Location: Wednesday 10:30-1:30pm, and by appointment, in WAG 303

Unique number: 43190

Class Time and Place: MWF 9-10am in PAR 308

## Course Description

RHE 306 – Rhetoric & Writing is a course in argumentation that situates rhetoric as an art of civic discourse. It is designed to enhance your ability to analyze the various positions held in any public debate and to advocate your own position effectively. While this is a course in rhetoric – and so primarily concerned with the development of rhetorical skills – there will be substantive discussion of questions drawn from debates over race and criminal justice in America. These debates are of interest for more than their rhetorical dimension. Our discussion will thus regularly touch on moral and political questions about race and criminal justice.

Your work in this course will help you advance the critical writing and reading skills you will need to succeed in courses for your major and university degree. This course may be used to fulfill three hours of the communication component of the university core curriculum and addresses the following four core course objectives established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board: communication skills, critical thinking skills, teamwork, and personal responsibility.

You will learn how to:

1. Identify, evaluate, construct, and organize effective arguments
2. Read critically
3. Advocate a specific position responsibly
4. Conduct library and web-based research and document sources
5. Produce a clean, efficient style and adapt it to various rhetorical situations
6. Edit and proofread your own and others' prose

## Course Reading

There are two recommended texts:

- *Controversies: Race and Criminal Justice*. 40 Acres Press, 2015.
- *The Little Longhorn Handbook*. Norton, 2014.

Other readings will be made available on Canvas.

## Evaluation

Students will write three essays ranging from 4-5 pages each (above designated as 1.1, 2.1, and 3.1), and they will revise each of these three based on the instructor's feedback (above designated as 1.2, 2.2, and 3.2). In addition, students will compose six short writing assignments. In order to receive a passing mark for the course, regardless of the student's performance on other assignments or total average of all the student's grades, all major assignments (Essays 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, and 3.2) must be completed to the instructor's satisfaction.

Here is the grade breakdown:

1. Paper 1.1: 5% [Due Feb. 17th]
2. Paper 1.2: 10% [Due Feb. 27th]
3. Paper 2.1: 10% [Due Apr. 1st]
4. Paper 2.2: 15% [Due Apr. 11th]
5. Paper 3.1: 15% [Due April 25th]
6. Paper 3.2: 15% [Due May 6th]
7. Short Writing Assignments: 20% [Due: Jan. 27th; Feb. 3rd; Feb. 10th; Mar. 4th; Mar. 11th; Apr. 18th]
8. Participation: 10%
  - Part of your grade is based on whether you come to class prepared and participate. You will be required to do the assigned readings for *each Monday* in the term, answer a 'reading question' that I will post on Canvas two days ahead of time, and submit your answer in class (in hard copy).
9. Peer Reviews: Mandatory (must be turned in with subsequent assignment)

Final grades will be determined on the following scale: A=94-100 • 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=64-66 • D-=60-63 • F=0-60. *Please note:* To ensure fairness, all numbers are absolute, and will not be rounded up or down at any stage. For example, a B- will be inclusive of all scores of 80.0000 through 83.9999. The University does not recognize the grade of A+.

## Course Schedule

1. Course Introduction
2. What is Race? I

*Reading:* Sally Haslanger, 'A Social Constructionist Analysis of Race'

3. What is Race? II

*Case Study:* Rachel Dolezal

4. What is Race? III

*Reading:* Linda Martin-Alcoff, 'Latino/as, Asian Americans and Black-White Bias'

5. Racism I

*Reading:* Anthony Appiah, 'Racisms'

6. Racism II  
*Reading:* Michael Philips, 'Racist Acts and Racist Humor'
7. Racism III  
*Case Study:* The Washington Redskins name controversy
8. Racial Profiling I  
*Reading:* Risse and Zeckhauser, 'Racial Profiling'
9. Racial Profiling II  
*Reading:* Sam Harris and Bruce Schneier, 'To Profile or not to Profile?'
10. Racial Profiling III  
*Reading:* Annabelle Lever, 'Why Racial Profiling is Hard to Justify'
11. Mass Incarceration I  
*Reading:* Michelle Alexander, 'The Rebirth of Caste'
12. Mass Incarceration II  
*Reading:* Angela Davis, 'Race and Criminalization', in *The House That Race Built*
13. Mass Incarceration III  
*Reading:* Michelle Alexander, 'The Lockdown' from *The New Jim Crow*
14. Mass Incarceration IV  
*Case Study:* Department of Justice Investigation of the Ferguson Police Department (pp. 1-15 and 62-78)
15. Reparations I  
*Reading:* Ta-Nehisi Coates, 'The Case for Reparations'
16. Reparations II  
*Reading:* Kevin Williamson, 'The Case Against Reparations'; Ta-Nehisi Coates, 'The Case for American History'
17. Affirmative Action I  
*Reading:* James Sterba, 'Defending Affirmative Action, Defending Preferences' from *Affirmative Action and Racial Preference* (selections)
18. Affirmative Action II  
*Reading:* Louis Pojman, 'Why Affirmative Action is Immoral'
19. Affirmative Action III  
*Case Study:* Fisher v. University of Texas
20. Affirmative Action IV

*Reading:* Thomas Hill, ‘The Message of Affirmative Action’

21. Implicit Bias I

*Reading:* Kelly and Roedder, ‘Racial Cognition and the Ethics of Implicit Bias’

22. Implicit Bias II

*Reading:* Jules Holyrod, ‘Responsibility for Implicit Bias’

23. Implicit Bias III

*Reading:* Tamar Gendler, ‘On the Epistemic Costs of Implicit Bias’

24. Stereotype Threat I

*Reading:* Claude M. Steele, ‘Thin Ice: Stereotype Threat and Black College Students’

25. Stereotype Threat II

*Reading:* Bryce Huebner, ‘Troubles with Stereotypes for Spinozan Minds’

## RHE Course Policies Statement (2015-16) and Course Business

1. *Attendance Policy:* Rhetoric & Writing has established this attendance policy for all RHE courses. Any questions or appeals concerning this policy must be made directly to the department Associate Chair. You are expected to attend class, to arrive on time, to have prepared assigned reading and writing, and to participate in all in-class editing, revising, and discussion sessions. Should you miss the equivalent of SEVEN MWF sessions this semester, excused or not, YOU WILL FAIL THE COURSE. If you find that an unavoidable problem prevents you from attending class, you should contact me as soon as possible, preferably ahead of time, to let me know.
  - You will not be penalized for missing class on religious holidays. A student who misses classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holiday should inform me, in writing, well in advance of the absence, so that alternative arrangements can be made to complete work. If you know you will have to miss class(es) for this reason, provide me with the date(s) as early as possible. Please note that the University specifies very few other excused absences (e.g., jury duty).
  - When you must miss a class, you are responsible for getting notes and assignments from a classmate.
2. *Late Work:* It is highly recommended that you attend every class meeting and get your work in on time. The late penalty on the paper is set at 1/3 of a letter grade per day, to a maximum of three days (this includes weekends/holidays), unless accompanied by a documented medical explanation or due to a family emergency. Any work outstanding beyond this point will receive a grade of 0.
3. *Tardiness:* I’d like us all to get as much out of our time together as possible, which means we have to start class on time. Being late causes a disruption and shows a lack of concern for our time together, so please come to class on time. BEING LATE TWICE COUNTS AS ONE ABSENCE.
4. *Scholastic Honesty:* Turning in work that is not your own, or any other form of scholastic dishonesty, will result in a major course penalty, possibly failure of the course. A report of the incident will be submitted to the Office of the Dean of Students and filed in your permanent UT record. Under certain circumstances, the Dean of Students will initiate proceedings to expel you from the University. So, take care to read and understand the Statement on Scholastic Responsibility, which can be found online at <http://www.utexas.edu/cola/depts/rhetoric/firstyearwriting/plagiarismcollusion.php>. If

you have any doubts about your use of sources, ask your instructor for help before handing in the assignment. You are responsible for knowing what plagiarism is, and also for knowing the particular plagiarism penalties. Plagiarism includes (but is not limited to) the use of a thinker's ideas or words without proper citation; the purchase of assignments; the use of internet resources without proper citation; and the submission of work written (in whole or in part) by another. Penalties for plagiarism range from a zero on the assignment to suspension from the university. Furthermore, I'm known to be an excellent detector of plagiarism: if you cheat, I will catch you. So don't do it.

5. *How to Avoid Plagiarising*: Most students plagiarise because they believe themselves to be without options. But no student will ever be without options in this course. If you find yourself in trouble, and tempted to cheat, contact me immediately. If you haven't yet cheated, a solution can always be found.
6. *Special Accommodations*. I am more than happy to assist with special accommodations for students registered with accessibility services. If you are registered with accessibility services, please don't hesitate to have your accessibility services representative get in touch with me. More information on accommodations can be found here: <http://ddce.utexas.edu/disability/>
7. *Your Course Contact*: I am your primary contact for this course. Course-related emails MUST have "RHE 306" somewhere in the subject line, and a proper format for a professional communication. I will not answer emails that ask for information readily available on either Canvas or the course syllabus, so it is always a good idea to begin by checking those two places. I will also not answer emails that ask for information easily obtainable through regular class attendance. Finally, I do not generally respond to email in the evenings or over the weekend, so if you have an assignment coming up that you might want to talk to me about, please plan ahead of time. That said, do not hesitate to email me when appropriate. I will respond to all appropriate emails within 48 hours.
8. *Writing Center*: I highly recommend that you use the Undergraduate Writing Center (FAC 211, 471-6222: <http://www.uwc.utexas.edu/>). The UWC offers free (i.e. already paid by your tuition), individualized, expert help with writing for any UT undergraduate, by appointment or on a drop-in basis. These services are not just for writing that has "problems": Getting feedback from an informed audience is a normal part of a successful writing project. The UWC's trained consultants work with students from every department on both academic and non-academic writing. Using methods that preserve the integrity of your work, they help you develop strategies to improve your writing and become a more independent writer. Whether you are writing a lab report, a resume, a term paper, a statement for an application, or your own poetry, UWC consultants will be happy to work with you.
9. *Sensitive Material*: Both studying and teaching at the University of Texas at Austin is a great privilege. But with privilege comes a responsibility, a responsibility to engage honestly and respectfully with each other and with the material. While no one has the right to not be offended, please be sure to never deliberately offend someone, respond with sarcasm, sneers, etc. The topic of this class is highly sensitive. We will be discussing some very difficult issues that are close to home for many of us. Words like "the n word" may be discussed as well. If you feel that you might have difficulty discussing these topics, please do not hesitate to come and speak to me.
10. *Emergency and Evacuation Procedures*: Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside. Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building. Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class. In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors. Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office. Information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at <http://www.utexas.edu/emergency>.