COMM 415
AFRICAN AMERICAN RHETORIC & IMAGE:
STRATEGIES, STYLES, AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION
SPRING 2016

People hate each other because they fear each other; they fear each other because they don’t know each other; they don’t know each other because they are so often separated from each other...
~Martin Luther King Jr.

Let our scholarship be a communal activity where no one comes first and no one stands alone.
~James G. March

LOCATION
ASC 228
TIME
9:30-10:50 TTh
INSTRUCTORS
Dr. Randall Lake and Marcus Shepard
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ASC 206C
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EMAIL
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OFFICE HOURS
TBA

REQUIRED TEXTS (Preliminary and Subject to Change)
** Additional supplementary readings distributed in class or via Blackboard as appropriate.

GENERAL OBJECTIVE OF THE COURSE
The primary objective of this upper division course is to understand how members of African American communities have used symbols rhetorically to construct and reconstruct images of themselves and their communities.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE
Students successfully completing this course will:
1. study the impact of racialized communication on the social and symbolic construction of the United States.
   a. define and understand communication as a meaning centered process.
   b. define and understand rhetoric as a special set of communication practices that create and define a cultural reality.
   c. define and understand how such communication also serves to frame our individual identities.
2. review significant examples of symbol-using that constructed and maintained images of African Americans.
   a. public contexts (speeches, the arts, media, and public demonstrations)
   b. private contexts (interpersonal and small group in particular)
3. examine African American rhetoric/communication scholarship in terms of:
   a. the theoretical and conceptual tools that have been used,
   b. the limitations of existing data, and
   c. the need for further research.
4. write a rhetorical criticism

Major Units of Study in African American Rhetoric
Unit 1: Rhetorical Construction of Race and Community: Blackness and Whiteness Considered Theoretically
Unit 2: Foundations of African American Rhetoric: An American Historical-Literary Perspective
Unit 3: African American Rhetoric in the 21st Century: Understanding Mediated Representations of African Americans
GRADING AND REQUIREMENTS  
(Preliminary and Subject to Change)

Class Participation, Quizzes................................................................. 170 pts.  
Journals..................................................................................................... 130 pts.  
Group Discussion .............................................................................. 100 pts.  
Exam #1 ..................................................................................................... 150 pts.  
Exam #2 ..................................................................................................... 150 pts.  
Final Examination ............................................................................. 200 pts.  
Final Paper ............................................................................................. 100 pts.  
TOTAL ...................................................................................................... 1000 pts.  

EXPLANATION OF ASSIGNMENTS

Readings
Readings are assigned to enhance our understanding of argumentation theory and practice as well as to stimulate class discussion. All readings are mandatory, unless indicated otherwise. Readings will come from the text(s) and articles that can be accessed on the web via Blackboard. In some cases readings will be distributed via email or in class as handouts.

Midterm / Final Examinations
There will be three (3) examinations during the course of this semester. The exams will consist of multiple choice, true/false, fill in the blank, matching, definition of key terms, and/or short answer questions. The first and second exams WILL NOT be cumulative. The final exam WILL BE cumulative. Exam material will be taken from class activities, readings, and lectures. Translation: Everything on the syllabus (whether covered in class or not) as well as everything covered in class is eligible for testing. This syllabus is your review sheet, which means no additional review sheets will be provided by the professor. Scantrons and blue books will be provided for exams, as appropriate.

Exams #1 and #2 dates are listed on the tentative class schedule. The date of the final exam for our course will be announced in class or on Blackboard. You can also find this information by searching the USC Schedule of final exams website for this semester.

Quizzes
There are no quizzes scheduled, but your instructors retain the prerogative to give unscheduled quizzes if student engagement with the course materials and/or discussion is found to be lagging. Each quiz will count toward your class participation grade. If a quiz is missed it cannot be made up.

Journal
During this class we will be exploring a number of issues related to racial identity, community, interracial communication and the social construction of race. Many of our conversations in class will deal with these issues. Attached to this syllabus are conversation starters. Continue the conversation in a 1 page, double spaced, 1" margins, 12 point font, journal entry. A good journal entry is one that is self-reflective and carefully expressed. Your journal writing is free writing. Journal entries must be posted no later than 11:59 pm on the date assigned in order to receive full credit toward your class grade. Each journal entry will be submitted electronically via Blackboard.

Group Discussion (Select topic area of your choice as indicated)
The Black Rhetoric/Image Group Discussion—Mediated images of race are powerful symbols circulating in our society. Consequently, as students of communication interested in how symbols are created and function, it is important that we have a good base of knowledge. You are required to utilize the assigned readings and you are encouraged to include additional information as needed.

Discussion Format: Your task is to become expert on your chapter and then lead the class in vigorous discussion of the chapter's main ideas. You will work in a group of two people. On the day of your presentation you may elect to divide up the class into small groups and assign each group questions to work on, or you can show us some media samples and then have us analyze the samples using the ideas from the chapter. Or you could.... do ANYTHING you can creatively devise that will get the class thinking and talking about these VERY provocative chapters. You must turn in a one page summary to Blackboard providing the 3 key ideas from the readings and 5 questions for class discussion.

NOTE: You/your group will be required to get Dr. Lake's approval ahead of time on the proposed content and style of project to be presented or discussion to be facilitated.

Final Paper
For the final project in African American Rhetoric you are to research a contemporary issue related to African American rhetoric or communication and write a rhetorical criticism. You may want to look at the oral or written communication of contemporary political or religious leaders. Or you may want to analyze the media constructed image of African American men or women. Or you may examine and evaluate the representational strategy of an African American icon. Your topic choice is limited only by your own creativity.

1. The final project will take the form of a traditional term paper. Anticipated length: 5-7 pages with at least 8 sources included in your bibliography. All
sources must be cited properly – if you don’t know how, please ask!! At least four of your sources for final paper must come from readings assigned over the course of the semester.

2. Shortly before the midterm exam we will ask each student to hand in a project proposal consisting of a topic, thesis statement and short list of resource material to be used to complete the project. Our goals are to help, to make sure that everyone is on track and to make sure that projects are approved before you begin working on them in depth.

You are to follow proper citation guidelines throughout this paper. Each failure to employ proper citation guidelines will cost you a point off your paper grade. Papers will also be graded on quality of writing, quality of analysis, and demonstrated understanding of concepts. Papers will lose one point for each error in spelling or grammar.

Papers with an excessive number of errors in grammar, spelling or proper citation guidelines usage will receive a failing grade. Remember, there are no opportunities to rewrite papers in this course so you must do your best work the first time or pay the consequences.

The final paper is due at the start of our last class session.

DAILY SCHEDULE

Under construction.
African American Heritage Society. www.aahlb.org


