

# COMM 499

## AFRICAN AMERICAN RHETORIC & IMAGE: STRATEGIES, STYLES AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION

### FALL 2012

*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 / TIME

#### INSTRUCTORS

Marcia Alesan Dawkins, Ph.D.

#### OFFICE

#### PHONE

#### EMAIL

#### OFFICE HOURS

T/Th

#### REQUIRED TEXTS

Entman, Robert M. and Andrew Rojecki. The Black Image in the White Mind: Media and Race in America. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2001.

Grant, Joanne. Black Protest: 350 Years of History, Documents and Analyses. New York: Ballantine Books, 1996.

Jackson, Ronald L. II and Elaine B. Richardson. Understanding African American Rhetoric: Classical Origins to Contemporary Innovations. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Strunk, William Jr. and E. B. White. The Elements of Style. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1979.

\*Speech/Reading Packet. *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 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Understanding *Mediated* Representations of African Americans

## GRADING AND REQUIREMENTS

Journal Entries .....	10%
Class Participation.....	10%
Group Discussion .....	20%
Midterm Examination.....	15%
Final Project .....	30%
Final Examination.....	15%

## EXPLANATION OF ASSIGNMENTS

### 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 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 5:00 pm Friday of the week assigned in order to receive full credit toward your class grade. Each journal entry will be submitted electronically via Blackboard or Posterous (TBD).**

### 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. The instructors will let you know whether your group will use a report or discussion format.

Report Format: Your group will create a report that provides a firm understanding of the historical context in which the African American rhetoric was created. The report will consist of an oral presentation and a written summary of the work to be distributed to the class with discussion questions. We expect that your group report will generate creative classroom discussion. Reporting groups will generally consist of 3-4 members.

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 three or four people. You may elect to divide up 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. As with the Group Project, you will be required to produce a written summary of the chapter for the class.

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

### Final Project

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: 5-8 pages with at least 6 sources. At least three (3) of your sources for final paper must come from readings assigned over the course of the semester.
2. For those among you who are truly creative, you may elect to do a final media project. That is, instead of a final research type project you may want to do a film, direct a scene, write a short story, author some poetry. These alternative forms of expression are acceptable as long as you use them to sustain an argument or to make a point and the project represents the quality and quantity of work indicative of your scholarly status.
  - a. We will work out grading requirements when your project is approved.
3. 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 here 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.

### Midterm / Final Examinations

There will be two examinations during the course of this semester. The exams will consist of multiple choice, essay and short answer questions. Exams will not be cumulative.

## OFFICIAL POLICIES

### ATTENDANCE POLICY

If you want a good grade come to class! If you will need to miss class we must be told in advance by way of personal conversation with instructor(s) or email if we are unavailable. Medical emergencies require a doctor's note. Funerals require a memorial program. NO EXCEPTIONS!!

If you are more than 5 minutes late to class you will be marked 1/3 absent. Internet surfing, emailing, instant messaging, taking cell phone calls, text messaging and other activities not conducive to class discussion will result in a full absence mark. You are allowed three absences during the semester. Four or more absences WILL result in a lower grade. Six or more absences could result in failure of the course. Late papers and assignments will be assessed penalty points. (We generally assess 5 points a day...that's a calendar day not a class day!)

Physically being here does not get a participation grade. The class needs everyone to share in the discussion. Feel free to question instructors or each other. The best policy is to always **THINK** before you speak. Before sharing make sure your comment is: Thoughtful, Helpful, Interesting, Necessary, Kind.

### GRADING POLICY

Listed below are the criteria for the various letter grades used in this course:

- A: This is a superior grade and is given to work that has **far exceeded the specific requirements of the assignment**. Additionally, a student receiving this grade must have shown both **insight** and **initiative** in completing the graded task.
- B: This is a very good grade and is given to work that has **carefully and thoroughly met the specific requirements** of the assignment and shows evidence of **extra effort**.
- C: This is an average grade and is given to work that has **met the specific requirements** of the assignment.
- D: This is a below average grade and is **indicative of work not completed**. It is given when the specific requirements of an assignment are not met.
- F: This is a **failing grade** and is **given to work that is wholly an inadequate representation** of college-level work.
- 0: This is a grade **given when an assignment is not turned in**. Most work will be assigned some points. Try to avoid not doing your assignments.

Final letter grades will be assigned on the following numerical basis: **A=100-94; A-=93-90; B+=89-87; B=86-84; B-=83-80; C+=79-77; C=76-74; C-=73-70; D+=69-67; D=66-64; D-=63-60; F=59-below**

Papers and other assignments are due on the date established in class. Missing assignments are recorded as 0 and will adversely impact your final grade. If you need help or extensions on assignments please **TALK TO US** and we will see what we can work out.

### STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Within any classroom it is imperative that students and teachers establish a relationship built on mutual respect and trust. Students should be able to rely on the fact that teachers will prepare their classes in earnest, respond fully to their questions, and test them appropriately on subject matter covered in the course and issue grades fairly using established criteria. Teachers should be able to rely on the fact that students will rigorously and honestly perform the tasks assigned to them, ask questions when they don't understand reading or lecture material and comment on any aspect of the course that they feel is not addressing their needs or expectations.

In accordance with stated University policy we expect that you will adhere to ethical academic practices in the writing and reporting of your work. ASC endorses and acts on the school policies and procedures detailed in the SCampus section titled: "University Student Conduct Code." See especially Appendix A: "Academic Dishonesty Sanction Guidelines." Plagiarism of any kind will not be tolerated. Specifically, plagiarism can result in and F for the assignment, an F for the course or dismissal from USC. If you have some question about whether or not to document a source or piece of reference material please do not hesitate to ask.

### ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION BASED ON DISABILITY

Any student requesting academic accommodation based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to the instructor as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

### ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION BASED ON OFFICIAL PARTICIPATION IN UNIVERSITY SPONSORED ACTIVITIES

It is your responsibility to get class notes if you miss a session due to an official USC sponsored activity. In addition, you are expected to turn in assignments on time. If you will miss class on the due date of an assignment speak to instructors **IN ADVANCE** so that we can make proper arrangements.

## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Date	Lecture/Activity	Reading/Homework
August 28	Introduction, Syllabus	Speech Packet: Orbe & Harris (Chap. 2); Chang; Harris; Davis Entman/ Rojecki (preface xi-xxvii)
August 30	Let's Talk about Race	Speech Packet: Lopez; Orbe & Harris (Chap. 8)
September 4	Defining Race, Identity and Symbolic Construction: A Communication Perspective Screening: <u>Something New</u> ; <u>Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?</u>	Speech Packet: L. Dawkins, Orbe & Harris (Chap. 4), Johnson ("US Census")
September 6	Redefining Race and Racial Passing Screening: <u>The Human Stain</u>	Speech Packet: Golden (1-19); Foss (3-22)
September 11	Principles of Rhetoric, Criticism and Communication	Speech Packet: Golden (20-46) Jackson/Richardson: Foreword, Introduction
September 13	More Principles of Rhetoric, Criticism and Communication...and Race <b>Group Discussion</b>	Jackson/Richardson: Chap.1, Chap 6, Chap 7
September 18	An Overview of African American Rhetorical Theory <b>Group Discussion</b>	Speech packet: K. Walker (art), Lovell Jackson/Richardson: Chap. 4 **Grant, Part 1: 17-54
September 20	The "So(ul)cial" Experience of Slavery & Abolition Screening: Art of Kara Walker; <u>Color Purple</u> ; <u>Fresh</u> <u>Prince of Bel Air</u> Listening: Negro Spirituals <b>Group Discussion</b>	Speech Packet: Walker, Jefferson, Wheatley **Grant, Part 2 Section 1: 55-74
September 25	The "So(ul)cial" Experience of Slavery & Abolition: Rhetoric of David Walker, Thomas Jefferson, Phillis Wheatley <b>Guest Lecture: Ulli K. Ryder, Ph.D</b>	Speech Packet: selections from Lange's <u>George</u> <u>Washington's Boy</u> 5-8; 17-22; <i>Scene 7</i> ; <i>Scene 12</i>
September 27	The "So(ul)cial" Experience of Slavery & Abolition Rhetoric of Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth Listening: <u>Strange Fruit</u> <b>Group Discussion</b>	Speech Packet: Douglass; Dawkins Jackson/Richardson Chap. 18
October 2	The "So(ul)cial" Experience of Slavery & Abolition Rhetoric of Ellen & William Craft <b>Group Discussion</b>	Speech Packet: Washington, DuBois
October 4	The Rhetoric of Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. DuBois <b>Final Project Proposal Due</b>	Review for Midterm
October 9	Midterm Examination	Rest, Relax and Reflect
October 11	Civil Rights Screening: <u>Mighty Times</u>	Speech Packet: Robinson; Brown V. Bd. of Ed.; "Doo-Wop Readings"

\*\*suggested reading

*When I discover who I am, I'll be free.* ~Ralph Ellison

## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Date	Lecture/Activity	Reading/Homework
October 16	Segregation, Integration and the All-American Crossover Screening: <u>Why Do Fools Fall in Love?</u> <b>Guest Lecture: Prof. John M. Dawkins III</b>	Speech Packet: Robinson; Brown V. Bd. of Ed.; "Doo-Wop Readings"
October 18	Segregation, Integration and the All-American Crossover Screening: <u>Why Do Fools Fall in Love?</u> <b>Guest Lecture: Prof. John M. Dawkins III</b> <b>Final Project Proposals Returned</b>	Grant, Part 8 Section 2: 424-448 Entman/Rojecki Chap.8 Speech packet: "Black Panther 10-Point Program"
October 23	Black Power Movement: Rhetoric of The Black Arts Movement and Black Panthers <b>Group Discussion</b>	Speech Packet: King, Malcolm X **Grant, Part 6 Section 2: 237-284
October 25	The Rhetoric of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X <b>Guest Lecture: Dr. Berky Nelson</b>	Take a break!!
October 30	Race and Rhetoric: Review and Regroup <b>Group Discussion</b> (King and X)	Entman/Rojecki: Chap. 3 Speech Packet: Julien
November 1	Constructing and Deconstructing Race Today Screening: <u>Color Adjustment</u> or <u>Black Is, Black Ain't</u> <b>Group Discussion</b>	Jackson/Richardson: Chap. 13 Speech Packet: Guevara, Utley
November 6	Socio-Politics of Global Hip Hop Culture Screening: <u>Doo-Wop/"That Thing" video</u> ; <u>Lil B "Look Like Jesus"</u> <b>Guest Lecture: Ebony Utley</b>	Jackson/Richardson: Chap. 12 Speech Packet: Whitney, Utley
November 8	Socio-Politics of Global Hip Hop Culture <b>Guest Lecture: Ric Whitney / Ebony Utley</b> Screening: <u>CNNFN Fat Joe Interview</u> ; <u>Wu-Tang Financial</u>	Entman & Rojecki: Chapter 10; Speech Packet: Elam "Black People Love Us" website "Boondocks" website
November 13	Media Constructions: Advertising Race <b>Guest Lecture: Dr. Janalyn Glymph</b> <b>Group Discussion</b> Screening: <u>Smirnoff Tea Partay</u> ; <u>Black People Love Us</u> ; <u>Boondocks Website</u> ; <u>Tea Partay</u>	Speech Packet: Haggins, Powell @DaveChappelle
November 15	Media Constructions: Racial Jokes & Sketch Comedy Screening: <u>Frontline: Clayton Bigsby</u> ; <u>N-Family</u> <b>Group Discussion</b>	Entman & Rojecki: Chap. 11 *Racialicious "Hunger Games Fans Are... Racist"
November 20	Media Constructions: Race at the Movies Screening: <u>Hunger Games</u> ; <u>Good Deeds</u> <b>Group Discussion</b>	Take a break!!
November 22	Thanksgiving Break!!	Speech Packet: Jackson, Obama, Utley, Dawkins, Friedersdorf
November 27	"Hope 2.0:" The Political Rhetoric of POTUS & FLOTUS <b>Group Discussion</b>	Entman and Rojecki: Chapter 12 Jackson/Richardson: Chap. 17
November 29	Final Thoughts <b>Contemporary Issues in African American Rhetoric:</b> <b>Final Project Presentations I</b>	Work on Final Project / Study for Final
December 4	<b>Contemporary Issues in African American Rhetoric:</b> <b>Final Project Presentations II</b>	Work on Final Project / Study for Final
December 6	<b>Contemporary Issues in African American Rhetoric:</b> <b>Final Project Presentations III</b>	Study for Final
	<b>Final Examination / Final Project Papers Due</b>	Hooray!! We're done!

\*\*suggested reading

## JOURNAL ENTRIES (via Posterous or Blackboard TBD)

Week 1: due 8/31	Recount the first time you realized you were a race. How, if at all, did it affect you?
Week 2: due 9/7	Talk about "whiteness." Where and how do you see it? Do you like what you see? AND... Do you think that people are still "passing" today? What kind of passing do you feel is most prevalent today?
Week 3: due 9/14	I never knew that rhetoric was (or included).....
Week 4: due 9/21	What do you think are the five (5) best and worst things about being white? AND... What do you think are the five (5) best and worst things about being black? AND... What do you think are the five (5) best and worst things about being both black nor white or neither?
Week 5: due 9/28	The most dangerous racial rhetorical construction to come out of America's experience of slavery was.... OR... Imagine your life as that of an African American man or woman just recently emancipated. What would be your joys, fears, hopes, concerns, etc.?
Week 6: due 10/5	Whose strategy and insights for uplifting the race were most effective (Washington or DuBois)?
Week 7: due 10/12	Respond to <u>Mighty Times</u> .
Week 8: due 10/19	What do you see as the best contributions of Doo-Wop music to contemporary popular culture and U.S. race relations?
Week 9: due 10/26	If he were living today who do you think would have the most political and social impact on the United States: Martin Luther King, Malcolm X? AND... Comment on the role of The Black Panthers as you understand it.
Week 10: due 11/2	Watch an evening newscast. What racial images and conclusions were delineated? Comment on the accuracy and fairness of the images you saw. OR... Watch a televised and commentated sports event. Divide a piece of paper into two columns labeled "black" and "white." Note adjectives used by commentators to describe white and black athletes. What patterns/trends do you notice with regard to racial images? Comment on trends as they relate to racial stereotypes.
Week 11: due 11/9	CNN asked its viewership whether hip hop is "art or poison." What do you think? Support your answer. OR... Is hip hop the voice of today's global generation? Yes or No. If yes, explain implications especially as they pertain to African Americans (in a "post-racial" media culture). If no, what or whom do you think is the voice of today's global generation? Support your answer.
Week 12: due 11/16	What kind of social responsibility does Dave Chappelle have when it comes to the images he presents? Is this similar to or different from Carlos Mencia or <i>Saturday Night Live</i> ?
Week 13: due 11/23	N/A. Take a break!!
Week 14: due 11/30	Do you think that the U.S. is ready to re-elect its first African American President? Why? Why not?
Week 15: due 12/7	Talk about "blackness." Where and how do you see it? Do you like what you see?

*Let a new earth rise. Let another world be born. Let a bloody peace be written in the sky. Let a second generation full of courage issue forth; let a people loving freedom come to growth. Let a beauty full of healing and strength of final clenching be the pulsing in our spirits and our blood. Let the martial songs be written, let the dirges disappear. Let a race of men now rise and take control.*  
~Margaret Walker