

RWS 6321: Rhetoric and Technology

Fall 2022

Wednesday 6pm-8:50pm

Hudspeth Hall 313

Dr. Elias Adanu

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Office hours: Fridays, 1:30pm-3:30pm

Course Description

This course is situated at the intersection of discourses about rhetoric and technology, that is, the dependence of contemporary rhetoric on modern technologies, and the rhetoricity of these technologies. The platform architecture and affordances of today's hardware and software technologies such as mobile phones, computers, and social media have an outsized influence in how we communicate, persuade, and act. Consequently, we will interrogate how some of the pillars of modern rhetoric, writing, persuasion, communication, and culture are influenced by modern technologies. We will also be interested in how racial and gender disparities are enabled, exacerbated, and reconfigured by technological transformation even as technology itself mitigates some of these social problems.

Required Texts:

- *Race, Rhetoric, and Technology* by Adam Banks. ISBN: 9780805853131
- *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism* by Safiya Noble. ISBN: 9781479837243

Free pdfs of the following books will be provided on Blackboard:

- *Track Changes: A Literary History of Word Processing* by Matthew Kirschenbaum (free pdf provided on Blackboard; purchase hard copy if you prefer that).
- *Digital Rhetoric: Theory, Method, Practice* by Douglas Eyman
- *Digital Samaritans: Rhetorical Delivery and Engagement in the Digital Humanities* by Jim Ridolfo
- *Theory of the Hashtag* by Andreas Bernard
- *On Bullshit* by Harry Frankfurt

Assignment Descriptions:

Weekly Responses: Wednesdays at 12pm

You will submit a total of ten weekly response papers. Ideally, each response should provide a summary of the day's readings, and advance one argument that connects the

readings to each other, to a previous reading, or to personal experience. These papers will serve as discussion starters in class.

Class Facilitation: Rotating basis; see sign-up sheet.

Each student will lead one class session in the course of the semester. This is intended as a pedagogical exercise during which the facilitator will provide discussion questions, practical application exercises, and a take-away document in the form of a PowerPoint, handout, or other resource. The facilitator will demonstrate mastery over the readings for the day and creatively nudge students to contribute meaningfully to the day's readings. Each facilitator will have 50-60 minutes.

Journal and Article Review:

This assignment gives you the opportunity to explore and analyze an academic journal related to some aspect of rhetoric and technology. Each student will examine a different journal (available online or through the library). I will provide a worksheet which you will fill in details about the journal. Additionally, you will analyze one article in the journal. This assignment will expose you to publications within the field of rhetoric and to journals which publish issues related to what we will be discussing in this class.

Paper Proposal and Annotated Bibliography

For this assignment, you will write a short (~500 words) abstract for your proposed final paper. This abstract should state what you are proposing to argue, and how it advances or contributes to scholarship surrounding your topic. The proposal should also explain your method, objects of study, and thesis. This abstract will be accompanied by an annotated bibliography that stipulates which texts you will be using and why. The annotated bibliography should have at least 5 reputable sources.

Final Paper:

The final paper should be a substantial analytical document (about 4000 words) on a topic of your choice that engages some of the issues raised in the class. The paper should have a thesis, be supported by rigorous argumentation and textual or photographic evidence, and cite at least 10 scholarly sources.

Alternatively, instead of a traditional seminar paper, you may propose a multimedia project that deploys any of the theories and tools we have discussed in class. This may be a digital edition, multimedia or experimental project. This project will be accompanied by a 1500-word creator's statement that explains the work along with a minimum of 5 scholarly sources. This creator's statement needs to be both technical ("how I made this") and critical ("how my work contributes to our understanding of my topic").

Grade Distribution	%	Numerical Grade Equivalents	
Attendance & Participation	10	A	100-90
Reading Responses	25	B	89-80
Facilitation	15	C	79-70
Journal & Article Review	15	D	69-60
Paper Proposal	5	F	59-0
Final Paper	30		

Course Policies

Class Meetings, Attendance and Participation

This class will meet once a week, in person, on Wednesdays from 6:00-8:50pm at Hudspeth Hall 313. Due to the length and time of day, I will build in frequent breaks to manage fatigue. Class attendance is mandatory. If for any reason, you cannot make it to class, email me ahead of class to inform me. More than two unexcused absences will result in one letter grade dropped from your final grade.

Attendance is different from participation. Attendance constitutes your physical presence; participation entails your preparatory and contributory presence. So, to receive a good participation grade, you must come to class having read the material, completed assignments, and ready to engage in discussion and other in-class activities. Because this is a discussion-based course, I expect that we will engage each other with utmost respect, tact, and decorum even when we disagree with each other – especially when we disagree.

Office Hours and Availability

I will hold office hours in my office (HUD 316) on Fridays 1:30-3:30pm. If you prefer Zoom, simply alert me so I keep my Zoom on during office hours; the Zoom details are available through our Blackboard home page. Aside office hours, you can reach me via email. I respond to emails within 36 hours. For non-urgent requests, it might be more efficient to simply linger after class and ask.

Assignment Submission and Late Work Policy

Unless otherwise indicated, all assignments will have upload links on Blackboard. Although I give frequent reminders about upcoming deadlines, it is ultimately your responsibility to keep up with due dates. Late work is not accepted for the weekly response paper since these demonstrate your preparedness for each class. For other assignments, life happens, I know (especially in the middle of a pandemic), so let me know in advance if you're facing any challenges which will impede your ability to meet a deadline and I'll be happy to make accommodations.

Diversity Statement

It is my intent that students from all backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. I expect same from you.

Required and Recommended Online Programs

If any of the tools below are new to you, you should begin familiarizing yourself with them as soon as possible – from the Help Desk at UTEP or YouTube.

- **Blackboard:** Blackboard will be the main interface for our course. This is where you'll find all documents, course materials, resources, and instructions; participate in online discussion groups; submit all assignments; check your grades; and much more. For training or information regarding its use, please refer to the UTEP Connect Online Support Center.
- **Zoom:** If we need to communicate virtually in real time, such as office hours or occasionally when the class goes online, we will use Zoom. The meeting ID and password will be available in Blackboard.
- **OneDrive:** I recommend that you back up all your work in this class on OneDrive, for future use, but also in case your computer fails. Some of our class assignments and collaborative work will be done on the online version of MS Word via OneDrive.

University Policies

University Writing Center

The University Writing Center (UWC) is located on the second floor of the UTEP library in Room 227 and offers free one-on-one online and in-person writing assistance for both graduate and undergraduate students. Their website is <http://uwc.utep.edu>.

COVID-19 Precautions

You must STAY AT HOME and REPORT if you have been diagnosed with COVID-19, are experience symptoms, or have had recent contact with a person who has received a positive coronavirus test. Reports should be made at screening.utep.edu. If you know anyone who should report any of these three criteria, encourage them to. If the individual cannot report, you can report on their behalf by sending an email to COVIDaction@utep.edu. Review university emails frequently for COVID-19 safety updates.

ADA Accommodations

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that reasonable accommodations be provided for students with physical, sensory, cognitive, learning, and psychiatric disabilities. If you suspect that you have a disability and need accommodation, please contact the Center for Accommodations & Support Services (CASS) at 915 747 5148 or at cass@utep.edu. The CASS office is located in Room 106, Union East. Students are

responsible for presenting the instructor with any CASS accommodation letters and instructions.

Course Calendar

Dates	Content	Due Date/ Remarks
Week 1: August 24	<p><u>Introduction</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syllabus & Schedule • Course Policies • Experience & Expectations 	
Week 2: August 31	<p><u>An Overview of Rhetoric & Technology</u></p> <p><u>Ong</u>: “Writing Is a Technology That Restructures Thought”</p> <p><u>Baron</u>: Ch.4: “Are Instant Messages Speech?” in <i>Always On</i>.</p> <p><u>Eyman</u>: Ch1: “Defining and Locating Digital Rhetoric” in <i>Digital Rhetoric: Theory, Method, Practice</i>.</p> <p><u>Haas</u>: “Race, Rhetoric, and Technology: A Case Study of Decolonial Tech. Comm. Theory, Methodology & Pedagogy.”</p>	Response Paper @ 12pm
Week 3: September 7	<p><u>Writing with Technology. Writing as Technology</u></p> <p><u>Kirschenbaum</u>: <i>Track Changes: A Literary History of Word Processing</i></p> <p><u>Flusser</u>: <i>Does Writing Have a Future?</i></p>	Response Paper @ 12pm Facilitation: No office hours
Week 4: September 14	<p><u>Digital Rhetoric & Digital Humanities</u></p> <p><u>Ridolfo</u>: excerpts from <i>Digital Samaritans</i></p> <p><u>Eyman</u>: Ch.2: “Digital Rhetoric: Theory”</p> <p><u>Eyman</u>: Ch.3: “Digital Rhetoric: Method”</p>	Response Paper @ 12pm Facilitation:
Week 5: September 21	<p><u>Race, Rhetoric & Technology</u></p> <p><u>Banks</u>: <i>Race, Rhetoric, and Technology</i></p>	Response Paper @ 12pm Facilitation: Journal Overview & Analysis: Sept 23

Week 6: September 28	<u>Algorithmic Bias</u> <i>Noble: Algorithms of Oppression</i>	Response Paper @ 12pm Facilitation:
Week 7: October 5	<u>Rhetorical Code Studies</u> <i>Brock: excerpts from Rhetorical Code Studies: Discovering Arguments in and Around Code</i>	Response Paper @ 12pm Facilitation:
Week 8: October 12	<u>Infrastructure Rhetorics & Digital Damage</u> <i>Nicole Starosielski: excerpts from The Undersea Network</i> <i>Iheka: excerpts from African Ecomedia: Network Forms, Planetary Politics</i> <i>Edwards: excerpts from Digital Damage</i>	Response Paper @ 12pm Facilitation:
Week 9: October 19	<u>Rhetorics of Surveillance</u> <i>Eds. Ball et al: excerpts from the Routledge Handbook of Surveillance Studies</i>	Response Paper @ 12pm
Week 10: October 26	<u>Rhetoric, Technology, and Archives</u> <i>Bernard: excerpts from Theory of the Hashtag</i> <i>Haskins: "Between Archive and Participation: Public Memory in a Digital Age"</i> <i>Ray: "Rhetoric and the Archive"</i> <i>Florini: excerpts from Beyond Hashtags</i>	Response Paper @ 12pm
Week 11: November 2	<u>Visual Rhetoric and Technology</u> <i>Flusser: excerpts from Into the Universe of Technical Images and Towards a Philosophy of Photography</i> <i>Redi et al: "What Makes Photo Cultures Different?"</i> <i>Benjamin: "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"</i> <i>Highfield & Leaver: "Instagrammatics and Digital Methods: Studying Visual Social Media, from Selfies and GIFs to Memes and Emoji"</i>	Response Paper @ 12pm Facilitation:
Week 12: November 9	<u>Fake News, Memes, and Trolls</u>	Response Paper @ 12pm

	<p><u>Frankfurt</u>: excerpts from <i>On Bullshit</i></p> <p><u>Nietzsche</u>: “On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense”</p> <p><u>Van Horn & Beveridge</u>: “Attention Ecology: Trend Circulation and the Virality Threshold”</p> <p><u>Lotier</u>: “What Circulation Feels Like”</p> <p><u>Jenkins</u>: “The Modes of Visual Rhetoric: Circulating Memes as Expressions”</p> <p>Excerpts from:</p> <p><u>Lanham</u>: <i>The Economics of Attention</i></p> <p><u>Milner</u>: <i>The World Made Meme</i></p> <p><u>Phillips and Milner</u>: <i>The Ambivalent Internet: Mischief, Oddity, and Antagonism Online</i>.</p> <p><u>Woods & Hahner</u>: <i>Make America Meme Again</i></p>	Project Proposal: Nov 5
Week 13: November 16	No Class: Start Work on Final Projects (I’ll be away at a conference)	Response Paper @ 12pm No office hours
Week 14: November 23	TBA	Thanksgiving Week
Week 15: November 30	Final Class Day: Project Review, Presentations, and Peer Review	<i>Submit Draft Online</i>
Week 16: December 7	Exam Week	Final project due: December 7