

RWS 6320: Advanced Critical Theory

Spring 2024

Instructor: Dr. Lauren Rosenberg (she/her/hers)

lmrosenberg@utep.edu

Hudspeth 311

Office phone: 915-747-5276

Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 3-4 and by appointment

Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere. – Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol.1.*

Though racism has always been tied to language, has always had to be sold rhetorically, the rhetoric has changed, the tropes are different more often than not.

– Victor Villanueva, “Blind: Talking about the New Racism”

I am my language. – Gloria Anzaldúa, “How To Tame a Wild Tongue”

Rhetoric’s new thing is, in fact, things.

– Paul Lynch and Nathaniel Rivers, introduction to *Working with Bruno Latour in Rhetoric and Composition*

These four quotations indicate the range of theories that we’ll be sampling in this course.

Overview

In this course, we’ll be focusing on theory that can help you advance an argument, explain some data, open avenues of thought, complicate your thinking in productive ways. Theory can also help you understand your own positionality, the lens through which you see conversations in the field. Theory in this sense can serve as a thinking tool, as a rhetorical strategy, and as an avenue through which you can develop theory in your own scholarship. A primary focus in this course will be on analyzing how theory is used in contemporary rhetoric and writing studies (RWS) work, and how you can use it in your own scholarship. When you write a conference paper, article, or dissertation, what is the role of theory? What is the interplay between theory and research? How can theory help frame and develop an argument rather than intrude on it? How do we take a critical stance toward theory? In this class you’ll practice constructing theoretical frameworks for your own inquiry processes.

The theory in this course is grouped into four sections:

- **Section One** foregrounds power and focuses on three highly influential theorists who come from different schools of thought: Gramsci, neo-Marxist; Foucault, post-modernism; and Bourdieu, social theory. Key concepts from these theorists circulate so widely in RWS scholarship that they often aren't even cited. It's part of the "common sense" of the field. In this section we'll also read four recent RWS articles that demonstrate how these concepts are frequently used.
- **Section Two** concentrates on Critical Race Theory, or CRT, which originated in legal studies and which now influences all areas of RWS.
- **Section Three** focuses on Critical Language Studies, including the important and often misunderstood notion of translingualism.
- **Section Four** highlights what some are calling in RWS the post-critical or post-human turn, which includes New Materialism and Actor Network Theory.

Books and Course Materials

Bou Ayash, N. (2019). *Toward translingual realities in composition: (Re)working local language representations and practices*. Utah St. University Press.

Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2023). *Critical race theory: An introduction*. 4th ed. NY: New York University Press.

Foucault, M. (1978). *The history of sexuality. Vol. 1: An introduction*.

Grenfell, M. (Ed.). (2008). *Pierre Bourdieu: Key concepts*. Acumen.

Wilkerson, I. (2020). *Caste: The Origins of our Discontents*. NY: Random House.

These books will be supplemented by journal articles and book chapters. A bibliography of these articles is on Bb.

Assignments

Blackboard blog posts. Beginning **Jan. 22**, you will need to post on Blackboard a response to the readings for every class day (a total of 23 posts over the semester). In these posts, you will want to give your thoughts about how theory is being used in one or more of the readings. You can also make connections, puzzle out ideas, respond to someone else's post, propose topics for our evening's conversation, and so on. You can write broadly

about the readings for that class day, or you can focus in on one or two readings. **To help you engage deeply with the reading, begin each post with a brief quotation from a relevant reading.** You might also bring up current mainstream articles or videos that reflect, resonate, or speak to the readings or concepts in interesting ways. These posts should be at least 250 words. **These posts are due at noon on each class day (i.e., Monday or Wednesday).**

Pause and Reflect Facilitations. At the end of each of the four sections of the class, we will have a class day devoted to reflecting on some aspect(s) of the readings from that section. You will team up with one or two other students in the class to facilitate the class discussion. Avoid lecturing and/or simply summarizing. Instead, prepare topics for us to discuss, questions for us to answer. Draw on your colleagues' Bb posts in your facilitation. Rather than attempting to cover a large number of readings, focus instead on tracing a concept through several readings or contrasting different authors' approaches to a topic. You will definitely want to encourage conversation about how theory is being used in one or more of the readings for that section.

Theory Analysis of Two Journal Articles. Select two articles in the discipline of RWS, in any area, from a major journal (your choice) that are no more than 10 years old. Write a paper in which you observe and analyze how the authors use theory in their arguments. For instance, how is a particular theoretical concept used to explain data? Or how does a certain theoretical lens help to propel an argument forward? If the authors rely primarily on citing research studies, discuss the theory that grounds those research studies. This is a short paper, about 3 double-spaced pages, and it can be informal. **You will hand in this paper at a date that you select prior to spring break (by March 6).**

Final project. Your final assignment will be a seminar paper of approximately 20-30 pages in which you examine a topic in RWS that you've been working on, or a new project, in greater depth. It must include some of the theory from one of the four sections in the course in a productive way as you connect it to your topic of inquiry. Your seminar paper should include a minimum of 8-peer-reviewed research articles or 3 peer-reviewed research articles and 1-2 books. At least half of your sources should be articles/books new for this project that you did not already read for class that either extend or apply the theories from the course. You will need to meet with me to discuss this project before you start it, sometime before **April 15**. The intention is that this project will be useful to you beyond this class (a conference paper, article, dissertation prospectus, etc.). **The final paper is due by midnight on Monday, May 7th.**

Assessment

I am using a contract assessment system for this class in the hopes that you will feel free to take chances that you might otherwise avoid with a standard grading system. I am open to your feedback about these requirements.

You will receive an A in the class if you

- Fully complete at least 21 of the required 23 Bb posts (at least 250 words), with no more than one of the posts being late over the course of the semester.
- Miss no more than 2 class days (unless exceptional circumstances occur, in which case we might consider video attendance).
- Participate in all class discussions. Participation doesn't always require talking; listening is a form of participation as well, though we all are interested in your thoughts. Avoid dominating conversations as well.
- Receive an "excellent" ranking for the Theory Analysis, Final Project, and Presentation. Though you will not be receiving a traditional grade for these assignments, be assured that you will receive extensive feedback. You may revise these assignments until you have received the "excellent" ranking. "Excellent" is not necessarily the same as an A grade; instead, this label recognizes that you have done your best work at this moment in time.
- Demonstrate that you have prepared for your Pause and Reflect session by showing knowledge of the reading, preparing topics and questions for discussion, keeping within the designated time frame, and collegially engaging with your partner(s).
- Meet all deadlines

You will receive a B in the class if you

- Fully complete 19 of the required 23 posts, with two late posts allowed.
- Miss no more than 2 class days (unless exceptional circumstances occur, in which case we might consider video attendance).
- Participate in all class discussions. Participation doesn't always require talking; listening is a form of participation as well. Conversely, avoid dominating discussions so that everyone has a chance to participate.
- Receive an "excellent" ranking for two of the three major assignments (the Theory Analysis, Final Project, and Presentation), and an "acceptable" ranking for the other assignment.
- Demonstrate that you have prepared for your Pause and Reflect session by showing knowledge of the reading, preparing topics and questions for discussion, keeping within the designated time frame, and collegially engaging with your partner(s).
- Meet all deadlines

You will receive a C or lower in the class if you

- Complete fewer 19 of the required 23 posts.
- Miss more than 2 class days.
- Fail to participate effectively in all class discussions.
- Do not receive an "excellent" ranking for two or more of the major assignments.
- Do not adequately prepare for the Pause and Reflect session, or do not work well with your partner(s).

- Fail to meet deadlines.

Respectful Discourse

We all have a different positionality that will affect the way that we perceive the topics and texts for the course. I hope that we strive to maintain an openness to other people's ideas. At the same time, meaningful and extended debate is important. Basically, respect boundaries and listen carefully. Also, avoid dominating a discussion or sitting back and not committing to anything. We all need to listen and to contribute. Finally, arrive on time and do not leave early.

Resources and Policies

Technology Resources

[Help Desk](#): Students experiencing technological challenges (email, Blackboard, software, etc.) can submit a ticket to the UTEP Helpdesk for assistance. Contact the Helpdesk via phone, email, chat, website, or in person if on campus.

Academic Resources

[UTEP Library](#): Access a wide range of resources including online full-text access to thousands of journals and eBooks plus reference service and librarian assistance for enrolled students.

[University Writing Center \(UWC\)](#): Writing tutors provide assistance with writing style and formatting and writing resources.

[RefWorks](#): A bibliographic citation tool; check out the RefWorks tutorial and Fact Sheet and Quick-Start Guide.

Pertinent University Policies

Academic Integrity

The University of Texas at El Paso prides itself on its standards of academic excellence. In the classroom and in all other academic activities, students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, and any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts. Instructors are required to report the suspected academic dishonesty to the Office of Student Affairs. Visit the [Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution](#) page for more information on Academic integrity.

Accommodations

UTEP is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and auxiliary services to students, staff, faculty, job applicants, applicants for admissions, and other beneficiaries

of University programs, services and activities with documented disabilities in order to provide them with equal opportunities to participate in programs, services, and activities in compliance with sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. Reasonable accommodations will be made unless it is determined that doing so would cause undue hardship on the University. Students requesting an accommodation based on a disability must register with the [UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services](#) (CASS). Students are encouraged to visit CASS in room 106, Union East Building or contact them at 747-5148 or cass@utep.edu.

Military Students

If you are a military student (veteran, dependent, active) please visit the [Military Student Success Center](#). I also recognize the complexities of being a student veteran. If you are a student veteran, please inform me if you need special accommodations. Drill schedules, calls to active duty, complications with GI Bill disbursement, and other unforeseen military and veteran-related developments can complicate your academic life. If you make me aware of a complication, I will do everything I can to assist you or put you in contact with university staff who are trained to assist you.

Student Pregnancy and Parenting Nondiscrimination Policy

The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and auxiliary services to students, staff, faculty, job applicants, applicants for admissions, and other beneficiaries of University programs, services and activities with documented disabilities in order to provide them with equal opportunities to participate in programs, services, and activities in compliance with sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. Students who become pregnant or have parenting responsibilities may also request reasonable accommodations. Reasonable accommodations will be made unless it is determined that doing so would cause undue hardship on the University. The UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) will process requests for accommodations based on a disability, pregnancy, or parenting. Contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services at 915-747-5148, email them at cass@utep.edu, or apply for accommodations online via the CASS portal.

Course Support Resources

Title IX	915-747-8358	Institutional Compliance
Dean of Students	915-747-5648	Dean of Students
UTEP Health & Wellness Center	915-747-5624	https://www.utep.edu/chs/shc/ studenthealth@utep.edu
UTEP Police Department	915-747-5611	https://www.utep.edu/police/ police@utep.edu

Counseling and Psychological Services	915-747-5302	https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/counsel/caps@utep.edu
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Calendar

RWS 6320: Advanced Critical Theory Spring 2024

Section One: “Common Sense” Concepts in the Field and Power Relations

<u>Week 1</u> W Jan 17	Introduction to criticality; what’s the point of theory?
<u>Week 2</u> M Jan 22	Landy, Culture and Politics in the Work of Antonio Gramsci; Gramsci, Intellectuals and Education (pdf); Villanueva, Hegemony: From an Organically Grown Intellectual (pdf)
W Jan 24	Foucault, History of Sexuality Vol. 1, Parts 1, 2, and 3 (pp. 1-75)
<u>Week 3</u> M Jan 29	Foucault, History of Sexuality Parts 4 & 5 (pp. 75-161); Foucault, “Panopticism” https://foucault.info/documents/foucault.disciplineAndPunish.panOpticism/
W Jan 31	Grenfell, Introduction to book; Ch. 1, Biography; Ch. 2, Theory of Practice; Ch. 3, Habitus; Chapter 4, Field
<u>Week 4</u> M Feb 5	Grenfell, Ch. 5, Social Class; Ch. 6, Capital; Ch. 7, Doxa; Ch. 8, hysteresis
W Feb 7	Grenfell, Ch. 9, Interest; Ch. 11, Suffering; Ch. 12, Reflexivity; Bourdieu, The Production and Reproduction of Legitimate Language (pdf)
<u>Week 5</u>	Chávez, The Body: An Abstract and Actual Rhetorical Concept (pdf); Alexander & Rhodes, Queer: An Impossible Subject for Composition (pdf)

M Feb 12	
W Feb 14	Denny, Queering the Writing Center (pdf); Vivian, "The Incitement: An Account of Language, Power, and Fascism" (pdf)
<u>Week 6</u> M Feb 19	Pause and Reflect 1

Section Two: Critical Race Theory

W Feb 21	Delgado & Stefancic, Critical Race Theory: An Introduction, pp. xiii-76.
<u>Week 7</u>	Delgado & Stefancic, pp. 77-165; Dubois, The Forethought and Ch. 1 from <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i>
M Feb 26	https://www.gutenberg.org/files/408/408-h/408-h.htm
W Feb 28	Yosso, Whose Culture Has Capital; Gross, The 'Caucasian Cloak' (pdf). Also, skim Crenshaw, Mapping the Margins (pdf), focusing on the idea of intersectionality
<u>Week 8</u> M Mar 4	Brayboy, Toward a Tribal Critical Race Theory in Education (pdf); Villanueva, Blind: Talking about the New Racism (pdf); Flores Carmona, Pedagogical Border Crossings (pdf); García, Unmaking Gringo-Centers (pdf)
W Mar 6	Pause and Reflect 2
M Mar 11	SPRING BREAK
W Mar 13	SPRING BREAK

Section Three: Whiteness Studies; Critical Language Studies

<u>Week 9</u> M Mar 18	Hikido & Murray, Whitened Rainbows (pdf); Roediger, Whiteness and Ethnicity in the History of 'White Ethnics' in the U.S. (pdf)
W Mar 20	Gries & Bratta, The Racial Politics of Circulation (pdf); Davis, Reversal of Injury in the Obama Era (<i>Rhetoric Review</i> symposium on Race and Resentment pp. 320-331 (pdf))
<u>Week 10</u> M Mar 25	Huckin, Andrus, & Clary-Lemon, Critical Discourse Analysis and Rhetoric and Composition (pdf); Davila, Indexicality and 'Standard' Edited American English (pdf); Anzaldúa, How to Tame a Wild Tongue (pdf)
W Mar 27	Christiansen, Creating a Unique Transnational Place (pdf); Horner et al., Language Difference in Writing (pdf); Mangelsdorf, Language Difference and Translingual Enactments (pdf)
<u>Week 11</u>	Bou Ayash, pp. 3-103.

M Apr 1	
W Apr 3	CCCC—Lauren away—class will not meet
Week 12	Bou Ayash, pp. 103-185.
M Apr 8	
W Apr 10	Pause and Reflect 3

Section Four: New Materialism, Actor-Network-Theory, and Caste

<u>Week 13</u>	Micciche, Writing Material (pdf); Vieira, What Happens When Texts Fly (pdf)
M Apr 15	
W Apr 17	Latour, Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam? (pdf); Lynch & Rivers, Introduction (pdf)
<u>Week 14</u>	Wilkerson, I. (2020). <i>Caste: The Origins of our Discontents</i> , pp. xv-96.
M Apr 22	
W Apr 24	Wilkerson, I. (2020). <i>Caste: The Origins of our Discontents</i> , pp. 101-260.
<u>Week 15</u>	Wilkerson, I. (2020). <i>Caste: The Origins of our Discontents</i> , pp. 263-388.
M Apr 29	
W May 1	Pause and Reflect 4

Your final project is due no later than Monday, May 6th at midnight.