

Fall 2016, Monday 3:00-5:30: ENGL 401:01 Nineteenth-Century American Activist Rhetoric

Pr. Patricia Bizzell

Office: Fenwick 210, hours 1:00-3:00 MTWR (often available later in the afternoon except on Mondays), and by appointment; office x 2524; email pbizzell@holycross.edu; cell/text 508-340-8130.

Please stop by / contact me often! But please note that between 8:00 p.m. and 9:00 a.m., I will not be checking my devices regularly.

Required texts:

Lowance, Mason. *Against Slavery: An Abolitionist Reader*. New York: Penguin, 2000.

Modern Language Association. *MLA Handbook*. 8th edition. New York: Modern Language Association, 2016 (you MUST have this most recent edition).

Sklar, Kathryn Kish. *Women's Rights Emerges within the Antislavery Movement, 1830-1870*. Boston: Bedford / St. Martin's Press, 2000.

Stowe, Harriet Beecher. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. 1852; rpt. New York: Dover, 2005 (you may use any edition of this novel).

Additional required course readings will be posted on Moodle.

Course Plan:

The 1800s was a time of radical social change, during which the United States survived a brutal civil war and saw slavery abolished and rights for people of African descent and all women increased dramatically. We will be studying the ways that White and Black women and men used the verbal arts of fiction, journalism, autobiography, essay, and oratory to encourage this social change. You will learn that they were accomplished rhetors, especially in light of the fact that in order to gain attentive audiences, they had to contend with the period's ideologies concerning the proper performance of one's gender and race.

We will be activists in our seminar, too, helping each other to learn about the eloquent activists of this earlier period. Accordingly, we will follow the "Evergreen Method" of conducting class, which I learned from Professor Martin Camper of the Writing Department at Loyola University Maryland:

You will make verbal contributions without raising your hand or looking to me (the professor) for permission to speak. Instead, you will take turns speaking as you would in any other conversational space by paying attention to the flow of conversation and the other participants. Everyone is expected to participate, and you are responsible for ensuring that you do so in every seminar meeting. But you are also responsible for ensuring that your peers speak as well. If you notice that someone has not yet spoken or it looks like someone has something to say, invite that person to speak. Considerate attention to your fellow seminar members will be especially important when we touch on sensitive topics, e.g. relating to racism and sexism.

At the same time, there will be moments in class when only one person holds the floor, to make an oral presentation. You are responsible to listen respectfully and ask alert questions.

Active participation will naturally require you to come to class on time, every time. Our seminar meets only 14 times, and if you miss more than 2, you will not be able to pass the course. It really does not matter why you miss class. If you are not present, you cannot participate in the real-time active learning exchange that will be impossible to recreate outside of class time.

Our work will consist of an introductory unit aiming to familiarize you with historical background on our period and some elements of rhetorical theory and method, which we will practice by reading *Uncle Tom's Cabin* together. You will then choose an individual activist or rhetorical theme to explore in your work for the rest of the semester, periodically reporting to the class on what you are learning. Each of you will be responsible for teaching the class about your chosen activist or rhetorical theme.

Honor Code:

I hope I do not have to warn a class of advanced students that any form of academic dishonesty will be completely unacceptable in this course. Typically, in a seminar, you will be building your own analyses from the work of others, as well as from your own ideas. You are responsible for using the new *MLA Handbook* citation practices to clarify which is which for your audience. Every written and oral text that you submit must clearly indicate which words are your own and which are taken from primary or secondary sources that you have researched (primary = material authored by nineteenth-century rhetors; secondary = scholarship analyzing their material) or from class notes, which may reference something said by me or another seminar member.

Electronic devices such as laptops, tablets, and i-phones can be used in this course. You may wish to take class notes on your device or to access material on the internet or the course Moodle site that will be referenced in class. You are on your honor not to use your device for any other academic or social activities during class time. Please respect the attention owed to your fellow seminar members.

Assignments and Grading:

Your work will culminate in a seminar paper (~30 pages) on your chosen rhetor or rhetorical theme. Please note that this seminar carries credit for both the Gender and Women's Studies concentration and the Africana Studies concentration. In consultation with me and the concentration director, you may choose a seminar paper topic that can count as your capstone for the concentration (ordinarily, this option will require you to prepare a somewhat longer paper).

Preliminary assignments will assist you in preparing material that can go into this final paper; more information on these assignments will be given in class. There is no final exam in this course. All graded assignments must be submitted in class in paper copy on the due date, and reported orally. Additional brief readings and ungraded writing assignments will be required from time to time.

Seminar paper (50%)

Uncle Tom's Cabin rhetorical analysis of a character (10%)

Capsule bio / timeline for your chosen activist / theme (10%)

Rhetorical analysis of passage(s) from your chosen activist / theme (10%)

Mini-review of secondary sources (10%)

“Abolitionist Imagination” position paper (10%)

Syllabus:

9/5:

Introductory activities; begin reading *Uncle Tom's Cabin* if you have not already done so.

9/12:

Read for today's discussion: General Introduction in Lowance, *Against Slavery* (pp. xiii-xxxvi), Sklar, Introduction in *Women's Rights* (pp. 1-76), and on Moodle, Condit and Lucaites, *Crafting Equality* Preface (pp. ix-xvii), Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak for Her* Introduction (pp. 1-15).

9/19:

Quiz due today that you have composed from Lowance or Sklar (5-7 items).

Read for today's discussion: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (all), and on Moodle, Baldwin, Tompkins, and Levine.

9/26:

Paper/report due today: rhetorical analysis of your assigned character in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 4-5 pages written text and you will present this material in class with visual aid.

10/3: We will not meet as a class today because I will be celebrating Rosh Hashanah. I will schedule individual meetings with each of you for later times this week. Be prepared to discuss your seminar paper topic (person / theme / etc.). See seminar paper assignment for suggestions.

OCTOBER BREAK

10/17:

Today we will confirm each person's seminar paper topic and conduct tie-breakers if necessary. Bring to class the *MLA Handbook*.

10/24:

Paper/report due today: capsule biography of your chosen activist (influences, achievements, controversies) or timeline of your chosen theme, 5-6 pages written text and you will present this material in class.

10/31:

Paper/report due today: rhetorical analysis of passage(s) from your activist's work or illustrative of your theme, 5-6 pages written text and you will lead the class through a discussion of this material.

11/7:

Paper/report due today: mini-review of three critical sources, summarizing their content and highlighting their agreements, disagreements, potential usefulness to your analysis, 5-6 pages written text. You will

also present this material in class; we may organize these presentations into group discussions of related themes so people can share sources.

11/14:

Paper due today: your position paper on the “abolitionist imagination,” debated in Moodle readings for today’s discussion, essays by Delbanco and Sinha. We will share views in class.

11/21: We will not meet as a class today, but I will meet individually with each of you on 11/21 or 11/22, before we disperse for Thanksgiving Break.

THANKSGIVING BREAK

11/28:

Report due today: a lecture (10-12 minutes) on your seminar paper (individual dates tba)

12/5:

Report due today: a lecture (10-12 minutes) on your seminar paper (individual dates tba). This is our last class meeting.

12/16:

FINAL DUE DATE for your seminar paper.