



COMM 635: Seminar in Communication Criticism Fall 2020

Hi, I'm: Dr. Stephanie Hartzell

E-mail: stephanie.hartzell@csulb.edu

Office Hours: Thu. 4–5 via Zoom & by
appointment

Course Schedule:
Th. 7–9:45 pm via Zoom

Office Location: AS 348

Course Description

This graduate seminar in contemporary communication criticism will focus on critical approaches to understanding and analyzing the relationship among rhetoric, power, and subjectivity—the processes through which we become differently positioned subjects with recognizable identities in a larger sociocultural milieu.

Wherever there is rhetoric, there is power...and wherever there is power, there is rhetoric. Moreover, the very presence of power opens possibilities for resistance. Power and resistance, even in their most material formations, *always* have rhetorical dimensions. Rhetoric has the power to shape and re-shape our social realities—meanings, identities, ideologies, norms, and expectations are all constructed, reinforced, and challenged through rhetoric and its interactions with our material worlds. Yet, the power and influence of rhetoric on our social realities are often masked. In contemporary contexts, communication scholars have increasingly turned their attention toward applying critical perspectives to analyze the role of rhetoric in creating, sustaining, and challenging unjust social realities.

By analyzing the relationship among rhetoric, power, and subjectivity through critical perspectives, we are able to unmask rhetoric's power to better understand how people are influenced to think, feel, act, and *be* in particular ways and, ultimately, how social realities and relations are created, sustained, and challenged. Analyzing rhetoric illuminates the influence of communication on public attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviors, which enables us to challenge harmful arguments, ideas, and practices as we work toward co-creating a better, more just world.

Course Goals & Student Learning Objectives

Through class discussions, presentations, and writing assignments, this course has been designed to help you...

- ❖ Evaluate the role and complexities of rhetoric in our society
- ❖ Explain the relationship among rhetoric, power, and subjectivity
- ❖ Apply critical perspectives to analyze contemporary rhetorical discourse
- ❖ Produce a conference-ready piece of criticism

Successful completion of this course provides students with the ability to engage each of the above points verbally and in writing.

Required Materials

This is a Zero Cost Course Materials class—you are not required to purchase anything to successfully complete this course. All readings will be posted to BeachBoard (either as PDFs or links to outside resources) and all written assignments will be submitted electronically through BeachBoard (either via Dropbox or the Discussion Board). Because there is an online component to this course, you'll need access to the technology required to download and upload electronic content on the web. If your only access to this technology is on campus, please plan ahead to ensure you have plenty of time to download and/or upload content in advance of deadlines.

- ❖ **BeachBoard Access:** To access the course BeachBoard (BB) page, visit <https://bbcsulb.desire2learn.com/d2l/home> and log in with your CSULB student ID and password. Click on the course title under “My Courses.”
- ❖ **Computer Access:** Two open access computer labs are available for current CSULB students. Both the Horn Center (located in lower campus) and the Spidell Technology Center (located in the Library) are a great resource for students needing to use a computer. Visit the [Open Access Computing Facilities - http://www.csulb.edu/library/guide/computing.html](http://www.csulb.edu/library/guide/computing.html) website for an extensive list of all available software installed in both computer labs.

Assignments

Intrinsic Analysis: As part of the preliminary analysis of the artifact(s) you select for your final project, you will compose an 8–10-page paper providing a detailed “close reading” of your artifact(s) using Campbell & Burkholder ch. 2 as a guide. Here, you will provide a thorough description of your artifact(s) and discuss structures, patterns, themes, and other distinctive rhetorical characteristics discovered.

Extrinsic Analysis: As part of the preliminary analysis of the artifact(s) you select for your final project, you will compose an 8–10-page paper providing a contextual analysis of your artifact(s) using Campbell & Burkholder ch. 3 as a guide. Here, you will identify and unpack the relevant social, cultural, and/or political contexts for your artifact(s) to thoroughly establish their rhetorical situation and significance.

Critical/Theoretical Perspective Paper: As part of the preliminary analysis of the artifact(s) you select for your final project, you will compose a 3–5-page paper that identifies, explains, and justifies the critical perspective that you plan to use to analyze your artifact(s) using

Campbell & Burkholder ch. 4 as a guide. Here, you should use prior rhetorical research on your topic as well as your intrinsic and extrinsic analyses and course readings to select the rhetorical concepts/theories/perspectives that will be most useful in your continued analysis of your artifact(s).

Final Paper: As a culminating component of your final project, you will produce a full (20–25 page) piece of rhetorical criticism. Your final paper should artfully synthesize (not copy/paste) material from your earlier papers and present your in-depth analysis of your artifact(s) using your selected critical/theoretical perspective. You will compose an initial draft of this paper, which will be peer-reviewed and workshopped. Using the feedback from your peer reviews, you will then revise and resubmit your paper to me for a formal evaluation. Your final submission must include a cover letter in which you identify a journal in communication/rhetorical studies for which your paper would be an appropriate outlet and detail the changes you've made to your manuscript in response to the feedback received.

Participation: Active, consistent, quality participation in course discussions and activities is an expectation in graduate seminars. I expect that you will attend each class session having read the assigned articles/chapters and prepared to contribute to our discussion. Quality participation during class discussions entails sharing and supporting your insights and ideas in ways that demonstrate your understanding of course material, responding to the ideas and insights of others, asking smart questions, and generally advancing our discussion. In addition to evaluating the quality of your participation in our class discussions and in-class activities, I will assess your participation through your completion of the following:

- **Reading reflections:** Prior to our weekly meeting, you will submit a 1–2-page reflection on the readings for that week. Reading reflections should concisely summarize each reading by identifying main ideas, key concepts, and take-aways, should synthesize the readings together to illuminate themes and points of convergence/divergence, should place the week's readings into conversation with previous readings/discussions, and should provide three discussion questions (which may refer to specific readings and/or [dis]connections across readings).
- **Final project proposal:** Early in the semester, you will compose a short (1–2 page) proposal for your final project. Your proposal should identify the artifact(s) you've selected for analysis, the larger issue/controversy/context to which it/they relate, and your reasons for embarking on this project.
- **Peer reviews:** Peer review and revision is an essential part of academic writing. You will read and provide feedback on drafts of each component of the final essay (intrinsic analysis, extrinsic analysis, critical/theoretical perspective, & first draft) for two of your classmates.
- **Presentations:** You will craft a 5–7-minute “pitch” of your final project proposal class and a 12–15-minute conference-style presentation of your final essay, each of which will be presented during class.

Grading

Grade distribution

Assignments	Grade Weight
Intrinsic analysis	15%
Extrinsic analysis	15%
Critical/theoretical perspective paper	10%
First draft of final paper	15%
Final draft of final paper	30%
Participation	15%
TOTAL	100%

Grading Scale

90%–100%	A
80%–89.99%	B
70%–79.99%	C
60%–69.99%	D
0–59.99%	F

A Brief Word on Grades...

It is no secret that graduate seminars are challenging and expectations are high. In this class, **A's** will be reserved for *excellent* work that demonstrates deep knowledge of rhetoric in general and course material in particular, evidences creativity, insight, and scholarly aptitude, and goes well above and beyond minimum expectations. **B's** are earned by doing above-average work that displays creativity and insight and demonstrates a strong grasp on rhetoric in general and course material in particular. **C's** are earned by completing all major assignments in ways that meet all requirements and demonstrate competency with rhetoric in general and course material in particular. **D's** will be given for work that falls short of minimum requirements and/or fails to demonstrate adequate competency with course content, and **F's** will be given to inadequate work that falls significantly short of minimum requirements and expectations. You'll receive the final grade that you earn based on your performance throughout the semester.

I'm always happy to talk to you about your grade on any assignment or assessment, but these conversations need to take place in person and in private—please email me to schedule a Zoom conference if you'd like to discuss a grade(s). Should you wish to have a formal conversation about a particular grade on a specific assignment, please contact me *after 24 hours but within 7 days* of receiving the grade. This policy provides you with time to reflect on the grade, feedback, assignment, and grading criteria while ensuring that grade related discussions occur in a timely fashion. All grade-related conversations must take place prior to the last day of the semester.

Course Policies & Expectations

Assignment Composition & Submission

All assignments for this course will be submitted and/or completed through BeachBoard. All assignments must be submitted to me through Dropbox on BeachBoard as .doc, .docx, or .pdf files (files submitted in other formats will not be graded). I will not accept emailed copies of any assignment.

It is *always* your responsibility to ensure that your documents are successfully submitted to the appropriate place—misdirected submissions will not be graded. I strongly suggest that you use

BeachBoard to view all documents after submitting to ensure there are no issues or errors. If you accidentally upload the wrong file, forget to hit “submit,” upload a corrupted file, or otherwise fail to successfully submit an accessible copy of your intended file prior to the deadline, you will not receive credit for that assignment. You should always save your Dropbox submission confirmation emails from BeachBoard.

Minimum page length/word count requirements for essays are firm—an 8–10-page assignment means 8 *full* pages of text (properly formatted, see below). Submissions short of minimum length requirements result in a 5% grade deduction for each ½ page missing.

All written assignments must be uniformly formatted according to APA guidelines: Times New Roman 12-pt. font, double-spaced throughout, with 1” margins on all sides, no extra spaces between paragraphs, no extra indentation, and no extra line or word spacing. Improperly formatted documents will be reformatted and will have 5% deducted from their final score for each formatting issue. Note that if reformatting of an improperly formatted document results in the document failing to meet minimum page requirements, additional penalties will be incurred (see above). Do not manipulate your written work to make it artificially appear to meet length requirements—doing so is a form of academic dishonesty. Intentionally increasing the size of your punctuation, increasing your margins, including unrecognizable characters or unreadable text, and/or manipulating your line/word spacing to make a deficient document artificially appear to meet minimum length requirements will result in that assignment receiving a score of 0.

Late work policy: I will not accept late or make-up work in most cases. If you are experiencing a significant hardship, please contact me ASAP so that I can determine whether accommodations are possible. Any late or make-up work considered is subject to a 30% grade deduction and will only be accepted at my discretion.

Citation policy: Any sources cited in written work must be properly cited (parenthetically and bibliographically) according to current APA guidelines. [Purdue Owl](#) is a great resource for citation style and formatting instructions.

Cheating, plagiarism & academic integrity policy: Cheating, plagiarism, and academic dishonesty are serious ethical violations with significant consequences. All written work submitted will be scanned by originality checking software. If your work is flagged for plagiarism, whether due to improper citation of sources, reusing an essay previously submitted for another course, copying work from an unattributed source either in part or in whole, or any other circumstance, I will launch an investigation. Work found to be plagiarized, either in part or in whole, will receive a score of 0 and will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development and the Graduate Director, which may result in additional sanctions. Particularly egregious forms of plagiarism, such as using significant portions of material written by another person as if it were your own, will cause you to fail the course and may jeopardize your standing in the graduate program. *It is unacceptable to submit or present any portion of work completed for another course or purpose for credit in this course—doing so is considered “self-plagiarism” and will be treated as plagiarism.* You may choose to analyze and write about topics that you have studied elsewhere, but all work submitted must be your new, original work composed for this class. Please familiarize yourself with the university’s [cheating & plagiarism policy](#).

(Online) Classroom Communication

Rhetoric is inherently political and ideological, and the world of politics and ideology is often contentious. Moreover, it can be difficult to share and receive critical feedback on writing, whether or not a particular essay makes a controversial argument(s). Because we'll be reading about, discussing, and writing about controversial issues as well as sharing our own writing with one another, it's very important that we all work actively to build a supportive and engaged community in which sharing and considering multiple perspectives is encouraged and valued.

Your communication with each other: Part of building this type of classroom community entails treating one another with respect and care. We will likely disagree from time-to-time, but it's important to avoid directing these disagreements toward personal attacks (whether aimed at people inside this class or not). Verbal and/or non-verbal acts that create a hostile learning environment will not be tolerated. Sometimes, though, learning is uncomfortable. In order to move toward a better, more inclusive, more just society, it's necessary to uncover problematic viewpoints, consider their rhetorical functions (i.e. how they've been constructed through discourse and why they are persuasive to some), and construct insightful, well-supported arguments to challenge those viewpoints. In many ways, the work of exposing, considering, and challenging viewpoints and ideologies is precisely what critical rhetorical analysis aims to accomplish—but there is no one “right” or “best” way to go about this process. As such, we'll strive for a balance between a friendly, inclusive classroom community and an environment in which ideas can be tested and challenged. I'm happy to help you work through any discomfort you may experience as a result of our class discussions—please contact me if you find yourself in this position.

Your communication with me: As graduate students, you should strive to develop strong, collegial relationships with your professors. You should always communicate respectfully with faculty, whether in person or via email—doing so helps to build your *ethos*, and it is extremely important to maintain a good reputation with your growing scholarly network, particularly if you hope to pursue a career in academia.

I welcome your emails for any course-related questions or concerns. When you email me, please ensure that your message contains a greeting, a body that clearly identifies the purpose of your email, and a closing signature that includes your name and the course/section in which you're enrolled. Please address me as “Dr. Hartzell,” or “Professor Hartzell” and note that I prefer she/her or they/them pronouns. I am happy to address you by the name and pronouns that you prefer—just let me know.

My communication with you: I will strive to answer emails within 24-hours of their sent receipt M–F. I don't read or answer emails over weekends, holidays, or breaks. I'm unable to provide substantive feedback on assignments via email, but I welcome you to set up a Zoom conference to discuss your ideas and/or assignments. I'm unable to answer questions about assignments less than 24-hours before their deadline. Federal privacy laws prevent me from discussing grades via email—if you'd like to discuss your grade on an assignment or your overall performance in the course, please utilize office hours or email me to set up an appointment.

On requests for letters of recommendation: At some point during your time as a graduate student, you will likely need a letter(s) of recommendation from one or more of your professors. The strongest letters of recommendation are written by professors who know you well (e.g. outside of regular in-class interactions) and can speak to your qualifications for the particular opportunity for which you're applying. In most cases, I am only able to write letters of recommendation for students who have completed a full in-person semester in one or more of my classes and have earned an A or high B. If you'd like to request a letter of recommendation from me, you must do so *at least three weeks prior to your application deadline*. If I agree to write a letter of recommendation for you, I will send you a form to fill out—you must return the completed form *at least two weeks prior to your application deadline*.

Standard University Policies

Accommodations

Students requesting a reasonable accommodation based on a mental or physical disability should contact Disabled Student Services as soon as possible at 562-985-5401 or dss@csulb.edu for support and assistance.

Withdrawals

Students not attending a class in which they are enrolled must drop or withdraw from the class; failure to do so will result in a failing grade on the student's record (F or WU).

See [Understanding Grades and Grading](#) for more information. Students should not assume the University will remove them from a class for non-payment of fees or that the instructor will remove them for non-attendance.

- **NOTE:** It is your responsibility to adjust your enrollment by the deadlines to avoid charges or be eligible for a full or pro-rated refund. Failure to track your enrollment and student account balance at [MyCSULB](#) may result in charges and holds preventing critical university services. If you had a financial aid fee deferral in place when you registered and are later determined ineligible for aid, or you decline your aid, you must drop your classes. Students who do not plan to attend, should drop all classes before the first day of instruction to get a full refund. After instruction begins, students who drop/withdraw from their classes will be responsible for pro-rated fees based on the date of dropping or withdrawing.

Class withdrawals during the final 3 weeks of instruction are not permitted except for a very serious and compelling reason such as accident or serious injury that is clearly beyond the student's control and the assignment of an Incomplete grade is inappropriate (see http://www.csulb.edu/depts/enrollment/student_academic_records/grading.html). Application for withdrawal from CSULB or from a class must be officially filed by the student with Enrollment Services whether the student has ever attended the class or not; otherwise, the student will receive a grade of "WU" (unauthorized withdrawal) in the course. Please refer to the [CSULB Course Catalog - http://www.csulb.edu/divisions/aa/catalog/current/academic_regulations/withdrawal_policy.html](#) to become familiar with the full withdrawal policy.

Technical Assistance

If you need technical assistance at any time during the course or need to report a problem with BeachBoard, please contact the Technology Help Desk using their [online form](http://www.csulb.edu/divisions/aa/academic_technology/thd/contact/) - http://www.csulb.edu/divisions/aa/academic_technology/thd/contact/ or by phone at (562) 985-4959 or visit them on campus in the Academic Service (AS) building, room 120.