

Words, Icons, Roles and Clips [WIRC]:
Representations of Power
(English 151: Rhodes College/ Fall 98)

"language is also a place of struggle." (bell hooks)

"I'll decode you yet." (Yolland, from Friel's _____
Translations)

Instructor: Dr. Rob Canfield
Office: 309b
Office Hrs: MWF 11:30-1:00; by appointment
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Required Texts:

Aristotle. The Rhetorics and Poetics.

The Norton Reader: An Anthology of Expository Prose. Shorter Eighth Edition. New York: W. Norton & Co., 1992.

Chipp, Herschel B. Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book for Artists and Critics. Berkeley, CA.: UC Press, 1968.

Cesaire, Aime. A Tempest. Richard Miller, trans. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1969.

Friel, Brian. Translations. Boston, MA.: Faber & Faber, 1981.

Soyinka, Wole. Death and the King's Horseman. New York: Hill and Wang, 1975.

Other readings will be assigned from a variety of sources in the first unit of the course and will be distributed during class.

OVERVIEW:

The central project of this course, traditionally, is to teach students to write more effectively, to identify and mimic rhetorical strategies employed by the Great Orators, and to imbibe what academics have termed "the best of what has been thought and said." In some senses, this is the objective of this course. Yet, rather than just analyze rhetorical formulae and hone our syllogisms, students in this course will be asked to invade the enthymeme at the heart of such traditional curriculum and inquire into the various implications of cultural work (or, W.I.R.C.), from eulogies, epistles, polemics, treatises, manifestoes, and satires to artistic representations and

dialogues to dramatic scripts to cinematic spectacles. Students will be asked to collectively interpret and discuss these cultural representations in light of a central theme: Representations of Power, and in light of the diverse critical perspectives they will engage. Working through a series of critical arguments, the course aims to develop crucial skills in critical thinking and articulation by promoting participation in the foundational ideologies, central concepts, and current debates that comprise our own roles in the *teatrum mundi*.

COURSE BREAKDOWN:

The course is essentially divided into three main arenas of inquiry, from expository prose to art to theater/film. Each unit includes at least one writing assignment to capitalize upon discussions. Students will be asked to move from initial writings that promote critical "brooding" to persuasive, contextual, documented, and finally intertextual argumentation. The assignments will include peer reviews, conference workshops, and an oral presentation.

UNIT 1: From Rhetorical Triangles to Critical Sites

The first unit invites students to engage cultural expression via the persuasive essay form, reading a variety of discursive acts from Pericles and Paul to Castro and Chief Seattle. Beginning with Aristotle, students will inquire into both the rhetorical mechanisms of a text and its ideological implications, its cultural voices, its enactments of discourses of Power. Readings have been arranged in terms of rubrics of Power, from patriarchy and property, to mastery and resistance. Students will be asked not only to interpret singular texts in this unit, but to question the larger issue of the function of expository prose in cultural work. Assignments include a critical brood and two critical analyses (10%, 10%, 15% respectively).

UNIT 2: Talking Pictures: The Ideology of Iconography

In this unit students will transfer their critical gaze to the work of visual art, "reading" artistic texts for their ideological implications and discussing a variety of essays concerning the role of art in cultural construction. Readings will include diaries, manifestoes, and epistolary excerpts from Van Gogh, Giacometti, Orozco, the Mexican Syndicate of Revolutionary Artists, Nazis on Degenerate Art, Breton, Trotsky, Henry Moore et al. Students will pursue the contextual implications of a given artist, work, or movement in their own documented arguments (20%) and will have the chance to work through those ideas in an open student forum that will allow others to benefit from evidence, tactics, or theses proffered.

UNIT 3: Master-Scripts and Counter-Clips: The Stage/Set as a Site of Struggle

In the final unit of the course, students will make another critical shift from the power of the visual image to the theatrical in an attempt to unpack the role of dramatic presentation and cinematic production in cultural work. Moving from thesis-centered analysis to thematic interpretation, students will read three plays and view two films that center on some of the ideological tensions we have examined throughout the semester. Irish playwright Brian Friel, Nigerian playwright Wole Soyinka, and Martinican playwright Aime Cesaire will be juxtaposed

with either Cuban filmmaker T.G. Alea's Fresas y chocolate or Akira Kurasawa's Roshomon to construct an intertextual argument (20%) that promotes comparatist sensibilities as the course closes. A Final Exam Essay (15%) will beckon a response to the underlying questions: How is culture a stage? How do we write our own parts in the script?

Course Policies:

Given the quick pace and somewhat intense subject matter of this course, you perhaps will not want to miss a class. Plus, we need your voice in discussions that will become crucial to both individual assignments and the overall conclusions of the course. Students are expected to be on time and prepared for every discussion, save the two they may excuse as absences.

The most effective grading system, I have found, is one that assumes not that the student begins with an `A' and is then proved to warrant demerits, but that the student begins with a blank slate and earns their way to a fully persuasive and powerful essay. Essays will be graded on a 15 point system from A-plus (15) to E-minus (1). I view the C grade as an evaluation of average, o.k., basics down, etc. I also tend to comment a great deal on papers, and this marginal dialogue is intended both to further my dialogue with individual students and to suggest revision strategies, probe ideas for future development, unpack main arguments further. To better enable such dialogue, no late papers will be accepted and the course cannot be completed with any grade higher than an `E' if coursework is left incomplete. DO NOT ABANDON SHIP...TURN IN SOMETHING. I also expect all technology to run magically without printer problems and the like. If you must call an audible and use the archaic typewriter, then gird up thy loins and get me your paper on the due date.

Finally, this course depends upon class discussion and an open critical forum. Do not spend your time attempting to pin down my opinions or to oppose my socratic method. I'll instigate, you interpret. Similarly, students should observe basic courtesies and modes of respect when heatedly debating topics. Remain critical, not cruel.

Daily Calender:

Aug. 26: Introductions. Begin discussing general theme of course.
Assign Aristotle, Rhetoric, Bk I, ch. 1-4; Bk II. ch. 1-11, 19-25.
Powerful Words:

Aug. 28: Discuss Aristotle, Book I, ch. 1-4.

Aug 31: Discuss Aristotle, Book II, ch. 1-11, 19-25. Discuss cultural critical triangle. Assign Brood.

Sept. 4-11: Power of Death. Read and Discuss:

Thucydides, "Pericles' Funeral Oration"
lincoln, "The Gettysburg Address"

Padraic Pearse, "At the Grave of O'Donovan Rossa"
Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, "On the Fear of Death"
Ken Saro-wiwa, "Eulogy"

Sept. 14-18: Power of Property. Read and Discuss:

John Locke, selections from Second Treatise on Government
Alexis de Tocqueville, selections from Notebooks
Upton Sinclair, "Chicago Slaughterhouse"
Anthony Burgess, "Is America Falling Apart?"
Karl Marx, selections from The German Ideology

Sept. 21-25: Power of Patriarchy. Read and Discuss:

Freud, selections from "Civilization and its Discontents"
Paul, I Corinthians
Wolstonecraft, "Vindication of the Rights of Woman"
Toni Morrison, "Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech"
Gloria Anzaldua, selections from Borderlands

Assign Critical Argument #1: Choose one of the discursive acts we have discussed and interpret how its rhetorical mechanisms enact its ideological implications or cultural meanings. 5-7 pages. Due Sept. 28.

Sept. 28-Oct. 2: Power Of Mastery. Read And Discuss.

Thucydides, "Melian Dialogue" and "Mytilinean Debate"
George Fitzhugh, "Slaves without Masters"
Andrew Jackson, "On Indian Removal"
Thomas Carlyle, "The Nigger Question"
Caesar, selections from The Conquest of Gaul

Oct. 5-9: Power of Resistance. Read and Discuss.

Fidel Castro, "Words to the Intellectuals"
King, "letter from Birmingham Jail"
Chief Seattle, "letter to President Pierce" and "Address"
Aime Cesaire, Discourse on Colonialism

Assign Critical Argument #2: Choose two of the expository essays we have examined and interpret them in light of each other. 5-7 pages. Due Oct. 16.

Oct. 9-16: Peer Conferences. Students should bring drafts of peer review. critical argument 2 for

Oct. 16-19: Fall Recess. View as much visual art as humanly possible.

UNIT 2: Powerful Images

Oct. 21-30: Read and Discuss selections from Chipp's Theories of Modern Art. Begin to decide research pursuits.

Nov. 2-6: Group library research for group presentations. Individual conferences on individual projects.

Nov. 9-13: Group Presentations. Documented Critical Argument due Nov. 13. 7-10 pages.

UNIT 3: Powerful Roles

Nov. 16-18: Read Césaire's A Tempest. Discuss.

Nov. 20-23: Read Friel's Translations. Discuss.

Nov. 24-30: Eat turkey. Discuss.

Dec. 2-4: Read Soyinka's Death and the King's Horseman. Discuss.

Dec. 7-9: Film Viewings. Classes cancelled. Viewings schedule TBA.

Dec. 7: Fresas y chocolate

Dec. 9: Roshomon

Dec. 11-16: Dreaded Final Exam. Final intertextual analysis due during exam. 5-7 page intertextual analysis of TWO of the works in unit 3.