

WRPR 0205: Race, Rhetoric, and Protest

Instructor: Dr. James Chase Sanchez

Meeting Time: Le Chateau 109, T/Th 9:30-10:45

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Course Description: Though many have dubbed the age of Obama as “post-racial,” race has played an important role in protest movements over the past few years, demonstrating race’s importance as a rhetorical identity marker. Of

course, racial protest is not a new phenomenon in America--from the violent insurrection of Nat Turner to the nonviolent protest of Martin Luther King Jr. to the contemporary #BlackLivesMatter campaign, race has been integral to many human and civil rights campaigns (due to the long history of racism in America). After only a few smaller racial protests toward the end of the 20th century, the #BLM movement struck a nerve in America, with racial issues



becoming front and center to civil rights in America. Therefore, the purpose of this course will be to interrogate racial protest campaigns and rhetorically understand effective strategies of dissent.

To begin, our class will first discuss discursive racial social movement actions and pinpoint gender, social, and intersectional components that were pillars in these movements while focusing on the inquiries of rhetoric. Then we will move to looking at non-discursive protest acts (such as sit-in campaigns, hunger strikes, and violent insurrection) and will rhetorically dissect their effectiveness outside of language. Our readings will focus on historical and contemporary protests, such as the Birmingham Bus Boycott, the Rodney King Riots, and the recent vandalization of Confederate statues, and we will work as a class to better understand the realms of persuasion embedded in each act.

Overall, our class will expand on our knowledge of race, rhetoric, and protest through our discussions, readings, and assignments. In our class we will write analyses of contemporary and historical protests, cultivate an archive of files on the Middlebury controversy, construct op-eds, and possibly even enact a protest as means of knowledge-making. These assignments will help us build a better understanding of these issues and will be key to the completion of the course.

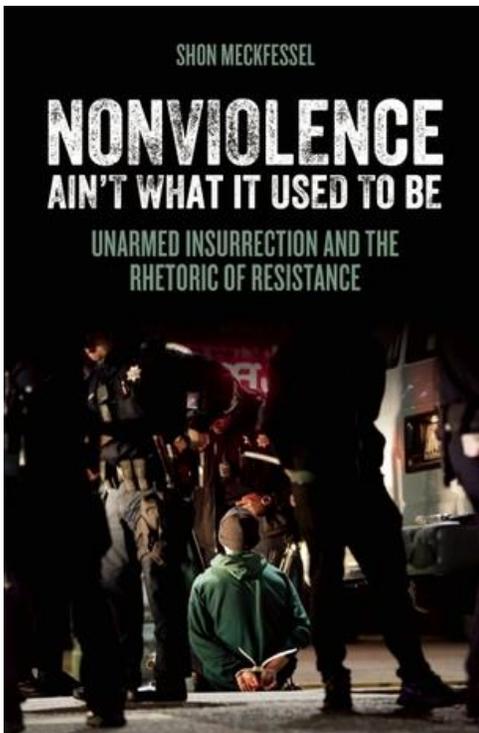
On a side note: Since the rhetorical nature of race often is politically charged and full of “hot takes,” this class will focus on race with a critical but sensitive lens, emphasizing understanding, empathy, and writing about not only personal viewpoints but the views of others as well. I ask for all students to be respectful of others in this classroom, be open to opposing perspectives, and be willing to challenge your own presumptions about racial topics. While the purpose of this course is not to dictate a single ideology of race, we should be mindful of respectful of all viewpoints in this class. This goes for you *and* me.

This course, like all courses at Middlebury, has certain outcomes that should be achieved by the end of the semester that are specific to our program and to this specific course. These outcomes are goals to work toward success in this classroom and should be conscious guides in thinking and writing in our classroom:

1. Describe, Define, Explain and Discuss how race, rhetoric, and protest are intermingled in historical and contemporary terms
2. Be able to rhetorically specific rhetorical protest acts and understand their persuasive underpinnings
3. Develop your own ideas of race, rhetoric, and protest and effectively use these ideas in connection with various genres of writing
4. Be able to effectively use research in one’s papers and adhere to MLA guidelines
5. Be able to critically examine one’s own environment

Required Textbooks:

1. Bowers, John W., et al. *The Rhetoric of Agitation and Control*, 3rd ed. 2009 ISBN-13: 9781577666141. \$6 on Amazon.
2. Meckfessel, Shon. *Nonviolence Ain’t What It Used to Be*. 2016. ISBN-13: 9781849352291. \$6 on Amazon.
3. Banks, Adam J. *Race, Rhetoric, and Technology*. 2005. ISBN-13: 9780805853131. \$19 on Amazon.
4. Various articles will be provided in class



Other Required Materials:

1. A pocket folder to contain your writings
2. A notebook for notes

Classroom Assignments Breakdown:

Voices of Dissent Analysis (3-5 pages) – 20%

Rhetorical Analysis on Protest Act (3-5 pages) – 20%

Middlebury Project (archives, assessment, and op-ed) – 15%

Enacting Protest and Reflection/Term Paper (6-8 pages) – 25%

Response Papers (3, 2-page papers) 10%

Class Participation 10%

Course Requirements:

1. Voices of Dissent—Very early in the semester, we will be analyzing and discussing language surrounding racial protest movements. In particular, we will be



examining famous speeches, letters, opinion pieces, and other types of discursive language that have been powerful tools in various social movements. You will then choose a discursive text related to a particular movement (which can be anything from a transcript of a speech, to a written letter, to a Twitter “rant”) and will rhetorically analyze how the language and tactics embedded within the speech act attempts to persuade audiences. This will help us achieve outcomes 1, 2, 3, and 4 of your classroom goals.

2. Protest Act Analysis- For your second assignment, you will rhetorically analyze a nondiscursive protest act, or an act that does not involve written or spoken language. Examples of this could be sit-in movements, hunger strikes, self-immolations, boycotts, acts of violence, acts nonviolence, and other acts. The purpose of this assignment is to see how



change can be created with the body, or with tools outside of language, that can be central to such protests. Overall, in this assignment, you will analyze how such nondiscursive means creates possibilities of persuasion. This will help us achieve outcomes 1, 2, 3, and 5 on your classroom goals.

3. Middlebury Project- About halfway through the semester, we will begin to talking about the Charles Murray incident at Middlebury to help us better examine how these issues affect the local. You will collate op-eds, articles, and stories written about the Middlebury controversy and will summarize your understanding of the story and its effects. Once you do this, you will write an op-ed about your opinions on the incident and will share what actions, if any, would have been more appropriate to create change. The purpose of this assignment is to analyze a very real situation on our campus

and to be able to effectively and critically examine it. You will all five outcomes in this assignment.

4. Enacting Protest and Reflection/Term Paper- Your final paper for the semester you will be asked to actually unite our discussions on discursive and non-discursive analysis of racial protest by enacting a non-discursive protest and then rhetorically analyzing and reflecting on it. This could mean a multitude of things--perhaps you want to boycott something, complete a sit-in, or do something more extreme like a hunger strike (we will discuss options and what might/might not be good places to do protest). After completing the act, you will then rhetorically analyze your own act, discuss why it was effective/not effective, what could have made it more effective, and so forth and will end this piece by reflecting on the process of

protest. (There will be other options open for students who may not want to do this.) This will achieve outcomes 1, 2, 3, and 4 for your course goals.

5. Response Papers- Three times throughout the semester, you will write a 2 page, double space response paper to the readings we have done in class. These papers are not solely summaries of the material but will be you demonstrating your analytical chops. I want to see how these readings are helping you with your assignments and helping you better understand contemporary news today. Thus, you will be demonstrating not only that you have read the material but that you can connect it to real happenings in the news and society today. These short papers will achieve all 5 course goals.

6. Class Participation- Class discussion is important in this course for two reasons: 1) Writing well is essentially communicating well, so being able to discuss your ideas and thoughts with others potentially could help your writing. Since this course is workshop/discussion based, we need participation to move our conversations along. 2) Talking about culture and assimilation is hard. So we need people to step up and share their opinions to keep the class moving. Also, doing in-class writing assignments, being on time, and attending class are all vital to your success in here and will comprise your participation grade.

Grade Scale:

A 4.0 Outstanding	A- 3.67
B+ 3.33	B 3.0 Exceeds Expectations
B- 2.67	C+ 2.33
C 2.0 Average	C- 1.67
D+ 1.33	D Below Average
F Failing	

Course Policies and Middlebury Information/Resources

Day-to-Day Activities: On a daily basis, I will ask you to complete small tasks, including readings, writings, workshopping thesis statements and paragraphs, research, and other activities too.

Completing these tasks is vital to your progress and advancement within the course and also are part of your discussion grades. Our daily activities focus on gaining momentum to complete our larger

papers and projects; therefore, all the readings, workshops, and small writings should build you toward your goal of completing each assignment. Failure to complete these tasks could result in failed learning opportunities and lower grades..

Drafts/Workshops: We will have multiple days in class to work on the actual assignments in class, which will require full participation. Though process work will not be evaluated in this class, it will always be important to spend your class time efficiently. Failure to do process work can affect your discussion grade. Also, multiple days throughout the semester, we will have workshop days that consist of you bringing multiple drafts of your paper to class for peer review. The days are important for writing our papers, creating a solid structure, and seeing any flaws or positive points in your paper. If you do not come to class with a completed draft and copies of the draft on these days, you will be counted absent.

Attendance: Since this is a workshop course that requires that you engage in discussions about writing, that you produce writing regularly, and that you respond to the writing of your peers, your attendance and participation in class are essential. What writers learn from workshoping simply cannot be made up, nor can it be learned when working alone.

Absences under the three-week maximum can still affect your grade adversely. After one week of unexcused absences (two in a TR class), half a letter grade can be subtracted from your final grade (i.e.: 4 absences means the final grade will be lowered by one full letter grade). Only official university absences—absences REQUIRED by an official body of Middlebury—will be excused, e.g. will not count against you. Official university absences must be documented in writing BEFORE they occur, and work due during the intended absence must be submitted in advance. Absences due to illness, sleeping in, and long weekends are unexcused—they all count toward the three weeks' absences limit. As you see, you get two “free” absences before your grade is hampered—if or how you use those is your choice, so you don’t need to tell me why you missed class (bear in mind that if you get sick and have already used your unexcused absences playing Halo 2, that’s also your choice; I’d suggest saving them for sick days).

Tardies: Please be on time for class. Students who are tardy are a distraction to the whole class. Being tardy will affect your daily grade. *Three tardies will equal one absence.* Keep in mind that in-class work cannot be made up.

Late Work: Papers will be due at the beginning of class and will be considered late thereafter. If you know you will be missing a class, you need to hand the assignment in ahead of time. Late work can lower your grade for the course.

Classroom Atmosphere: I envision our classroom as a place where all of us can share our ideas, thoughts, and questions without fear of being made fun of or embarrassed. Our classroom interaction will be based on respect for all of the writers and readers we encounter this semester. Please turn cell phones off during class.

Office Hours: During the office hours posted above, I will be in my office and available to talk with you about any questions, comments, or concerns you have about the course. Please stop by and see me during these hours—that time is yours. If the hours don't work for you, come make an appointment with me.

Communication and Support: Communication and respect are very important to our course. I attempt to return all phone calls and emails within 24 hours and appreciate the same from my students. Your feedback is essential to the success of this course. I will give you opportunities to reflect on the course, both in-class and anonymously, but I appreciate hearing from you at any point about your needs and experiences. If you are feeling overwhelmed or frustrated, I hope you will let me know as soon as possible, so I can help you get the support you need.

If you have learning issue of any kind that might impact your studies, please communicate with me and/ or the ADA office, so that we can make a plan to accommodate you. See <http://www.middlebury.edu/campuslife/diversity/ada/> for more information.

Although I will be meeting with you frequently, both during scheduled appointments and in office hours, I hope you will make use of support from the following:

1. Peer Writing Tutors (PWTs): Katie Allman (kallman@middlebury.edu) Possible add'l.
2. Library Liaison: Carrie Macfarlane- cmacfarl@middlebury.edu (x 5018)
3. CTLR: <http://www.middlebury.edu/administration/ctrl> (Peer tutors for all subjects including drop-in Sun-Th eve. Also professional tutors for writing, quantitative skills, and time management/ learning resources)
4. Anderson Freeman Center ([go/afc](http://www.middlebury.edu/afc))- Inclusive community, particular support for underrepresented and/or traditionally marginalized students.
5. Counseling Services- ([go/counseling](http://www.middlebury.edu/counseling))- Support on all kinds of emotional/social issues, including adjusting to college life!