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War's Sensorium

**Please note: This is a sample syllabus for a graduate course in Communication and Rhetorical Studies*

Course Description

This course asks students to consider how war, with special emphasis on the Global War on Terror, operates through and comprises specific sensory arrangements. In *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari describe affects as projectiles—the “catatonic fits, swoons, suspenses” of the war machine (441). The class defines affect related to pathos, feeling, and emotion, introduces students to a multiplicity of war affectivities (dis/unity, trauma, grief, fear and anxiety, feeling “brown and down”), considers the rhetorical methods used to analyze the unique object of affect, and charts changing war media (biopolitical, ballistic, informatic). The course includes a number of embodied assignments and culminates in a final research paper where students integrate the topics of war, rhetoric, and sensation to make a unique contribution to rhetorical studies.

Course Objectives. By the end of the semester, students will be able to:

- Contextualize war as an embodied, visceral happening
- Critically evaluate citizen and media consumption-patterns of war
- Understand how rhetorical studies engages sensation and war
- Learn and apply theories of sensation in the history of rhetoric
- Complete a publishable rhetorical analysis to build their research agendas

Required Readings

- Elisabeth Anker, *Orgies of Feeling: Melodrama and the Politics of Freedom* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press)
- Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (New York: Verso, 2010)
- J. Martin Daughtry, *Listening to War: Sound, Music, and Survival in Wartime Iraq* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015)
- Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Nomadology: The War Machine* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986)
- Joseph Masco, *The Theater of Operations: National Security Affect from the Cold War to the War on Terror* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014)
- Brian Massumi, *Ontopower: War, Powers, and the State of Perception* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015)
- Kumarini Silva, *Brown Threat: Identification in the Security State* (University of Minnesota Press, 2016).
- Articles and Book Chapter pdf's on Canvas

ASSIGNMENTS

Listening to War: Embodied Attunement (50 points)

One of our readings for the course is *Listening to War* by J. Martin Daughtry. The “Listening to War” assignment asks you to undertake an attunement to war rhetoric through sound by selecting a “war sound” and writing about it. Because war is every day and public discourse mutes certain aspects of war, attuning our senses to war raises important questions about who feels war, how war operates, and the effects of war on an environment. For this assignment, you will post a snippet of the sound (through Youtube, from your device, etc.) on the collective “Listening to War” Canvas page. All reproductions of the sound must be accessible, so please ensure it has Closed Captioning or provide a written description below it. Your sound must include the following trigger warning at the top of your post if the content is potentially traumatizing: “Trigger warning: Content includes graphic material.” You must also engage two peers’ posted sounds. Some examples of war sounds include: the songs that soldiers listen to when deployed, silence from a politician on a particular war issue, a member of a terrorist organization speaking, bombings, a survivor’s testimony, an interview with the mother of a soldier about PTSD, etc.

Collective Digital Writing (50 points)

As part of this course, you will be expected to contribute to public annotations *twice per focal reading* (indicated with *) through our online course page. For this, we use a software called hypothes.is (you will not be required to download anything). For the focal reading each week, we will build communal layers of knowledge and questions in preparation for class. These comments will feature heavily in our discussions. Your contributions should be substantial (in other words, if you post a .gif or image, you need to have some sort of text that explains its relevance). Posing questions, linking to other research articles or news articles, and offering your critical evaluation of claims are welcome. Please make each comments 2-3 sentences in length.

War Artifact Thick Description (100 points)

For this assignment, we will visit special collections devoted to the history of warfare. For the “War Artifact Thick Description” assignment, the class will visit the archives and consider how they are mediated. You will be responsible for engaging one of the artifacts through a short (1-2 page double spaced) close reading. The aim of this assignment is to flex your verbosity, in preparation for the final research paper, as well as consider the campus’s own involvement in war machinics. This assignment will be judged on the thickness of its description and an in-class presentation where you will read your essay aloud.

Reading Responses (300 points, 150 each)

You will be responsible for two reading response essays throughout the semester. The responses will be between 3-4 pages double-spaced. They are not intended as comprehensive summaries of the readings, but critical engagements with the material. In this assignment, you will choose one course reading and write a response. The response should include an introduction, a short summary of the argument of the reading, an analysis of the essay in question, and a conclusion. Your response may argue with the reading, branch off from it to explore an idea, or pose a question that went unanswered. The best responses offer a *generous* read, meaning they attempt

to closely read and engage the text on its own terms before offering something more. The responses will factor into your overall participation grade.

Final Rhetorical Analysis (500 points)

The final rhetorical analysis comprises two parts: a paper proposal and a final essay. You will turn in a 3-4 page double-spaced proposal justifying the relevance of your topic well in advance, so there will be ample time to develop and finesse your topic and arguments. At the end of the course, you will turn in a rhetorical criticism or theory paper: a rich, smart, evocative analysis of a rhetorical artifact. Rhetorical criticism papers should *illuminate* the artifact for your readers: What does it do? And why is that significant? For this assignment, you will turn in a 16-20-page publishable-quality paper that makes unique contributions to the field of rhetoric, security, war, affect theory, and/or media.

GRADING

Grades are determined based on the number of points earned out of a maximum of 1,000 points. This course *does not* award plus and minus grades. Final grades are calculated as follows:

A	900-1,000
B	800-899
C	700-799
D	600-699
F	0-599

COURSE POLICIES

Readings

Readings must be completed on the day they are listed on the course schedule. As we will discuss in class, the goal of the readings should be to read generously: consider the movements, arguments, and context. You are expected to contribute collective annotations online on the focal reading each class.

Discussion of Graded Assignments

I encourage you to discuss your work with me well in advance of due dates. Any grade appeals must occur no sooner than 24 hours after but no later than one week after receiving the evaluation.

Attendance

This course is heavily discussion based, so students are expected to attend each week. In order to be excused, you must provide documentation for all absences.

Academic Integrity

University standards regulating academic integrity (e.g., cheating, plagiarism, etc.) are strictly enforced. You can read more about the policies here:

http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php. This course emphasizes proper citation

and sourcing as ethical practices. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please do ask me.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The ADA is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation. The University of Texas at Austin offers support services for students with documented physical or psychological disabilities. Any students with a disability should visit with the instructor after requesting reasonable accommodations through the Service for Students with Disabilities: <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	Topic	Readings	Assignments
Th 8/31	Introduction to the Course	Deleuze and Guattari, complete <i>Nomadology</i> * Selections, <i>A Thousand Plateaus</i>	
BEGINNINGS			
T 9/5	Rhetoric and the Sensorium	Debra Hawhee, "Rhetoric's Sensorium"* Joshua Gunn, "Speech's Sanatorium" Jenny Rice, "Pathologia"	
Th 9/7	Affect, Feeling, Emotion	Massumi, "The Autonomy of Affect"* Hardt, "What Affects Are Good For" Brinkema, "Affective Fallacies"	
T 9/12	Pathos	Rei Terada, "Pathos: Allegories of Emotion"* Aristotle, selections from <i>Rhetoric</i>	
WAR AFFECTIVITIES			
Th 9/14	Dis/unity	Anker, <i>Orgies of Feeling</i> *	
T 9/19	Dis/unity	Biesecker, "No Time for Mourning"* Jeffrey Melnick, "Us"	
Th 9/21	Trauma	Daughtry, <i>Listening to War</i> *	Post your war sound to "Listening to War" Canvas page and engage two peers
T 9/26	Trauma	Hariman and Lucaites, "Public Identity and Collective Memory in U. S. Iconic Photography"* Brouwer and Horwitz, "The Cultural Politics of Progenic Auschwitz Tattoos"	
Th 9/28	Grief	Butler, <i>Frames of War</i> *	
T 10/5	Grief	Saas and Hall, "Restive Peace"*	
Th 10/7	Disgust	Williams, "Cluster Fuck"* Bayoumi, "A Bloody Stupid War"	Response Paper 1 Due
T 10/12	Fear and Anxiety	Masco, <i>The Theater of Operations</i> *	
Th 10/14	Fear and Anxiety	Ahmed, "Affective Economies"* Puar, "The Turban is Not a Hat" Selection from Kundnani, <i>The Muslims Are Coming!</i>	
T 10/19	Feeling Down	Garcia-Rojas, "(Un)Disciplined Futures"* Silva, <i>Brown Threat</i> Muñoz, "Feeling Brown"	

Th 10/21	Acquiescence	Ohl, “Nothing to See or Fear” [*] Saas and Engels, “Ends-less War” Oliver, “Innocence, Vulnerability, and Violence”	
RESISTANCE			
T 10/24	Campus Connections	No readings	Visit War Collection
Th 10/26	Campus Connections	No readings	Thick Description Due, Class Presentation
T 10/31	Organization	Selections from Ivie, <i>Dissent from War</i> [*]	
Th 11/2	The Limits of Liberalism	No readings: In-class viewing of <i>Fahrenheit 9/11</i>	Paper Proposal Due
MODES/MEDIA			
T 11/7	Biopolitics	Anderson, “Affect and Biopower” [*] Selections from Hayes, <i>Violent Subjects and Rhetorical Cartography in the Age of the Terror Wars</i>	
Th 11/9	Necropolitics	Mbembé, “Necropolitics” [*]	
T 11/14	Ballistics	Gronnvoll and McCauliff, “Bodies That Shatter” [*] Selections from Bennett, <i>In the Ruins of the Cold War Bunker</i>	
Th 11/16	Lateral	No readings: In-class viewing of <i>Occupation: Dreamland</i>	Response Paper 2 Due
T 11/21	No Class: Break		
Th 11/23	No Class: Break		
T 11/28	Entertainment	Selections from Stahl, <i>Militainment, Inc.</i> [*]	
Th 11/30	Informatics	Massumi, <i>Ontopower</i> [*]	
COURSE WRAP-UP			
T 12/5	Final Paper Presentations		Final Research Paper Presentations
Th 12/7	Final Paper Presentations		Final Rhetorical Analysis Paper Due, Final Paper Presentations