

# English 489: Seminar in Rhetoric

## The Rhetoric of Reconciliation

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226 Pearson, TR 11-12, M 2-3

It's hard to say whether the 20th century was more brutal than previous eras; certainly we can feel horror at the way that atrocity became industrialized. But the commitment to speak and act against mass violence *is* unique to our age. We have developed institutions like the United Nations, groups like Amnesty International, and laws like the International Declaration of Human Rights. And when we cannot prevent crimes against humanity, we are determined to help people end the violence and find ways to live together in peace—that is, to reconcile. Now, the means of reconciliation are fragile, and they require a lot of resources. Most importantly, they require the resources of speech--the power of words to change minds, hearts, memories and relationships. In this class we will be examining this speech: the *rhetoric of reconciliation*.

**Goal:** This class promises that you will develop *responsible opinions* about the ways people can speak in order to address histories of atrocities. What are "responsible" opinions?

- they are based in a *broad* knowledge of what has happened in the world;
- they arise from a *deep* understanding of the powers and limits of speech;
- they are consistent with your *own* life experience and philosophy—you *care* about them;
- they can be expressed and defended—they *respond* to others' views.

**Starting point:** I do not presume that you have any special knowledge of human rights history or speech act theory. I do presume that you have the ability to read and understand original (non-textbook) materials, to give a decent class presentation, to write short papers, and to do web and library research. Coursework in rhetorical analysis/criticism or theory will also be useful, although not essential.

### Two principles guiding us from starting point to goal:

1. *Responsibility.* It's my job to do everything I can to help you learn. But fundamentally, your progress is in your hands, especially in an advanced seminar such as this. It's up to you to take advantage of the opportunities and freedoms this class will offer, to invest your time wisely and whole-heartedly, and to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of your own learning.
2. *Accommodation.* Everyone learns differently. Therefore *everything in this syllabus can be changed*—if you ask, and give me a good reason. Hint: Tell me how it will help you learn.

**General overview of the path to come:** During the first three weeks, we will work to develop a basic understanding of the central problem we're addressing, looking at the issues in an abstract way. From weeks 4 to 11, we'll take up a series of case studies. We'll examine five different situations (Argentina, WWII/Pacific, South Africa, Guatemala, and one TBA), and consider five different speech acts (amnesties, memorials, apologizing, story-telling, and accusing). For each case study, we'll spend a day learning about the history of atrocities, as presented by a student group. Then we'll study the speech act involved, and analyze some actual discourse from the events. The last month of the class will be devoted to practice and application. As your final project, you will design and explain discourse that addresses our own history of human rights abuse: American slavery.

## Resources for getting from starting point to goal:

1. *Class time.* This is a discussion-based course, which means that most of your learning will probably occur during class time. Attendance is therefore vital. Attendance is required the last day of class, subject to a one step grade penalty (e.g., B to B-).

2. *Peer group.* Your group's main job is to be the class experts on one of the countries we'll be studying and to lead the class one day; you'll also share at least one other class presentation. You can also use your group to improve your learning, e.g. by reviewing the readings prior to writing your papers, or by cooperating on the final project--whatever you decide will help.

3. *The instructor.* It is easiest to reach me via email (goodwin@iastate.edu). I also *strongly* encourage you to come to my office hours (or make an appointment) with any concerns:

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4. *Readings.* Three books (Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness*; Gobodo-Madikizela, *A Human Being Died That Night*; Robinson, *The Debt*) are available at the UBS. I'll be handing out two "packets" of articles.

5. *Course webpage.* The course webpage will store copies of all course assignments and link to useful resources. Check it out also for hints for the quiz on Tuesday of second week:

**<http://www.public.iastate.edu/~goodwin/eng489/index.html>**

6. *Your fellow students, the ISU community, and the rest of your life.* Basically, if you never discuss this class with someone outside of class, then we've failed.

## Expectations:

As mentioned above, this class is centered on class discussion. All other assignments except for the final project are intended to prepare you to discuss well.

Expect to hand in a paper just about every class day--sometimes summarizing the reading, sometimes responding to it or applying it. These papers will be a major source of evidence of your own learning (see Grading, below). I don't accept papers by email, so if you're not coming to class, either put it in my mailbox or have a friend hand it in. Since the main purpose of the papers is to prepare for class discussions, I do not accept late work. Therefore if you start missing the papers, see me immediately to arrange for a special accommodation of your situation.

Expect an occasional "pop" quiz on the readings, again to provide some evidence of your learning. If I don't announce the question(s) in advance, the questions will probably be: something like "What is the author's main point? What are the main arguments/examples she gives in support?"

Expect to write several papers analyzing your own progress in the course, to meet with me at least twice to discuss your learning, and to peer review your groupmates at the end of the term.

The major assignments are: (1) the day your group will be leading the class; and (2) the final project, applying your knowledge to the case of reparations for slavery (which you can also do as a group).

In sum: in line with the general policy for college courses, expect to spend about 2-3 hours outside of class for every hour in class.

## Schedule in detail

day	date	What to expect in class	What to read prior to class
1 T	Aug 26	What is this class about?.	---
<b>R</b>	28	Case enactment: York, PA Sign-ups for "atrocitiy books"	York case materials Minow, chap. 1, "Introduction"
<b>2 T</b>	Sep 2	Organization day: how this class will work--grading, assignments & all that. First "pop" quiz	This syllabus
<b>R</b>	4	"Wrongs, resentment, reconciliation"-- what are they?	Hampton, "Forgiveness, Resentment and Hatred" Minow, chap. 1 & 2
<b>3 T</b>	9	"Speech acts"--what are they?	Austen, "Performative Utterances"
<b>R</b>	11	"Gross violations of human rights"-- what are they? Reports on your "atrocitiy book"	Finish your "atrocitiy book" Declaration on Human Rights
<b>4 T</b>	16	Group leads class on the history of human rights abuse in Argentina	Reading as assigned by group
<b>R</b>	18	Analysis of the amnesties & memorials in Argentina; how (& whether) they work	Timeline of amnesties Nino, "View from the Trenches" Mellibovsky, "Circle of Love" Foss & Domenici, "Haunting Argentina" Minow, pp. 137-145 (on amnesty & memorials)
<b>5 T</b>	23	No class--individual assessment meetings with instructor	---
<b>R</b>	25	Group leads class on the history of human rights abuse during WWII in the Pacific	Reading as assigned by group
<b>6 T</b>	30	How (& whether) the speech act of apology works	Kort, "What is an apology" Tavuchis, "Apologies from the Many to the Many" Minow, pp. 112-117 (on apologies)
<b>R</b>	Oct 2	Analysis of the WWII apologies	Historical background on Japanese apologies Ikeda, "Memorial Speech" Diet Resolution Murayama, "Memorial Speech" U.S. Congress, "Civil Rights Act" Bush, Letter Clinton, Letter
<b>7 T</b>	7	Group leads class on the history of human rights abuse in South Africa	Reading as assigned by group
<b>R</b>	9	How (& whether) the speech act of story-telling works	Minow, chap. 4, "Truth Commissions" Tutu, "Ubuntu"

<b>8 T</b>	14	Analysis of the victim's stories	"Constitution of South Africa" Boraine, "Breaking the Silence" Krog, "The Shepard's Tale" A testimony before the TRC, TBA
<b>R</b>	16	Group leads class on the history of human rights abuse in Guatemala	Reading as assigned by group
<b>9 T</b>	21	What if the victim's story is <i>false</i> ?	Menchú, from <i>I, Rigoberta Menchú</i> Rohter, "Tarnished Laureate" Stoll, "The Battle of Rigoberta"
<b>R</b>	23	Should we heed the <i>perpetrator's</i> story?	Finish reading Gobodo-Madikizela, <i>A Human Being Died That Night</i> Mahomed, "Judgment"
<b>10 T</b>	28	Organization day: What's happening for the rest of the semester?	Minow, chap. 6, "Facing History"
<b>R</b>	30	Instructor leads class on the history of human rights abuse in a country TBA	Reading TBA
<b>11 T</b>	Nov 4	How (& whether) the speech act of accusing works	Minow, chap. 3, "Trials" Reading TBA
<b>R</b>	6	No class--individual assessment meetings with instructor	--
<b>12 T</b>	11	Reports from groups on aspects of the history of U.S. slavery	---
<b>R</b>	13	Debate "reparations" for slavery. Note: Last day to request a personalized grading scheme.	Lincoln, "Second Inaugural" Finish reading Robinson, <i>The Debt</i> Secours, "The Reparations Bandwagon" King, "Slavery's Scar" McWhorter, "Against Reparations" Steele, "A Childish Illusion of Justice?" Fanon, from <i>Black Skin, White Masks</i>
<b>13 T</b>	18	Debate "reparations" for slavery	---
<b>R</b>	20	No class; work on final projects	---
		Thanksgiving week!	---
<b>14 T</b>	Dec 2	No class; work on final projects and meet with instructor	---
<b>R</b>	4	Final project presentations	---
<b>Sun</b>	7	Dinner at instructor's; 1011 Harding, 6:00 p.m. Be there or be square.	
<b>15 T</b>	9	Final project presentations	---
<b>R</b>	11	Final class day: summary, and course & peer group evaluation. Attendance required subject to a one step grade penalty.	---
<b>16 T</b>	16	Final projects and final self-assessments handed in, 5:00 p.m., in my mailbox, 226 Pearson	---

## Grading

I am convinced that each of you can reach the highest level of accomplishment, and I am committed to doing everything I can to help you do so.

By University rule, I am also required to give you a letter grade at the end of the semester reflecting your actual level of accomplishment in meeting the course goal. The following will be the basic or “default” method of assessing your accomplishments in order to assign letter grades:

Effort to learn oneself (as shown by class participation, small papers, quizzes, advance questions, self-assessments and meetings with instructor, etc.)	One-third
Contribution to others' learning (as shown by class participation, group work and peer assessments, etc.)	One-third
Final project	One-third

See the draft "grading rubric" (next) for details of what I think, or guess, these categories mean.

Now, I understand that this grading scheme may cause you some anxiety. It is not like schemes you know from high school, where you are given "points" for each little thing you obediently do. Instead, under this scheme it's up to us to work together to try to reach a holistic judgment of the quality of your learning in this class. Before rejecting this scheme, you might want to brainstorm some of its advantages, and to remember as well some of the disadvantages of the "points" method. Also consider the following:

1. I have used this way of grading successfully in the past. I have found that students are well able to judge their own accomplishments. If you've ever thought that you got a grade you didn't deserve (either too high or too low), then you know that you can judge what grade you do deserve—and I mean *deserve*, not wish for.
2. We'll be working on the grading rubric throughout the semester, to ensure that by the end of the term we all share a sense of what "Excellent" and "Adequate" work in this class is. In other words, you will have input into the standards you will be judged by.
3. There should be no mystery or surprises about your final grade. Each of you will be required to meet with me at several points in the semester, at which times we'll review your progress. If at any other time you feel anxiety or doubt about your progress in the class, come and see me immediately.
4. If this grading system is too stressful either to you individually or to the class generally, we can switch over to another system, according to the "Principle of Accommodation." My only request is not to wait to the last minute to ask for the change. In particular, all requests for personalized grading systems must be made no later than Thursday of 12th week (13 Nov)

**Finally, please note that class attendance is required Thursday of 15th week (11 Dec), subject to a one step grade penalty (e.g., B to B-).**

## "Atrocity" Book List

### Argentina

Arditti, Rita, *Searching for Life* (1999)--a history of the search of the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo to locate the kidnapped and then adopted children of their disappeared children. L

Carlson, Eric Stener, *I Remember Julia* (1996)--a war crimes investigator reconstructs the life and death of one of the disappeared. L

\*Mellibovsky, Matilde, *Circle of Love over Death* (1997)--a collection of stories that the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo tell of their disappeared children, with a narrative of the growth of the movement.

Partnoy, Alice, *The Little School* (1986)--stories based on the author's experiences as a "disappeared" person. L

### Guatemala

*Guatemala: Never Again* (1999)--the official report of the Human Rights office on the atrocities. L

\*Menchú, Rigoberta, *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (1984)--the Nobel Prize winner's account of her life and the massacres of her family and community. L

Ortiz, Dianna, *The Blindfold's Eyes* (2002)--an American nun's story of her struggle to heal after being kidnapped and tortured.

Wilkinson, Daniel, *Silence on the Mountain* (2002)--a human rights investigator pieces together the stories of violence in one community. L

### South Africa

Malan, Rian, *My Traitor's Heart* (1990)--an Afrikaaner journalist tells the stories of apartheid's violence. L

Mandela, Nelson, *Long Walk to Freedom* (1994)--the autobiography of the Nobel Prize winner, leader of the African National Congress and first president of post-apartheid South Africa. L

Mathabane, Mark, *Kaffir Boy* (1986)--an autobiographical account of growing up black in a "township" (ghetto) outside Johannesburg. L

Ramphele, Mamphela, *Across Boundaries* (1995)—the autobiography of a black woman activist and doctor.

Woods, Donald, *Biko* (1978)--a biography of the Black Consciousness leader by his white journalist friend.

### World War II/Pacific

Ballard, J.G. *The Empire of the Son* (1984)—a novelized account of the author's boyhood in a Japanese concentration camp outside of Shanghai. L

Chang, Iris, *The Rape of Nanking* (1997)--a journalist recounts the devastation of one Chinese city at the hands of the Japanese. L

Hicks, George, *The Comfort Women* (1994)--a history of the Korean women forced into prostitution by the Japanese army. L

\*Inada, Lawson Fusao (ed.), *Only What We Could Carry* (2000)--a collection of stories, poems and pictures from the camps in which the U.S. confined Japanese-Americans. L

Knox, Donald, *Death March: The Survivors of Bataan* (1981)--a collection of testimonies from U.S. POWs held by the Japanese in the Philippines. L