Please read and save this syllabus. If you remain in the course after the first class, then you are stipulating that you will abide by university and course policies, and that you will be a positive, contributing member of the class.

“As a classroom community, our capacity to generate excitement is deeply affected by our interest in one another, in hearing one another’s voices, in recognizing one another’s presence.”

-bell hooks

Hunter H. Fine, Ph.D.
Humboldt State University
Syllabus: Communication 300.1

AMERICAN PUBLIC DISCOURSE

Class Times: TH 5-6:20pm
Class Location: SH 128

Office: Telonicher House 54 Rm. 6
Office Hours: MW 5-7pm
Email: hf234@humboldt.edu
Office Phone: (707) 826-5430
Mailbox: Communication Office, Telonicher House 54

Course/Cause

This class functions to critique genres of discourse and their importance in American Culture (HSU Catalog). American Public Discourse is defined as spoken, written, and mass media texts that are widely circulated in the U.S.A. Rhetoric and public discourse are the foundations of democracy and popular culture. What used to be relegated to ceremonial, political, and entertaining oratory dating back to the fifth century B.C.E. we now apply to music, film, television, the internet and even how we walk down the street and what we wear when we do so. Throughout this course we will develop the tools to critique popular culture through the examination of particular artifacts within American Public Discourse, which includes everyday events, objects, and gestures. These everyday activities have serious implications on our individual and collective identity, how we treat other people, and the nature of the world we live in. We are all producers of social discourse in that we consume, create, and perpetuate systems of signs on a daily basis. In this class we will strive to be critics of this on-going social discourse.

Throughout this class we pay particular attention popular discourse, which has enabled a broad audience to encounter unique cultural texts that often transcend historical and social power dynamics while remaining entrenched in our postmodern reality. Hip-hop as a cultural discourse in America is an applicable example of a complete and uniquely American discourse that transcends many traditional restraints in the dissemination and reception of cultural messages. We will be examining an artifact from this discourse this
semester and apply a wide array of discursive texts to this examination. Ultimately, we will all individually conduct our own artifact analysis of an artifact of our choice and remix a particular discourse.

Readings
We will be using a reader that consists of carefully selected excerpts from various historical texts. These readings are available in PDF form on our class CANVAS site. You are responsible for downloading and/or printing this reader and READING it. There will also be additional expositional readings made available via the course website.

*Reading 10: Peterson, James Braxton. “It’s Yours”: Hip Hop Worldviews in the Lyrics of Nas.” *Born to Use Mics*. Eds. Michael Eric Dyson and Sohail Daulatzi. New York: Civitas. 75-95

* Readings with an asterisk will be presented to the class as a position presentation.

Course Websites
*Canvas Site
www.publicdiscourse.weebly.com
Outcomes
To equip each student with a better understanding of public discourse in the U.S.A.

To provide each student with an opportunity to examine how public discourse in the U.S.A. has helped to shape her/his identity

To describe and explain the contributions of the discipline of Communication Studies to an understanding both of public discourse and of ourselves

Gain understanding of relationships between self, message, and others in public communication interaction and production

Embody/enact communication behaviors that reflect each of the goals listed

HSU Learning Goals
Effective communication through written and oral modes.

Critical and creative thinking skills in acquiring a broad base of knowledge and applying it to complex issues.

Competence in a major area of study.

Appreciation for and understanding of an expanded world perspective by engaging respectfully with a diverse range of individuals, communities and viewpoints.

Policies
Class Attendance Policy
As members of a learning community instructors and students agree to a tacit social contract. That contract ensures that all participants will attend every class meeting, engage one another in an informed and spirited manner, and complete all assigned responsibilities on time. In other words, when you signed up for this course, attendance, and participation became two of your assigned responsibilities. Like any other assignment you will be awarded points for meeting that responsibility. More than three absences will adversely affect your final grade. Remember that the reason for missing class does not change the fact of your absence. It is also your responsibility to be on time to class, three late arrivals result in one absence. Please avoid arriving more than 15 minutes late to class, anything after will be considered an absence and should be avoided.

Class Activities
This class involves physical as well as mental effort. The in-class activities will sometimes include physical activity and interaction. Some activities are done solo, some with groups. Come to class prepared to commit to being physically and mental present.
**Classroom Civility**

Students are expected to be thoughtful in their speech, performance, and general behavior. Sexist, racist, homophobic, anti-Semitic, gender biased, and other forms of disrespectful speech have no place in critical contemporary public discourse and I would be doing you a disservice if I tolerated it in class. Participation is an important part of this class; however, please avoid creating a conversational monopoly that constrains discussion.

**Accessibility**

In the spirit of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), I wish to make this course as accessible as possible to students with differing abilities, temporary medical conditions, or mental or emotional health concerns that may affect any aspect of course assignments or participation. I invite you to communicate with me at the beginning of the semester or at your discretion about any accommodations that will improve your experience of or access to the course.

**Academic Integrity and Reading**

Academic integrity refers to the adherence to agree upon moral and ethical principles when engaging in academic or scholarly pursuits. Likewise, reading the carefully selected reader is a major component of the tacit class contract. It is also a foundation of intellectual engagement and should be done with a critical sensibility and rigor.

**Philosophy/Pedagogy**

Critical. Aiming to create a unique yet representative civic intellectual space, which encourages all to have an individual and powerful voice, I take the thoughts, ideas, and lives of every student seriously. I am as critical of them as I am of myself as we all have much to learn, gain, and lose.

**Office Hours**

I will be available during my office hours and encourage students to contact me with any concerns they might have regarding the class climate and/or content.

**Grading/Evaluation of Performance**

The grading criteria are interconnected, as effective class competence entails knowledge of content (tests), critical reflection and active listening (discussion). The areas will be graded concurrently and formally; as you are being graded for speaking (presentations) others are being graded for listening (participation). In-turn responses and assignments should exhibit a progression of such thought (papers) and further research outside of class time.

- Unit I Test (100 points)
- Unit II Test (100 points)
- Reading Presentation (50 points)
- Reading Presentation Handout/Visuals (50 points)
- Reading Presentation Responses (10 points each/100 points)
Discourse Analysis (100 points)
Discourse Remix (100 points)
Attendance (100 points)
0 absences 100 points
1-3 absences 90-99 points
3-6 absences 89-60 points
7-9 absences 59-40 points (potential fail)
-10 absences 39-0 points (potential fail)
Total points: 700

Scale:
A=90-100%  C=70-79%  F=59% and below
B=80-89%  D=60-69%

Tentative Spring Schedule
Course schedule is tentative and subject to change. You are responsible for any changes or modifications.

UNIT I

1/22, 1/24: TTH
Introduction to Course Content and Context

1/29, 1/31: TTH
Rhetoric and Democracy

2/5, 2/7: TTH
Popular Discourse Introduction

2/12, 2/14: TTH
Popular Discourse and Theory (first reading presentation)

2/19, 2/21: TTH
Myths, Values, and Wrestling

2/26, 2/28: TTH

Fashion, Thrifting, and Gender

3/5, 3/7: TTH


Food Discourse and Gender

3/12, 3/14: TTH

Unit I Test

UNIT II

3/19, 3/21: TTH

Classes Cancelled: *Spring Break*

3/26, 3/28: TTH


Postmodern Theory and Popular Discourse

4/2, 4/4: TTH


Hip-Hop Discourse and Whiteness

4/9, 4/11: TTH


Hip-Hop Discourse and Gender

4/16, 4/18: TTH

*Reading 10: Peterson, James Braxton. “It’s Yours”: Hip Hop Worldviews in the Lyrics of Nas.” *Born to Use Mics*. Eds. Michael Eric Dyson and Sohail Daulatzi. New York: Civitas. 75-95

Hip-Hop Discourse and the Rhetoric of Nas

4/23, 4/25: TTH


Hip-Hop Discourse and the Rhetoric of Nas
4/30, 5/2: TTH
*Reading 12: Carrington, Victoria. “I Write, Therefore I am.” Visual Communication 8.4
Spatial Discourse and Graffiti

5/7, 5/9: TTH
Final Presentations

5/13-5/17: Final Examination Week
Unit II Test