AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNICATION
CSS 4354 and PSC 4340
Spring 2011
T/R 9:30-10:45

Dr. Martin J. Medhurst
Office Hours: T/R 12:30-2:00;
213 Marrs McLean W: 2:00-5:00 and by appt.
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Course Description: This course is a survey of the place of African American rhetoric in American political life, from the Founding period to the present. We will be looking for important themes that recur in the rhetoric, topics that are of abiding concern, argumentative strategies employed, stylistic markers, other indicators of the literature of a people, and their political significance. Speeches can be studied both as a kind of rhetorical literature—spoken rather than written, prose rather than poetry, factual rather than fictive—and as a kind of rhetorical history, significant landmarks of responses to particular political developments. We will be interested in the various ways in which African Americans have tried to cope rhetorically with the political circumstances they have faced, including slavery, prejudice, discrimination, laws, mores, habits, beliefs, and cultural differences. We will also examine the role that faith has played in the lives and rhetorical responses of many of these African American public leaders, including orators, statesmen, lawyers, teachers, ministers, and businesspeople. How has faith affected their rhetoric and what place does it have in the politics of a liberal polity?

Required Texts: Juan Williams and Quinton Dixie, This Far by Faith: Stories from the African American Religious Experience (New York: William Morrow, 2003)


Course Evaluation: If you are an undergraduate, the course evaluation will be as follows:

Attendance and Classroom Participation: 10%
Oratorical Biography Paper 30%
Article Report: 20%
Mid-Term Exam 20%
Final Exam 20%

If you are a graduate student, the course evaluation will be as follows:

Attendance and Classroom Participation 10%
Two Article Reports 20%
Research Bibliography 20%
Research Paper 30%
Book Review 20%

Attendance and Participation: Much of this course will involve discussion of speeches and other documents. It is imperative that you complete each day’s readings and come to class prepared to discuss them. Plan to participate in each day’s class discussion. I will keep detailed notes each day concerning classroom attendance and participation.

Oratorical Biography Paper: This is a 6-9 page paper in which you discuss the oratorical career of a particular African American orator. It may be any person from any time period as long as that person had a notable career as a speaker. He or she could be a minister, a politician, a statesman, an educator, a lawyer, or any other profession in which speaking was a central part of the job. The paper should outline the person’s career, talk about their important speeches, the themes they regularly developed, the kind of style they used, the audiences they reached, and anything else that was unique about their speaking. Due April 19.

Book Review: If you are a graduate student, you should select a book from the list below and write a 5-7 page review of it. I will provide an example of what an academic book review looks like and what it should accomplish. All reviews should be typed, double-spaced, with one inch margins all around. Due March 29.
Books For Review:


William McFeely, *Frederick Douglass* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991)


William Wiethoff, *The Insolent Slave* (South Carolina, 2003)


**Article Reports:**
Starting the third week of class, we will have one or two article reports each week on a significant piece of communication scholarship that is directly related to the topic for the week. Each report should be a one-page, typed outline that is duplicated for distribution to the class. Each person will have 10 minutes to report orally, followed by 5 minutes of Q and A. Graduate students will do two article reports.

**Research Bibliography:**
This is a comprehensive bibliography in which graduate students try to find all the extant pieces of rhetoric--written or oral--from one of the following African American leaders.

- Alexander Crummell
- Henry Highland Garnet
- Maria W. Stewart
- Henry McNeal Turner
- Booker T. Washington
- W. E. B. Du Bois
- A. Philip Randolph
- Whitney Young
- Mary McLeod Bethune
- Thurgood Marshall
- James Farmer

I suggest that you begin by making an inventory of everything the person has written—speeches, sermons, tracts, pamphlets, etc. Then find out where this material is located and order it through interlibrary loan. Once a copy is in your possession, read it and add it to the bibliography. I am especially interested in your ability to find and catalogue as many speeches and/or sermons as possible. The more the better. **Due April 12.**
Mid-Term Exam

This will be a blue book examine over the speeches we have read in the first part of the course. All undergraduates must take this exam. **Thursday, March 3.**

Final Exam

**Thursday, May 5, 2:00-4:00.** Bluebooks will be provided.

Research Paper

All graduate students must turn in a research paper of 20-30 pages, typed and double-spaced. This paper should grow out of the research bibliography and should make a significant argument about the rhetoric of the person under study. All topics must be cleared with me. **Due, May 5.**

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Syllabus

Week 1: Tuesday, January 11: Introduction to Course

Thursday, January 13: Slavery in North America

**READ:** *This Far by Faith* (TFBF), pp. 1-41.


Week 2: Tuesday, January 18: Barack Obama as an African American Orator


Thursday, January 20: President Obama’s Inaugural Ceremony and Address

READ: Barack Obama, “Inaugural Address.”

Week 3: Tuesday, January 25: African Americans and the American Revolution
The Slavery Debate in the Constitutional Convention


Thursday, January 27: Free Men in an Un-Free Land, 1787-1799

READ: LEV, pp. 20-58.

Week 4: Tuesday, February 1: Free Men in an Un-Free Land, 1800-1827


TFBF, pp. 43-73

Thursday, February 3: Seeds of Protest, 1828-1833

READ: LEV, pp. 110-130; 135-143.

Week 5: Tuesday, February 8: Organizing Protest, 1833-1841

READ: LEV, pp. 154-165; 168-177.
Thursday, February 10: African American Abolitionists

READ: LEV, pp. 189-217.

Week 6: Tuesday, February 15: Early Frederick Douglass, 1841-1860

READ: LEV, pp. 246-268; 308-312; 354-357.

Thursday, February 17: Later Frederick Douglass, 1861-1888

READ: LEV, pp. 567-577; 687-707.

Week 7: Tuesday, February 22: Sojourner Truth

READ: LEV, pp. 226-229; 269-271; 463-467; 503-506.

TFBF, pp. 75-99.

Thursday, February 24: The Building Storm, 1850-1860

READ: LEV, pp. 220-226; 273-287; 313-321

Week 8: Tuesday, March 1: Civil War, 1861-1865

READ: LEV, pp. 340-354; 357-377; 392-397; 407-410; 426-428

Thursday, March 3: MID-TERM EXAM

Week 9: SPRING BREAK: March 5-13

Week 10: Tuesday, March 15: Reconstruction, 1865-1877
Thursday, March 17: Reconstruction Statesmen, 1871-1880

READ: LEV, pp. 432-445; 460-462; 467-472; 536-549.

Week 11: Tuesday, March 22: Post-Reconstruction & Radical Reform, 1884-1889

READ: LEV, pp. 506-511; 520-536; 549-563.

TFBF, pp. 101-123.

Thursday, March 24: Education & Self-Improvement, 1890-1895

READ: LEV, pp. 623-633; 640-645; 665-660; 676-680; 708-713

TFBF, pp. 125-147.

Week 12: Tuesday, March 29: Emerging Radicalization, 1896-1900

READ: LEV, pp. 805-815; 840-857.

TFBF, pp. 149-169.

Thursday, March 31: The Rhetoric of White Racism, 1900-1945

READ: LEV, pp. 868-885; 905-908.

TFBF, pp. 171-197.

Week 13: Tuesday, April 5: The Crucial Decade, 1945-1955
Thursday, April 7: The System Challenged: Montgomery 1955

READ: RRCRM, pp. 19-31; 49-64

Thursday, April 14: Diadeloso—No Class Today

Week 14: Tuesday, April 12: “Fighting Back, 1957-1962”

READ: RRCRM, 99-107; 131-145; 216-224

Thursday, April 14: Diadeloso—No Class Today

Week 15: Tuesday, April 19: The Movement Hits Full Stride, 1963

READ: RRCRM, 533-543; 584-587; 631-637

Tuesday, April 21: King’s “Letter” and “Dream”


Week 16: Tuesday, April 26: The Rhetoric of Black Nationalism: Malcolm X

READ: “The Ballot or the Bullet” “Message to the Grassroots”
“Address at UC Berkeley”
All on www.americanrhetoric.com. Look under the letter “M” on the main menu.

TFBF, pp. 255-299.

Thursday, April 28:

Jesse Jackson, “The Rainbow Coalition, July 18, San Francisco, California,” online at

Jesse Jackson, “Save the Dream March on the Capital,” Sacramento, California, October 27, 1997,” online at
http://www.inmotionmagazine.com/jjsave.html

Minister Louis Farrakhan, “Speech at the Million Man March, Washington, D.C., online at

May 5: Graduate Research Papers Due Today

May 5: Final Exam: 2:00-4:00

Articles for Oral Reports:

All of these articles can be found in one of two electronic databases—“Communication and Mass Media Complete” or “Project Muse.” If you have difficulty finding your article, please let me know before the day of your presentation.


