

WRIT 3577W: Rhetoric, Technology, & the Internet

Meeting Times T/TH, 8:15-9:30am
Lind Hall, room 303
Twin Cities Campus

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Office Hours T/Th, 9:30am-11:30am
Nolte Center room 338b





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Course Description

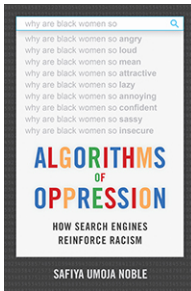
“Technology is both integral to culture and always already cultural. Just as the rhetoric we compose can never be objective, neither can the technologies we design. Technologies are not neutral or objective—nor are the ways that we use them” (Haas, 2012, p. 288)

“Behind that cloud-shaped icon on our screens is a whole universe of technologies and cultural norms, all working to keep us from noticing their existence” (Hu, 2015).

I designed the course with a few primary outcomes in mind. I hoped that we can learn more about the material and cultural infrastructures on which internet technologies are built, ask questions about relationships between new and old technologies, and navigate the often-shifting relationships between race, power, and digital networked technologies. Activism and social justice often figure centrally in the readings and discussion topics for this course. As such, we will discuss the ways in which networked technologies open possibilities for activism and resistance, while also assessing the extent to which technology corporations mediate and monitor activity on the web, a system that often reinforces existing racial, social, and economic power inequalities (Noble, 2017).

Rhetoric is a particularly helpful theoretical framework for critiquing and studying internet-based technologies. At the broadest level, I think of rhetoric as a way to ask questions about communication practices—questions about how people communicate with each other, how changes in technology affect the way that communication occurs, how communication encourages or enables particular forms of interaction, and how communication perpetuates or destabilizes relations of power. So, for our class, rhetoric allows us to ask questions about how digital and networked technologies have impacted or affected communication and opened new opportunities for identification, community building, and community activism. I hope, in particular, that you will be able to bring your own understandings of rhetoric and online communication to this class and use those experiences as a basis for research and writing.

Required Materials



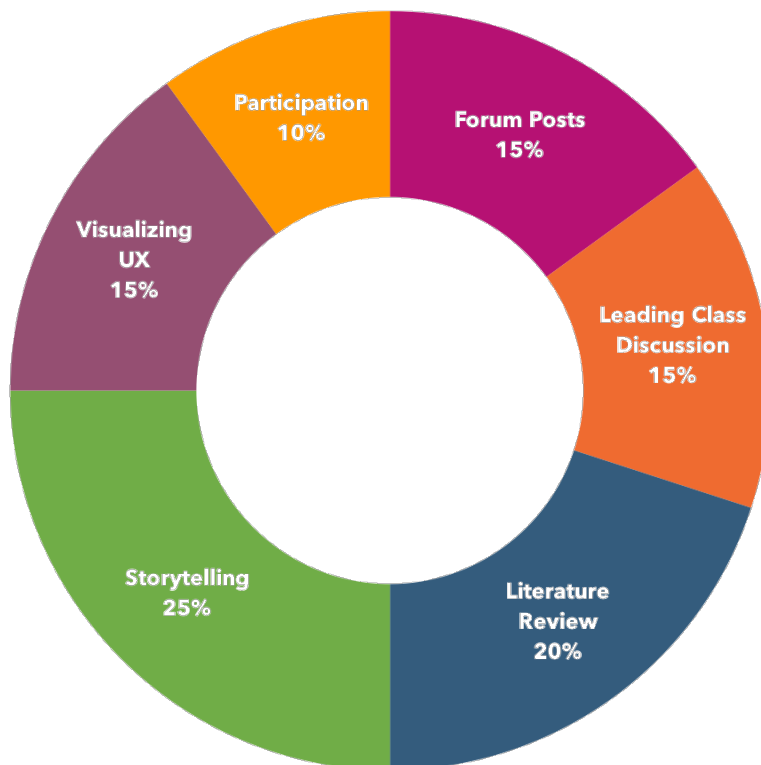
- Safiya Noble, [*Algorithms of Oppression*](#), NYU Press, 2015
- Our Course Canvas Page
- Access to laptop or internet-compatible device

Course Inspiration

This syllabus is a partial adoption of the course, “Black Lives Matter” designed by Frank Leon Roberts (frankroberts@nyu.edu) at BlackLivesMatterSyllabus.com. I also developed this syllabus with generous help and guidance from a number of scholars, including Jason Tham, Alexander Champoux, Spencer Czech, Suban Nur Cooley, and the Twitter chat, [#racialshorthand](https://twitter.com/racialshorthand), organized by Computers and Composition Digital Press.

Assessment Policies

Grade Distribution	
Assignment	Points
Forum Posts	15
Leading Class Discussion	15
Lit Review	20
Research Paper	25
Visualizing UX	15
Participation	10
Total	100



Grading Scale	
Total Points	Grade
93-100	A
90-92	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
80-82	B-
77-79	C+
73-76	C
70-72	C-
65-70	D
Below 65	F

Late Work

I don't mind if you need extra time on an assignment, so let me know a couple days before the due date if you want an extension. Many of our assignments are sequential and build from one another, so falling behind on due dates might make it difficult to engage effectively with class content. Please let me know if the due dates pose challenges for your schedule, and we can work something out. In general, if you don't reach out to me in advance, I cannot accept work that is more than four days late (except for extreme circumstances).

Use of Electronics

While you will need access to an internet-compatible device to access our course readings outside of class, you are not required to have access to one inside class. However, you are welcome to bring electronic devices—laptops, cell phones, tablets, etc.—to class and use them as you see fit, and having access to a computer or mobile device may support some of our class discussions.

Attendance

If anything comes up when you need to miss class, just let me know before class starts. If you are sick, please stay home. You are **not** required to provide a doctor's note if you aren't feeling well—just take care of yourself. That said, part of making this class useful for you involves participating in our class' discussions and activities, so attendance is required. We will discuss specific scenarios that count as unexcused absences in class, and these scenarios will be listed on our Canvas page. In case you have an unexcused absence, I will lower your participation grade. We'll certainly talk if there are significant attendance challenges, but you may receive a failing grade in the class if you have more than two weeks (four individual classes) of unexcused absences.

Revision

If you would like, you are welcome and encouraged to revise your Literature Review and/or Storytelling paper. If you decide to revise, here are the steps to take:

- We will meet in person (or via zoom) within three days of you receiving feedback on your graded project.
- During our meeting, we will make a written plan for revision.
- After our meeting, you have one week to turn in your revisions.
- When you submit your revised work, please turn in your original graded paper and your revision plan, which can help me see how you developed your project.

The revised grade will completely replace the original grade.

Assignment Descriptions

Forum Posts (15%)

Each week or so, you will write a brief (about 250-word) response to day's reading. These posts can be somewhat informal, but they should do two things: first, they should develop a deeper understanding of the text. You could, for example, articulate the main questions that the author asked and describe how they answered those questions, or you could pick apart a particularly challenging section of the text as a way to understand it better. Second, your posts should pose questions. What questions do you have after reading? How does the article open new areas for inquiry or new spaces for research? These questions should not be easily answerable—instead, they should identify spaces for new research or further discussion based on the reading. We will develop strategies for writing these forum posts in class.

Leading Class Discussion (15%)

Most weeks, a group of four students will lead class discussion. Leading class does not have to entail a formal presentation, but you should set up a framework for the class to engage more deeply with the week's materials. As part of leading class, your group should do a couple things:

- Find 3-4 examples from your lives or popular culture that somehow relate to or illustrate the week's topic.
- Draw connections between the themes we've discussed over the course of the class and the day's assigned reading.
- Develop an activity or set of discussion questions that will allow everyone in class the opportunity to engage with the day's reading.
- Write a brief reflection (about 250-word per group member) that describes your thought process behind the activity and details your contribution to the group project.

Most importantly, be creative with leading class. Look for new/different ways to engage your classmates in conversation or opportunities to approach our course's themes in a new way.

Literature Review (20%)

Your literature review begins with your weekly forum posts. Pick a forum where you've developed deeper insight into one of our readings, a post that posed an insightful or intriguing question, or one that engaged with a topic especially relevant to your lived experiences. Then, develop a research question that speaks to your work in the forum post (don't worry—we'll work on writing research questions together). After you've established a research question, find out how other researchers, scholars, and community members have studied your topic. What have other people said or thought about your topic? Find at least 10 sources that pertain to your research question, and at least 7 of those sources should be from scholarly or peer-reviewed sources. Your literature review is exploratory—the goal is to describe how others have thought about your topic in the past. As such, you do not have to conduct original research on the topic. You should be able to make a claim about the broad themes that emerged from your research. You should conclude your literature review by identifying new spaces for inquiry, new questions that came up from conducting your literature review, or revisions to your original research question. Your essay should be about 1000 words long.

Storytelling (25%)

The Storytelling assignment should emerge somewhat organically from your literature review. Your literature review ended with a set of questions or perspectives on your research topic at the intersections of rhetoric, digital technology, and identity. Your storytelling paper should take those questions or perspectives as a starting point.

You should gain a deeper understanding of those questions/perspectives by describing your personal experiences with those questions/perspectives in online spaces. Pick a set of your own experiences on a digital platform and describe how those experiences relate to the scholarly research you found in your literature review. Essentially, you will use your personal stories as a way to nuance the research you found in your

literature review, and you will weave your own stories into research on the topic. The stories you tell should be detailed and focused specific interactions you've had in online spaces—almost an autoethnography, with rich description and detailed accounts of your experiences. I encourage you to use the research and writing you completed for your literature review in your Storytelling assignment, though you should revise that writing based on my feedback and your own goals.

You are welcome to present your storytelling project in whatever format you want—digital, online, or via any range of composing tools available to you. However, because of privacy concerns, I will not require you to put your personal information or work onto the internet. Regardless of form, your storytelling essay should be 1700-2000 words long, and you should strategically include visual design choices (e.g., images, screenshots, etc.) to supplement your written arguments.

Visualizing User Experience (UX) (10%)

Through our work in the literature review, storytelling paper, and class readings, you learned about how individuals, communities, and corporations use digital networked technologies to achieve a range of situated goals, tactics, and strategies. The visualizing user experience project asks you to describe how YOU use digital networked technologies to materialize your own goals, or how internet-based technologies mediate your relationship with social and communicative environments. To do so, you will record your interaction on a mobile technology-based platform of your choice (e.g., a social media site, professional networking organization, search engine, or even SMS texting platform). Over the course of a week, you will record one aspect of your interactions on that platform. Centrally, you must pick an interaction or set of interactions that focus on the relationship between technology, rhetoric, and identity, and your experiences must be on a mobile device. After selecting and recording your interactions on the platform of your choice, you will visualize those experiences. We will develop strategies for visualizing in class, and you can check out [Dear Data's "A Week of our Phones"](#) as an example.

Participation (10%)

Our class relies on participation and engagement from everyone, so part of class entails finding a way of participating in class that is productive for you. For instance, if you don't like to speak in large group discussions (I never liked talking in large groups as an undergrad), try to be more active in forum posts, online discussions, or small group activities. Attendance is crucial for participation, too, so your participation grade will reflect your engagement with in-class activities, writing workshops, and discussions during class meeting. At the end of the semester, you will write a brief reflection (about 500 words) that describes how you participated in class and some of your major takeaways from the semester.

Course Calendar

The information in our course calendar is subject to minor changes based on how we develop as a class. For example, we may need to add a discussion topic, eliminate unnecessary readings, or move readings to a different day. I will let you know in advance if I make any changes, and keep an eye on our Canvas calendar.

Date	In Class	Homework Due
1/22	Introductions	No reading assigned
1/24	Framing the Course	Have Read: Haas, "Race, Rhetoric, and Technology" Have Completed: Forum Post 1
1/29	Watch in Class: Bloom, What is the Internet, Really?	Have Read: Hu, <i>A Prehistory of the Cloud</i> , Chapter 1 Have Completed: Forum Post 2
1/31	Leading Class Discussion Group 1	Have Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devarajan, "Black Skin White Emojis?" • Conely, "The Women and People of Color Who Invented the Internet" • Lee, "The Internet, Explained"
2/5		Have Read ONE of the Following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duthely, "Black Feminist Hip-Hop Rhetorics and the Digital Public Sphere" OR • Sawyer, "All in Together Girls" Have Completed: Forum Post 3

Date	In Class	Homework Due
2/7	Leading Class Discussion Group 2	Have Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robinson, "We Slay. Part I." • Robinson, "How Beyoncé's 'Lemonade' Exposes Inner Lives of Black Women"
2/12		Have Read: Noble, <i>Algorithms of Oppression</i> , Introduction & Chapter 1 Have Completed: Form Post 4
2/14	Leading Class Discussion Group 3	Have Read: Daniels, " The Algorithmic Rise of the Alt-Right "
2/19		Have Read: Carney, " All Lives Matter " Have Completed: Forum Post 5
2/21	Leading Class Discussion Group 4	Have Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Garza, "A Herstory of the Movement" • Stephen, "How Social Media Helps BLM Fight the Power" • hooks, "Marginality as a Space of Resistance"
2/26	Peer Review	Have Completed: Rough Draft of Lit Review
2/28	Lit Review Due	Have Completed: Full Draft of Lit Review
3/5	Defining Research Qs	Have Read: Haas, "Wampum as Hypertext" Have Completed: Forum Post 6
3/7	Leading Class Discussion Group 5	Have Read: Noble, <i>Algorithms of Oppression</i> (selections)

Date	In Class	Homework Due
3/12	<p>No Class Meeting - Complete Forum Post 7</p> <p>Read the assigned texts (one academic article and one popular article) and write a response. I will be at a conference, so this forum post will replace our regular class meetings for the week.</p>	<p>Have Read ONE of the Following Articles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cho, "Default Publicness" • Gray, "Gaming Out Online" • Connor, "The Gay Gayze" <p>Have Read ONE of the Following Articles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ho, "Tumblr's Adult Content Ban..." • Fawal, "Queer Women Used Tumblr..." • Bean, "Saying Goodbye to AIM" • LaGaccia, "How the Trans Community..." <p>Have Completed: Forum Post 7</p>
3/14	No Class Meeting	No Class Meeting
3/19	SPRING BREAK	SPRING BREAK
3/21	SPRING BREAK	SPRING BREAK
3/26		<p>Have Read: TBD</p> <p>Have Completed: Forum Post 8</p>
3/28	<p>Guest Lecture: Suban Nur Cooley</p>	<p>Guest Lecture: Suban Nur Cooley</p>
4/2	Individual Conferences	Have Completed: Draft of Paper

Date	In Class	Homework Due
4/4	Individual Conferences	Have Completed: Draft of Paper
4/9	Peer Review	Have Completed: Complete Draft of Paper
4/11	Papers Due	Have Completed: Turn in Paper
4/16	Leading Class Discussion Group 6	Have Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curran, "Are You Ready?" • Dance et al., "As Facebook Raised..." • Wu, "Don't Fix Facebook"
4/18	Guest Presentation- Dear Data Workshop	No Reading Assigned
4/23	No Class Meeting	No Class Meeting
4/25		Have Read: Noble, <i>Algorithms of Oppression</i> , Conclusion
4/30		Have Read: Van Dijk, <i>The Culture of Connectivity</i> , Chapter 1
5/2	Course Evaluations and Reflections	Have Completed: Visualizing User Experience

Official University Policies

Student Conduct Code:

The University seeks an environment that promotes academic achievement and integrity, that is protective of free inquiry, and that serves the educational mission of the University. Similarly, the University seeks a community that is free from violence, threats, and intimidation; that is respectful of the rights, opportunities, and welfare of students, faculty, staff, and guests of the University; and that does not threaten the physical or mental health or safety of members of the University community.

As a student at the University, you are expected adhere to Board of Regents Policy: *Student Conduct Code*. To review the Student Conduct Code, please see:

http://regents.umn.edu/sites/default/files/policies/Student_Conduct_Code.pdf.

Note that the conduct code specifically addresses disruptive classroom conduct, which means "engaging in behavior that substantially or repeatedly interrupts either the instructor's ability to teach or student learning. The classroom extends to any setting where a student is engaged in work toward academic credit or satisfaction of program-based requirements or related activities."

Scholastic Dishonesty:

You are expected to do your own academic work and cite sources as necessary. Failing to do so is scholastic dishonesty. Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering, forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis. (Student Conduct Code:

http://regents.umn.edu/sites/default/files/policies/Student_Conduct_Code.pdf) If it is determined that a student has cheated, he or she may be given an "F" or an "N" for the course, and may face additional sanctions from the University. For additional information, please see: <http://policy.umn.edu/Policies/Education/Education/INSTRUCTORRESP.html>.

The Office for Student Conduct and Academic Integrity has compiled a useful list of Frequently Asked Questions pertaining to scholastic dishonesty: <http://www1.umn.edu/oscai/integrity/student/index.html>. If you have additional questions, please clarify with your instructor for the course. Your instructor can respond to your specific questions regarding what would constitute scholastic dishonesty in the context of a particular class-e.g., whether collaboration on assignments is permitted, requirements and methods for citing sources, if electronic aids are permitted or prohibited during an exam.

Makeup Work for Legitimate Absences:

Students will not be penalized for absence during the semester due to unavoidable or legitimate circumstances. Such circumstances include verified illness, participation in intercollegiate athletic events, subpoenas, jury duty, military service, bereavement, and religious observances. Such circumstances do not include voting in local, state, or national elections. For complete information, please see: <http://policy.umn.edu/Policies/Education/Education/MAKEUPWORK.html>.

Appropriate Student Use of Class Notes and Course Materials:

Taking notes is a means of recording information but more importantly of personally absorbing and integrating the educational experience. However, broadly disseminating class notes beyond the classroom community or accepting compensation for taking and distributing classroom notes undermines instructor interests in their intellectual work product while not substantially furthering instructor and student interests in effective learning. Such actions violate shared norms and standards of the academic community. For additional information, please see: <http://policy.umn.edu/Policies/Education/Education/STUDENTRESP.html>.

Sexual Harassment

"Sexual harassment" means unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and/or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work or academic performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or academic environment in any University activity or program. Such behavior is not acceptable in the University setting. For additional information, please

consult Board of Regents Policy:

<http://regents.umn.edu/sites/default/files/policies/SexHarassment.pdf>

Equity, Diversity, Equal Opportunity, and Affirmative Action:

The University provides equal access to and opportunity in its programs and facilities, without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. For more information, please consult Board of Regents Policy:

http://regents.umn.edu/sites/default/files/policies/Equity_Diversity_EO_AA.pdf.

Disability Accommodations:

The University of Minnesota is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. The Disability Resource Center is the campus office that collaborates with students who have disabilities to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations. If you have, or think you may have, a disability (e.g., mental health, attentional, learning, chronic health, sensory, or physical), please contact DS at 612-626-1333 to arrange a confidential discussion regarding equitable access and reasonable accommodations.

If you are registered with DS and have a current letter requesting reasonable accommodations, please contact your instructor as early in the semester as possible to discuss how the accommodations will be applied in the course.

For more information, please see the DS website,

<https://diversity.umn.edu/disability/>.

Mental Health and Stress Management:

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance and may reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. University of Minnesota services are available to assist you. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Student Mental Health Website: <http://www.mentalhealth.umn.edu>.

Academic Freedom and Responsibility, for courses that involve students in research:

Academic freedom is a cornerstone of the University. Within the scope and content of the course as defined by the instructor, it includes the freedom to discuss relevant matters in the classroom and conduct relevant research. Along with this freedom comes responsibility. Students are encouraged to develop the capacity for critical judgment and to engage in a sustained and independent search for truth. Students are free to take reasoned exception to the views offered in any course of study and to reserve judgment about matters of opinion, but they are responsible for learning the content of any course of study for which they are enrolled.* When conducting research, pertinent institutional approvals must be obtained and the research must be consistent with University policies.

Reports of concerns about academic freedom are taken seriously, and there are individuals and offices available for help. Contact the instructor, the Department Chair, your adviser, the associate dean of the college, or the Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs in the Office of the Provost.

** Language adapted from the American Association of University Professors "Joint Statement on Rights and Freedoms of Students".*

Incompletes:

There will be a symbol I (incomplete) awarded to indicate that the work of the course has not been completed. The I will be assigned at the discretion of the instructor when, due to extraordinary circumstances (as determined by the instructor), the student who has successfully completed a substantial portion of the course's work with a passing grade was prevented from completing the work of the course on time. For further information see Section D here:

<http://policy.umn.edu/education/gradingtranscripts>