Rhetoric in Contact Zones

Course: English 597A
Time: W6:35P – 9:35P
Location: 7 Burrowes
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Course Description
Two decades ago, Mary Louise Pratt advanced the notion of “contact zones” as “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today.” This notion has until now remained constructive, as well as contested, in understanding relations between languages and cultures. The class will revisit theoretical debates on the notion; discuss their implications for our research and teaching in language, literature, and composition; and read about rhetorical practices in various contact zones in the globalizing world. The following are some of the themes we will cover: cosmopolitanism; cross cultural rhetoric; lingua franca English; multilingual communication; multiliteracies; and postcoloniality. Class assignments include readings, talking points, short response papers, and a semester-long research project on contact zone literacies.

Talking Points
You are required to make notes on our readings for each meeting. These should be meaningful notes to you, so they do not need to be especially formal. Notes can include questions, extensions, rebuttals, or the beginnings of writing ideas. Bring these notes to class with you, and be prepared to use these notes to talk from during class. Talking points should be about one single-space page in length every week. They do not need to be in a formal, essayist style. Notes can be sentence or paragraph length statements. Be sure to include any page numbers you are discussing so that you can reference passages during our discussions. In class, you may be asked to read your notes out loud to initiate discussions.

Short Response Papers
You will need to submit four short response papers, ranging between one and two single-spaced pages, during the semester. You can respond to both class readings and discussions. You are encouraged to reflect upon the connections between the readings and your ongoing research projects. Every time two or three students may be asked to read aloud their response papers in class according to the alphabetical order of their last names.

Final Research Paper
You will need to complete a research paper by the end of the semester, which ideally should lead to a publishable article later. To help you write such a paper, several small papers will be assigned along the way. You will first write a research proposal to explain your topic and the rationale for choosing it. Please keep the 2011 Penn State Rhetoric and Composition Conference
in mind when writing your proposal. Alternatively, you can write an abstract for the conference. (The conference deadline for submission of abstracts is Feb. 15th.) Next, you will complete the first draft of your paper, in which you should at least review published scholarship on your topic and detail the method that you will use to conduct your study. In your final paper, you will build on your first draft by additionally analyzing a set of data and discussing your findings in light of your research questions. In the end of the semester, you will present your research to the class, focusing on the data analysis. You are encouraged to discuss your topic with us at any stage of your writing.

**COURSE POLICIES**

The usual policies apply. We reserve the right to lower attendance points for absences over a reasonable number (say, two absences). We will also turn down requests to turn in assignments late. Grades will be assigned as follows,

- Talking points - 20 points
- Short response papers - 20 points
- Research proposal - 10 points
- Research paper, first draft - 10 points
- Research paper, final draft - 30 points
- Presentation - 10 points

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

The following texts are required. They are available in both Penn State University Bookstore and Student Bookstore. The rest of the readings will be available on Angel.


**SCHEDULE**

1/12
- Introduction
- Pratt – “Arts of the Contact Zone”
- *Caliban’s Voice*, Chapter 1-3

1/19
- Bhabha – “Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree outside Delhi, May 1817”
- *Caliban’s Voice*, Chapter 4-6
- You – *Writing in the Devil’s Tongue*, Introduction

1/26
- You – *Writing in the Devil’s Tongue*, Chapter 1

2/2
- Due: Response paper #1
- *Caliban’s Voice*, Chapter 7-9
- You – *Writing in the Devil’s Tongue*, Chapter 1

2/9
- *Cosmopolitanism*, Chapter 1-4
- Liu – “Justifying My Position in Your Terms”
Sharing research proposals in class
Due: Research proposal/conference abstract
2/16  
*Cosmopolitanism*, Chapter 5-7
Burns – “Supporting Deliberative Democracy”
2/23  
*Cosmopolitanism*, Chapter 8-10
Mao – “Rhetorical Borderlands”
Due: Response paper #2
3/2  
Canagarajah – “Multilingual Strategies of Negotiating English”
Nicotra – “‘Folksonomy’ and the Restructuring of Writing Space”
Ratcliffe – “Rhetorical Listening”
3/16  
*Grassroots Literacy*, Chapter 1-3
3/23  
*Grassroots Literacy*, Chapter 4-6
3/30  
*Grassroots Literacy*, Chapter 7-9
Due: Response paper #3
Due: Research paper, first draft
4/6  
Conference on the research paper, first draft
4/13  
*Professing in the Contact Zone*, Chapter 1-5
4/20  
*Professing in the Contact Zone*, Chapter 6-9
Canagarajah – “Safe House in the Contact Zone”
4/27  
*Professing in the Contact Zone*, Chapter 10-14
Due: Response paper #4
5/4  
Presentations
5/6  
Due: Research paper, final draft