

# ENGL 3523: Special Topics: Feminist Rhetorics

Fall 2021 | Midwestern State University | Dr. Coenen

Days	Time	Room
MW	1:00 - 2:20 PM	PY 205

“You cannot afford to think of being here to receive an education: you will do much better to think of being here to claim one. One of the dictionary definitions of the verb “to claim” is: to take as the rightful owner; to assert in the face of possible contradiction. “To receive” is to come into possession of: to act as receptacle or container for; to accept as authoritative or true. The difference is that between acting and being acted-upon”

--Adrienne Rich

## Contact

**Professor:** Dr. Hillary Coenen  
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**Office:** BW 203  
940.397.4058

**Office Hours:** MW: 11am-12:15pm; TR: 12:30-1:45pm  
& by appointment

**Email** is the best way to contact me.

## Course Materials

### Required Text:

- **AM** – Ritchie, Joy, & Kate Ronald, eds. *Available Means: An Anthology of Women's Rhetoric(s)*. U Pittsburgh, 2001.
- **BLF** - Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 4th ed. Aunt Lute, 2012. (Any edition will do).
- **TBC** - Moraga, Cherríe, & Gloria Anzaldúa, eds. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings By Radical Women of Color*. SUNY Press, 2015.

### Other Resources:

- Access to D2L to receive messages & news and submit assignments.
- A Gmail account (like MSUTexas account) to access additional readings and collaborate with classmates.
- Regular computer and internet access

## Course Goals

- Develop vocabulary to discuss feminist & social justice rhetorics & philosophies, research methods & theoretical approaches.
- Critically synthesize and apply course readings to contemporary movement examples and problematics.
- Critically evaluate various forms of resistance & protest, considering socio-historical contexts and identity negotiations.
- Identify and apply relevant rhetorical research methods (bibliographic, narrative, qualitative, or otherwise) to present original findings in a coherent, expressive, and persuasive manner.

Additional information about course objectives can be found here:

[msutexas.edu/academics/libarts/english/index.php](https://msutexas.edu/academics/libarts/english/index.php)

## Course Overview

From movements for women's suffrage, to labor rights, to #BlackLivesMatter, feminist activism has shaped public discourse in significant ways throughout history. This course aims to introduce feminist rhetorics with a broad look at key texts that reveal the ideologies and rhetorical strategies of a variety of feminist rhetors. We will also discuss texts that employ feminist rhetorical theories for analysis and practice applying such theories in original research projects.

## Grades

Major Tasks		Points	Grade Scheme	
Discussion Leader (DL)	100 x 2 DLs	200	<b>Letter</b>	<b>Numerical</b>
Resource Response (RR)	50 x 4 RRs	200	A	895-100
CHOICE Proposal		100	B	795-894
CHOICE Project		200	C	695-794
CHOICE Presentation		100	D	595-694
Labor Log (See p. 6)		150	F	0-594
Labor Log Reflection		50		
<b>Total</b>		<b>X/1000</b>		

### Grade Policy

Through contract grading in this course, the default grade is a B. If you do all that is asked of you in the manner and spirit it is asked, work through the processes we establish, do all the labor asked of you, then you'll earn a B in the course. It will not matter what I or your colleagues think of your writing, only that you are listening to our feedback openly. If you miss class (do not participate fully), turn in assignments late, forget to do assignments, or do not follow the labor instructions precisely, you will get a lower course grade. You can earn an A by completing additional "Investment Tasks" that contribute to the class community and to your learning.

### Midterm Grades

To help track your progress, I will provide your Midterm Grades through WebWorld. Midterm grades will not appear on transcripts or be calculated in GPAs. They reflect where you stand halfway through the semester. Students earning a C or below should visit with me and visit the Writing Center.

### On Language Assessment

You may expect to learn "proper grammar" in this class, but linguists argue that every language and dialect has a distinctive grammar and that no one grammar is inherently better or more correct. American universities rely on "Standard (American) Academic English" (SAE) to determine "college readiness," but this ["standard" is a false one rooted in intentional gatekeeping and discrimination](#) based on race, class, and citizenship status. In this class, your professor will assume that SAE is a false and flawed standard. Your language practices are relevant. You will not be chastised for using grammars other than SAE. If you would like to learn to use SAE more persuasively, we can work on that through independent exercises for which you may earn extra credit, but you are also welcome to use your language experience in ways that you and your peers and community members would find persuasive and trustworthy; these goals are more practical and more inclusive than striving for an arbitrary and false notion of correctness. Grammar police be warned. (See also [CCCC's 2020 Demand for Black Linguistic Justice](#).)

## Course Practices

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### *Submission Format and Policy*

All formal assignments are to be typed and formatted – and outside sources documented - according to MLA style. Some minor assignments may be submitted as a hard copy in class. All formal papers must be uploaded into the D2L Dropbox folder. *Note:* You may not submit a paper for a grade in this class that already has been (or will be) submitted for a grade in another course, unless you obtain the explicit written permission of me and the other instructor involved in advance.

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### *Late Assignments*

Late assignments, defined as work not submitted to the appropriate dropbox by the designated due date and time, will be accepted for full credit if the student consults with the instructor on a reasonable timeline, at the discretion of the instructor. If you need to submit something late, you may request an extension in advance. If you have difficulty submitting or are unsure if your submission was successful, email me with your work attached.

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### *Academic Dishonesty*

Plagiarism is the use of someone else's thoughts, words, ideas, or lines of argument in your own work without appropriate documentation (a parenthetical citation at the end and a listing on the Works Cited page)—whether you use that material in a quote, paraphrase, or summary. At the very least, plagiarism will result in an F on the assignment; at worst, the consequence will be an F in the course. Offenders will be reported to the Chair of the Department of English, Humanities, and Philosophy and/or the Director of Student Conduct.

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### *Assessment and Revision*

I will provide written or oral feedback on drafts prior to submission as needed, and I will inquire about your writing progress regularly. If you request the opportunity to revise, you should meet with me to make a revision plan. You may revise and resubmit any coursework within 3 weeks of receiving a grade and prior to finals week for additional feedback. Grade revisions will be negotiated on a case-by-case basis.

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### *Conferences*

You should participate in at least three writing conferences with me or a writing center tutor this semester prior to the last week of class. You may use these meetings for any course-related discussion, but your formal and research papers will be especially useful topics.

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### *Contacting Me & GroupMe*

Email is the best way to contact me. In the body of your email, indicate the course and section number you're in. Please allow at least 24 hours for a response during the week and 48 hours over the weekend. If you need a response more urgently, please indicate that your question is "Urgent" in the subject of your email. We will also have a class GroupMe which you can use to ask questions and share resources among classmates. Access it here: [https://groupme.com/join\\_group/69791843/hQAt8Lw8](https://groupme.com/join_group/69791843/hQAt8Lw8)

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### *D2L & Google Drive*

We will use D2L to access most course materials including the syllabus, additional readings, schedule updates, assignment sheets, PowerPoints, your feedback and grades, and other materials. You will also submit formal assignments and find announcements on D2L, so please check it daily, especially before our class meets. Google Drive will also be used as a collaborative space and to store class resources.

## Course Policies

### *Attendance Policy*

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It is important that you attend class and be on time, whether in person or via D2L/Zoom. If you have a total of more than two (2) weeks' worth (TR: 4 class sessions; MWF: 6 class sessions) of absences excused or not, it will affect your performance in class. Students who miss class will not be directly penalized, but they will miss opportunities to learn and to earn points for in-class activities. Some activities may be made up if you make arrangements with me to do so in a timely manner. If you must miss multiple sessions for personal/health reasons, you should alert the Dean of Students office and provide information so they can verify the situation for your instructors.

Notify me via email in advance if you will not be able to make class or must join on Zoom. Consider it your responsibility to be present and prepared for class in order to succeed and maximize your learning.

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### *Accessibility & Technology*

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The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Disability Support Services in Room 168 of the Clark Student Center, 940-397-4140.

Beyond complying with the ADA, I want to ensure that this course is accessible as possible to all students. If you have problems accessing campus sites or learning materials (physical or digital), don't hesitate to talk with me about how we might improve that. I will often refer to uses of technology that I have not covered during class, and I am happy to provide one-on-one or workshop-based support for students who are unfamiliar with platforms or programs I reference.

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### *Campus Carry Statement*

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Senate Bill 11 passed by the 84th Texas Legislature allows licensed handgun holders to carry concealed handguns on campus, effective August 1, 2016. Areas excluded from concealed carry are appropriately marked, in accordance with state law. For more information regarding campus carry, please refer to MSU Texas's Campus Carry page (<https://msutexas.edu/campus-carry/>).

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### *Writing Proficiency Requirement*

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All students seeking a Bachelor's degree from Midwestern State University must satisfy a writing proficiency requirement once they have 1) completed 6 hours of Communication Core and 2) earned 60 hours. Students may meet this requirement by passing the Writing Proficiency Exam, passing two Writing Intensive courses, or passing English 2113. If you have any questions about the exam, visit the [Writing Proficiency Office website](#) or call 397-4131.

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### *Writing Center & Tutoring*

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Tutoring and Academic Support Programs (TASP) provides free drop-in tutoring for MSU students. Located on the first floor of Moffett Library, Writing tutors are available most weekdays. You don't need an appointment to use these services. Writing tutors will not edit your papers for you, but they will provide support and feedback at every stage of the writing process, from brainstorming to drafting, revising to proofreading. See <https://msutexas.edu/academics/tasp/on-campus.php> for more info.

## COVID-19 & Our Class

### *Safety & Care*

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We are still dealing with a public health emergency. The pandemic will continue to shape university and class activities as well as our lives. As a community, we're deeply affected by the actions others take (or don't) to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Many faculty, staff, and students here are caregivers for parents, children, and loved ones who are immunocompromised, and many may be at risk themselves. The variants are becoming increasingly aggressive, and our campus is a hub that can directly reach them all. As such, I ask that you make efforts to protect yourselves, our campus, your families, and mine as well as our broader community for the spread of COVID-19.

As the pandemic continues, I want to share thoughts about our collective experience:

- Some of our lives may be relatively unaffected by the pandemic while others have experienced profound and life-altering tragedies and hardships. We cannot make assumptions about others' experiences.
- We must be compassionate with others and with ourselves. At this time, we all need more grace and care.
- Together, we can make this semester safe, thoughtful, rigorous, and insightful through our intellectual efforts and by carefully following safety protocols.

All students should follow the University's guidance regarding COVID-19 precautions, masks, & vaccinations.

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### *On Symptoms*

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If you are sick, particularly with symptoms that resemble COVID-19, DO NOT ATTEND CLASS IN PERSON. I'll work with you to ensure that you have the opportunity to learn any material you miss because of illness.

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### *On Masks*

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As the Delta variant spreads and the reality of breakthrough cases becomes clear, I cannot help but think of each of our family members and co-workers who are unvaccinated or immunocompromised. Because vaccinated individuals can carry or be infected by the Delta variant, I will wear a mask (or face shield when lecturing) in class, and I ask you to wear a mask while inside the classroom too.

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### *On Zoom*

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This is a face-to-face class. It will be held in that format unless the University changes modalities. Students may not attend class via Zoom as a regular alternative. Contact me for options if you must miss class.

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## Course Community

### *Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility*

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Because we and our community members have diverse bodies, experiences, and needs, and because language helps shape our world, as a community, we must reject language and behaviors that denigrate others based on identity category. In this learning space, hate speech, harassment, discrimination, & violence are not tolerated.

As a professor, my commitment to equity, inclusion, and accessibility in this classroom and on this campus begins with acknowledging the ways that our institutions (academic and otherwise) have excluded, neglected, and marginalized many community members based on race, religion, gender expression, sexual orientation, immigration status, national origin, language, ethnicity, sex, ability status, socioeconomic status, age, body type, and other aspects of identity, and continues with seeking to understand and resist those failures. To create a safer, more just community, we should seek to critique and counteract individual and systemic/structural oppression. This means educating ourselves about oppression and marginalization, fostering conversation and learning about those topics,

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developing practices that respond to the needs of historically marginalized communities, and holding our communities accountable for becoming more equitable, inclusive, and accessible.

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### *Learning with Generosity*

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This course encourages the discussion and consideration of some uncomfortable topics. We can work through discomfort and create a brave space for learning and exploration. We will show respect and consideration of perspectives that differ from our own. There is a lot we don't know about each other, and our choice of words in discussing social, political, and economic issues matters a great deal. As a group, we should acknowledge that, while ignorance is not an excuse for cruelty or dismissiveness, we all make mistakes as we learn, so we should be willing to forgive & learn from these situations. I will provide content warnings as needed, and if you have a need for specific warnings, please let me know.

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### *Courtesy and Hospitality*

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The college classroom should be a vibrant environment that fosters creativity, discussion, and intellectual growth. You have the freedom to create the kind of intellectual community you desire. Included here are behaviors that I believe will help foster a generative community:

- *Pay attention.* This means when the instructor or classmates are addressing the class you are attentive to the speaker and NOT (1) talking, (2) using electronic devices for unrelated tasks, or (3) sleeping. If emergencies or mitigating circumstances mean that you may need to do one of these things, please be considerate by quietly excusing yourself.
  - *Be respectful.* You are expected to be respectful to your instructor, your classmates, and yourself. If you witness behavior that is less than respectful, you are welcome to hold the community accountable by calling us in.
  - *Be prepared & responsible.* Know what is happening in class by checking the schedule and your emails. Bring materials and assignments to class when needed. Submit work on time, and communicate with me in mitigating circumstances.
  - *Participate.* Since you are working to become an expert in your field, the class and our scholarly community stand to benefit and learn from your contributions. Practice now by sharing what you know and are learning when it is relevant.
  - *Communicate.* Come by or call me during office hours if you are struggling with an assignment, have issues with course material, or want additional guidance or feedback. You can also email me.
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### *This Course as a Contract*

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This course uses a labor-based grading contract adapted from that of composition scholar Asao Inoue. [Here is his original contract example](#). If you do all that is asked of you in the manner and spirit it is asked (the terms of this are laid out throughout this document), then you'll earn a B in the course. This should foster a collaborative, supportive environment and relieve some writing anxiety. You'll get feedback from me and your colleagues which you can use to improve your work and to take risks, but you won't get traditional grades on major assignments. Instead they will be marked on a Satisfactory(S)/Unsatisfactory(U) basis. If you meet the basic expectations laid out in the assignment, you'll earn full credit for it, but if you receive a "U," you may revise with additional feedback or you will earn a portion of the points (.5, .7, or .8) available for that task. You should use your colleagues and your reflections for assessment and revision advice and thus build strategies of self-assessment that function apart from a teacher's approval.

While the default grade for the course is a B, you can improve upon your grade by doing more than is required. The primary options for doing so are outlined in the Labor Log description (p. 7) and the grade distribution chart (p. 2). If you don't earn all of the points for a major assignment, you may revise and make up for it in the labor log. If you have missed or incomplete work or work that does not meet the expectations for revision, editing, or originality, and you choose not to make that up with timely revision or additional labor, you will forfeit the default B for a lower grade, depending on the amount and quality of missing or incomplete work.

By staying in this course and attending class, you accept this contract and agree to abide by it. I (Dr. Coenen) also agree to abide by the contract, and administer it fairly and equitably.

### *Labor Log & Reflection*

This class works better, is more fun, and generates more learning when everyone participates. The Labor Log allows you to track and earn credit for your effort & participation. Record all labor related to the class in your log with the type & number, date, time spent, and a brief description. Word & Google Docs versions of the template are on D2L. See the main types below:

<b>Type (Abr.)</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Pts/</b>	<b>Description</b>
Meaningful Contribution (MC)	15	3	MCs represent the everyday ways that you engage in class work, and they can take many forms: comments (C) or questions(?) in class or via email, relevant chat on GroupMe (GM), excellent group work (GW), volunteer to read aloud or report group work (V), activities on D2L (D2L), and others.
Homework & Tasks (HT)	9	5	HTs will be indicated when they are assigned and may include homework, brainstorming, work on major writing assignments (including planning, drafting, revision, and editing), and other engagement activities as announced. There will many opportunities to complete homework or tasks, and you should strive to do all of them. About one per week will keep you on track.
Peer Review Feedback (PRF)	2	10	PRFs are a summary of the feedback you've provided to a classmate on their written drafts during peer review. The note should summarize the 2 or 3 main suggestions for revision that you gave your partner. These notes should also be provided to your peer.
Writing Conference (WC)	2	20	WCs with me or the writing center should be recorded in your log and documented well in your own notes. You can meet with me during designated conference times or office hours, or use the writing center and document your visit (w/ writing & photos).