English 890 – New Material Rhetorics

COURSE INFO
• Day/Time: R 6:00-8:30
• Room: HU 312
• Professor: Byron Hawk
• Email: byron.hawk [at] gmail [dot] com
• Office: HUO 408
• Office hours: T-R 4:15-5:45

DESCRIPTION
The course will address the importance of new materialist thought for rhetoric and composition. The predominant understanding of rhetoric sees it as a symbolic and social art. While material things are certainly around us and at issue, it is human meaning and persuasion that traditionally define rhetoric. The class will examine new materialist theories that question this basis in the linguistic and social turns, examine current texts in rhetoric and composition that deploy or invoke new materialism, and assess these work in relation to current debates in rhetoric and composition. Students will write three short papers on new materialist texts, a research statement connecting their projects in rhetoric and composition to new materialism, and a final paper outlining or enacting their own research projects.

TEXTS
• Multiple PDFs to be distributed via Dropbox.
• Hardcopy books can be purchased via Amazon at student's discretion.

GOALS
• to introduce students to the material turn as a broad movement;
• to develop a perspective on objects of study in relation to research; and
• to experiment with developing a rhetorical research agenda in relation to new materialism.

ATTENDANCE
Since this is a seminar, it is vital to attend and be prepared to discuss the readings and listen to each other deliver papers. While I won't formally count discussion and listening as participation, it is crucial to a well functioning seminar and will influence my grading accordingly.

OFFICE HOURS
I will have office hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays 4:15-5:45. In some cases I may have other meetings during these times, so be sure to send me an email to confirm my availability. Otherwise, we can schedule another time that is convenient for both of us. I check my e-mail several times daily, so this will be the best way to contact me outside of class.
ACCOMMODATIONS
In keeping with the University of South Carolina’s commitment to non-discrimination—based on age, race, color, sex, religion, national origin, and sexual orientation—and providing program accessibility for qualified students with disabilities, I am happy to provide reasonable accommodation through the Student Disability Resource Center (LeConte Room 112A or 777-6142).

ASSIGNMENTS
Main assignments include participation, short papers, and a final paper.

Participation
Participation includes attendance, weekly reading responses, the research statement, and appropriate participation in class discussion. Attendance and responses will be numerically counted.

- **Weekly Responses** - For each reading day, students should write brief responses to a select portion of the readings (250-350 words). In some cases we may split up the readings for each student, in other cases the options will remain open. The goal is to have an engagement with a text or idea that can be a starting point for class discussion or a connection to the students’ own projects.

- **Research Statement** - For week 14, students should write and bring a brief research statement (1-page single-spaced) that sets out their area of research interest, or if at all possible a specific research project, and its potential relation to new materialism. The research statement should function like an introduction to a research proposal and create a context for the research project. The intro should develop a rhetorical problem and point the way toward a possible solution. The paper should include a brief initial bibliography that the student plans to address as the project moves forward. Draw on the articles listed under each week in the syllabus and any others that the students gather through independent research. We’ll use these as a springboard for discussion of the final papers.

Short Papers
Over the course of the semester, students will write three short papers (1-2 pages single-spaced) that summarize a key reading or readings from that section for the first 2/3 of the paper and then put forward a response in the last 1/3. The basic rhetorical approach of the papers is theory/application, but the paper should both seek to understand the readings carefully and develop a connection to the student’s research interests. Under each of the three short paper days, the syllabus will list a major, recent work in rhetoric and composition that is grounded in that set of readings. Students will have the option to write a book review of that work as their short paper. On the day short papers are due, students will read their papers out loud and we’ll briefly discuss each one.

Final Papers
At the end of the semester, we will discuss student research statements as a class, and develop plans for the final paper (approximately 20 pages double-spaced). The final paper
could take 1 of 3 forms: a dissertation proposal that sets out a research agenda; a literature review that establishes the grounds for a potential project; or a draft of an article or chapter that carries out a version of the research project.

GRADES
I will use this basic grading scale: A (90-95), B+ (85-89), B (80-84), C+ (75-89), C (70-74).
Breakdown of percentages for each assignment:
• Participation (10%)
• Short Papers (60%) - 20% each
• Final Paper (30%)

SYLLABUS
This is a tentative schedule by week and day, for assignments, readings, and activities. Tentative means I can vary it as much as seems appropriate. However, plan on sticking fairly close to this outline, especially on paper due dates. I will post all revisions of and additions to the syllabus on this web page. The updated web version will always override the printable PDF version.

WEEK 1 - INTRODUCTIONS
(Jan 18)
Required:
• Coole and Frost, "Introduction" New Materialisms
• Biesecker and Lucaites, "Introduction" Rhetoric, Materiality, Politics
• Marback, "Unclenching the Fist" (RSQ)

WEEK 2 - RHETORICAL BEING
(Jan 25)
Required:
• Gross, "Heidegger's 1924 Lecture Course on Aristotle's Rhetoric" (PnR)
• Heidegger, Being and Time - "Analysis of Environmentality and Worldhood in General" (tool analysis) and "Understanding and Interpretation" (forestructure, hermeneutic circle)
• Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism" (193-210, 224-241)
• Sarah Ahmed, "Orientation Matters" New Materialisms

WEEK 3 - DWELLING WITH THINGS
(Feb 1)
Required:
• Rickert, "Ambient Dwelling: Heidegger, Latour, and the Fourfold Thing" Ambient Rhetoric
• Heidegger, "The Thing"
• Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking"
• Heidegger, "Origin of the Work of Art"

WEEK 4 - COMPOSING NETWORKS
(Feb 8)
Required:
• RSQ Forum, "Bruno Latour on Rhetoric"
• Latour, "One More Turn After the Social Turn"
• Latour, "Compositionist Manifesto"
• Latour, "Why Critique has Run Out of Steam"
• Latour, "From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik"

WEEK 5
(Feb 15)
Required:
• Short Paper #1
Suggested:
• Barnett, Rhetorical Realism

WEEK 6 - OBJECTS AND AGENCY
(Feb 22)
Required:
• Cooper, "Rhetorical Agency as Emergent and Enacted" (CCC)
• Stormer and McBreavy, "Thinking Ecologically About Rhetoric's Ontology: Capacity, Vulnerability, and Resilience" (PnR)
• Law, Aircraft Stories (Intro, Objects)
• Law and Singleton, "Object Lessons"
• Mol, The Body Multiple (preface)
• Mol, "Ontological Politics"

WEEK 7 - PERFORMATIVITY, EVENTS, ETHICS
(Mar 1)
Required:
• Daniel, "The Event That We Are: Ontology, Rhetorical Agency, and Alain Badiou" (PnR)
• Santos, "Uncrossing God: How Levinas’s Ethics Might Contribute to Latour’s Politics" (PnR)
• Barad, Meeting the Universe Halfway (Intro 25-38, Ch.1 39-45, 50-59, 66-70, Ch.2)
• Barad, "Posthuman Performativity"

WEEK 8 - VITALISM
(Mar 8)
Required:
• Davis, "Rhetoricty at the end of the World" (PnR)
• Povenelli, "Geontopower" (PnR)
• Bennett, Vibrant Matter
• Bergson, Creative Evolution (Intro, 1-23, 87-97, 98-105)
• Grosz, "Feminism, Materialism, and Freedom" New Materialisms

Spring Break - March 11-18

WEEK 9
(Mar 22)
Required:
• Short Paper #2
Suggested:
• Barnett and Boyle, eds. *Rhetoric Through Everyday Things*

**WEEK 10 - ANIMAL RHETORICS**  
(Mar 29)
Required:
• RSQ Issue - A Rhetorical Bestiary
• Davis, "Creatively Rhetorics" (PnR)
• Hawhee, "Towards a Bestial Rhetoric" (PnR)
• Kennedy, "A Hoot in the Dark"
• Haraway, *When Species Meet*

**WEEK 11 - SENSORIUM**  
(Apr 5)
Required:
• Hawhee, "Rhetoric's Sensorium" (QJS)
• LeMesuier, Mobile Bodies (CCC)
• Boyle, "Pervasive Citizenship through #SenseCommons" (RSQ)
• Alaimo, *Bodily Natures* (Ch.1)
• Alaimo, "Trans-Corporeal Feminism and the Ethical Space of Nature" *Material Feminisms*
• Latour, "Sensitizing"

**WEEK 12 - COMPLEXITY**  
(Apr 12)
Required:
• Mays, "Writing Complexity" (CCC)
• Micciche, "Writing Material" (CE)
• DeLanda, "Intro" *Assemblage Theory*
• DeLanda, "Material Evolvablity and Variability"
• DeLanda, "Emergence, Causality, and Realism" *The Speculative Turn*
• Pheng Cheah, "Nondialectical Materialism" *New Materialisms*

**WEEK 13**  
(Apr 19)
Required:
• Short Paper #3
Suggested:
• Mays, Rivers, Sharp-Hoskins, eds. *Kenneth Burke + The Posthuman*

**WEEK 14 - FINALS**  
(Apr 26)
Required:
• Research Statements
Final Papers Due...