**Territorial Acknowledgement**

I would like to acknowledge that we are on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron (Neutral), Anishnaabeg, and Haudenosaunee peoples. The University of Waterloo is situated on the Haldimand Tract, land promised to Six Nations, which includes six miles on each side of the Grand River.

**Course Description**

In this course, we will examine together the social, historical, and rhetorical dimensions of collective action. We will study the manufacture of consent and conformity in order to understand why, how, and to what effect dissent is enacted. We will explore the complex relationships between power and domination, coercion and consent, resistance and transformation, as well as the philosophical, social, organizational, and rhetorical features of effective dissent.

A traditionally delivered course in which a teacher holds forth, telling students what is important, how to understand that importance, what to think, and how to represent that thinking seems absurd given a traditionally delivered course in which a teacher holds forth, telling students what is important, how to understand that importance, what to think, and how to represent that thinking seems absurd given the subject of our study together. Therefore, this course will not be that. Instead, we will study, together, the dimensions of dissent by exploring the ways in which collective action might be conceived, organized, and enacted within and beyond the classroom community.

All of us will learn more and find the course more enjoyable to the extent that each of us participates as fully as possible in daily discussions and activities. I will ask you to contribute to our deliberations by bringing ideas, insights, current events or other materials of interest to class with you. In most cases, I will not assign these acts or signs of engagement and you will need to decide whether you will engage with the course material by doing only what is demanded of you and graded by me, or whether you will resist constructions of “student” and “teacher” that such relationships of exchange reproduce.

I have designed a series of written or project assignments that I hope will help you to make sense of the social, historical, and rhetorical matters we study together. Each of these assignments will, I hope, be useful and learningful and may be resisted, in most cases without penalty, in whole or in part.

Here are your choices with regard to established assignments:

- you may complete the assignment as designed to the best of your ability
- you may design a collective action with some or all of your fellow students to change the terms and conditions of the assignment or its outcomes
- you may design an individual act of dissent by producing an alternative piece of work that seems to you to be useful and meaningful
- you may refuse to participate in the assignment (note: this is the one course of action to which there may be a penalty attached).

No matter how you choose to respond to the assignments I have designed you will need to theorize for me and for the class as a whole your action, both in terms of the principles on which you act and the action’s strategic and tactical value in support of those principles. If you choose not to complete an assignment, this defense of your action will be of critical importance to whether or what kind of penalty results from your choice. You will need to convince your classmates and me that your choice is, in fact, learningful and possesses strategic or tactical value for supporting the principles underlying the action and for the learning of the class as a whole.

You will be assigned readings. These reading assignments are non-negotiable. You must read the material I assign. You will contribute to your own learning as well as that of your fellow students and me by reading beyond the course assignments and sharing those materials or what you have learned from them with us.
Course Readings

Required
Collins, Suzanne. The Hunger Games.
Mockingjay.
Catching Fire.


http://www.mkgandhi.org/swmngandhi/chap03.htm

http://www.thefeministwire.com/2014/10/blacklivesmatter-2/

King, Martin Luther. “Letter from the Birmingham Jail.”
https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html


Thoreau, Henry David. “Civil Disobedience” (with introduction and annotations).
http://thoreau.eserver.org/civil.html


Recommended Readings: Theoretical Frames


Marcuse, Herbert. “Repressive Tolerance.”

Marx, Karl. “The Communist Manifesto”
https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Manifesto.p
Recommended Documentaries: Special Topics

**Activism, social media, hacktivism**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BSZ7Ln5KzRU


https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VCdlOch2970


Activism and performance art/street theatre

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3WqBJ20bd2k

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5i5eEhd6Vt8

*Die-In Street Theatre for Gaza.* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tJpxXv4WFJ0

*Idle No More Round Dance Flashmob, Mall of America.*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vn5PFHlm1ak

**Environmental Activism**

Global Witness. “Murder in Brazil’s Amazon.” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lfFgA87P-qU

“Ghost Net Art as Environmental Activism.” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UNAh0zvAiiY

Al Jazeera. “Standing Rock and the Battle Beyond – Fault Lines.”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RX-3jdXa46U

**Political Repression**

“Plutocracy: Political Repression in the U.S. (2015).”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gohal9CW7t0

“If the injustice is part of the necessary friction of the machine of government, let it go, let it go: perchance it will wear smooth--certainly the machine will wear out... but if it is of such a nature that it requires you to be the agent of injustice to another, then I say, break the law. Let your life be a counter-friction to stop the machine. What I have to do is to see, at any rate, that I do not lend myself to the wrong which I condemn.”

— Henry David Thoreau, *Civil Disobedience and Other Essays*
Assignments

• **Speak-out** – Write and perform a two-minute speech on an issue of your choice. Record a video of your performance and post it to the class Facebook page. This assignment will allow you to introduce yourself to the class and to introduce us to an issue about which you care deeply. **DUE JANUARY 9**

• **Journaling** – The last time I taught this course, students agreed that next time round, the class should journal about its experience. The final exam for the course, they agreed, should be an all-class, co-authored journal entry. You will be working in groups throughout the term and each group will be responsible for collectively authoring two journal entries over the course of the term. Each week that your group is producing a journal entry, you will need to meet outside of class to compose your contribution to the class journal. You should talk together about what you have learned in the class, about how you are individually and collectively processing that learning, what seems significant to you, and what you would have the students who come after you to this course understand, consider, do or not do. You may be creative in your journaling. You may include drawings, poems, doodles, and, of course, dissent. Do consider your audience and speak to them in ways that will be accessible and powerful. **DUE APRIL 9**

  Each of you should complete the following short writing assignments, choosing foci for your essays associated with your group’s chosen social change movement and writing to advance the work of your group by contributing to its understanding of the issues and/or developing language and rhetorical appeals to be used by the group. Essays should be turned in on the course Learn site on the day they are due – prior to the start of class.

  ➢ **Critique** - in this short essay, you should choose a key claim or principle from some aspect of Canadian or international political discourse related to your group’s area of study and activism. You may decide as a team the subjects for each team member’s essay based on your needs for deeper understanding as well as for coverage of relevant issues. Your job is to perform a concise analysis of this claim or principle – this idea – by tracing its history (to whose political ideas and advantage, historically, is it related or connected?); exploring its present significance (to which current political ideas is this idea related or connected and whose advantage does the idea serve at this moment?); and examining/predicting the implications of this idea (if we behave as if this idea is true or act on this idea, what are the likely impacts or effects? *Qui bono* or who benefits?). **DUE JANUARY 25**

  Two pages; Times New Roman 10 point font; line spacing: 1 ½; APA citation: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/

  ➢ **Persuasion** – in this short essay, you should choose a key idea, principle, or action for which to argue. Carefully accounting for your purpose, your target audience, and the social/political as well as rhetorical context for your address, write as compelling a case as you are able for your position. Consider the range and register of appeals you will make to your audience as well as rhetorical exigence for your argument. **DUE FEBRUARY 8**

  Two pages; Times New Roman 10 point font; line spacing: 1 ½; APA citation: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/

For the following assignments, you and the members of your group may work in teams of two. Each of your group members should pick one of the following on which to collaborate **(DUE MARCH 8):**

  ➢ **Speech Writing** – write a speech for an activist leader addressing the issue on which your team is working. Study the previous writing and public speaking of other activist leaders also speaking to this issue to understand their positions and reasoning, the forms and registers of appeals they tend to use, their speaking style, and the audiences they seek to address. Draw on the strengths of your model’s approaches and try to avoid replicating what you see as their weaknesses.

  Three – four pages; Two pages; Times New Roman 10 point font; line spacing: 1 ½

  ➢ **Poster** – create a poster that educates viewers about an issue.
- **Broadside or flyer** – create a persuasive flyer or broadside that educates readers about an issue.

- **Manifesto** – write a manifesto that lays out a problem or issue reasonably, critically, and persuasively for your activist group.

- **Street Theatre or Street Art**: write/plan a performance or create a work of art that addresses an issue about which you care deeply.

- **Game Design**: create a game that teaches players about an issue that you are committed to addressing.

- **Website** – create a website your group can use to promote their cause, educate others, and organize for direct and indirect action.

**Make it real** – You and your group should build a campaign design for your chosen social change organization. Use what you have learned about social movements and the rhetorical means by which those movements articulate dissent and organize for change, to build your campaign. Together, you should set goals for your campaign, determine timelines, and prepare materials to be rolled out by the organization. Your campaign materials will become the centerpiece of your **group portfolio**. In addition to this finished, polished material, you should work together to revise each group member’s contribution to your group’s campaign using both the short essays and partner projects. Be creative both in your campaign design and in the design of your group portfolio. Be sure to use what you’ve learned in our class as well as your individual and collective interests, commitments, and strengths. Build your movement’s dossier, making sure that every group member’s contributions are heard, valued, and used to create your movement design.

**Alt-exams**

These are not exams as you have likely experienced them before. For the midterm, you will work with your team to meet a challenge or series of challenges and to reflect upon the experience together with the class as a whole. Your final exam will be a collectively authored (all-class) final journal entry about your shared experience in the course. **ALT-MIDTERM: FEBRUARY 15; ALT-FINAL: APRIL 3**

**Grading**

For each grade category, you should write a one-paragraph (minimum) reflection on the use value of your work to your personal, academic, and activist development. Remember that use value may in part reflect the value of the assignment, itself, but primarily reflects the quality of the work you did in response to that assignment. You should ask yourself questions like, “Did I engage with this assignment in ways that made the work meaningful and useful to me? How so?” “Did I do this assignment in such a way as to maximize my own learning? How so?” I will assign a mark for the exchange value of your work. That is, I will be thinking about whether, how, and to what degree the work you have accomplished is or has the potential to be valuable to your fellow group members, your classmates, and to your target audience. The mark you assign for the use value of your work and the mark I assign for its exchange value will be combined to produce a final mark in each category. In the event that I disagree strongly with any mark you have assigned yourself for the use value of your work, I reserve the right to call you to a conference to discuss and resolve the difference in our assessment. The reverse is also true. In the event that you disagree strongly with a mark I have assigned, you have the right to call me to a conference to discuss and resolve our difference.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Use Value</th>
<th>Exchange Value</th>
<th>Final</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance/Participation</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak Out Video</td>
<td>10*</td>
<td>10*</td>
<td>20*</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Short Essays</td>
<td>15**</td>
<td>15**</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partner project</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>5*</td>
<td>5*</td>
<td>10*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Movement Design</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journaling</td>
<td>5*</td>
<td>5*</td>
<td>10*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>5*</td>
<td>5*</td>
<td>10*</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>170 Possible Points***</td>
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* Marks given in full so long as assignment is completed (video posted).
** For each short essay, I will assign up to 7.5 points for Exchange Value and you will assign up to 7.5 for Use Value
*** Final grades will be calculated as a percentage of the total possible points.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>READING</th>
<th>DISCUSSION TOPIC</th>
<th>CLASS ACTIVITY</th>
<th>ASSIGNMENTS DUE</th>
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<tr>
<td>4 January</td>
<td></td>
<td>Course overview</td>
<td>Introductions and team building (formation)</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 January</td>
<td>Finite and infinite games: the rhetorical work of social life</td>
<td>Foundations Discussion Team-work</td>
<td>Speak-out videos should be posted to class Facebook page by class time.</td>
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<td>11 January</td>
<td>The Hunger Games</td>
<td>The Hunger Games</td>
<td>Foundations Discussion</td>
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<td>16 January</td>
<td>The Hunger Games</td>
<td>The Hunger Games</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
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<td>18 January</td>
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<td>Narrative politics and political rhetoric</td>
<td>Foundations Discussion</td>
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<td>23 January</td>
<td>Ideology and the self</td>
<td>Foundations Discussion Team-work</td>
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<tr>
<td>25 January</td>
<td>Catching Fire</td>
<td>Catching Fire</td>
<td>Foundations Discussion</td>
<td>Critique Essay Due</td>
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<td>30 January</td>
<td>Catching Fire</td>
<td>Catching Fire</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 February</td>
<td>Ideology and social order</td>
<td>Foundations Discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 February</td>
<td>On Civil Disobedience (Thoreau)</td>
<td>Ideology and consent</td>
<td>Foundations Discussion Team-work</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 February</td>
<td>Mockingjay</td>
<td>Mockingjay</td>
<td>Foundations Discussion</td>
<td>Persuasion Essay Due</td>
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<td>13 February</td>
<td>Mockingjay</td>
<td>Mockingjay</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
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<td>15 February</td>
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<td>20 February</td>
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<td>STUDY DAYS</td>
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<td>22 February</td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
<td>STUDY DAYS</td>
<td></td>
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<td>27 February</td>
<td>Performativity and the rhetoric of resistance</td>
<td>Foundations Discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 March</td>
<td>Gandhi; MLK; Deming</td>
<td>Performativity and the rhetoric of direct action</td>
<td>Foundations Discussion Team-work</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 March</td>
<td>LeGuin - Omelas</td>
<td>Foundations Discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 March</td>
<td>LeGuin - Revolution</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td></td>
<td>Partner projects should be complete by class time.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 March</td>
<td>NO CLASS – Frankie will be at a conference</td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
<td>Movement design and development (groups working on their own)</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 March</td>
<td>NO CLASS – Frankie will be at a conference</td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
<td>Movement design and development (groups working on their own)</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 March</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>Imagining, writing, performing change</td>
<td>Foundations Discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>22 March</td>
<td>Garza</td>
<td>Imagining, writing, performing change</td>
<td>Foundations Discussion Team-work</td>
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<td>27 March</td>
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<td>Workshop/Team-work</td>
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<td>29 March</td>
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<td>TBA</td>
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<td>3 April</td>
<td>LAST CLASS</td>
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<td>ALT-FINAL</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 April</td>
<td>ALL REVISIONS DUE (including individual use-value reflections)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Movement Design Projects (Team)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Course Policies

**Attendance:** Your presence in this class is required. In order to be excused, every absence must be documented. Missing four or more classes will result in a failing grade for the course. This policy begins on the first day of class. If you transfer into the class after the first class meeting, the classes you’ve missed will be included in your collected absences. If you must miss a class due to illness, you may mitigate the consequences of your absence by emailing me *in advance of the class you will be missing.* If you do email me in advance, I will count the absence but there will be no penalty to your participation grade. A class missed in order to finish an assignment for another class will not be excused. **If you do miss a class, please do not ask me if you have missed anything. Assume that you have missed important material and reach out to your classmates for notes. Complete the course reading for the day you have missed.** Read the PowerPoints that are posted to Learn after class. Once you have taken these steps, you are most welcome to visit my office hours to follow up on any questions or to share your insights and ideas.

**Academic Integrity:** Take the time to familiarize yourself with the summary of Policy #71. In order to avoid offences such as plagiarism, cheating, and double submission, consult “How to Avoid Plagiarism and Other Written Offences: A Guide for Students and Instructors”. Consult *Academic Integrity at UW* for more information. Visit this link to learn about the University of Waterloo’s expectations and policies regarding Academic Integrity.

**Accommodations:** The University of Waterloo has a long-standing commitment to support the participation and access to university programs, services, and facilities by persons with disabilities. Students who have a permanent disability as well as those with a temporary disability get AccessAbility Services. To register for services, you must provide documentation from a qualified professional to verify your disability. Please contact them at 519-888-4567 ext. 35082 or drop into Needles Hall 1132 to book an appointment to meet with an advisor to discuss their services and supports.

**Grievances:** In case that a decision affecting some aspect of a student’s university life has been unfair or unreasonable, they may have grounds for initiating a grievance according to Policy 70, Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4, [https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-70](https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-70). When in doubt, please be certain to contact the department’s administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.

**Discipline:** Familiarize yourself with “academic integrity” to avoid committing an academic offence, and to take responsibility for your actions. Consult Policy 71 for all categories of offences and types of penalties.

**Appeals:** A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70 (Student Petitions and Grievances) (other than a petition) or Policy 71 (Student Discipline) may be appealed if there is aground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to Policy 72 (Student Appeals) [http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm)
STATEMENT OF TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

Frankie Condon
Revised Fall 2016

For many years, I have been both moved and inspired by a question posed to Mary Rose O’Reilly by one of her professors, Ihab Hassan: “Is it possible to teach English so that people stop killing each other?” (The Peaceable Classroom). Removed from the social and educational context in which the question was originally posed, however - a widespread, collective recognition of the brutality and senselessness of war during the Vietnam era - the pairing of the teaching of English with peacemaking is more likely to provoke confusion than insight among readers of a statement of teaching philosophy such as this one. To understand whether or how there might be any sort of intersection between the study of English - of rhetoric and writing in particular - and the transformation of human relations requires something more than allowing the query to stand, functionally, as a rhetorical question.

In his book, The Geometry of Violence, criminologist Harold Pepinsky, argues that violence plays out along a spectrum of human relations ranging from the least affiliative and most violent to the most affiliative and least violent. Societies and cultures with expansive definitions of affiliation and higher valuations of affinity, care, contingency and mutuality are less likely to be riven by either systemic violence (e.g. political or social violence) or by widespread patterns of individual violence. The study of rhetoric and writing, it seems to me, constitutes one means by which we may examine, engage, and extend the critical, analytical, interpretive, performative and communicative means by which we have historically made and continue to make our relations: preserving and reproducing conditions produced by existing or inherited relations or, alternatively, creatively resisting and shifting or transforming those relations.

That the process of insertion into existing social relations and, by extension, into particular perspectival horizons begins at birth and continues throughout our lives is true. It does not necessarily follow, however, that we possess no agency within those relations; we can, in fact, shift, alter or even transform those relations. How we do this work, by what means, within what limits, for what purposes, and to what effect are questions with which I am most concerned both as a scholar and as a teacher.

There are, Linda Alcoff notes, two aspects to what we might understand as social identity: “our socially perceived self within the systems of perception and classification and the networks of community in which we live;” and our lived subjectivity or who we understand and experiences ourselves as being (Visible Identities 93). Rather than representing these two aspects of social identity in binary terms (exterior and interior or embodied and felt, for example), Alcoff asks us to consider the ways and degrees to which disparate experiences of being a self and of being called to perform as if one is a particular sort of self fail to map neatly onto one another. She asks readers to notice and make sense of the discontinuities among and between the range of experiences that constitute our being in and of the world. While we cannot possess objective understanding of our lives as we live them, as Gadamer points out, our situatedness in place, time, and experience do enable ways of knowing. We are capable of what Gadamer terms effective historical consciousness: capable, in other words, of “reflective awareness of the horizon of our situation.” We are capable of recognizing that horizon as fluid and dynamic rather than static and given, and capable of recognizing that this horizon is not the only determinant of our understanding and our ability to make meaning. (Alcoff 95)

My aim in the classroom is to invite students to notice, wonder at, and engage critically the power not only of language, itself, but of particular rhetorical modes and strategies for communicating (and performing) the known and the production of new knowledge. I challenge students to question and critique representations of social relations as natural and given and to recognize the ways and degrees to which these relations are, in fact, the products of human labour. I want students to recognize the ways in which they are always, already knowledge producers and rhetorical agents in the construction of meaning. I want also to support and sustain students as they recognize the degree to which as they exercise rhetorical agency they are in fact participating in the reproduction or potentially at least the struggle to transform social relations. I want to support and sustain students, providing them with appropriate conceptual and practical scaffolding as they acquire broader and deeper fluencies in the range of analytical, interpretive, performative and communicative modes of engagement or acts that constitute the means by which
individual and collective perspectival horizons are recognized and shifted for themselves and others. I hope to teach my students also to recognize the degree to which these modes of engagement are constituted by complex, ongoing processes of affiliation and disaffiliation or the making and unmaking, creating, inhabiting, and destroying or transforming of human relations. In other words, the study of rhetoric is also necessarily the study of how human relations are forged in and through language: shaped, enabled, and constrained through our representations of ourselves, of others, and of that which constitutes knowledge within particular contexts or communities. The study of rhetoric should engage all of us in the study not only of what is said and how, but also toward what ends and for whose benefit. We make and claim our relations as we compose across a wide variety of contexts asserting the legitimacy of our presence as rhetors and knowledge producers within communities to which we do or hope to belong. We may pass on the ideological as well as the intellectual legacies of our forebears, but we may also transform those legacies as we compose. I hope students leave my courses with an expanded sense of their intellectual and rhetorical antecedents as well as with a much greater sense of their own contingency, their interdependence and the mutuality of their needs and interests across disparate visible and invisible identities and social and lived subjectivities. Furthermore, I hope that students leave my courses with a greatly enlarged sense of their capability and responsibility as scholars, rhetoricians and writers, as citizens of the world, to those who will come after us.

I recognize the political and hence contested nature of the work I aim to do as a teacher. I believe that the purpose of critical theory is not only to explain the world, but also to change it. By extension, I believe that the purpose of writing as an activity central to higher education curricula is not merely to prove that one has learned, but to contribute meaningfully to the conditions in which learning is possible: to participate in the collective creation and sustenance of learningful relations as well as in the making of meaning and the production of new and usable knowledge.

Often, I believe, critical pedagogy is misunderstood and misrepresented as being inherently coercive and critical teachers as being engaged in the political inculcation of their students. These misconstruals are, I believe, an effect of an inadequate understanding of the range of conceptions of change and change-agency that inform the theory and practice of critical pedagogy. While I am not dismissive of the power of the *agon* in the cultivation of rhetorical agency or of oppositional pedagogy (a praxis distinct from the tradition of critical pedagogy) per se, these are not modes or approaches that play a significant role in my own teaching. I tend to see both oppositional pedagogy and the *agon* as being tactically useful on occasion, but more generally ineffective (and often dishonest) in argument, persuasion, as well as in teaching and learning. Neither am I terribly interested in the pedagogical potential of traditional practices of negotiation, which I believe preserve the status quo by, in effect, purchasing or manufacturing consent. Instead, as a teacher I labour to both enact and teach an array of interconnected intellectual and rhetorical processes that, taken together, constitute both a rhetorical appeal and a rhetorical means by which shifts in perspectival horizon and, consequently, in the character and quality of human relations might be initiated.

In brief, these processes might be categorized into four types: those associated with *decentering*; those associated with *nuancing*; those associated with *kairotic engagement*; and those associated with *readiness*. *Decentering* is the ongoing process of listening (recognizing and acknowledging) to the meaning-making practices of others while, simultaneously recognizing and honouring difference by dis-placing one’s self (social and lived subjectivities) from the center of meaning. I understand the process of *decentering* as a continuous revisioning of the quality of one’s presence with/for and attentiveness to the other. *Nuancing* is the ongoing process of transmemoration and witness: of situating one’s own story of being and becoming - of social and lived subjectivity - in relationship to the histories, epistemologies, and rhetorical traditions of others without privileging one’s own story or using that story to overwrite, subvert, or appropriate the stories others might tell. *Kairotic engagement* is the ongoing process of recognizing, articulating, revising, and re-articulating the rhetorical exigence that attends analysis, interpretation, critique, creative intervention, and the making of meaning or new knowledge; that is, of continual engagement with the ways and degrees to which problems, contradictions, or questions are amenable to address (or redress) through discourse. *Readiness* is the ongoing process of cultivating and sustaining a mindscape capable of wonderment: capable of being surprised by and interested in the world, in why the world is as it is and how it came to be so, and in the marvellous variety of ways in which the world might be created, inhabited, and represented by others. Here I understand “interest” in the double sense of being both intrigued by others -
by what others say and know and do - and being needful of affiliation and of the recognition and care co-created through affiliative relationships with others. Finally, however, none of these processes taken singly or together nor the variety of in-class discussions and activities and writing assignments that I might engage in any given course seem sufficient to me to justify a claim that mine is a critical praxis absent an ongoing, reflective consciousness of the constancy of failure to the endeavours of teaching and learning and a shared commitment to learn from failure. That is, humility is central to any meaningful practice of critical pedagogy and integral to humility is the recognition that failure is inevitable. I strive for willingness to learn from failure and, when appropriate and ethical, to make pedagogical failures visible to students such that they might engage reflectively and learningfully with them as well.

Frequently, critics of critical pedagogy assert that the greatest risks associated with this approach to teaching are that students will feel pressured to adopt the politics of their teachers in order to succeed in the course or, alternatively, be so alienated by the fact of their political differences with their teacher that learning becomes impossible. My own experience suggests a different kind of risk or challenge altogether. To engage - to really engage - critically in the study of writing as a communicative act requires that we study the epistemological and rhetorical means by which knowledge is produced and disseminated. To engage - to really engage - critically in the study of writing as a communicative act requires that we study public rhetorics that, by design, shape how we think, perform our selves, and act in relation to others. But to engage - to really engage - at all in any of these studies requires both interest and a sense of need for learning. The greatest challenge I face in the classroom is the extent to which students tend to confuse exchange-value and use-value or, more frequently, to believe that the only thing to be gained from any given writing assignment or any writing course is the exchange-value represented by a grade. My challenge is not that students adopt my politics in service of achieving a good grade; they just don’t nor do I require or expect them to. My challenge is that some of my students have learned too well the lesson that school is boring; that the subjects about which one might write as well as the activity of writing are boring; that being curious is boring; that the only knowledge worth acquiring in school are the usable skills that might be associated with workplace competencies and that learning those is boring. Too many of my students have been schooled for years by the ringing of bells that not only tell them it’s time to move from one classroom to another, but also to shut off the past moment from the current one--that there are no integral or fruitful intersections, continuities, or intriguing discontinuities between the subjects that they study (Gatto 1-5). The interferences of an audit culture in public education seem to have had the prevailing effect of teaching students that the value of learning and the quality of one’s education is measured by the number and range of information bytes emptied of nuance and complexity one might acquire that can be easily and quickly performed and judged. And so perhaps it is most accurate to say that my greatest challenge as a teacher is to create and sustain conditions in which joy is possible in the classrooms I share with students and to help students recognize the necessity of joy to learning well and deeply. I am speaking less here of fun - though, of course, I think having fun is good - than of the affective dimensions of learning at the conjoinment of interest and pleasure, seriousness and absurdity. These are the intellectual and creative intersections where learners discover in themselves and one another the strange and unfamiliar and find it good; where laughter fractures totalities; where the possibility exists for both gentle and exuberant celebrations of the miracle of our collective presence on this earth, at this place - together at the interstices of learning and knowing, being and becoming, of self and other (Ehrenreich 261). The value of joy to learning is not the degree to which momentary pleasure releases us from labour, from pressure, anxiety, or loss. I do not think of joy as a safety valve, for example (Ehrenreich 257). Rather, I think the value of joy derives from the ways in which the experience of joy releases us from bondage to the expected and the familiar - from rigid adherence to rules and compulsive adherence to social constraints. To experience joy in learning is to experience, even momentarily and provisionally, a release into creative intellectualism - into the as-if, the what-if, and the whys of matters that viewed without joy seem either exceptionally mundane or so permanent, so fixed as to be beyond question. In some sense, I suppose I am suggesting that learning - really learning - constitutes an act of misbehaviour in relation to the familiar and the known and that, similarly, writing well demands a certain mischievousness - the willingness to play the trickster as well as an openness to being tricked and making sense of that. I am interested and, I’ll admit, invested as a teacher, a co-learner, and as a writer in the ebullient joy that erupts among students as they learn to collude in the making of mischief as well as in the gentler joy that emerges in moments of recognition and
acknowledgement of mutuality, contingency, interdependence, for it is in such moments that I am most convinced that not only are we all learning, but that our lives as learners and as writers are and will be changed for the better by having learned together.

Works Cited


