

CRS 568 Rhetoric and Social Change
Public Memory of Unsolved Civil Rights Murders
Fall 2009 Syllabus
T Th 12:30-1:50

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Course description and overview: The focus of the course Rhetoric and Social Change centers this semester on the civil rights movement. The course investigates the rhetorical features of the civil rights movement including acts such as speeches, sermons, pamphlets, demonstrations, sit-ins, and letters. These rhetorical acts and others were constitutive and constructive of the civil rights movements, manifesting its power and influence. As such these rhetorical acts offer a rich volume of material for investigation and assessment.

The course covers the primary years of 1954-1980, with a special focus on the formative years 1954-1960, and includes key events such as the *Brown* decision by the Supreme Court in 1954, Little Rock, the murder of Emmett Till, Sit-in movement, Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee, Freedom Rides, Birmingham, Selma, and the Voting Rights of 1965. The course will also investigate the rhetorical acts of the various groups within the civil rights movement and the accomplishments and challenges of the civil rights movement in the 1970's and 1980's.

Course Objectives:

1. To become capable rhetorical critics;
2. To become competent historians of a 12-year window in American history known as the civil rights movement;
3. To gain an understanding of historiography and the writing of history;
4. To understand how rhetoric mattered to movement participants—on both sides;
5. To become expert researchers;
6. And, to become better writers.

Course Texts (required):

Juan Williams, *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years, 1954-1965*. New York: Penguin, 1987. To be read independently during the first three weeks of the course.

Selected reading (from Charles E. Morris III and Stephen H. Browne, *Readings on the Rhetoric of Social Protest*. Second edition, Strata, 2006), provided by the instructor.

Selected speeches from Houck and Dixon (see below) provided by the instructor.

Additional suggested texts:

Branch, Taylor. *Parting the Waters*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988.

Houck, Davis W., and David E. Dixon, eds. *Rhetoric, Religion and the Civil Rights Movement 1954-1965*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006.

Carson, Clayborn, et al., eds. *The Eyes on the Prize: Civil Rights Reader*. New York: Penguin, 1991.

Graded Assignments:

1. Unsolved civil rights murders - Semester-long project: This semester-long project ought to be considered an extensive research into a specific case of unsolved civil rights murder. The instructor will provide a list of cases and each student will be able to pursue the research of one case. In some instances, more than one student will be able to work on one case. The research here is open-ended as each particular case requires an assessment of how much material is needed in order to feel comfortable with the evidence available. It is possible that some cases will be researched and developed only up to a point and that by the end of the semester the case still requires additional work. This is fine and it will have no effect on the grade. The grade for this project will be determined by the quality of the research, the efforts put in, consultation, originality and determination. The project does require a final paper summarizing the case, forwarding the background, details, and whatever findings and resources gathered so that another individual or an agency may be able to take the project further.

2. Rhetorical Analyses: You are to submit two (s) papers analyzing a speech delivered between 1954 and 1965 related to the civil rights movement. The papers are to be selected from the list of speeches covered in the course and the focus of the analysis or critique is on the speech's significance, rhetorical situation, and the trajectory of the arguments, proposals or inherent message.

3. Participation: Your active participation is solicited and required throughout the term. This means very regular attendance, careful reading, and a willingness to raise questions, make observations, and answer questions.

4. Final Exam/Newspaper essay: a comprehensive essay exam at the conclusion of the course that will test knowledge of the material covered in the course. **OR**, a newspaper

essay that summarizes your case and articulated in outstanding narrative that can potentially be published in a newspaper or magazine.

Grading Percentages:

Semester-long project	450 points
2 Speech Analyses:	200 points (100 points each)
Final exam/Essay	250 points
Participation:	100 points
Total:	1000 points

A (93-100), A- (92-90), B+ (89-87), B (86-83), B- (82-80), C+ (79-77), C (76-73), C- (72-70), D+ (69-67), D (66-63), D- (62-60), F (59-0)

Grading Policy:

Following are the specifications regarding letter grades and what they mean:

A and A- grades represent work whose superior quality indicates a full mastery of the subject. An A represents the work of extraordinary distinction.

B+, B, and B- grades represent work of good to very good quality but that does not merit special distinction.

C+, C, and C- grades designate an adequate command of the course material. These grades are satisfactory for undergraduate students, but unsatisfactory for graduate students.

D grade indicate work that shows a deficiency in knowledge of the material. The overall quality is unsatisfactory for undergraduate and/or graduate students.

F is a failing grade representing work that is either very poor or non-existent.

Academic Integrity Policy:

All must abide by Syracuse University’s expectations for the integrity of students’ academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. Specifically, plagiarism is defined as “the use of someone else’s language, ideas, information, or original material without acknowledging the source” (taken from *Rights, Responsibilities, and Policies*, Students Handbook).

Americans With Disabilities Act:

All students should be aware that “Syracuse University provides reasonable accommodations to qualified students with documented disabilities.” And that “Students seeking to obtain reasonable accommodations are encouraged to initiate the process prior to or during the first week of class.” For details, students should contact the Office of

Disability Services, 804 University Avenue, Room 309. (Taken from *Rights, Responsibilities, and Policies*, Students Handbook).

Course Schedule: Fall 2009

Date:	Topic:
<u>Week 1:</u> Aug. 25, 27	Emmet Till Rhetoric and history Unsolved cases distribution Film screening: "The Untold Story of Emmet Louis Till." Read: Williams, chps. 1,2 Carson, pp. 37-41
<u>Week 2:</u> Sept. 1, 3	Public Memory: A rhetorical enterprise Research and interviewing: training session Read: Williams, chps. 3-5 Carson, pp. 47-51; 83-94 Speech: Horace M. Bond
<u>Week 3:</u> Sept. 8, 10	Rhetorical functions of movements Read: Williams, chps. 6-8 Morris, 45-58 Submission of initial review of each case Speech: Dr. T. R. M. Howard
Week 4: Sept. 15, 17	Fighting Back Read: Morris, 152-159 Research discussion Speech: Rev. Paul N. Carnes
<u>Week 5:</u> Sept. 22, 24	"Black Monday" Read: Carson, 83-94 Research discussion Speech: Dr. Howard (2)
<u>Week 6:</u> Sept. 29, Oct. 1	Non violent but frustrated Read: Carson, 112-114, 119-120 Morris, 165-171 Submission of background and review of each case
<u>Week 7:</u> Oct. 6, 8	No easy walk. Read: Carson, 130-132; 133-138 Speech: P. D. East

- Week 8: Oct. 13, 15 Epistolaric rhetoric
Read: Carson, 153-158
- Week 9: Oct. 20, 22 Read: Morris, 210-223
Speech: Rev. Shuttleworth
- Week 10: Oct. 27, 29 Freedom riders and anger
Read: Carson, 160-162; 163-165
Speech: Shad Polier
- Week 11: Nov. 3, 5 Read: Morris, 395-410

Submission of progress report of each case
- Week 12: Nov. 10, 12 Anger and political frustration
Read: Carson, 186-189
Speech: Rev. Edward H. Pruden
- Week 13: Nov. 17, 19 Power and Politics
Speech: Rev. William O. Byrd
- Week 14: Nov. 24 Resistance and boxing
Law, resistance and rhetoric
Presentations of projects
Speech: Rev. Shuttleworth (June 1964)
- Nov. 26 Thanksgiving Break
- Week 15: Dec. 1, 3 Integration, again
Presentations of projects

Final Projects Due by Noon

Note: This schedule ought to be considered a flexible guideline and changes to the schedule may take place in order to accommodate unexpected developments such as longer discussions on specific issues not anticipated earlier or lengthier presentations by students. In other cases, travel and conference attendance may also alter the schedule.

Guide to Civil Rights Documentation Retrieval

Davis W. Houck, Florida State University, and Amos Kiewe, Syracuse University

Statement of purpose: Our learning process is textual in essence, seeking written documentation about specific cases of unsolved civil rights murders. We are not to talk with witnesses, potential witnesses, or family members of victims. Such contacts may carry implications not desirable by the university and thus, should be avoided. Our focus is archival and limited to library archives, state archives, court documents, journalists and journalism material, as well as all other documentation held in public.

This guide is meant to function as a “how to find documents.” Given our wired age, it’s become relatively easy to locate important documents from the civil rights movement and the people who made it move. And yet many documents remain missing and/or unaccounted for; leaders who once led have remained in the biographical void; and people who victimized/brutalized unsuspecting blacks and whites remain unpunished. And many texts have simply gone without comment, sitting on shelves or occupying large server space, begging for comment and interrogation. In brief, a lot of work remains to be done; with a bit of instruction, creativity and technical know-how, we can create the next generation of civil rights scholarship.

****The Black Press****

One very underused and underappreciated resource involves the black press. Perhaps because it’s gone un-indexed for so long, and often un-microfilmed, these treasures have not been much utilized. And they need to be, for they contain an archive of daily black life in the United States—from hard news and opinion, to advertising and other forms of “racial uplift.”

While there wasn’t/isn’t a black newspaper equivalent of the New York Times, there are several excellent papers with something of a national orientation: The Chicago Defender, the Pittsburgh Courier, The Afro-American (Baltimore), the Birmingham World, the Atlanta Daily World, the California Eagle and the Cleveland Call and Post to name the most prominent. There are also myriad regional and local black newspapers, many of which are archived and housed in county and local libraries. Whatever county you live in, be sure to check your local libraries to see what they have. Most likely, a relatively large city, and even many small ones, will have a black press—typically a weekly paper, but a paper nonetheless. Don’t be fooled by the term “black press,” as if it’s a monolith; it isn’t. In fact, you’ll find that many black publishers exhibited a very conservative bias, often speaking out in favor of the racial status quo. Papers in Atlanta and Jackson, MS, for example often expressed opinions anathema to those advocated by the civil rights movement. You might also try a few black magazines, including the Crisis (NAACP publication), Ebony, and Jet. The Southern Regional Council also published a monthly

magazine called the New South, which provides an excellent chronicle of race-related activity in the upper and lower south. Finally, consult two other sources: Katallagete and Freedomways, progressive monthly magazines that often featured the movement.

The black press was big on covering racial injustices and race-related murders. And not just local ones, so be sure to examine copy in and around a given date; most likely the black press wrote about it, especially if a murder/event received wide play in the white press. Even so, the black press often covered very local murders/injustices, many of which the white press simply wouldn't/couldn't cover.

Don't overlook two other important newspaper sources: The Southern Patriot, published by the Southern Conference Education Fund, (SCEF, by Anne and Carl Braden) and the Student Voice, a newspaper published by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Both provide excellent glimpses of the day-to-day life of the movement.

****The White Press****

Of course don't overlook the mainstream white press in examining the specifics of a case. Often times the New York Times would cover very local and regional murders (especially as the volatile '60s unfolded and civil rights became a national set of issues). The library subscribes to the New York Times Historical database, which covers the full text of the newspaper from 1851 to 1999; it's indispensable for doing research on how the mainstream media reacted to (if at all) a given event.

Be sure to examine whatever newspapers were then publishing in the community where the event took place. I spend a lot of time with small, local Mississippi newspapers, and a few more regional papers, but the point is: always try to get as local as possible with the event in question. Most likely the press covered said event. Furthermore, make sure you get to page 4 or page 6: those pages will often feature local opinion and editorial reaction to the event. This form of local expression is invaluable in framing the context.

In order to do comprehensive work with both black and white newspapers, you'll need to make good friends with the person who runs your library's interlibrary loan department. Be sure to tell that person what you're doing, how important those resources are, and how important it is to get them in a timely manner. You'll also need to become expert on running your library's microfilm/microform reading machines. Hopefully you have the type that can copy material onto a J-drive or thumb drive; this way you don't have to spend lots of time and money copying things the old fashioned way. The new generation of reading machines are REALLY great, allowing us to do some rather interesting manipulations with text and pictures. Always be sure to work with the expert on the machines about how to safely save data. I've lost a lot of time and effort occasionally because I didn't pay close attention about how to save material in certain places.

****Microfilmed Archival Material****

And speaking of using microfilm machines, you'll want to consult the library's holdings of relevant civil rights collections. Many, many excellent collections are available either in house or via interlibrary loan, and they come with excellent finding aids, or documents that index the thousands of pages in that particular collection. Several collections are a must: the papers of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Papers of the NAACP (this is a mammoth collection and the entire collection's finding aids can be viewed via Lexis-Nexis Academic), the papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, the papers of the Southern Regional Council, the papers of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and the papers of the American Missionary Association's Race Relations Department, among others. You'll find that many organizations that had a race relations component have archived and microfilmed papers. In addition, scores of excellent personal papers collections are available on microfilm, including luminaries such as WEB DuBois, Frederick Douglass, Mary McLeod Bethune, Horace Mann Bond, Fannie Lou Hamer and many, many others. One other great microfilm resource for civil rights research involves federal documents put out by both the Johnson and the Kennedy administrations (a basic library search for Kennedy, Race, and Microfilm will pull it up if your library has it; otherwise, be sure to get it via interlibrary loan)

****Maxing out Google****

One of the best search engines, of course, is Google. But even better than the good old fashioned workhorse is the "advanced search" option in Google. I've used it countless times over many years to locate all manner of civil rights people and primary documents. From the Google main page, simply click on the "advanced search" option hyperlink. Then type in the phrase box the name or organization you're searching for (let's say, Fannie Lou Hamer). In the box immediately above the phrase box, type in "papers." You'll pull up any and all documents where Fannie Lou Hamer's name appears along with the term papers. If she has indexed and archived papers, you will find them via this method. You'll be surprised just how many people have shared their papers with various libraries and historical societies. Of course this material constitutes the gold standard for excellent primary source scholarship; it's the foundation from which the next set of historical structures get built.

****Government Documents****

Government documents: This is a great place to do research on any and all manner of civil rights. You won't be surprised to know that the federal government held countless hearings on the general subject of civil rights; you won't also be surprised to know that state and even local governments often had public hearings on civil rights. You'll want to work with a government documents expert to find what your library has (their call number system can be confusing), but you can also use Lexis-Nexis Congressional to locate the full-text of hearings, evidence and bills; it's an excellent source for locating what the feds actually did.

But also check out your state's main historical library. Every state capital has a state archive that indexes and documents the activities of state government. Many states held protracted hearings on civil rights issues and questions. Many states like mine (Florida) even had longstanding committees whose task it was to spy on civil rights organizations. Chances are somewhere in that archive, you'll find a given administration's papers under the general subject heading of "civil rights" or "race relations." Don't be bashful about calling or emailing an archivist as to what you're looking for. Many documents are online and more will soon be online. Similarly, don't hesitate to examine what a county courthouse might have, even if it's "just" genealogical information. County courthouses are also invaluable for housing very small local and weekly newspapers—newspapers that larger university libraries just don't have, and that aren't available on interlibrary loan.

Similarly, if there was a trial as a result of an event, try to locate a trial transcript; these are invaluable documents when it comes to examining the evidences presented in an official setting. Many federal civil rights cases were tried in the south and are housed at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in the southeastern region (in Morrow, GA). But the National Archives is a good place to begin when it comes to a federal trial. Similarly, check state archives for state cases or the county courthouse where a trial took place. We've learned that some documents have been destroyed for various reasons, but many are out there collecting dust and waiting to be utilized. Be sure to try and locate jury information: who served on it, who was the foreman and who was the trial judge? Who prosecuted and defended? All very important questions.

One of the best electronic resources for doing civil rights research, especially in the state of Mississippi is at the MS Department of Archives and History (MDAH); it features tens of thousands of fully searchable and fully indexed and full text available documents that detail how the state maintained surveillance on its "subversive" civil rights workers. The papers include lots of local newspaper coverage as well as top-secret information on various activists and groups. In fact, the family of Medgar Evers got a retrial based on information unearthed in the State Sovereignty Commission papers. They do provide a remarkable resource for the myriad civil rights events that took place in the state.

Chances are your state's congressmen/women, mayors and governors kept files on the civil rights activities taking place across the state. Find out who was in Congress and who the elected state and federal officials were. Then do your advanced Google searching to see if you can locate their papers. Most elected officials have donated their papers to libraries in or near their state; occasionally it's an alma mater. But be sure to consult these papers; they almost always contain some headings involving the state's race relations, race commissions or what are called "human relations committee."

If you're really adventurous, and I hope you are, you may want to file a Freedom of Information Act request through the Dept. of Justice's homepage (www.doj.gov). These requests are known as FOIA (foya) requests and basically ask the federal government to cough up any and all documents about a given person, place or event. These FOIA

requests are the stock in trade of journalists seeking access to government documents and other top-secret material. You'll find that the FBI often conducted heavy surveillance or did a lot of investigating of a given person or event. These take a bit of time, so be sure to get started on whatever FOIA searching you're doing early.

****Archival Holdings****

Sometimes we simply can't do all of our homework from a desk; sometimes it's necessary to visit archives that house important documents that don't circulate via the ether or via interlibrary loan. Here are some of the best: the Amistad collection at Tulane University, the University of Virginia, the University of Mississippi, Mississippi State University, the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, the University of Southern Mississippi, the University of Georgia, the Martin Luther King Center, Florida State University, Howard University, Fisk University, Emory University, the Atlanta University consortium, the Avery Institute in Charleston, SC, Trenholm Technical College in Montgomery, AL, Vanderbilt University, the University of Michigan, the University of North Carolina, Duke University, Harvard University (particularly the Schlesinger Library), Washington University, Syracuse University, the New York Public Library (particularly the Schomburg Center), the University of Arkansas, the University of Tennessee, Columbia University, the University of South Carolina, and the University of Texas. Of course lots of universities and colleges have smaller and very important collections. You'll find many collections online, at that particular university's library homepage (typically under a hyperlink called "special collections" or "university archives"). Many times you can contact the head archivist at a given archive and plead for help. Don't forget: archivists love it when we use their collections (it's all about use and thus funding) and if you're particularly nice and informed, often they will copy documents/recordings for you. Not always, but often they will lend a very helpful hand.

In terms of government collections, you'll want to examine the Library of Congress (www.loc.gov) and the National Archives (www.nara.gov). Both are excellent sites and have many online digitized resources. Be sure also to check out various state historical society websites as they often have papers from leading state politicians and activists.

****Finding the Living****

This part of the research is sensitive and requires specific stipulations given the restriction that we are not allowed to talk with victims' surviving family members. If such a contact is needed or is desirable, and if family members are identified, please contact your faculty who in turn will consult with Keith Beauchamp about making the contact for us.

You can, of course, do the following advanced search in Google: type in their full name in the phrase box and in the box above type in obituary. That can work; often I've found out a lot of information from a local paper that carried an obit. If the person happens to

be a bit more famous, chances are the New York Times did an obit on said person. Using the Times Historical web site, you can easily locate it (especially if you have the date). Then, be sure to note who survives that person and where they live. This is particularly important for married daughters who often change their last names. For example, I was able to track down two of Annie Devine's daughters based on their listing in a New York Times obituary. But how?

Through the wonders of this web site, www.zabasearch.com, it's very easy to track down surviving family. It's a scary sort of web site in that it tracks any and all public records, so chances are it has a lot of information about you, including phone numbers and addresses. In any case, you can do a basic search or an advanced search to locate a person. I knew from the Times' obituary that one of Ms. Devine's daughters was named Monette Watts and lived in Alabama. Sure enough, I searched for her in Alabama and easily located her. We were talking about her mom within minutes. She in turn gave me phone numbers for two other siblings. Archivists will also give out information on surviving family members (if they have their collection of papers) and how to contact them if you're interested in talking. Typically, once family members find out that you're working on a loved one, they're very helpful and will often open up their own address books for other people you can talk with. This of course requires no small finesse. Often the wounds are still very real and very deep. Work closely with your instructor on the specifics of what the finessing should look like/sound like.

Also be attuned to where, if at all, a given person attended college. In certain circumstances, college alumni offices can be helpful in helping locate an individual or that person's family. Occasionally, there's even an award named after said person.

****Web Sites****

The new trend, and a trend that will be with us for a long time, is that of housing documents, video and audio online and allowing researchers all over the world unfettered access to said documents. Whether it's a presidential phone conversation (see the Kennedy library web site and the Johnson library web site), an oral history or textual documents, increasingly are libraries digitizing documents for would-be researchers. Some fairly basic Google searching will generally reveal what sorts of material is out there. Let's say for example you're looking for materials on race relations in 1950s Mississippi. A search using any of those terms will pull up a host of really good web sites. Similarly, if you're looking for images, be sure to use the Google "Image" hyperlink to see what video and photographic material is out there. Two excellent sites for oral history testimony are those at the University of Southern Mississippi and the Southern Oral History Project at the University of North Carolina (their Southern Historical Collections are also invaluable). Full texts and often the accompanying audio are available online.

Another great resource for contacting directly movement veterans is at this web site: www.crmvets.org You'll find scores of activists who are actually encouraging folks like

us to contact them and ask them questions about their time in the movement. Of course some of these folks are flakey and won't respond. But many will. They want to pass along what was for many, a time when they lived history; indeed, they comprised collectively its front line.

****Don't overlook the Churches and Synagogues****

As you get further in your civil rights research, one very interested party in most communities involved local churches and synagogues. You'll often come across a specific church or synagogue that was friendly to the movement. Furthermore, these same churches often have small archives that contain germane documents. Don't be bashful, too, about contacting regional centers such as local dioceses or more national concerns, such as the National Council of Churches or even the national offices of a given denomination. Various faiths grappled with the vexations of the civil rights movement in very different, often very contentious, ways. Furthermore, many preachers, priests and rabbis have given their papers to national religious libraries and archives.

Of course the above list is not comprehensive; far from it. You must be guided by something of a journalist's creativity when it comes to finding the best route to a given subject. Figure out ways to get to a source. Where did that person leave tracks? Who would most likely keep a record of those tracks? What circles did that person run in? When? Were they ever litigated or did they litigate? What other scholars/historians have studied them? Is their obituary available? Where did they call home and who is still alive who might know them? Who did they work for? Were they members of a church or synagogue? Did they work on a government committee? Did they ever publish a memoir? Did someone else who worked with them? These are just a few of the questions that might lead you down a productive path. Of course some paths will be dead-ends, but even dead-ends can tell us a lot about the next route to try. Good luck.

Limitations of Research:

Given the sensitivity of these unsolved murders and especially the on-going criminal investigation of several unsolved civil rights murders, great caution and limitations must dictate the work you will pursue. When unsure about a specific contact, please consult Prof. Kiewe.

Summary of key sources:

<http://www.clarionledger.com/assets/pdf/D06031423.PDF>

<http://www.splcenter.org/index.jsp>

Googlenews. (specify the year or range of years)

www.newspaperarchives.com

AP (associated press) photographs
Moving images archive at UCLA
FOIA (don't forget to ask for bulk files)

ProQuest (via SU Library, especially Black newspaper)

www.northeastern.edu/crrj/