In this course, we will read primary texts and scholarship, engage in conversations, and produce critical work that enables us to explore, understand, theorize, and deploy astute rhetorical acts of public engagement. In designing our course, I have focused on two motivating questions: What can we learn about the range of rhetorical tactics used in different forms of public engagement? How can academic knowledge and work become publicly engaged?

Members of this seminar will examine rhetorical practices of protest, activism, activist ethnography, and pedagogy. We will look to print, performance, bodily action, art, and electronic texts to develop our understandings of public engagement.

Your primary responsibilities include:

- attending class and engaging actively in discussion
- reading and responding (in writing each week) to the assigned readings
- completing a survey of a field (annotated bibliography + short summary essay)
- working with a group to perform and document an intervention
- completing a final paper (approx. 20pp) that builds upon your survey of a field

Books (on reserve at the undergraduate library)


*Articles and Other Texts*
Most of the additional articles for the course are available as e-reserves (http://web.library.uiuc.edu/ereserves/querycourse.asp) and as Xerox copies in a box in the English Building journals room (English Building 213). If you are using the e-reserves option, please print the readings and bring them with you to class. If you are using the readings in EB 213, please duplicate the originals and return them to the box.

Additional readings (a few articles, some images, and several links) are available at the course website @ http://www.english.uiuc.edu/Schaffner/teaching/fall2006/584. Where readings can be found is indicated on the course calendar.

Class Discussion

A primary responsibility for students in this course is to engage with other members of the class effectively, critically, and respectfully. This is not a seminar based on reaching pre-determined understandings; as a group of participants, we will be making knowledge about the subject through dialectic discussion and critical work. Please do not underestimate the importance of discussion in this course.

Written Responses to the Readings

Each week before class meets, please bring to class a short written response to the assigned texts for the week. Your written response should be limited to one page single spaced and describe the main arguments in the texts, important examples, problems you encountered, and pressing questions for discussion. Attend closely to the rhetoric of social engagement in these written responses.

Survey of a Field and Annotated Bibliography

This project has two parts and is the foundation for your final project. Because of that, you will need to look ahead quite early in the semester, asking What specific field of study or type of public engagement do I want to research, possibly engage in, and write about this semester?

Part I:

Having decided on a focus, read and annotate no fewer than twenty-five sources relating to your topic of study. Focus on current scholarship published in academic journals; keep the number of books you read to a minimum; read strategically with keen attention to prominent questions, recurring arguments, persistent problems, marked accomplishments, and noticeable gaps in this body of scholarship.
The annotated bibliography should be formatted to conform to MLA or APA style. A sample annotation for an academic article might read something like this (taken from utoronto.ca/writing/annotatebib.html):


This article seeks to define the extent of the civil and political rights returned to aboriginal women in the Constitution Act (1982), in its amendment in 1983, and in amendments to the Indian Act (1985). This legislation reverses prior laws that denied Indian status to aboriginal women who married non-aboriginal men. On the basis of the Supreme Court of Canada's interpretation of the Constitution Act in R. v. Sparrow (1991), Mclvor argues that the Act recognizes fundamental human rights and existing aboriginal rights, granting to aboriginal women full participation in the aboriginal right to self-government.

Annotations for an academic book should be somewhat longer, but note that an annotation is not a review.

Part II:

Write a concise (roughly three pages, single spaced) survey of the field in which you explain the prominent questions, recurring arguments, persistent problems, marked scholarly accomplishments, and glaring gaps in the research. Take particular care to attend to trends and gaps in knowledge production in what you have read.

Group Intervention

Work with at least one other member of the class to plan, orchestrate, and enact an instance of publicly engaged rhetoric. Document what you do for discussion in class. Note that this project can overlap with the topic(s) of inquiry decided upon for the final project, but such overlap is not necessary.

Final Project

This project builds directly from your annotated bibliography and survey of the field, adding to that work a critical academic argument about your field of study. Integrate your concepts and discussion with readings and discussions from the class where possible; diverge where necessary. This article should attempt to make an original contribution to knowledge production in the field you have surveyed. Your argument should be multiple, intertextual, and intellectually satisfying in the context of our ongoing discussions. Approximate length: 20 pages.