

**CAT 125**  
**Public Rhetoric and Practical Communication**  
**University of California, San Diego**

*\*Syllabus is subject to change at any point in the quarter*

**Professor:** Romain Delaville

**Email:** [rdelaville@ucsd.edu](mailto:rdelaville@ucsd.edu)

**Class hours:** MWF, 10-10:50a

**Class location:** Flex Space, Sixth College Hub

**Office hours:** WF, 11a-12p in my office (in the [Sixth College Hub](#), i.e. 2nd floor of Catalyst Building in North Torrey Pines Living and Learning. When you arrive, you will need to tell the front desk that you are there for office hours and they will notify me.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

In this public rhetoric and practical communication course, we will use media narratives from stand-up to documentary film and television episodes to explore how we tell our personal, professional, and political stories. The narratives we'll engage with, from *Nanette* to Gloria Andalúa's writings and the 1619 Project, will situate personal stories, research, and expertise within broader histories and geopolitics, mobilizing rhetorical devices from humor and emotion to lighting and costuming. The texts we watch will serve as (fun, hopefully) springboards to discuss different topics and rhetorical strategies and how to play with those same strategies in our own self-presentation.

The course will be part discussion and part writing workshop, driving towards helping you think through your future plans from graduation to life after college, from graduate school to getting a job you want/like. Part of this will entail using reflective strategies for reading, watching, and listening rhetorically, i.e. being mindful of contexts, messages, and audiences. You will also practice several modes of rhetorical speaking and writing, making decisions about content and structure to inform, persuade, or tell a story, and ultimately support you as you hone your voice and style. Finally you will develop strategic plans, turn your goals into actions, and discuss and develop a work-life balance. Exercises and assignments are loosely structured so as to allow you to compose texts that will support your present and/or future-life hopes and goals, while highlighting different stages of the writing process, from pre-writing and drafting to peer review and collaborative revision.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

CAT 125 students work towards these goals:

- Practice reflective strategies for reading, watching, listening, and writing.

- Develop proficiency in public presentation, documentation, and curation.
- Examine authority as a writer and how authority in authorship works in terms of race, gender, and sexuality.
- Understand and employ various rhetorical strategies appropriately.
- Clearly direct written, spoken, and digital compositions to multiple and diverse audiences.

### **REQUIRED TEXTS AND TECHNOLOGY**

- Netflix subscription, weeks 3-7
- Access to Canvas & Course Reserves
- Notebook & Writing Utensil
- Recommended: *They Say, I Say* CAT Edition

### **GRADING AND ASSIGNMENTS:**

All assignments must be original work created for this class and should ascribe to UCSD's policy of academic integrity. All major assignments will be graded using the CAT 125/R Rubric.

- [Personal Narrative](#) -- 25%
- [Public Performance](#) -- 30%
- [Final Reflection](#) -- 15% (Complete/Incomplete)
- [Weekly Annotations & Reflections](#) -- 20%

Journal assignments will provide space for you to reflect on what you are interested in (in life, in career, etc.); imagine the possibilities attached to those ideas; and to reflect on the discussions we have in class and the media we consume. Entries should be 250-400 words each and prompts are below in the syllabus. These are graded complete/incomplete and also include a [Resume/CV](#) assignment and an annotated bibliography.

- [Participation](#) -- 10%  
You must earn your participation grade through various forms of engagement with the course. Such forms include, but are not limited to:
  - Engaging in section discussion and online communication
  - Asking questions in instructor office hours
  - Completing readings
  - Working respectfully with others
  - Coming to section ON TIME
  - Taking notes
  - Putting away distractions (no cell phones!)
  - Attending office hours with your Instructor

Your final grade will be determined by the following point scale:

A+	97-100
A	93-96

A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D	69-60
F	60-0

## **COURSE POLICIES**

### **AI POLICY**

All work for this course needs to be original and created by you. This doesn't mean you can't get feedback from friends or work together, but the work you turn in needs to be your own. If you are not sure if you are committing an AI violation, please talk to me or your TA before submitting your assignment.

If you are planning to use generative AI, please ask your instructor first to discuss appropriate uses of the technology. Anytime you use generative AI, you will need to cite the use of the technology and describe how and why you used the technology.

Please note: UCSD has a university-wide Policy on Integrity of Scholarship, published annually in the General Catalog, and online <https://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu/>. All students must read and be familiar with this Policy. All suspected violations of academic integrity will be reported to UCSD's Academic Integrity Coordinator, following Academic Senate policy. Students found to have violated UCSD's standards for academic integrity may include suspension or dismissal, and academic sanctions may include failure of the assignment or failure of the course.

### **STATEMENT OF INCLUSION:**

I believe very strongly that the classroom is a place to expand our knowledge and experiences safely, while being respected and valued. I support the values of UC San Diego to "create a diverse, equitable, and inclusive campus in which students, faculty, and staff can thrive". I strive to uphold the values articulated by the Office of the [Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#): "We believe that true excellence is achieved through productive relationships among people of diverse perspectives. When the collective talents of our students, faculty, and staff at UC San Diego are united in an environment that is open and inclusive, creativity and innovation prosper." I hope you will join me in creating a class that upholds these values to further enhance our learning as a community.

For more information, [https://commons.ucsd.edu/\\_files/Inclusion-Statements-Handout-4.pdf](https://commons.ucsd.edu/_files/Inclusion-Statements-Handout-4.pdf).  
And <http://diversity.ucsd.edu>.

## **DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT**

Our classroom will be inclusive and compassionate. Please see UCSD'S policies [here](#).

## **DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS**

Students with disabilities who require reasonable accommodations must be approved for services by providing appropriate and recent documentation to the [Office of Disabilities](#). Students authorized by OSD to receive reasonable accommodations should meet with me during my office hours during the *first two weeks of class* in order to ensure confidentiality. *We can discuss your specific accommodations and brainstorm ideas of how I can best help you succeed in this course.*

## **ACADEMIC HONESTY**

UCSD has a university-wide Policy on Integrity of Scholarship, published annually in the General Catalog, and online <https://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu/>. All students must read and be familiar with this Policy. All suspected violations of academic integrity will be reported to UCSD's Academic Integrity Coordinator. Students found to have violated UCSD's standards for academic integrity may include suspension or dismissal, and academic sanctions may include failure of the assignment or failure of the course.

## **ATTENDANCE**

Attendance and class participation is *essential* and *mandatory* to your success in this course. Please arrive on time and ready to participate in the classroom community. If you must miss class, please come and talk to me during office hours or email me to discuss the circumstances. It is *your responsibility to check in with your fellow students* to see what you may have missed and/ or meet with me in office hours. I will **not** be able to detail what we covered in class via email.

*Policy: You are allowed 3 absences. For every absence after 3, you will lose 1/3 a letter grade of your overall grade. After 6 absences, you may fail the course.*

## **TARDINESS**

Tardiness is disruptive to the classroom environment and will adversely affect your grade. Three tardies are equivalent to one absence.

## **PARTICIPATION**

In CAT, it is our hope that in this course we will develop a supportive learning community that fosters discussion, engagement, and excitement. Often, we will engage in the course material through the sharing of ideas, questions, and personal experiences. “Honesty, listening for understanding, a willingness to share your ideas, and respect for self and others” are basic guidelines that can help create a positive learning environment. Your participation and feedback are important to the success of the course and I welcome your thoughts throughout the term on how we might improve class processes that will encourage effective communication and dialogue.

Showing up to the class is a small portion of what counts as participation. You must earn your participation grade through various forms of engagement with the course. Such forms include, but are not limited to:

- Actively engaging in discussion and online communication
- Completing readings and Weekly Annotations
- Turning in “In class assignments” to Canvas
- Working respectfully with others
- Coming to class ON TIME
- Putting away distractions (no cell phones!)
- Attending office hours

A – You are well prepared for class, demonstrated by: having all your materials; consistently contributing to discussion; asking productive questions; listening actively and taking notes; engaging in group work; supporting and respecting other students; respecting the instructor and course material; attending office hours; coming to class on time and staying for the entire class time; taking responsibility for any work or material missed if absent; overall proactive and attentive.

B – You are somewhat prepared for class, demonstrated by: occasionally contributing to discussion; listening actively; engaging in group work; respecting other students; respecting the instructor, and course material; mostly coming to lecture and section on time and staying for the entire class time; overall responsible.

C – You are inconsistently prepared for class, demonstrated by: rarely contributing to discussion; missing materials; managing time poorly; working well with others, but unable to contribute fairly; respecting the instructor and course materials; mostly coming to class on time and staying for the entire class time; overall, inconsistent.

D – You are physically present but mentally disengaged from the course, demonstrated by: never contributing to discussion; consistently coming to class late or leaving early; working well with others, but unable to contribute fairly; failing to develop any relationships with the instructor; overall, disengaged.

0 – You demonstrate through behavior and/or language that you are uninterested in learning; or, alternatively, you are regularly disrespectful of other students, the instructor, or course material.

### **ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION AND LATE WORK**

All major assignments require you to submit a rough draft before the final due date. While the draft does not count towards your grade, failure to submit a draft will result in the loss of a letter grade on the final submission.

In order to receive a letter grade, all assignments must be submitted through Canvas. For each day work is late, your grade goes down by  $\frac{1}{3}$  letter. If the assignment is more than a week late, you will receive a 0.

### **GRADING CRITERIA**

Your major projects and presentations will be graded on a letter scale. ***Assignments must be turned in on time.*** Please let me know at least a week in advance of the due date if you need an extension for valid reasons. Retroactive extensions WILL NOT be issued. *For each day work is late, your grade goes down by  $\frac{1}{3}$  letter. If the assignment is more than a week late, you will receive a 0.*

An “A” represents extraordinary work that has been thoroughly developed and considered, a “B” represents great work that fulfills all requirements of the prompt but leaves room for more development and consideration. A “C” is considered to be the “average” and reflects the completion of an assignment that fulfills the prompts requirements, but does not show a great amount of effort to hone your skills from class, it also shows a lack of evolution from initial idea to final project. A “D” represents an insufficient effort in the completion of the assignment, meaning some components are missing or are not turned in on time. An “F” represents disregard for deadlines, assignment instructions, and displays a minimal effort for completing an assignment. In order to receive a grade, all work must be your own.

NOTE: Discussions about grades are more productive in person than over email. If you have a question or concern about your grade, please meet with me during office hours or set up an appointment. I am happy to discuss why you received this grade and how you can improve it in the future.

**COURSE CALENDAR:**

WEEK 0: Introduction to CAT125		
<u>Date</u>	<u>Homework</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
Friday, Sept 27	<i>In class:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Syllabus review</li></ul>	

WEEK 1: Personal Narrative & Storytelling		
<u>Date</u>	<u>Homework</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
Monday, Sept 30 8	<i>To prepare for class:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Watch Brené Brown, "<a href="#">The Power of Vulnerability</a>"</li></ul>	
Wednesday, Oct 2	<i>To prepare for class:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Read Ocean Vuong, "<a href="#">Someday I'll Love Ocean Vuong</a>"</li></ul>	
Friday, Oct 4	<i>To prepare for class:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bring a draft of your CV/Resume</li></ul>	<b>Buckler Waiver</b> (Modules > Week 1), due by 11:59pm

WEEK 2: Stories & Power		
<u>Date</u>	<u>Homework</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
Monday, Oct 7	<i>To prepare for class:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Abdellah Taia, "<a href="#">Oum Zahra Goes to the Movies,</a>" <i>Another Morocco</i></li></ul>	<b>Reflection 1 - CV/Resume</b> due by 11:59pm
Wednesday, Oct 9	<i>To prepare for class:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Emily McCrary-Ruiz-Esparza, "<a href="#">Generation Amazing!!! How We're Draining Language of Its Power</a>"</li></ul>	<b>Annotations 1</b> Due by 11:59pm
Friday, Oct 11	<i>To prepare for class:</i>	<b>Reflection 2 - Personal Narrative Proposal</b>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Melissa Febos, <a href="#">“In Praise of Navel-Gazing”</a></li> </ul>	Due by 11:59pm
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WEEK 3: Laughter, Joy, & Pain		
<u>Date</u>	<u>Homework</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
Monday, Oct 14	<i>To prepare for class:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Watch Nanette (Netflix)</li> </ul>	
Wednesday, Oct 16	<i>To prepare for class:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Audre Lorde, <a href="#">“The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action”</a></li> </ul>	
Friday, Oct 18	<i>To prepare for class:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vauhini Vara, <a href="#">Ghosts</a></li> </ul>	<b>Personal Narrative Rough Draft</b> Due by 11:59pm

WEEK 4: Organizing Silences & Creating Space		
<u>Date</u>	<u>Homework</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
Monday, Oct 21	<i>To prepare for class:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bring a draft of your personal narrative for peer review</li> </ul>	<b>Annotations 2</b> Due by 11:59pm
Wednesday, Oct 23	<i>To prepare for class:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Audre Lorde, <a href="#">“The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action”</a></li> </ul>	
Friday, Oct 25	<i>To prepare for class:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gloria Anzaldúa <a href="#">“Speaking in Tongues”</a></li> </ul>	
Sunday, Oct 27		<b>Personal Narrative Final Draft</b> Due by 11:59pm



WEEK 5: Telling a Story: Fashion		
<u>Date</u>	<u>Homework</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
Monday, Oct 28	<i>To prepare for class:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Joseph Azam, <a href="#">“Last, First, Middle”</a></li> </ul>	<b>Annotations 3</b> Due by 11:59pm
Wednesday, Oct 30	<i>To prepare for class:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mock congressional hearing: Review the list of readings and use them to draft a 3-5 opening statement, framing the issue from your perspective as a witness (ban, support, or reform).</li> </ul>	
Friday, Nov 1		

WEEK 6: On Curiosity & Asking Questions		
<u>Date</u>	<u>Homework</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
Monday, Nov 4	<i>To prepare for class:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read Marita Golden, <a href="#">My Black Hair: a Tangled Story of Race and Politics in America</a></li> <li>Watch Oscar-winning short film <a href="#">Hair Love</a></li> </ul>	<b>Annotations 4</b> Due by 11:59pm
Wednesday, Nov 6	<i>To prepare for class:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Watch <a href="#">“The Medium is the Message”</a></li> <li>Read Gilbert, <a href="#">“Curiosity and Devotion to Inquisitiveness”</a></li> </ul>	
Friday, Nov 8	<i>To prepare for class:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Watch <a href="#">“Examined Life”</a></li> </ul>	<b>Reflection 3 - Public Performance Proposal</b> Due by 11:59pm

WEEK 7: Turning Out: Questions & Researching Answers (Example about Food)		
<u>Date</u>	<u>Homework</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
Monday, Nov 11	No class	
Wednesday, Nov 13	To prepare for class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ngofeen Mputubwele, <a href="#">“When White People Say Plantation”</a></li> <li>Watch <a href="#">“Examined Life”</a></li> </ul>	<b>Reflection 4 - Annotated bibliography</b> Due by 11:59pm
Friday, Nov 15	To prepare for class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chantha Nguon &amp; Kim Green, <a href="#">“The Gradual Extinction of Softness”</a> (2021)</li> </ul>	<b>Annotations 5</b> Due by 11:59pm

WEEK 8: Talking About your Stuff		
<u>Date</u>	<u>Homework</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
Monday, Nov 18	To prepare for class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">“How to Save a Planet, “Black Lives Matter &amp; the Climate”</a></li> </ul>	<b>Reflection 5 - Outline for Public Performance</b> Due by 11:59pm
Wednesday, Nov 20	To prepare for class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">“How to Tell a Dragon Slaying Story”</a></li> </ul>	<b>Annotations 6</b> Due by 11:59pm
Friday, Nov 22	To prepare for class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bring a copy of your public performance rough draft</li> </ul>	<b>Public Performance Rough Draft</b> Due by 11:59pm

WEEK 9: The Internet & Digital Decluttering		
<u>Date</u>	<u>Homework</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
Monday, Nov 25	To prepare for class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read and complete <a href="#">The Dolly Parton Challenge</a></li> </ul>	<b>Annotations 7</b> Due by 11:59pm

Wednesday, Nov 27	<i>To prepare for class:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Frank Pasquale, <a href="#">“The Algorithmic Self”</a></li> </ul>	
Friday, Nov 29	<i>No class</i>	

WEEK 10: On Reflection		
<u>Date</u>	<u>Homework</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
Monday, Dec 2	<i>In class</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public performances</li> </ul>	
Wednesday, Dec 4	<i>In class</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public performances</li> </ul>	
Friday, Dec 6	<i>In class</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public performances</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Final Reflection &amp; Portfolio</b>, due by 11:59pm</li> <li><b>Public Performance Final Draft</b>, due by 11:59pm</li> </ul>

**Recommended Readings & Screenings that related to the course topics:**

Arielle Bernsetin, [“Mari Kondo and the Privilege of Clutter”](#)

*Chef’s Table*, “Cristina Martinez” (Vol 5, Ep 1) (Netflix)

Phoebe Bronstein, [“Our Modern Attempt to Control Pregnancy is Just another Attempt to Control](#)

[Women’s Bodies”](#) & [“Violently Inclined”](#) & [“Quiet Times”](#)

Kristi Coulter, [“Enjoli”](#)

Frederick Douglass, [“What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?”](#)

Hannah Gadsby, [“Three Ideas. Three Contradictions. Or not.”](#)

Roxane Gay, “A Tale of Three Coming Out Stories” (in *Bad Feminist*)

Roxane Gay, [“What fullness is”](#)

Roxanne Gay, [“Some Jokes are Funnier Than Others”](#)

[“This I Believe Speeches”](#)

Myriam Gurba, [“Pendeja, You Ain’t My Steinbeck”](#)

“Introduction,” [Nonbinary: Memoirs of Gender & Identify](#)

bell hooks, [“Moving Beyond Pain”](#)

Wayne Koaustenbaum, [“My 80s”](#)

NPR, [“She’s Funny”](#) (NPR Special Column)

[NYT article on COVID & Mental Health](#)

David Sedaris, [“Stepping Out”](#)

Jenny Slate, *Stage Fright* (Netflix)

Sarah Todd, [“What Rescue Dogs Can Teach us about Vulnerability”](#)

Amy Schumer, *Growing* (Netflix)

Alexandra Schwartz, [“Improving Ourselves to Death”](#)

[“The Subaltern”](#)

Wambui Wainaina, [“Biographical Friction”](#)

Ali Wong, *Baby Cobra* (Netflix)