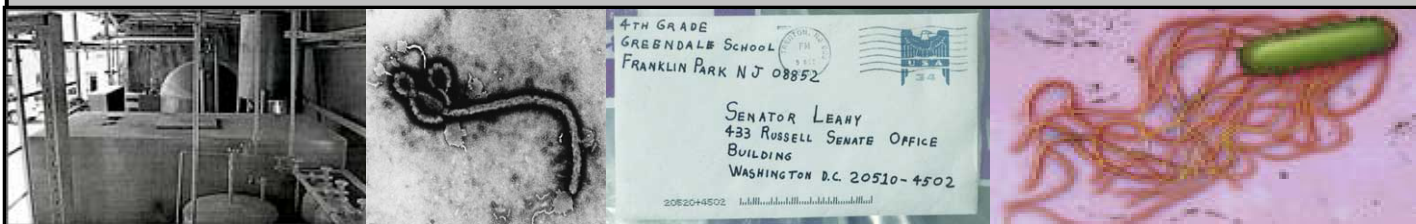


Senior Seminar in

RHETORIC AND BIOTERRORISM

M 3:30-6 PM

HLMS 191



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COURSE-WEBSITE	tac.colorado.edu/keranen (check here before class)
OFFICE HOURS	M 12-2, W 2-3 pm, and by special appointment



COURSE DESCRIPTION

For decades, experts have warned that the United States was vulnerable to attack by biological weapons. Following the anthrax mailings of 2001, the possibility of pathogen-based terrorist attacks acquired new urgency in the public sphere. However, competing assessments of the threat abound. Senator Bill Frist has called bioterrorism "the greatest existential threat we have in the world today," while others dismiss it as "persistent hype." Regardless of individual assessments, concerns about pathogen-based terrorist attacks and naturally occurring pandemic are driving biotechnological research and development, prompting new security responses, and altering public health policies in consequential ways.

This course examines how the discourses surrounding biothreats shape our understanding of biological agents and political violence and encourage particular responses to them in private, institutional, and public contexts. After briefly examining the development, deployment, and regulation of biological weapons, we will chart the trajectory of contemporary discourses of bioterror. Sobering and salient, these discourses raise vexing questions about the relationship between the individual and the collective. They also complicate our notions of secrecy versus disclosure, deterrence versus defense, awareness versus alarm, and efficiency versus social justice. In addition to these topics, we will pay specific attention to the construction of threats and communication of risks; the initiation, maintenance, and resolution of public controversies regarding bioterrorism; the traversal of technical information across argument fields; the interplay of expert and non-expert discourse; the need to make decisions in light of indeterminate knowledge; the creation of ethics codes which govern biological weapons research; and the negotiation of institutional policies to address potential harms.

*"Education is not a preparation for life; Education is life itself."
—John Dewey*

OBJECTIVES

To become better acquainted with the rhetoric of bioterrorism in a way that stimulates critical thinking, this course has the following four objectives:

1. HISTORY

To gain a deeper understanding of the history and context from which current rhetoric about biothreats emerged

To achieve this aim, we will identify key concepts, figures, ideas, historical developments and policies that influence current discourses of biothreats. Developments from WWII through the end of the Cold War will be of particular interest.

2. CRITICISM

To develop facility reading texts about biothreats rhetorically

To cultivate an appreciation of the ethical and political dimensions of rhetoric about bioterrorism specifically and biothreats more broadly

To achieve these aims, we will read, discuss, interpret, and evaluate texts related to bioterrorism and biothreats with a specific focus on key concerns from the rhetorical tradition.

3. THEORY

To gain insight into how the rhetoric of biothreats shapes our understanding of biological agents and weapons and encourages particular responses in public, private, and policy-related settings

To achieve this aim, we will isolate recurrent patterns, themes, tensions, arguments, and metaphors pervasive in the rhetoric of bioterrorism and critique their implications for thought and action.

4. PRACTICE

To consider how our own rhetorical practices contribute to the public discussion of bioterrorism, biodefense, and biopreparedness.

Like all thoughtful rhetoricians, we will also consider the implications of our own rhetorical practices and received ways of thinking about biological weapons and agents, political violence, and counterterrorist response.

READINGS AND COURSE TEXTS

Most of the readings for this course will be posted on the course website under the link "4300 Docs. You will be given a password to access the readings.

WHAT KIND OF CLASS IS THIS?

This course fulfills a critical thinking requirement. Although we will engage in a variety of activities, the course designation gives a clue about our primary activity: discussion. The term *seminar* generally refers to a small group of advanced students who engage in *intensive study* or *original research* on a particular topic who meet regularly under the supervision of a professor to discuss their progress. In addition to honing our critical thinking skills through discussion, we will enrich them through two other activities: first, by formulating at least one typed discussion question for each set of assigned readings that challenges, extends, or problematizes some key aspect or aspects of the texts; and second, by composing, presenting, and reflecting on short think pieces which identify a key theoretical issue, take a position on it, and argue for that position relying on solid reasoning and carefully selected evidence.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Measure of Evaluation	Percentage of Course Grade	Assessment Dates
Class Participation	10% of final grade	continuous
Discussion Questions	30% of final grade	collected each session
Think Pieces (2)	30% of final grade (15% each)	2/19, 3/19
Final Paper Project	30% of final grade	final draft due 5/2

OVERVIEW OF COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Class Participation

Class participation includes coming to class having carefully read the assigned material, listening closely to your classmates' comments during class, enthusiastically trying in-class exercises, bringing in outside material pertinent to our discussions, and contributing your ideas to the class. Class participation is not credit for mere attendance.

Discussion Questions

Each week you turn in one typed discussion question that responds to the readings. These will be graded on a check (B), check plus (A), check minus (C), check minus minus (D) scale. At the end of the term, these scores will be considered as a whole when assigning your grade for this portion. More details to come.

Think Pieces

At the end of each unit, you will compose a concise argument of 3-4 pages to be presented and discussed in class. More specific guidelines will be distributed in class at least a week before the think piece is due. Each think piece is worth 15% of your final grade. The first think piece will include a group presentation component we will discuss in class.

Final Paper

Students will write a 10-15 page final paper that analyzes a bioterror artifact from a rhetorical perspective. This project includes a paper proposal, a draft of the final paper, and an oral presentation of the final paper to the class. More specific guidelines will be given later in the term. *There will be no final exam for this class.* This paper is a substitute.

GRADING

Numerical grades assigned for each of the above will be translated into letter grades as follows:

>93 = A	87-89 = B+	77-79 = C+	67-69 = D+	<60 = F
90-92 = A-	83-86 = B	73-76 = C	63-66 = D	
	80-82 = B-	70-72 = C-	60-62 = D-	

COURSE PHILOSOPHY, POLICIES, AND CLASSROOM CONDUCT

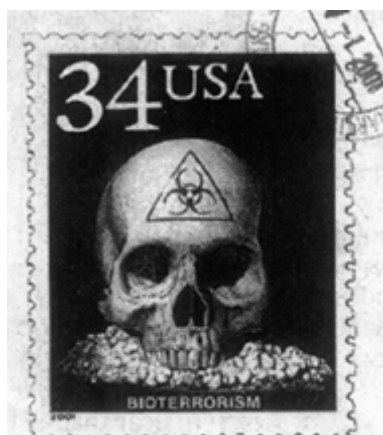
The university is a place where the free exchange of ideas should flourish. In this class, we will foster an environment of debate and healthy disagreement that nonetheless upholds the values of respect and civility for other persons. Both students and instructors share responsibility for fostering a supportive learning environment. In short, my vision for this course is one in which all of the members of the class work towards the collective goal of better understanding the rhetoric of bioterrorism. I believe that we all have something to learn from other and look forward to fostering an environment in which we can help each another succeed. Just in case you wanted further guidance, the University of Colorado's policy on proper classroom decorum may be reviewed at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html>. Consideration for others includes arriving on time, turning off pagers and cell-phones, and leaving pets at home.

This seminar will be conducted in an informal, interesting, and understandable manner. Please do not let the open nature of the class fool you. I still expect high quality work on the day it is assigned. All written work (think pieces, discussion questions, etc.) is due at the beginning of class on the day it is listed on the syllabus. In addition, it must be typed and double-spaced. Assignments should be free of grammar and spelling errors and, when required, contain a list of works cited. Late work will not be accepted except under verifiable extenuating circumstances. Students must complete all work in order to pass the course.

ADA STATEMENT

Students with disabilities who qualify for academic accommodations must provide a letter from Disability Services and discuss specific needs with the professor preferably within the first two weeks of the term. To contact DS, call 303.492.8671 or visit Willard 322, or www.colorado.edu/sacs/disabilityservices.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY, PLAGIARISM, AND THE HONOR CODE



read the CU Honor Code every now and again at: <http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/>.

Academic integrity violations—cheating, plagiarism, letting someone else use your written work—are *absolutely* not tolerated and will result in failure of the course. An academic integrity violation may include (but is not limited to) *either a)* turning in someone else's work as if it were your own, *or b)* providing your work to someone else to turn in as if it were their own. Work that is not yours would include, for example, a think piece written by someone else, a paper or other written work composed by someone else or copied from another source, or a final paper lifted from the internet. Please note that your instructor takes plagiarism and cheating very seriously. In other words, do not even think of misrepresenting material copied from an on-line source or another student. Rather than being tempted, please let me know in advance if you are having difficulties with your assignment, and we will work them out together. The CU Honor Code specifies additional violations of academic integrity that will also not be tolerated. You may wish to

ATTENDANCE, ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES

You are expected to come to class having read and reflected upon the assigned material. If you must miss class, it is your responsibility to obtain notes and handouts from your peers. Excessive absences (more than two classes for undergraduates and more than one for graduate students) will result in a 5 point reduction of your final course grade per absence. Students who have conflicts between religious observance dates and course requirements should talk to me during the first week of class to make other arrangements for completing assignments. You are also expected to arrive on time. Late arrivals and early departures will negatively affect your final grade. If you are late, it is your responsibility to sign the attendance sheet and obtain missed notes and handouts from your peers.

KEY QUESTIONS



Some of the questions that animate this course include those listed below. Undoubtedly, we will generate new questions as the course progresses.

- How do we define terms such as terrorism, bioterrorism, biodefense, and biosecurity? Who defines these terms and to what end? That is, what is the rhetorical and political work of definitions in the context of biothreats?
- Are there differences between state-sponsored use of biological weapons and terrorist-sponsored use of them? If so, what are they?
- What can we learn from past cases involving the use of biological agents against human populations about the way in which bioterrorism is framed in the contemporary public sphere?
- How do politicians, citizens, scientists, and journalists persuade one another to accept particular assessments of the nature and threat of bioterrorism and to enact specific responses to them at private, institutional, and public levels?
- How do we construct unfolding events as dramas?
- How do fantasy documents shape our understanding of biothreats and biodefense?
- What are the processes through which we construct understandings of the risk of bioterrorism? How does the concept of risk society contribute to our understanding of the present?
- What role do modernity and technology play in our assessments of risk?
- How does the mass media and popular culture shape understanding of and responses to the possibility of bioterrorism and emerging infectious disease?
- How do our discourses of biodefense interact with institutional politics to encourage the formation of particular policies?
- How are bioterrorism and biopreparedness framed differently according to argument sphere? What gets accentuated, diminished, or ignored? What are the consequences of these different frames? Which voices are included in the discussion and who gets left out?

“It is clear from surveying the literature of terrorism, as well as the public debate, that what one calls things matters. There are a few neutral terms in politics, because political language affects the perceptions of protagonists and audiences, and such effect acquires a greater urgency in the drama of terrorism. Similarly, the meanings of the terms change to fit a changing context.”—Martha Crenshaw, 1995, *Terrorism in Context*, 7.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

With a salient topic such as this one, we will remain somewhat fluid and flexible with our schedule. In addition, current events might require us to modify this schedule in order to address unfolding incidents. In general, I end each class session by reviewing what we have accomplished and previewing our goals for next time, including mentioning the reading assignments. This will help keep us on the same page. Since this is a seminar, I will keep the lectures to a minimum, except for the first two sessions.

Date/Session	Topic/Questions	Readings and Other Assignments <i>To be completed before class on day listed</i>
1 <i>January 22</i>	Introduction to the Course Lecture: History of Biological Weapons <i>How have we gotten to the present moment?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • King, Nicholas B. "The Influence of Anxiety: September 11, Bioterrorism, and American Public Health." <i>Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences</i> 58 (2003): 433-41;
2 <i>January 29</i>	Studying Bioterrorism from a Rhetorical Perspective <i>What does it mean to study the rhetoric of bioterrorism? What key insights from the rhetorical tradition can we use to propel our understanding of the rhetoric of bioterrorism? What are some of the key theoretical concerns and thinkers from rhetoric and communication studies that can guide us this semester?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dobkin, Bethami A. "What's in a Name? "Terrorism" as Ideograph." From <i>Tales of Terror: Television News and the Construction of the Terrorist Threat</i>, 39-53. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1992. 4300 Docs: <i>TalesofTerror</i>; • Weimann, Gabriel. 1988. "Media Events: The Case of International Terrorism." <i>Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media</i> 31 (1): 21-39. 4300 Docs: <i>Weimann</i>. <p><i>Don't forget your discussion question! Students will select groups for bioterrorist rhetoric presentations.</i></p>
3 <i>February 5</i>	Construction of Risk <i>What can we learn from past cases involving intentional pathogen spread? Are there any similarities, patterns, or recurrent topoi in the rhetoric produced in and about these cases? What do these cases suggest about rhetoric in the present?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fox, N. J., " Postmodern reflections on 'risk', 'hazards', and life choices," in D. Lupton (Ed.) <i>Risk and sociocultural theory: New directions and perspectives</i> (New York: Cambridge University Press): 12-33. 4300 Docs: <i>Fox</i> • Leitenberg, Milton, "An Assessment of the Threat of the Use of Biological Weapons or Biological Agents," Paper presented at the Conference on Biosecurity and Bioterrorism (Rome, Italy, 2000). 4300 Docs: <i>Leitenberg</i> • Garrett, Laurie, "The Nightmare of Bioterrorism," <i>Foreign Affairs</i> (2001): 76-88. 4300 Docs: <i>Garrett 2001</i> <p>Guest Speaker on Biothreat Risk Assessment in the Federal Government: Ms. Shali Moheli, Center for Science and Policy Technology Research and ENVS</p>

<p>4 <i>February 12</i></p>	<p>Tales from the Hotzone</p> <p><i>How do anxieties about AIDS and Ebola shape contemporary discourses about bioterrorism?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read selection entitled "Ebola River" from Preston, Richard. <i>The Hot Zone</i>. New York: Random House, 1994. 4300 Docs: Preston. • Weldon, Rebecca A. 2001. An "Urban Legend" of Global Proportion: An Analysis of Nonfiction Accounts of the Ebola Virus. <i>Journal of Health Communication</i> 6 (3): 281-194. 4300 Docs: Weldon. <p>RECOMMENDED READING: Nancy Tomes, <i>The Making of a Germ Panic, Then and Now</i>. To be posted on website.</p>
<p>6 <i>February 19</i></p>	<p>The Past as Prologue</p> <p><i>What can we learn from past cases involving intentional pathogen spread? Are there any similarities, patterns, or recurrent topoi in the rhetoric produced in and about these cases? What do these cases suggest about rhetoric in the present?</i></p>	<p>Group Presentation and Think Piece One Due.</p> <p>For further reading, if interested: Mayor, Adrienne, "The Nessus Shirt in the New World: Smallpox Blankets in History and Legend," <i>Journal of American Folklore</i> 108, no. 427 (1995): 54-77. 4300 Docs: Mayor; Fenn, Elizabeth, "Biological Warfare in Eighteenth-Century North America: Beyond Jeffery Amherst," <i>Journal of American History</i> (2000): 1552-80. 4300 Docs: Fenn</p> <p>[Group Presentations on Aum Shinrykio, RISE, the Rajneeshees, Minnesota Patriots, and DIN]</p>
<p>7 <i>February 26</i></p>	<p>Case Study: Anthrax 2001</p> <p><i>Here will we will closely examine rhetoric produced during and after the anthrax mailings.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Anthrax Case Timeline." <i>Journal of Health Communication</i> 8, no. 1-2 (2003). 4300 Docs: Anthrax Timeline • Clarke, Christopher and Caron Chess, "False Alarms, Real Challenges," <i>Bioterrorism and Biosecurity</i> (2006): 74-83. 4300 Docs: Clarke • Dougall et al., "Media Exposure to Bioterrorism: Stress and the Anthrax Attacks," <i>Psychiatry</i> (2005): 28-42. 4300 Docs: Baum.
<p>8 <i>March 5</i></p>	<p>Case Study: Anthrax 2001 and the CDC</p> <p><i>Here will we will closely examine rhetoric produced during and after the anthrax mailings.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robinson, Susan J., and Wendy C. Newstetter. "Uncertain Science and Certain Deadlines: CDC Responses to the Media During the Anthrax Attacks of 2001" <i>Journal of Health Communication</i> 8, Supplement 1 (2003): 17-34. 4300 Docs: Robinson • Prue, Christine, Cheryl Lackey, Lisa Swenarski, and Judy Gantt. "Communication Monitoring: Shaping CDC's Emergency Risk Communication Efforts." <i>Journal of Health Communication</i> 8 (2003): 35-49. 4300 Docs: Prue et al.
<p><i>March 12</i></p>	<p>Biopreparedness More Broadly Construed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reissman, Dori, et al., "Pandemic Influenza Preparedness: Adaptive Responses to an Evolving Challenge," <i>Journal of Homeland Security and Emergency Management</i> (2006): 1-26. 4300 Docs: Pandemic Flu Preparedness • Tierney, Kathleen et al., "Metaphors Matter: Disaster Myths, Media Frames, and Their Consequences in Hurricane Katrina," <i>Annals of the American Academy</i> (2005): 57-81. 4300 Docs: Becv
<p>9 <i>March 19</i></p>		<p>Think Piece Two Due</p>

<p>10 <i>April 2</i></p>	<p>Case Study: WMD in Iraq</p> <p><i>Here we will critically examine issues of framing and consequence in the Iraqi bioweapons controversy.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selection from Miller, Judith, Stephen Engelberg, and William Broad. <i>Germs: Biological Weapons and America's Secret War</i>. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002. • Readings TBD
<p>11 <i>April 9</i></p>	<p>Decision Making and Publics</p> <p><i>What conceptions of the public undergird contemporary discourses of bioterror? How can and should the public participate in decision-making?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glass, Thomas; & Schoch-Spana, Monica. "Bioterrorism and the People: How to Vaccinate a City against Panic." <i>Confronting Biological Weapons</i> 34 (2002): 217-23. 4300 Docs: <i>Bioterrorism and the People</i> • Grabill, Jeffrey T., and W. Michele Simmons. "Toward a Critical Rhetoric of Risk Communication: Producing Citizens and the Role of Technical Communicators." <i>Technical Communication Quarterly</i> 7, no. 4 (1998): 415-41. 4300 Docs: <i>Grabill</i> <p>Paper Proposals Due.</p>
<p>12 <i>April 16</i></p>	<p>Biodefense</p> <p><i>How do discourses of expertise and authority function with regard to bioterrorism? How do technical and scientific discourses about bio-sciences circulate across argument spheres?</i></p>	<p>Readings TBD.</p>
<p>13 <i>April 23</i></p>	<p>Paper Presentations</p>	
<p>14 <i>April 30</i></p>	<p>Paper Presentations</p>	

"BEFORE OUR EYES LIES AN UNCHARTED NEW LANDSCAPE WHOSE CONTOURS ARE BEING SHAPED IN THOUSANDS OF BIOTECHNOLOGY LABORATORIES IN UNIVERSITIES, GOVERNMENT AGENCIES, AND CORPORATIONS AROUND THE WORLD." —JEREMY RIFKIN, *THE BIOTECH CENTURY*

"TERROR AND GRACE THEREFORE JOSTLE EACH OTHER WITHIN THE INFINITELY TEXTURED PARTICULARS OF THE DAY."
—STEPHEN JOHN HARTNETT, 1999, "FOUR MEDITATIONS ON THE SEARCH FOR GRACE AMIDST TERROR."

"WHEN ONE SAYS 'TERRORISM' IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY, ONE ALSO SAYS 'MEDIA,' FOR TERRORISM BY ITS VERY NATURE IS A PSYCHOLOGICAL WEAPON WHICH DEPENDS ON COMMUNICATING A THREAT TO A WIDER SOCIETY"
—PAUL WILKINSON, 1997, "THE MEDIA AND TERRORISM."

NOTES: