Malcolm X: Voicing the Revolution
Communication Within the Curriculum Critical Speaking Seminar

Instructor: Asma Al-Naser
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Office Hours: Tuesday 2:00-3:00
Marks Café, Van Pelt Library

I. Course Description

Malcolm X is remembered as one of the most commanding, radical voices of the 1950’s and 60’s, for representing and articulating a powerful critique of the ideological underpinnings of racial oppression in the United States. He is also remembered as a poignant orator, as a man capable of writing and delivering forceful speeches. However, these two legacies are not unrelated; in fact, Malcolm’s ability to mobilize his audience relied on an intersection of the power of critique and the power of delivery. In this class, we will read texts and watch videos of some of Malcolm X’s most poignant speeches and pay attention, on the one hand to some of the key themes and concerns, such as his call for a black revolution, his representation of race in America, his views on the place of African Americans in the world, and of course his thoughts on the ethics and politics of violent resistance. On the other hand, we will also search the texts for signs of the spoken moment: an awareness of audience, a reliance on emphasis and repetition, and strategies of conversion.

As a Critical Speaking seminar, this course will offer students the opportunity to improve their public speaking skills through class discussion, class debates, and individual and group presentations. Students will be encouraged to explore personal convictions, to articulate and defend different or opposing points of view, and to regularly participate in oral communication assignments.

II. Required Texts:
Available at Penn Book Center, 34th and Sansom.


All other assigned texts will be provided on Blackboard. Films are on reserve at Van Pelt.

**Useful Sources:**

The Malcolm X Project at Columbia University  
Project at Columbia University dedicated to providing new research on the biography of Malcolm X. Also includes interviews, audio recordings, and documents, as well as some information provided by Columbia’s late Prof. Manning Marable while working on his biography of Malcolm X.

Malcolm X: A life of reinvention  
Blog of Prof. Marable’s biography of the same name. Includes another set-up of the Malcolm X Project, with some additional links and information. Also check out the Malcomology episodes on YouTube. A link to episode 2 is provided in the home page:  
[http://www.youtube.com/user/malcolmology#p/u/5/SyoAfZFQDHg](http://www.youtube.com/user/malcolmology#p/u/5/SyoAfZFQDHg)

BMA: Black Media Archive  
[http://www.dubyakaygee.com/BMA/theBMA.html](http://www.dubyakaygee.com/BMA/theBMA.html)  
A fascinating multi-media source for African and African-American history. Check out their podcasts: parts of several of Malcolm X’s and Martin Luther King’s speeches are available, as well as speeches by other relevant orators, clips from films, academic debates, music recordings, and interviews.

ItunesU  
University lectures, several of which can be downloaded for free.

**III. Course Objectives**

To identify and analyze the rhetorical mechanisms and strategies of delivery in Malcolm X’s speeches.

To develop skills and techniques for communicating logically, coherently and effectively in a public setting.
To get accustomed to speaking publically on a regular basis.

To acquire an understanding of both the consistencies and transformations of Malcolm X’s political philosophy.

To think critically about terms and concepts that are often taken for granted in contemporary political discourses, such as: war, terrorism, democracy, civil rights and liberties, and nationalism.

IV. Course Requirements and Assignments (% of final grade)

Attendance (10%)

Participation in class activities and discussions (15%)

Attend a CWiC workshop
You will be responsible for attending one CWiC speaking workshop. These workshops are usually not only informative but also a lot of fun. CWiC offers a variety of public speaking workshops, from dealing with nerves to powerpoint presentations. Be sure to pick one that you think you will benefit from. After attending the workshop, please be ready to give a short description of your experience to the class. This is not a graded assignment, but it IS a requirement.

Response papers (10%)
Response papers posted to blackboard by the beginning of each class. Informal. Can be anywhere from a paragraph to two pages long.

In-class impromptu speeches (ungraded)
On occasion, students will be given a prompt and three to five minutes to prepare a response. Each class, one student will be chosen at random to speak for a minute and a half and another to respond. The format of these speeches will vary, from role-playing to This exercise is designed to get students used to preparing quick notes and speaking on call.

Class Debate (15%)
Class debate on the ethics and politics of non-violent resistance. The class will be divided into two groups, one supporting non-violence as a practical and ethical means of achieving civil or human rights, the other supporting militarization and/or self-defense. This assignment depends on student enrollment. If the class is less than six students, then this assignment will likely be a shorter individual presentation (5 minutes). The student will be asked to take a position on non-violence vs. self-defence and plead their case to a civil/human rights organization of their choice.

Group Presentation (20%)
Group presentations on Malcolm X’s global vision and black nationalism: on the significance of an international or transnational moment or movement in Malcolm’s writings, on one of
Malcolm’s international travels, or on a comparison or contrast between Malcolm’s presentations on race in America and racism and colonialism outside the United States. Each student in the group will be required to present for 5 minutes.

**Final Presentation (30%)**

Individual ten-minute oral presentations. This is the oral equivalent of a short research paper. Format and topic of this presentation TBA. The class will likely come up with an assignment topic/format together, depending on student interests.

**V. Video conferences**

Depending on enrollment, I will be recording your presentations and meeting with you individually to discuss one or more of your presentations. Alongside your meetings with the CWiC advisors (read below), this is meant to give you the chance to work on some areas that need development but also, just as importantly, to identify your own strengths, perhaps even develop a personal public speaking style.

**VI. Policies**

*CWiC Advisors:*

This course is affiliated with Communication Within the Curriculum (CWiC), which means that an undergraduate speaking advisor will be assigned to assist you with the oral presentation assignments. Your advisor has been trained in *public speaking*. S/he will not help you with the course material—come see me if you have any questions or assistance. What the CWiC undergraduate advisors will do is help you work on your public speaking skills and on giving an effective and engaging presentation/speech. This means that you must prepare your presentation before meeting with the advisor. I cannot stress this enough: if you have no presentation, the advisor will not be able to give any effective feedback.

You will be required to meet with the CWiC advisors at least twice outside of class, each for a one-hour session. I will point out which assignments require that you meet with a CWiC advisor: this will be included in the assignment hand-out. These meetings are required. The advisor will communicate regularly with me, and not meeting with the advisor will result in the reduction of a full letter grade from your assignment grade. However, the meetings themselves are not graded, and the advisors are undergraduates like yourselves and are very helpful and congenial, so they should not be a source of pressure or stress. Instead, approach these sessions as a useful resource: the advisors will essentially help you give better presentations, which in turn should help you fare well in the course.

The CWiC advisor assigned to our class will attend class to introduce him/herself, explain what to expect from the advising session, and direct you to CWiC’s online scheduler.
Academic Integrity:
The University of Pennsylvania has a Code of Academic Integrity ([http://www.upenn.edu/academicintegrity/ai_codeofacademicintegrity.html](http://www.upenn.edu/academicintegrity/ai_codeofacademicintegrity.html)), and students in this class are required to abide by this code. Any violation will result in an F for the course. If you are having trouble with an assignment, struggling with course load, or are concerned for any reason, please come see me.

VII. Course load

A quick note on course load. Since this is a critical speaking class, I have attempted to put together a reading schedule that will not overburden you with readings. The only exception to this is the Autobiography of Malcolm X, which we will be reading in the second week of class. This long text will help set up many of the issues we will be discussing in the class, so I preferred to assign it to you at the beginning of the semester. However, since it is a particularly long book, I will point out specific chapters to focus on. After week two, we will mainly be reading either one long or two shorter speeches a week, accompanied by secondary readings, all of which should be a manageable workload. The reading list is tentative, however, and if we fall behind or need to rearrange/replace some readings, I will consult with you over the course of the semester.

Schedule

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<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Introduction</th>
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<td>Th Sept. 8</td>
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<th>Week 2</th>
<th>Life and Times</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tu Sept. 13</td>
<td>Autobiography of Malcolm X, pp. 1-250</td>
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<td>In class: short screening of Eyes on the Prize, Vol 4: “The Time Has Come.”</td>
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<th>Week 3</th>
<th>Rhetoric, Orality and Audience</th>
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<td>Tu Sept 20</td>
<td>Malcolm X. “The Ballot or the Bullet.”</td>
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Robert E. Terril. “Judgement and Critique in the rhetoric of Malcolm X.”

Th Sept 22
Malcolm X. “The Ballot or the Bullet.”
Selections from Henry Louis Gates, Jr. _The Signifying Monkey._

**Week 4**

**Black Nationalism**

Tu Sept 27
Malcolm X. “A Declaration of Independence.”
Malcolm X. “The Black Revolution.”
Marcus Garvey. “Ethiopia Shall Once More See the Day of Her Glory.”
_Black Nationalism in America_, pp. 200-209.

Th Sept 29
Malcolm X. “A Declaration of Independence.”
Malcolm X. “The Black Revolution.”
Scot Brown. “‘To Unbrainwash an Entire People’: Malcolm X, Cultural
Nationalism, and the US Organization in the Era of Black Power.”
Malcolm X: a Historical Reader, 137-146.

**Week 5**

**Bandung**

Tu Oct 4
Malcolm X. “Not just an American problem, but a world problem.”
Malcolm X. “There’s a Worldwide Revolution Going On.”
Brenda Gayle Plummer. _Rising Wind_. Ch. 1 “Race, Ethnicity and U.S.
Foreign Policy.”

Th Oct 6
Malcolm X. “Not just an American problem, but a world problem.”
Malcolm X. “There’s a Worldwide Revolution Going On.”
Selection from Richard Wright, _The Color Line._
Cary Fraser. "An American Dilemma: Race and Realpolitik in the
American Response to the Bandung Conference, 1955."

**Week 6**

Tu Oct 11 FALL BREAK
Th Oct 13 Catch-up and in-class workshop

**Week 7**

**Islam and Religion**

Tu Oct 18 In class: Group presentations.
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>Th Oct 20</td>
<td>James Baldwin. <em>The Fire Next Time.</em></td>
<td>In class: <em>The Hate that Hate Produced</em></td>
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<td><strong>Week 8</strong></td>
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<td>Tu Oct 25</td>
<td>Islam and Religion</td>
<td>Malcolm X. “Message to Grassroots.”</td>
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<td>Th Oct 27</td>
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<td>Selections from Louis A. Decaro, Jr. <em>Malcolm and the Cross.</em></td>
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<td><strong>Week 9</strong></td>
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<td>Tu Nov 1</td>
<td>Malcolm and Martin</td>
<td>Malcolm X. “Twenty Million Black People in a political, economic and mental prison.”</td>
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<td>Martin Luther King. “Black Power Defined.”</td>
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<td>Martin Luther King. “Facing the Challenge of a New Age.”</td>
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<td><strong>Week 10</strong></td>
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<td>Tu Nov 8</td>
<td>Violence</td>
<td>Malcolm X. “To Mississippi Youth.”</td>
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<td>Henry David Thoreau. “Civil Disobedience.”</td>
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<td>Mahatma Gandhi, “The Political Scope of Nonviolence.”</td>
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<td>Martin Luther King. “The Power of Nonviolence.”</td>
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<td>Th Nov 10</td>
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<td>Malcolm X. “To Mississippi Youth.”</td>
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<td>Jean-Paul Sartre. “Preface” to Frantz Fanon’s <em>The Wretched of the Earth.</em></td>
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Week 11
Tu Nov 15  In-class: Debate
Th Nov 17 In-class: library session.

Week 12
Tu Nov 22 The Question of Race
Malcolm X. “After the Bombing.”
CATCH UP.

Th Nov 24 THANKSGIVING

Week 13
Tu Nov 29 Racial Consciousness and Colonialism
Malcolm X. “At the Audubon.”

Th Dec 1 Malcolm X. “At the Audubon.”
Selections from W. E. B. DuBois, Darkwater.

Week 14
Tu Dec 6 Final Presentations
Th Dec 8 LAST CLASS

Final response paper: December 15