Writing 5905: Mormon Rhetorics
Summer 2016
Monday/Wednesday, 1:25-2:45 PM
Milton Bennion Hall, room 204

Instructor Information:
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Required Texts:
The Mormon People, by Matthew Burton Bowman
Additional chapters, articles, and web sources available on Canvas.

Course Overview
Course Description
In December 2014, an article published in Slate magazine declared the so-called “Mormon moment” over. That moment, which arguably began during the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympics, began to gain steam with Mitt Romney’s first run at the presidency in 2008 and along the way granted Mormonism a voice in the US media that it hadn’t had in decades. Mormons, a Pew survey reported, were slightly more accepted by the mainstream, or (at the very least) a larger number of Americans found contemporary Mormonism a little less peculiar.

Accompanying this shift in outside perspectives of Mormonism, many members within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* also began to think about, understand, and challenge their faith in more nuanced and complicated ways. The internet in particular provided Mormons with a number of previously unavailable tools: easier access to alternative histories, communities to ask and debate questions and concerns, and highly visible blog sites to publish new ideas, expand upon the devotional canon, and even challenge status-quo beliefs and dogmas. As such, Slate argues, “a megaphone for the voices of Mormons who might ordinarily find themselves on the fringes of their congregations— academics, feminists, LGBTQ Mormons, and Mormons questioning their own beliefs” emerged and began to thrive. The “moment” arguably ended after Kate Kelly and John Dehlin, two of the most prominent of these alternative voices, were
excommunicated for their criticism of and activism against the church’s position on women’s access to the all-male priesthood and gay marriage.

During the last decade or so, Mormonism’s generally monolithic public discourse—largely shaped, controlled, and distributed by the LDS church—has blossomed like Brigham Young’s proverbial rose in the desert: from Mormon rhetoric to Mormon rhetorics. These rhetorics will be the focus of this class. Over the course of the semester, we will trace the Mormon historical narrative; examine the tradition’s sacred texts, doctrines, and shifting church policies; and consider the influence and rhetorics of LDS leadership. We will also make a special effort to nuance and complicate “official” institutional narratives with attention to both academic and vernacular historical, sociological, and ethnographic accounts of what it means to be Mormon. Of special focus during the semester will be Mormonism’s struggle with and rhetorics about marginality, first as a marginalized “peculiar” group itself and second as a group that has, at times, had complicated relationships with marginalized groups within its membership, including women, people of color, and people who identify as LGBTQ.

*In class, we will work to differentiate between the institutional Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and “Mormons” and “Mormonism” as more cultural (and rhetorically flexible) terms.

**Course Goals**
In this course, we will work together to:

- Trace the histories and exigencies Mormon-related rhetorics from the early nineteenth century to the twenty-first.
- Discuss LDS/Mormon rhetorics as simultaneously theological, political, cultural, and contested.
- Examine the diversity and complexity of LDS communities and their rhetorical practices, past and present.
- Situate Mormon rhetorics both in the local context of Utah and Salt Lake City, in U.S. society more broadly, and the global context in which it the LDS Church has become a major, growing religion.
- Develop a critical vocabulary for talking about talking about religion and religious diversity.

**Course Grading**
In order to de-emphasize grade-related pressures and keep the focus on community-building and authentic intellectual inquiry, we will be taking what is sometimes called a “contract grading” approach to Writing 5905. The terms of the contract are this: if you turn in all of your assignments on time and they meet the stated objectives and
specifications, you are guaranteed to receive at least a B in the course. If your assignments consistently exceed the minimum expectations and demonstrate thoughtful engagement with the course materials and concepts, you will receive an A. We would love to see everyone in the course earn an A, and we are willing to work closely with all of you to get your projects into that range.

We will update the gradebook on Canvas regularly so you can track your progress throughout the term. The following course components will be factored into your final grade:

**Discussion Posts**
Canvas-based discussion posts are an opportunity to explore specific course topics and share resources with your classmates using a less formal writing voice. There will be **ten required discussion posts** throughout the term, each of which will be in response to a specific question or task that we pose for the class. In order to receive full credit for the post, you will need to respond insightfully to the week’s question or task. We strongly encourage you to post additional thoughts and resources, as well as any news, events, or online content you encounter that might be relevant to the course.

**Class Discussion Leader**
On the syllabus, you’ll notice that on most days, there are one or two additional readings “recommended.” You will select an article you’d like to read and present on (we’ll have you choose 1-3 of them and hopefully you’ll get your first or second choice). The presentation should include a one page handout, a 10-15-minute presentation on the material, and a 15-20 minute class discussion. Here are the topics for those discussions:

- Rhetoric and Religion
- Mormon Ethnicity/Peculiarity
- Early Mormonism and the Magic Worldview
- Markers of Mormon Identity/Orthodoxy
- Mormon Freemasonry
- Mormon Folklore
- Mountain Meadows Massacre
- Decolonizing Mormonism
- Race and the Priesthood
- The Divine Feminine
- Contemporary Mormon Feminism

**Projects**
We will complete three major projects this term, each of which will involve multiple drafts with opportunity for feedback and revision. We will give out detailed assignment handouts for each of these projects when the time comes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Final Draft Length</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rhetorical analysis</td>
<td>4 pages</td>
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Course Schedule

Unit 1: Rhetorics of Religion, Belief, and Mormon Studies

Monday, May 16: Rhetoric and Religion
Read:
  (concentrate on the first ten pages)

Recommended:
- Home of the Brave, podcast episode: “Prisoner of Zion”

Wednesday, May 18: The Rhetoric of Mormon Studies
Discussion Post 1 due
Read:

Recommended:

Unit 2: Rhetorical Frameworks: Engaging Issues in Mormonism, Past and Present

Monday, May 23: Defining Religious Rhetoric / Socio-Historical Understandings of Mormonism
Read:

Wednesday, May 25: Understanding and Negotiating Mormon Beliefs and Identities
Discussion Post 2 due
Read:
- Basic Beliefs on LDS website: “Basic Doctrines” and the “The Articles of Faith.”
- Skim the various sections of Preach My Gospel, the LDS church’s missionary manual.
- Patricia Nelson Limerick, “Peace Initiative: Using the Mormons to Rethink Culture and Ethnicity in American history” in Something in the Soil, pp. 235-255

Recommended:

Monday, May 30: No class, Memorial Day

Unit 3: Rhetorics of Restoration: Mormon Origins, and Sacred History

Wednesday, June 1: Heavenly Visions and Rhetorics of “Restoration”
Read:
- Bowman, Ch. 1 “Joseph Smith and the First Mormons: To 1831,” 3-31.

Recommended:

Monday, June 6: Rhetorics of Revelation: Sacred Texts, Translation,
Discussion Post 3 due
Read:
- Title Page and Introduction, 1 Nephi, Ch. 1, 8, 16 Book of Mormon (LDS Scriptures),

Recommended:

Unit 4: Histories of Mormon and Anti-Mormon Rhetoric/Discourse
Wednesday, June 8: “The Spirit of God”: Kirtland, Nauvoo and the Everyday Rhetorics of Ritual
Rhetorical Analysis draft 1 due
Read:
• Bowman, Ch. 3 “City of Joseph: 1839 – 1846,” 63-96.

Recommended:
• Michael W. Homer, “Mormon Freemasonry,” in Joseph’s Temples. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2014), pp. 138-178

Workshop Memos due
Read:

Recommended:
• Jan Harold Brunvand - “As the Saints Go Marching By: Modern Jokelore Concerning Mormons” from Latter-Day Lore: Mormon Folklore Studies, 360-368.

Unit 5: 19th Century Rhetorics of Mormonism: Polygamous Pioneers
Wednesday, June 15: “Come, Come Ye Saints” - Mormon Pioneer Rhetorics
Rhetorical analysis draft 2 due
Read:
• Bowman, Ch. 4 “Come, Come Ye Saints, 1846 – 1877,” 96-123.

Recommended:
Monday, June 20: Mormon Polygamy Rhetorics
Discussion Post 4 due
Read:
- lds.org Gospel Topics Essay “Plural Marriage in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints”

Recommended:

Unit 6: (Settler) Colonial Rhetorics in Mormonism
Wednesday, June 22: Mormonism, Indigeneity, and Settler Colonialism
Read, Everyone:
- Jared Farmer, Chapters 1-2, On Zion’s Mount: Mormons, Indians, and the American Landscape (Harvard University Press, 2008)

Assigned Groups:
- Daniel Liestman, “‘We Have Found What We Have Been Looking For!’: The Creation of the Mormon Religious Enclave among the Catawba.” South Carolina Historical Magazine, 2002
- Grant Underwood, “Mormonism, the Maori, and Cultural Authenticity” Journal of Pacific History, 2000

Monday, June 27: Decolonizing Mormonism
Discussion Post 5 due
Read:

Listen:
Decolonizing Mormonism, talk from Sunstone by Gina Colvin and Joanna Brooks (Link in Canvas)

Recommended:
Unit 7: Rhetorics of Race in Mormonism

Wednesday, June 29: Rhetorics of Mormon Whiteness
Read, Everyone:

Assigned Groups:
- Ch 2. “Red, White, and Mormon: Ingratiating Themselves with the Indians”
- Ch. 3 “Black, White, and Mormon: Amalgamation”
- Ch. 8 “Oriental, White and Mormon”

Monday, July 4: No class, Independence Day (get a head start on reading for Wednesday!)

Wednesday, July 6: Mormon Rhetorics of Blackness, Black Mormon Rhetorics
Discussion Post 6 due
Read:
- lds.org Gospel Topics Essay: “Race and the Priesthood”

Recommended:

Further Reading:

Unit 8: Women and Mormonism

Monday, July 11: Goddesses and Priestesses: Mormon Rhetorics of Divine Womanhood
Read:
- lds.org General Topics Essay - “*Women in the Church*” & Gospel Topics Essay “*Mother in Heaven*”
- Margaret Toscano, “Is There a Place for Heavenly Mother in Mormon Theology?” in *Discourses in Mormon Theology: Philosophical & Theological Possibilities*, (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2007), 193-224.

Recommended:

Wednesday, July 13: *Mormon Feminism*
Discussion Post 7 due
Read:

Recommended:

**Unit 9: Rhetorics of Family and Sexuality within Mormonism**

**Monday, July 18:** *“The Divine Institution of Marriage”*
Final Project draft 1 due
Read:
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “Proclamation to the World on the Family”
- LDS Newsroom, “The Divine Institution of Marriage”

Pick one:

**Wednesday, July 20:** *LGBTQ Mormon Rhetorics: From Prop 8 to the Nov 2015 policy announcement*
Workshop memos due
Read:
- [http://mormonsandgays.org](http://mormonsandgays.org)
- Claudia Bushman, “Gender and Sexual Orientation” from *Contemporary Mormonism: Latter-day Saints in Modern America* (Praeger, 2006)

**Monday, July 25:** No class, Pioneer Day
Unit 10: Digital Mormons and Rhetorics of Mormonism in/at Utah

Wednesday, July 27: The Mormon Moment, mormons.org, bloggernacle, lds.org essays, podcasts
Final Project draft 2 due
Read/listen:
  ● An online article, blog post, or podcast from the last year.

Monday, August 1: Rhetorics of Mormonism in Utah (the state) and at Utah (the University)
Discussion Post 8 due

Wednesday, August 3: Final class. Wrap-up.

Due during Finals Week:
  ● Reflective letter
  ● Rhetorical Analysis final draft
  ● Final Project final draft

Course Policies
Formatting
All drafts should be double-spaced, in 12-point Times New Roman font, with one-inch margins. Your last name and the page number should appear in the upper right corner of each page. Whenever possible, we will submit assignments and provide feedback electronically in order to save paper.

Late Work
In order to receive full credit for any assignment, you must turn your work in by the due date. If you miss class on the day that an assignment is due, you must submit the assignment to me via Canvas before the beginning of class in order to get full credit. If you miss the deadline, you have one week to turn in the assignment for half-credit. After that one-week window, we will not accept late work unless you are experiencing a personal or family emergency. If that is the case, please contact us as soon as possible, and we will work out a plan for getting you caught up.

Attendance and Participation
The work we do in class is essential for both your learning and the successful completion of your writing projects, so it is very important that you miss as few class meetings as possible: We will be taking attendance. For every three classes you miss this term—for any reason—you will need to complete an additional mandatory make-up essay as a condition of passing the class.
Please come to class prepared to discuss all readings and assignments. Many of the theoretical readings for this course are written for academic audiences and will be challenging. **We expect you to read these texts actively, using any and all strategies that you have developed for tackling tough readings:** annotate them, make handwritten or typed notes, write outlines or summaries, and reread key sections as needed.

All of the assignments in this course are “scaffolded”: that is, large projects are broken into smaller steps and stages that will help you develop the final product. If you are stuck or struggling with an assignment, please don’t let that lead to procrastination, poor work, or failure to come to class. Email or come talk to us during office hours—we have lots of tools for getting students unstuck.

**Content Accommodation**
While productive rhetorical critique is a goal of the course, our intentions are by no means to diminish or disprove Mormonism or undermine its unique faith claims. In fact, we actively discourage comments or conversations that may take that tone. Our goal, as stated above, is to provide a space for analysis and discussion that will be productive for believers and non-believers, as well as for students without personal connections to the LDS traditions, but with a vested interest in local Utah history, politics, and religion. In this sense, the course is presented as an experiment about how to talk about and understand Mormonism from a variety of perspectives. In essence, we’ll be seeking to answer this question: How do we produce useful and inclusive rhetoric about Mormon rhetorics?

In light of this goal, we will not make content accommodations. Please review the syllabus and readings to determine whether the content of the course or any of the readings conflict with your core beliefs **before** the last day to drop courses with no penalty (May 25). For more information on the content accommodation policy, please visit the Accommodations Policy section of the administration policy and procedures at [http://www.admin.utah.edu/facdev/index.html](http://www.admin.utah.edu/facdev/index.html).

**Academic Honesty**
Writing something original can be difficult, and trying to write your own paper based on information and ideas you’ve read elsewhere can be even trickier. However, using the ideas of another writer without giving that writer credit—or even worse, pretending that someone else’s writing is your own—is a serious violation of the University of Utah’s Student Code, and grounds for failure of this class. All written work submitted in this class must be your own, and must be produced specifically for this class. Any time you use outside sources to support your own thinking in a piece of writing, you must cite
those sources using MLA citation format. If you have questions about how to avoid specific instances of plagiarism, feel free to ask us. If you have questions about the University’s plagiarism policy, please refer to sections II and V of the Student Code.

Classroom Conduct

Difficult discussions: It can be very challenging to discuss issues of religion, race, class, colonialism, gender, sexuality, religion, and cultural difference in the classroom. We all come from different social positions and experiences, and we have all had different opportunities to examine the narratives that sustain structures of oppression. One of the purposes of this class is to develop the conceptual tools to discuss these structures critically, and we will all need to be patient with one another as we are learning. That said, it is important to continuously examine the assumptions our backgrounds might lead us to make and to be mindful of how the views we express and the language we use might affect others in the classroom community. Please make every effort to listen and respond to one another rhetorically.

Civility: Your grades in this course, while based in part on your willingness to think critically and remain open to new thoughts and ideas, will not be affected by the political, philosophical, or spiritual beliefs you express in your writing or class discussions. However, in accordance with University of Utah policy—and to protect the learning environment for every student in the class—we will not tolerate the use of racist, classist, sexist, heterosexist, ageist, or ableist language in the classroom or in written assignments.

Computers and phones: If you have a laptop or tablet, we encourage you to bring it to class, particularly if doing so enables you to save paper by accessing readings and drafts digitally. Likewise, we understand that some students need to keep their phones on in case of family emergency. If this is the case for you, please switch your phone to vibrate during class time. If we see you using electronic devices while class is in session, we will assume it is for legitimate class-related purposes unless you give me reason to suspect otherwise, at which point we will renegotiate your technology privileges. If you need to take a phone call, please minimize the disruption by quietly stepping out of the classroom.

Drop/Withdrawal

To learn more about the University's Drop/Withdrawal Policy, go to http://www.acs.utah.edu/sched/handbook/wddeadlines.htm. The last day to drop classes with no penalty is May 25. The last day for student withdrawal from courses is June 24.

University Writing Center
The University Writing Center offers one-on-one assistance with writing. Tutors can help you understand your writing assignments, work through the writing process, and/or polish your drafts for all the courses in which you are enrolled. Sessions are free of charge, and you can meet as often as you need. To make an appointment, call (801) 587-9122. The Writing Center is located on the second floor of the Marriott Library. Visit the website at writingcenter.utah.edu.

**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Statement**
The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All information in this course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.

**Wellness Statement**
Personal concerns such as stress, anxiety, relationship difficulties, depression, cross-cultural differences, etc., can interfere with a student’s ability to succeed and thrive at the University of Utah. For helpful resources contact the Center for Student Wellness: www.wellness.utah.edu or (801) 581-7776.

**Veterans Center**
If you are a student veteran, the University of Utah has a Veterans Support Center on campus. They are located in Room 161 in the Olpin Union Building. Hours: M-F 8-5pm. Please visit their website for more information about what support they offer, a list of ongoing events and links to outside resources: http://veteranscenter.utah.edu/. Please also let me know if you need any additional veteran-related support in this class.

**LGBT Resource Center**
If you are a member of the LGBTQ community, please know that my classroom is a safe zone. The University of Utah also has an LGBT Resource Center on campus. They are located in Room 409 in the Oplin Union Building. Hours: M-F 8-5pm. You can visit their website to find more information about the support they can offer, a list of events through the center and links to additional resources: http://lgbt.utah.edu/. Please also let me know if there is any additional LGBT-related support you need in this class.

**Learners of English as an Additional/Second Language**
If you are an English language learner, there are several resources on campus that will support you with your language development and writing. These resources include: the Department of Linguistics ESL Program (http://linguistics.utah.edu/esl-program/); the
Writing Center (http://writingcenter.utah.edu/); the Writing Program (http://writing-program.utah.edu/); the English Language Institute (http://continue.utah.edu/eli/). Please let me know if there is any additional ESL-related support you would like to discuss for this class.

**Research Librarians**

The library is filled with resources. One of the most important is the group of research librarians, who are available to help you. If you have a question, you can simply walk up to the Knowledge Commons on Level 2 of the Marriott Library—the Knowledge Commons staff is particularly helpful for getting help using new software for digital composition. Visit their website to find information about online consultations, email addresses, etc.: [http://www.lib.utah.edu/services/knowledge-commons/](http://www.lib.utah.edu/services/knowledge-commons/).