

Rhetoric and Civilization
CMST 3167
Department of Communication Studies
Louisiana State University

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Course Description: During the past three millennia, Western civilizations have flowered, prospered, and fallen at the hand of rhetoric. With the rise of urban culture and the emergence of mass culture, the study of public deliberation has taken center stage in enlightening our understanding of how societies coalesce, fragment, and provide their denizens with appropriate definitions of what it means to be a citizen. The art of rhetoric, both in its practice and theoretical investigation, stands at the center of this process. Our capacities to speak, create iconography, and use new communication technologies are indispensable to the rise of civic culture and democratic practice. This course will explore the history of the practice and theoretical investigation of rhetoric from antiquity to the present. By sharpening an understanding of the complex processes that shape our cultural consciousness, one is afforded a glimpse at the social activities that define who and what we are. During the semester, we will strive to meet the following objectives:

- 1) Trace the history of rhetorical theory from antiquity to the present.
- 2) Explore key shifts in rhetorical practice at significant points in western history.
- 3) Develop an appreciation for rhetoric as a central component in the evolution of human consciousness.
- 4) Understand the way rhetorical theory has emerged from particular political and cultural contexts.
- 5) Inquire into the relationship between rhetoric and epistemology, the development of identity, and the management of symbolic exchange.

An Internet Course:

As such, there are no face-to-face meetings. You are responsible for completing the readings, participating in discussions and other activities electronically, and completing assignments by the due dates set. We will be using discussion boards to take the place of traditional classroom discussion. Here are some things to note about the Internet format.

[You must have access to the Internet every day.](#) You should be able to access the LSU Library via the Internet, and also to access your LSU e-mail account. Even if you are traveling, this does not excuse you from class.

[This course takes place on Moodle.](#) Course discussions, class announcements, exams, assignments and class activities all take place in this electronic space.

This is a writing intensive course because of its electronic nature. Be prepared to read and write extensively, and to devote at least 2 to 3 hours a day to these activities.

Your time is flexible. The beauty of Internet courses is that students have some freedom as to when to read or write, but there are boundaries. You must post discussion to the bulletin board and submit written work and other activities within a set time frame specified in the assignment.

Back up your work elsewhere. Things get lost in cyberspace, and you need to be able to recover work that is lost. When you send me your work, you must submit it in the proper format. Due to the large number of files I will be receiving, I need clear and specific identifiers so I don't have to open multiple files to find your work. I will be explicit in describing the proper format for each assignment, but in general, each file should have an indicator of which assignment it is, and who is sending it

One very important technical note: if you use Microsoft Word 2007, when you save a file do not simply hit the save command. Make sure you have saved it as a .doc file (previous version of Word), *not* a .docx file. Otherwise, I will not be able to read it, and I cannot grade it.

Texts:

Course Manual available at the Coop Bookstore and other readings provided online

- 1) The History and Theory of Rhetoric: An Introduction by James Herrick
- 2) Cicero: The Life and Times of Rome's Greatest Politician by Anthony Everitt

Assignments:

Class Discussion (150 pts.): You will be graded on your answers to a series of discussion questions that will be used to guide our discussion of each class. Each response should be a well-developed paragraph for 80-100 words.

Definitions of Rhetoric Paper (50 pts.): In this short paper you will explore the definitions of rhetoric. 200-250 words.

Greek Agora (200 pts.): After studying the model of Greek civic society, we will stage a replica of the agora online. You will assume the social of key Greek actors and attempt to manage a political crisis. This assignment will have a written component. 450-500 words.

Encomium Paper (200 pts.): After completing our discussions of antiquity, you will invent, organize, and present a classical encomium on an important Greek or Roman figure. Specifically, you will prepare a paper of praise/blame of a classical political or cultural figure against another opponent from the class. Each person will then present a brief rejoinder after seeing your opponent's position paper. This assignment will require original research, persuasive organization, and effective argument. 450-500 words.

Religion (Faith) Versus Science (Argument) Paper (200 pts.): This paper asks you to reflect upon what you have learned about persuasion in the early Christian period and contrast it with the Enlightenment period. 450-500 words.

Exam (200 pts.): There will be one exam at the end of the semester. Bear in mind that both the readings and lectures will be covered on the exam. This comprehensive final examination will also be given during the final exam period.

Course Total: 1000 points

Grading:

1000-980: A+
979-929: A
928-900: A-
899-880: B+
879-829: B
828-800: B-
799-780: C+
779-729: C
728-700: C-
699-680: D+
679-629: D
628-600: D-
599 and below F

Course Policies

Virtual Participation: Participating in class via virtual discussions is important for your success because many of the concepts covered on the exams will be covered in our online discussions. You are responsible for having readings completed on the day that they are assigned, and your engaged participation will make the class lectures go more smoothly and will influence your final discussion questions and answer grade. Answers to discussion questions are due within 2 days after the day they are assigned.

Plagiarism: Do not inappropriately represent the work of others as your own. See the LSU Student Handbook or <https://grok.lsu.edu/article.aspx?articleid=17072>

Disability Access: The Americans with Disabilities Act and Rehabilitation Act of 1973: If you have a disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please see a coordinator in the Office for Disability Affairs so that such accommodations may be arranged. After you receive your accommodation letters, please meet with me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations during the first two weeks of class. <http://students.lsu.edu/disability?destination=node/146>

Personal Success: I am committed to making your experience at LSU an enriching one. It is my hope that this class will be enjoyable, and that you will take the insights that you accumulate and apply them in your future endeavors.

Tentative Schedule:

Ancient Greece

1/13 WEEK 1: Introduction. Review syllabus and course packet materials

Read Lecture 1.

View *The Ancient Greeks: Crucible of Civilization on YouTube*. Videos 1-3

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pgyJOdkq8uI>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tcFBLSYOsY4>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KpVfhwp5tZM>

1/20 WEEK 2:

Read Lecture 2.

Also read: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/sophists/>.

Def. of Rhet. Paper Due.

1/27 Discussion Question One: Identify what you believe would have been the three most significant differences between a public figure of the classical age versus one from the modern age. What are some of the different obstacles each must overcome to persuade their audience?

2/3 WEEK 3:

Read Lecture 3

Read Pericles' Funeral Oration. <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/education/thucydides.html>

Discussion Question Two. Thucydides (Pericles Funeral Oration): Read and comment on Pericles' speech. Bear in mind that this speech was delivered in the midst of a war that Athens was losing and just after a crushing military defeat. Do you think that that speech was effective and why? Go to Youtube and type in key words "Reagan" and "Challenger." This will take you to President Ronald Reagan's speech to nation after the shuttle exploded live on national television. Do you see similarities in the two speeches?
<http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/GREECE/PERICLES.HTM>

Read Lecture 4

2/10 WEEK 4:

Read Gorgias' Encomium to Helen

<http://www.iep.utm.edu/gorgias/>

<http://www.classicpersuasion.org/pw/gorgias/helendonovan.htm>

2/17 WEEK 5:

Discussion Question Three: You should remember that this sophistic exercise was designed to get the Greek student to be able to prove even those things which are generally agreed not to be true. Remember that it was Helen's adultery that killed thousands of men on both sides and caused the fall of a kingdom. Do you think that what Gorgias is doing is ethical? Also, notice that he compares rhetoric (speech) to a drug. Do you agree?

<http://www.classics.ucsb.edu/classes/cla175-s09/Gorgias.pdf>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7qSTAX40N2g>

Discussion Question Four: Here Plato softens his attack somewhat and says that rhetoric can only be good if it is good for the soul, that the speaker must understand the souls of men. First, Plato here equates knowledge and ethics—that if one has true knowledge, one will do and say what is right. Do you agree? How do you know a person's soul? What is a soul?

<http://www.iep.utm.edu/plato/>

<http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/phaedrus.html>

2/24 WEEK 6:

Read Lecture 5

Discussion Question Five: In chapters one and two from *The Rhetoric* one sees the classic theory of rhetoric—the art of persuasion. What do you think he means when he notes that rhetoric is the counterpart of dialectic? Is he arguing that we need to practice rhetoric well and that there is an inherent value in doing anything skillfully? Define ethos, pathos, and logos. Select what you think is the best passage and explain how it remains relevant today.

<http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/rhetoric.1.i.html>

<http://www.iep.utm.edu/aristotl/>

3/2 WEEK 7:

**Agora Position Paper 3/2; Due. Virtual Debate Begins 3/2;
Virtual Debate Ends 3/3; Agora Assignment Vote Due 3/4.**

Ancient Rome

3/9 WEEK 8:

Read Lecture 6.

Read: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/cicero/>

Also watch *Rome: Power and Glory* on Youtube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MEMMNnM6rRc>

Discussion Question Six How would you describe the Roman Republic during the time of Cicero? They had a constitution, voted, and conducted public jury trials. What are the strengths of this government? What are its weaknesses? How would you compare and contrast the Roman Republic without form of government today?

3/16 WEEK 9:

Discussion Question Seven: Here is one of the classic attacks delivered by Cicero in the wake of Caesar's death against the general Mark Anthony. How would you describe his rhetorical style? Can you understand why this speech got him killed?

<http://www.bartleby.com/268/2/15.html>

Discussion Question Eight: Some would argue that the death of Cicero marked the real end of the Republic, that he in many ways embodied the constitutional state. With his death at the hands of Mark Antony (another individual he angered with his tongue), what does Cicero's story teach us about the delicate nature of constitutional democracies. Remember that his death ushered in five centuries of imperial rule. Do you feel that America could go the way of the Romans?

3/23 SPRING BREAK WEEK 10:

3/30 WEEK 11:

Encomium Paper Due
Encomium Rejoinder Paper

Early Christianity

4/6 WEEK 12:

Read <http://www.hprweb.com/2012/10/preaching-to-the-whole-person-classical-wisdom-for-the-new-evangelization/>

Read Augustine's *On Christian Doctrine*.

<http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/jod/augustine/ddc1.html>

4/13 WEEK 13:

Discussion Question Nine: Given that rhetoric can be used to misguide the souls of those to whom it is addressed, can it be used in the service of the Christian God? Augustine argues yes. During the later centuries of the Roman Empire, its emperors adopted Christianity as the state religion because it could centralize the empire. Individuals like Augustine evangelized in the name of this developing faith. Do you think that preachers and evangelicals of today can gain insight into their mission by reading Augustine?
<http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/jod/augustine/ddc.html>

Discussion Question Ten: What were Augustine's three functions or ends of oratory? Give examples of the ways each can be used to promote Christian thinking.

4/20 WEEK 14:

READ Lecture 11 Rhetoric and the Enlightenment

View http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J0B28_gwj0M
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QcrYefMB3qM>

Modern

4/27 WEEK 15:

READ Lecture 14 Argument
Religion vs. Science Paper Due

5/4 WEEK 16: Finals Week

Essay Final Due

