

Rhetoric and Civilization
CMST 3167
Virtual Delivery
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 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.

Texts

1. Stephanie Houston Grey. 2014. *Rhetoric and Civilization Course Manual*. Available for purchase only at the Student Cooperative Bookstore.
2. Thomas Cole. 1995. *The Origins of Rhetoric in Ancient Greece* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press).
3. Anthony Everitt. 2003. *Cicero: The Life and Times of Rome's Greatest Politician*. (New York: Random House).

4. Suzanne Reynolds 2004. *Medieval Reading: Grammar, Rhetoric and the Classical Text* (Cambridge UP).

We will have online readings as well.

Assignments

Integrity Pledge (REQUIRED Mail-In form, 0 pts): Read and complete the Integrity Pledge in this manual. Sign and return by mail during the first week of class to Stephanie Houston Grey 224 Coates Hall Communication Studies Baton Rouge LA 70803. You will receive a point deduction from your final grade if you do not return this form.

Definitions of Rhetoric paper (Assignment One, 150 pts.): In a 2-3 page type-written paper compare and contrast 3-4 different definitions of rhetoric that appear in this manual.

Greek Agora (Assignment Six, 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.

Classical Debate Position Papers (Assignment Nine, 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.

Religion Versus Science Position Paper (Assignment Twelve, 200 pts.): Examining the issues represented by influential thinkers from the enlightenment/modern periods and pitted against those of the medieval period, you will present a position paper over this issue.

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

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 or two.

Point Distribution:

Definition of Rhetoric Paper: 50 pts.

Agora: 200 pts.

Classical Encomium: 200 pts.

Classical Debate: 200 pts.

In Class Discussion Questions: 150 pts.

Final Exam: 200 pts.

Total: 1000 points

Grading Scale:

A 900-1000

B 800-899

C 700-799

D 600-699

F 599 or less

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.

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.

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

Week One: Introduction. Integrity Pledge Due by Jan 21.

Jan 20: The Significance of Culture as Symbolic Activity. See handout and activity.

Jan 22: The Significance of Discourse and Debate in Ancient Athens: Read Cole (view *Greece: Crucible of Civilization on YouTube*).

Jan 27: Read Cole (Introduction to the book and Chapter 1). Read and respond to Pericles' Funeral Oration.

Discussion Question One: Thucydides (Pericles Funeral Oration): Read and comment on Pericles' speech. Bear in mind that this speech was delivered in the midst of a way 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>

Jan 29: Read and respond to Gorgias' *Encomium to Helen* Read Cole (Book Section One Chapters 2-4)

Discussion Question Two: 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.phil.vt.edu/MGifford/phil2115/Helen.htm>

Feb 3: The Platonic Critique of Rhetoric: Read Cole (Book Section On, Chapters 5-6).

Feb 5: Discussion Question Three (Phaedrus): 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://classics.mit.edu/Plato/phaedrus.html>

Feb 10: Aristotle and the Definition of Rhetoric: Read Cole (Book Section Two, Chapters 7-8).

Discussion Question Four: 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://www.public.iastate.edu/~honeyl/Rhetoric/oneindex.html>

Feb 12: Agora Assignment Due

Feb 13: Agora Assignment Vote Due

Ancient Rome

Feb 19: Cicero and the Republic: Read Everitt 2-46 (watch *Rome: Power and Glory* Part One on YouTube).

Discussion Question Five: 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 with our form of government today?

Feb 24: The Forum and the Rise of Cicero: Read Everitt 47-66, 87-112.

Feb 26: The Crisis of the Republic: Read Everitt 113-145.

Mar 3: Read Everitt 202-221.

Discussion Question Six: Here Cicero watches the Republic degenerate into war between the Senate and leading citizens such as Pompey and Caesar. We also see his exile at the hands of the vengeful Clodius. Compare and contrast Cicero and Caesar. What makes these men different? Remember that both served as Consul and both were highly respected. Both gained power but did so differently. What is this key difference between Cicero and these other citizens?

Mar 5: The Death of the Republic and the Retreat of Rhetoric: Read Everitt 260-319.

Discussion Question Seven: Here we see the final fall of the Roman Republic and the death of Cicero. 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?

Mar 10: Encomium Papers Due

Mar 12: Encomium Rejoinder Paper

Medieval and Modern

Mar 17: Rhetoric and the Rise of Christianity: Read Reynolds 1-3.

Mar 19: Augustine's *On Christian Doctrine*.

Discussion Question Eight: 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>

Mar 24: Rhetoric and Epistemology: Read Reynolds 4-6.

Discussion Question Nine: Here we see one of the authors of the Enlightenment challenging what they view as superstition. The big question that he is raising is how do we know what we know. Let's explore this question. Do miracles happen? If they do how would you prove them? When do you accept a fact as truth and where does this truth come from? It is book ten of enquiry concerning human understanding.

<http://18th.eserver.org/hume-enquiry.html#10>

Mar 26

Mar 31: Read Reynolds 7-10.

Discussion Question Ten: Science would change the way that we think about language and expand begin to challenge the field of rhetoric. In a nutshell, some assert science is beyond the use of metaphor. That is, it uses technical language rather than creative imagery. Do you think that this distinction can be a campaign? Think of an example of a movie or public document about science that you saw recently and explain the message. Did they use any rhetorical techniques like symbolism, etc.?

<http://www.tc.umn.edu/~agross/AlanGross/pdffiles/publicun.pdf>

Apr 2: Independence Day Holiday

Apr 7: Rhetoric and Literacy: Read Reynolds 11-12.

Apr 9: Religion vs. Science Paper Workshop

Apr 14-16 Spring Break

Apr 21: Religion vs. Science Paper Due

Preparation for Final: Handout of Final exam

Apr 23: TBA

May 5: Final Exam Due

