

CMST 3900: RHETORICS OF WAR AND PEACE

127 COATES
MW, 3:30-4:50

Instructor: William Saas (wsaas@lsu.edu)

Office: 216 Coates

Office hours: Wed., 1:30-2:30, or by appointment

“The Art of War is therefore, in its proper sense,
the art of making use of the given means in fighting.”
– Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*

“Rhetoric may be defined as the art of observing
in any given case the available means of persuasion.”
–Aristotle, the *Rhetoric*

“*Ad bellum purificandum.*” – Kenneth Burke

Rhetoric and war: both are distinctively human arts, the outcomes of which depend on the capacity of the artist(s) to “observe” and “make use of” the “available means” in particular situations toward particular ends. Yet persuasion and fighting, or rhetoric and violence, have traditionally been figured as polar opposites in the drama of human affairs. As we shall see in this course, the relationship between words and bombs is rarely so simple or clear. Our job this semester will be to achieve some clarity on these issues.

At the core of our semester-long investigation of the relationship between rhetoric, war, and peace, will lay certain key questions:

- *What is war?* That is, how has war been rhetorically figured over time, and what sorts of social, cultural, and political institutions are implied in those historical definitions of war?
- *On what argumentative grounds are peoples typically compelled to war?*
- *What is peace?*
- *How do citizens imagine--or how are they persuaded to imagine--themselves in relation to wars past and present?*
- *What role does mediated discourse play in the orchestration of war?*
- *What is the nature of the relationship between democracy and war?*

Through parsing the numerous theories of war, peace, and rhetoric with certain concrete cases of war and peace in modern history (in this class, the late-18th century to today), this course will help students to formulate answers to the above questions and thereby to become more engaged citizens and astute critics of war.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Keegan, John. *A History of Warfare*. New York: Vintage, 1993.

Cortright, David. *Peace: A History of Movements and Ideas*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

ASSIGNMENTS

Course Project (600 points, or 60%)

Participation (150 points, or 15%)

Discussion facilitation (150 points, or 15%)

Content Quizzes (100 points, or 10%)

Total: 1000 points

ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Course project: Object of Interest Paper & Presentation

Toward the beginning of the semester, you will select an “object of interest” or case study in the relationship between rhetoric and war and/or peace. Your object of interest will become the basis of a larger project that will culminate in a final paper and classroom presentation. This assignment has five parts that will be due at different points throughout the semester (each will be described in further detail later at the appropriate moment in the semester):

1. Description (2 pages; 5% of total grade): Select and describe an object of interest in two or more pages. Provide a justification for this selection. **Due: 9/10**
2. Context (4 pages; 10%): Provide historical context for the object described in the description paper. **Due: 9/24**
3. Analysis (4 pages; 10%): Analyze the object from a rhetorical perspective. **Due: 10/15**
4. Final paper (12 pages; 25%). Revise parts 1-3 and combine into one document. Conclude with at least two original pages explaining what this object tells us about the broader questions explored in class. **Due: 11/12**
5. Presentation (8 minutes; 10%): Adapt your final paper for oral presentation to the class. **Presentation days: 12/1, 12/3, 12/8**

Participation

This seminar-style course depends on your active participation in class discussion. Participation includes asking questions, responding to questions, visiting me during office hours, and—last but not least—attendance. If you must be absent from class, please notify me as promptly and as ahead of time as possible.

Discussion Facilitation

You will be the designated discussion facilitator for three class meetings. Your job as discussion facilitator will be to introduce one or more of the readings with (1) a summary of the reading(s) and (2) some questions to guide discussion. Discussion questions should be sent to me by 10 p.m. the evening before your designated day. **Facilitation selections due to me by 9/3.**

Content Quizzes

Content quizzes will be administered at five undisclosed times throughout the semester. These quizzes will be designed to assess your comprehension of recent readings and retention of classroom instruction and discussion.

GRADE BREAKDOWN

Final grades will be calculated according grades earned on assignments in the course.

90-100 = A

83-90 = B

70-82 = C

60-70 = D

WRITING CENTER

This is a writing-intensive course. I would be very happy to meet with you to help with your writing process. E-mail me at any time to set up an appointment, or just stop by during office hours. I am not your only resource, though. Students who want additional help with writing projects are encouraged to make appointments with a writing tutor in Studio 151, Coates Hall, well in advance of due dates by going to <http://sites01.lsu.edu/wp/cxc/writing/> to read information on how to prepare for and what to expect during a tutorial. There you will also find instructions on how to schedule tutorials on line. Hours are limited, so schedule early. I cannot overstate the helpfulness of this resource—please check it out!

DISABILITIES

The Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 states: “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 of Disability Affairs (112 Johnston Hall) so that such accommodations can be arranged.” After you receive the accommodation letters, please meet with me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations.

COURSE SCHEDULE

M, 8/25
Introductions

Unit One: Definitions

What do we mean by “rhetoric,” “war,” and “peace,” respectively?

W, 8/27
Defining Rhetoric
Readings: Burke, “Definition of Man”
Description paper assigned

M, 9/1 – NO CLASS

W, 9/3
Defining War
Readings: Handel, “Comparing Sun Tzu and Clausewitz” & “The Definition of War”
Discussion Facilitation selections dates due

M, 9/8
Defining War, cont’d
Readings: Butler, “War is a Racket”; Morris, “Introduction: Friend to the Undertaker”
Watch: Hedges, “War is a Force That Gives us Meaning”

W, 9/10
Defining Peace
Readings: Cortright, Chapter 1
Description paper due!
Context paper assigned

M, 9/15
Defining Peace, cont’d
Readings: Terrill, “An Uneasy Peace”
Watch: Obama, “Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance Speech”

Unit Two: Theories

The objective for this unit is to identify and assess the rhetorical implications of several different theoretical approaches—evolutionary, cultural, and historical—to the problems of war and peace.

W, 9/17
Nature & Evolution
Readings: Gat, “So Why Do People Fight?”; E.O. Wilson, “Is War Inevitable?”

M, 9/22

Culture & Psychology

Readings: Keegan, Chapter 1

W, 9/24

Culture & History

Readings: Keegan, Conclusion; Horgan, "No, War is Not Inevitable"

Context paper due!

Unit III: Rhetorics

The objective for this unit is to break the phenomenon of (post-)modern war into its constituent parts, and to comprehend the role of language in constituting those parts.

M, 9/29

The Enemy I

Readings: Burke, "The Rhetoric of Hitler's *Battle*"

Analysis paper assigned

W, 10/1

The Enemy II

Readings: Winkler, "What's in a Name?"; Ivie, "Savagery"

M, 10/6

The Enemy III

Readings: Winkler, "The Origins of Terrorism as an American Ideograph"

W, 10/8

The State I: Revolution

Readings: Lucas, "The Stylistic Artistry of the Declaration of Independence"

Weber, "Politics as a vocation," pp. 1-5

Analysis workshop

M, 10/13

The State II: Sovereignty

Readings: Brown, "Waning Sovereignty, Walled Democracy"

W, 10/15

The Commander-in-Chief

Readings: Campbell and Jamieson, "Presidential War Rhetoric"; FDR, "Pearl Harbor Address"

Analysis paper due!

Final paper discussion

M, 10/20

The Commander-in-Chief, cont'd

Readings: Dana Nelson, "Presidential War Powers and Politics as War"

Watch: Obama, “Speech on the U.S. Mission in Libya”

W, 10/22

Secrecy and Disclosure

Readings: Conley and Saas, “Occultatio”; Priest and Arkin, “Top Secret America”

M, 10/27

Media I: Propaganda

Readings: Herman & Chomsky, “A Propaganda Model”; Stahl, “Why We Support ‘the Troops’”

W, 10/29

Media II: Militainment, Inc.

Readings: Stahl, “War Games”

M, 11/3

Public Memory

Readings: Blair, “Public Memorializing”

W, 11/15

Public Forgetting

Readings: Vivian, “Rhetorical Form and Commemorative Politics”

M, 11/10

Dissent I

Readings: King, “Beyond Vietnam”; Cortright, Chapter 14

W, 11/12

Dissent II

Readings: Cloud, “Operation Desert Comfort”; Engels and Saas, “On Acquiescence and Ends-Less War”

Final paper due!

M, 11/17

Dissent III

Readings: Sunstein, Selection from *Why Societies Need Dissent*; Arundhati Roy, “The Algebra of Infinite Justice”

Final Project Presentation Workshop – Bring materials to class

W, 11/19 – NO CLASS

M, 11/24 – NO CLASS

W, 11/26 – NO CLASS – Thanksgiving holiday

M, 12/1

Final Project Presentations

W, 12/3

Final Project Presentations

M, 12/8

Final Project Presentations