

Introduction to Rhetorical Theory

COMX 240H, Fall 2018

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Office Hours: MW 1-3 pm and by appointment

Course Description and Objectives

The purpose of this course is to help you understand various theories of rhetoric—the art of discourse in the service of power—as they emerged in the western world. In the first half of the course, we'll examine theories developed from the classical Greek period through the Enlightenment, concentrating on the relationship between *persuasion*, *belief*, and *power*. In the second half of the course, we'll examine contemporary rhetorical theory, focusing on the concepts such as *identification*, *argument*, *narrative*, *ideology*, *the public sphere*, and *visual rhetoric*. Your main responsibilities will be to read the theories and examine public discourse using those theories. The purpose is to help you develop a new vocabulary for talking about the ways that various kinds of public discourse shape public consciousness and guide public action.

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

define and explain basic rhetorical concepts

use those concepts to analyze actual instances of rhetorical practice

address how rhetorical theories emerged from broader historical, cultural, and political concerns

assess the implications of specific rhetorical theories for democratic politics and culture

Texts

1. Palczewski, Ice, and Fritch, *Rhetoric in Civic Life*, 2nd edition (Strata). Available at UM Bookstore or online.
2. Patricia Roberts-Miller, *Demagoguery and Democracy* (The Experiment). Available at UM Bookstore or online.
3. Plato's *Phaedrus* dialogue. We will use the Nehamas & Woodruff translation. I will make it available as PDF, but you may want to order it as an e-book or paperback (~\$10); if so, order soon.

4. Other readings will be posted on Moodle. *It is your responsibility to attend class and stay in contact with classmates so that you are aware of changes to reading assignments.*

Attendance and Participation

I expect you to attend every day. Points will be earned through activities during class sessions (typically quizzes). If you miss a day, you should *talk with your colleagues* about the issues we discussed in class. This will be more beneficial than merely copying their notes (although that is a good idea, too). Participation in class is not evaluated on its own terms, but it will enhance your understanding of the texts and, hopefully, improve your performance on graded work.

Requirements

Exams: We'll have three exams during the term. They are primarily recall-and-distinguish (a.k.a. "objective" exams), usually involving multiple-choice, matching, true/false and quotation identification questions. Do not miss an exam, as the "make-up" exams are entirely essay and generally more difficult than the objective exams. Each exam is 100 points and worth 1/4 of your final grade; in total, the exams are 3/4 of your grade.

Quizzes and assignments: We'll have several quizzes and homework assignments throughout the term. The quizzes are intended to motivate you to do the readings, diagnose whether you've gained a basic understanding of those readings, and give you an idea of what exam questions will look like. They cannot be made up. The assignments will normally occur as part of an online day. They will involve some analysis of a rhetorical artifact or scholarly article. Some will be individual, others will be group assignments. Assignment details will be posted in Moodle and announced in class. The entire set of quizzes and exercises are worth 100 points, or 1/4 of your final grade.

Students with Disabilities

If you have a disability that may require modification of some element of the course, you should 1) register with Disability Student Services, 2) bring me the appropriate documentation from DSS, and 3) discuss with me the arrangements that fit your situation.

For my own part, I am currently undergoing chemotherapy and have treatments every other Thursday for the indefinite future. I have tried to arrange the schedule on subsequent Fridays to minimize disruptions if I am feeling less than 100% or unable to meet. The course schedule notes those Fridays. Plan to check your email late Thursday evening or early Friday morning for an update and instructions from me about those Friday sessions.

Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct includes cheating, plagiarism, and representing someone else's work as your own. Penalties range from an 'F' on the particular piece of work to the denial or revocation of a degree. Bottom line: don't do it. There are plenty of other rule-breaking activities you can engage while at college which have less serious consequences and are a lot more fun.

COMX 240 Tentative Schedule

DATE	TOPIC	READING/WORK DUE
Monday 8/27	Course Intro	
Wednesday 8/29	What is Rhetoric?	RCL, pg. 1-13
Friday 8/31*	Emergence of Rhetoric in Greece	RCL, pg. 13-20; Poulakos PDF
Monday 9/3	Labor Day—NO CLASS	
Wednesday 9/5	Protagoras	Fragments, Great Speech
Friday 9/7	Gorgias	<i>Encomium of Helen</i>
Monday 9/10	Plato's <i>Gorgias</i>	PDF, part 1
Wednesday 9/12	Plato's <i>Gorgias</i>	PDF, part 2
Friday 9/14*	Plato's <i>Phaedrus</i>	Through Lysias speech
Monday 9/17	Plato's <i>Phaedrus</i>	Through Socrates' 2 nd speech
Wednesday 9/19	Plato's <i>Phaedrus</i>	Rest of Dialogue
Friday 9/21	Isocrates	<i>Against the Sophists</i>
Monday 9/24	Aristotle	<i>Rhetoric</i> excerpts
Wednesday 9/26	Aristotle; review	
Friday 9/28*	EXAM 1	
Monday 10/1	Rhetoric as symbolic action	RCL, pg. 20-31
Wednesday 10/3	Language	RCL, ch. 2
Friday 10/5	Language	
Monday 10/8	Narrative	RCL, ch. 5

Wednesday 10/10	Narrative	
Friday 10/12*	Online—article analysis	
Monday 10/15	Situations	RCL, ch. 8
Wednesday 10/17	Situations	
Friday 10/19	No class	
Monday 10/22	Audiences	RCL, ch. 7
Wednesday 10/24	Audiences	
Friday 10/26*	EXAM 2	
Monday 10/29	Demagoguery	Roberts-Miller, pg. 1-31
Wednesday 10/31	Demagoguery	Roberts-Miller, pg. 32-77
Friday 11/2	Demagoguery	Roberts-Miller, pg. 78-end
Monday 11/5	Argument	RCL, ch. 4
Wednesday 11/7	Argument	
Friday 11/9	NCA-No class	
Monday 11/12	Veterans' Day-no class	
Wednesday. 11/14	Visual Rhetoric	RCL, ch. 3
Friday 11/16*	Visual Rhetoric	
Monday 11/19	Visual Rhetoric	
Wed & Fri, 11/21-23	Thanksgiving—no class	
Monday 11/26	Publics and Counterpublics	RCL, ch. 9
Wednesday 11/28	Publics and Counterpublics	
Friday 11/30*	Publics and Counterpublics	
Monday 12/3	Open	
Wednesday. 12/5	Open	
Friday 12/7	Review, course evaluation	
Fri. 12/14, 8-10 am	EXAM 3 —arrange travel to attend	

*Days when Steve may not be in class. When a regular class session is scheduled, please check email Thursday night or Friday morning to confirm class plans. Online and exam sessions WILL take place as scheduled.