

**SPCM 4200 Introduction to Rhetorical Theory
Spring 2008**

MWF 12:20-1:10

Instructor: Prof. Thomas Lessl
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Hours: 1:15-2:15 MWF

DESCRIPTION:

This course surveys the whole history of rhetorical scholarship from the time of the ancient Greeks right up through the twentieth century. Students are asked to contemplate the contributions to rhetoric made by a number of figures. In doing this our goal is to understand one very prominent component of human experience: the tendency of human beings to use speech in an effort to regulate, constitute, and understand their social surroundings.

TEXTBOOK: Available at Off Campus Bookstore

James A. Herrick, *The History and Theory of Rhetoric: An Introduction*

Other readings will be available on the course's WebCT site.

Schedule:

Dates:	Readings	Subjects
Week 1	Herrick, pp. 1-30	The framework of rhetorical theory
Week 2	Herrick, pp. 31-50 Hauser, "Rhetorical Thinking"	Classical origins and debates, the sophistic movement.
Week 3 no class Jan. 21	<i>Phaedrus</i> , Intro., Herrick, pp. 54-63	Plato's view of rhetoric
Week 4	Herrick, pp. 64-70 Aristotle's <i>Rhetoric</i> , book I.	Isocrates and the development of a civic philosophy of rhetoric. Aristotle's philosophy of rhetoric.
Week 5	Herrick, pp. 73-90 Lloyd Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation." Hauser, "Rhetorical Opportunities"	Aristotle's analysis of rhetoric: Invention, modes of persuasion, rhetoric's place in civic life.

Week 6	Herrick, 93-117 Cicero "On Invention" excerpts	Rhetoric, culture and politics in the Roman period.
Week 7	Herrick, 122-69 Augustine "On Christian Doctrine" Excerpts.	Rhetoric in the development of medieval culture. Rhetoric as hermeneutics.
Week 8	Midterm Exam Herrick pp. 147-73	Rhetoric's place in European culture's rebirth: Renaissance rhetoric,
Week 9	Herrick, pp. 174-94, Bacon, <i>Novum Organum</i> Excerpts March 4 withdrawal deadline	The Enlightenment and the Reformation. The heights and depths of human communication in the birth of modern culture.
Week 10	Spring Break	
Week 11	Herrick, pp. 198-218 Perelman, "The New Rhetoric"	Theories of argumentation in contemporary rhetoric. Stephen Toulmin, Chaim Perelman, and Jurgen Habermas
Week 12	Herrick, 222-229 Virginia Holland, "Kenneth Burke's Dramatistic Approach in Speech Criticism" Marie Hochmuth, "Burkean Criticism"	Kenneth Burke's dramatistic philosophy of rhetoric. Paper preparation
Week 13	Herrick, pp. 230-39 Lessl, "The Mythological Conditioning of Scientific Naturalism"	Narrative and myth
Week 14	Lessl, "Priestly Voice," Lessl "Darwin Fish"	The rhetoric of science and the language of scientism.
Week 15	William Harpine "What Do You Mean, Rhetoric is Epistemic?"	Rhetoric, Knowledge and Ethics
Week 16	Herrick, 244-270	Post-modernism, gender theory, rhetoric and power.

Exam Week	Final Exam: Mon, May 5, 2008 12:00 - 3:00 pm
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Grades:

Short Paper 1:	50 points
Short Paper 2:	50 points
Term Paper 3:	300 points
Midterm:	200 points
Final:	300 points
<u>Attendance/Participation:</u>	<u>100 points</u>
	1000 points possible

Attendance/Participation:

Students are expected not only to come to class but to actively participate in the thinking and discussion that will be going on here. A roll sheet will circulate each day; it is your responsibility to make sure you sign it. You are also expected to keep up with all assigned readings in preparation for class. So, for instance, except for the first day of class, the readings that are assigned for each day of class should be read before you come to class the next day. So for next Wednesday, (Jan. 9) please have read Herrick, pp. 1-30.

Midterm and Final Exams:

The format for these two tests will mainly consist of short essay questions. I am also likely to use matching exercises to test your understanding of basic vocabulary and concepts. Since the course follows a historical structure you do need to have some sense of chronology, but I'm not concerned with exact dates. So, for example, I'm not concerned that you know what year Aristotle was born, but I do expect you to understand something about the era and culture in which he lived, and how that might have been different from the time and culture in which Cicero lived three hundred years later.

Written Assignments:

Short Paper 1: 500-600 words. For this assignment you are asked to analyze what I will call the "rhetorical features" of some message. That message could be an advertisement, a blog, a letter to the editor, an op-ed piece from the newspaper, an argument you had with your roommate or with your mom—anything that has some obvious persuasive intent. By rhetorical features I mean any of those communication decisions that can be inferred from that message. The message you've chosen is the product of a complex of human judgments: decisions that the writer or speaker made about such things as evidence, truth value, ethics, audience, organization and language, etc. By an "analysis" of these features I mean a short essay in which you think about these judgements in terms of the goals that the message was trying to achieve. So I would like

you to think about questions such as these:

- 1) Given the message features you've found, what can we infer about what the speaker might have been trying to accomplish?
- 2) Does the message reflect some set of assumptions about the nature of persuasion? About its audience? About the speaker's/audience's culture, ideology, interest?
- 3) What might the speaker/writer have done differently? How would an alternative message approach influence the outcome?

Evaluation: A successful paper will demonstrate your ability to think at a "metacommunication" level—to get at the thinking about communication that seemed to go into your subject. So be careful not to just describe the message's features but to explain them—to explain why they were created. I prefer a paper that makes a small point well to one that makes a large claim that is unsubstantiated—or worse several disconnected claims. My evaluation of this and all three papers will also consider conventional issues, grammar, organization, spelling, and clarity.

Due: Week Five

Short Paper 2: 500-600 words. I would like this reaction paper to reflect upon one of the following three issues:

- 1) Aristotle taught that ethos (the character of a speaker as it manifests in a message) is the most powerful aspect of persuasive communication. What kinds of messages do you find credible because of ethos? Why? This could be a particular category of message (political, religious, commercial) or a particular message or communicator. How is ethos manifest in this message(s)?
- 2) Aristotle contends that reason will triumph, only so long as all sides are heard and only so long as all positions are well expressed. Do you agree? If so defend that position. If not, explain what other mitigating factors that Aristotle hasn't considered that might also need to be weighed here. Use examples to support your arguments.
- 3) Plato's understanding of human nature may seem rather strange to you, but we can see how his assumptions shaped his thinking about the role that rhetoric and philosophy should play in the world. So what do you think a human being is? How might your own (undoubtedly different) views on human nature shape your thinking about and practices of rhetoric?

Evaluation: The same criteria apply as in paper 1.

Due: Week 10

Term Paper: 8-10 pages. You've learned various things about the thinking of a number of different figures from the history of rhetoric. Choose one of these theorists and undertake a more complete study of that thinker's work. You might do this by reading some of the theorist's work, in addition to what is on the syllabus, or you might read some of the secondary literature surrounding this person's rhetorical theories. In total I would like you to consult at least 3-4 scholarly sources on your subject. Please list them in a bibliography and reference these sources in parenthetical notes within the body of your paper.

Your more complete study should not only explain this theorist's ideas. It should also illustrate them by considering how they might apply in real-world practices of communication. So, for instance, if you were going to write about Francis Bacon's theory of the imagination, I would want you to first explain what Bacon thought about this faculty's role in persuasion, and second, I would want you to illustrate it, either by looking at some examples of real messages that seem to reflect what Bacon had said, or hypothetically, by constructing some hypothetical applications of the concept.

Due: Week 15

If possible, all papers should be submitted as attachments to tlessl@uga.edu. When you name your file attachment please use your first initial and last name.