

English 493/593
T/Th 4-520pm
Fall 2015
189 PLC

Prof. Crosswhite
T/Th 2-320pm
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258 PLC

Rhetorical Criticism

COURSE OBJECTIVES

What is criticism? What is rhetoric? What is rhetorical criticism? What can rhetorical criticism do? What is it good for? In this course, we will explore the potential of rhetorical criticism. You will gain knowledge of rhetorical theory and rhetorical criticism, and you will gain experience and skill in practicing rhetorical criticism.

STARTING POINTS

Since we have the ability to persuade one other and to make clear to ourselves what we want, not only do we avoid living like animals, but we have come together, built cities, made laws, and invented arts... Logos is responsible for nearly all our inventions. It legislated concerning justice and injustice, the honorable and the dishonorable; and without it, we should not be able to live with one another. With it we refute the bad and praise the good. Through it we educate the ignorant and recognize the wise... With this logos we both contend against others on matters which are open to dispute, and seek light for ourselves on things which are unknown; for we use the same arguments by which we persuade others in our own thoughts. We call "rhetorical" those who are able to speak before a crowd, and we regard as wise those who debate their problems in their own minds. ... None of the things which are done with intelligence take place without the help of logos. In all our actions as well as in all our thoughts logos is our guide, and the most intelligent people use it most of all. Isocrates

Is not the art of rhetoric, taken as a whole, an art of leading the soul? Socrates *Phaedrus*.

Consider rhetoric to be the ability to see, in each particular case, the available means of persuasion. Aristotle

[Rhetoric is] the art of communicating thought from one mind to another, the adaptation of language to circumstance. Sister Miriam Joseph

Rhetoric [is] the use of words by human agents to form attitudes or to induce actions in other human agents... Wherever there is persuasion, there is rhetoric. And wherever there is "meaning," there is "persuasion." Food, eaten and digested, is not rhetorical. But in the *meaning* of food there is much rhetoric, the meaning being persuasive enough for the idea of food to be used, like the ideas of religion, as a rhetorical device for statesmen. Kenneth Burke

[The problem is that of introducing] rhetoric, the orator, the struggle of discourse within the field of analysis; not to do, as linguists do, a systematic analysis of rhetorical

procedures, but to study discourse, even the discourse of truth, as rhetorical procedures, as ways of conquering, of producing events, of producing decisions, of producing battles, of producing victories. Michel Foucault

Rhetoric, which was the received form of critical analysis all the way from ancient society to the eighteenth century, examined the way discourses are constructed in order to achieve certain effects. It was not worried about whether its objects of inquiry were speaking or writing, poetry or philosophy, fiction or historiography: its horizon was nothing less than the field of discursive practices in society as a whole, and its particular interest lay in grasping such practices as forms of power and performance. This is not to say that it ignored the truth-value of the discourses in question, since this could often be crucially relevant to the kinds of effect they produced in their readers and listeners. Rhetoric in its major phase was neither a language, nor a “formalism,” preoccupied simply with analyzing linguistic devices. It looked at such devices in terms of concrete performance—they were means of pleading, persuading, inciting and so on—and at people’s responses to discourse in terms of linguistic structures and the material situations in which they functioned. It saw speaking and writing not merely as textual objects, to be aesthetically contemplated or endlessly deconstructed, but as forms of *activity* inseparable from the wider social relations between writers and readers, orators and audiences, and as largely unintelligible outside the social purposes and conditions in which they were embedded. Terry Eagleton

[R]hetoric may be the art of persuasion, that is, it may be seen from one angle as a practical capacity to find means to ends on specific occasions; but rhetoric must also be seen more broadly as a human potentiality to understand the human condition. Robert L. Scott

[Rhetoric is] the study of the ways in which character and community—and motive, value, reason, social structure, everything, in short, that makes a culture—are defined and made real in performances in language. Whenever you speak, you define a character for yourself and for at least one other—your audience—and make a community at least between the two of you; and you do this in a language that is of necessity provided to you by others and modified in your use of it. [...] As the object of art is beauty and of philosophy truth, the object of rhetoric is justice: the constitution of a social world. James Boyd White

Rhetoric is love, and it must speak a commodious language, creating a world full of space and time that will hold our diversities. Most failures of communication result from some willful or inadvertent but unloving violation of the space and time we and others live in, and most of our speaking is tribal talk. But there is more to us than that. We can learn to speak a commodious language, and we can learn to hear a commodious language. Jim W. Corder

Contrarianism is of the essence in rhetoric, and was of the essence in careers of traditional rhetoricians such as Erasmus and Thomas Wilson. Understanding that contrarianism should help us understand what it means to think like a rhetorician. Thomas O. Sloane

[R]hetoric is the study of what is persuasive. ... Rhetoric is a humanistic study that examines all the symbolic means by which influence occurs. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Susan Schultz Huxman

The theory of argumentation, conceived as a new rhetoric or dialectic, covers the whole range of discourse that aims at persuasion and conviction, whatever the audience addressed and whatever the subject matter. Chaim Perelman

REQUIRED TEXTS

The New Rhetoric by Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca. Readings are also available online and on Canvas (CAN).

REQUIRED TIME

From UO Catalog: "In planning a term's studies, students should anticipate that each credit requires at least three hours a week for class meetings or homework." This is a 4 credit course, so plan for 12 hours a week. That's three in class and nine outside of class.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADE BREAKDOWN

Writing and Reading

You will develop your own critical project that will culminate in a 3000-5000 word essay of rhetorical criticism. I will distribute instructions and a grading rubric. You will be developing this paper over the entire term. The final version will be due any time before **1230pm on Monday, December 7**. Submit a hard copy under my door at PLC 258 AND an electronic copy through Canvas..

Working proposals, outlines and partial drafts of this project will be due at dates specified in the schedule.

Assigned reading must be completed before class begins. One day a week, beginning the second week, there will be a brief, written assignment due. It should answer the following questions: (1) What part of the reading for the day seemed to you the most applicable for rhetorical criticism? Does it seem to apply to your critical project? How? To another kind of project? How? (2) What question do you have about the reading that you would like to have addressed in the discussion—preferably but not necessarily a question that might concern your project? I may call on you for these ideas and questions in class. 100-250 words, or about the length of this paragraph. Submit these assignments through Canvas (under "Assignments") BEFORE class starts. Last names A-M submit on Tuesday, N-Z on Thursday.

Attendance is required. To cover illness or other events that make it impossible for you to attend, you are allowed two absences. If you get sick with something contagious, do not come to class as long as you are contagious. If the illness or injury forces you to miss more than two classes, be sure to contact me as soon as possible—before the absence, if this is possible—so that we can agree on a course of action. Being on time at 4pm is also required. Lateness will affect your grade.

Grades

One page proposal for possible project due 10/13: 5%

Project Plan due 11/10: 10%

Reading Responses: 20%

Optional: Outline of Project with minimum 1500 word draft Due 11/24 20%

Project: 65% (45% if early draft is submitted) Due by 12:30pm 12/7

Instructions and a rubric will be provided.

No late work. (Contact me in case of emergency.) Final projects may be submitted any time before and up until the day and time at which the final examination is scheduled: Monday, December 7 at 1230pm.

You may be absent from two classes with no grade penalty. After two absences, each of the next three absences will cause your final grade to go down a step (.33). After four absences, each additional absence causes your final grade to drop two steps (.66). If an emergency arises or an event beyond your control occurs that will temporarily prevent you from attending class, contact me as soon as possible so that we can agree on a plan.

Your participation may affect your grade. Tardiness may also result in an adjustment.

Written Work

Please include your name, the date you are submitting the work, the course number or name, and my name on your written work. And please include word count.

Please give your written work a title.

You should staple papers that have multiple pages.

Papers should be double spaced, with one inch margins.

Please use a 12 or 14 point font.

Written work may be submitted in class or under my door at PLC 258 AND electronically through Canvas.

RESPECT, CONSIDERATION, AND PARTICIPATION

The design of this course requires your active involvement. It simply will not work without it. Active and respectful participation is inconsistent with cell phone use, texting, internet use, side conversations, arriving late, leaving early, sleeping, distracting other people, and coming to class unprepared. If you do not give your full attention, you will not receive what the course has to offer. Listen to others respectfully, and expect the same of them. And feel free to speak up—to ask questions or offer your own insights and knowledge. You will learn more if you participate more. Besides, what you have to say is important and unique. The rest of us can learn from you, too. Let's all do our best to pay respectful attention to each other--and perhaps to offer some kindness as well. If we can accept and encourage each other in our projects, we will all benefit.

A LITTLE MORE

If you have a disability that may affect your ability to participate in this class, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can make arrangements for your full access.

Please be aware also that the Teaching and Learning Center (68 PLC; phone: 346-3226) provides support for all students. The Center offer tutors to help you with your writing assignments and provides other kinds of academic help. Look into it. Your fees help to pay for this.

An “Incomplete” can be given only in cases when a very limited but essential aspect of the course cannot be completed because of unforeseen circumstances beyond a student’s control.

All work submitted for this course must be your own and must be written exclusively for this course. If you plagiarize or cheat, the penalty will be an “F” in the course.

The use of sources (for example, other people’s language or paraphrases of their language or ideas) must be properly documented. Use MLA or APA documentation style.

SCHEDULE

WEEK 1

T 9/29 Introductions. What is Criticism? What is Rhetoric? Some Basic Concepts

Th 10/1 What is Rhetoric? More Basic Concepts

WEEK 2

T 10/6 Toward a New Rhetoric: *The New Rhetoric* (TNR) 1-62 (Canvas)

Th 10/8 The Rhetorical Background and Situation I TNR 65-83

WEEK 3

T 10/13 Some Forms of Persuasion TNR 83-114

Due: One paragraph proposal describing what may become your project.

Th 10/15 The Economics of Attention (Canvas)

WEEK 4

T 10/20 Selection and Presence TNR 114-141

Th 10/22 Rhetoric and Cognition: Attention Effort, Priming (Canvas)
Rhetoric and Cognitive Ease (Canvas)

WEEK 5

T 10/27 Forms of Rhetorical Power: Persons—Realities and Appearances TNR 293-337

Th 10/29 Forms of Rhetorical Power: Persons—Realities and Appearances (Handout)
Shaping Language and Thought. TNR 142-183

WEEK 6

T 11/3 Rhetoric of Medicine I and II (Judy Segal Canvas)

Th 11/5 Rhetoric as Dramatism (Kenneth Burke Canvas)

WEEK 7

T 11/10 Conferences **Project Plan Due: 300 word abstract and an outline with a sentence for each projected paragraph. Bring to conference.**

Conferences

Th 11/12 Conferences

WEEK 8

T 11/17 Forms of Rhetorical Power: Dualities, Binaries, Polarities. TNR 411-459
Handout: "Rhetoric in the Wilderness." (Canvas.)

Th 11/19 Rhetoric of Medicine 3 (Canvas). Dramatism Revisited. Review Kenneth Burke:
Rhetoric as Dramatism (Canvas)

WEEK 9

T 11/24 Sequential Relations (TNR 261-292)

Due: Optional Outline of final paper, with a draft of at least 1500 words and a clear description of the project.

Th 11/26 Thanksgiving

WEEK 10

T 12/1 Rhetorical Realities (TNR 350-410)

T 12/3 Special Office Hours: 10am-1pm, 3-5pm.

Monday, 12/7 at 1230pm. **Final day and time to submit Final Paper under door at PLC 258 AND electronically through Canvas.**