

English 491 – Rhetoric and Ethics
Spring 2016 CRN 36711
MWF 11:00 – 11:50
185 Lillis

Professor John Gage
OH: MWF 10:00 – 11:00
and by appointment
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Beginning with Plato’s arguments against the sophists, rhetoric as the art of persuasion has been criticized in ethical terms, since words have the power to induce belief without necessary knowledge of truth. This power can be abused, all the more so by someone with the desire to control and the facility to use words craftily. Such critiques continue into our own time, as in the allegation that ours is an “argument culture” in which persuasion has become a matter of winning at all costs by silencing the opposition, so-called “demagoguery” has replaced so-called “civil discourse,” beliefs are sold to gullible people by manipulative or non-rational means, or reasoning itself is seen as a form of violence. We will read several philosophical and theological theories of rhetoric which seek to replace the agonistic aspects of public argumentation by emphasizing instead a renewed sense of rationality, or dialogue, or inquiry, or democratic free play of ideas, or negotiated belief, or ethical education.

Texts:

Available in the Bookstore:

Deborah Tannen, *The Argument Culture*
Plato, *Gorgias*
Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*
Martin Buber, *I and Thou*

Other readings as listed on the course schedule will be made available on Canvas or handed out in class.

Requirements:

Attendance, preparation, and participation	20%
Two formal essays	60%
Eight reading reflections posted on Canvas	20%

Note: This course may be used to satisfy a requirement for the Minor or Certificate in Writing, Public Speaking, and Critical Reasoning open to undergraduate students in any major. For more information, go to: <http://english.uoregon.edu/undergraduate/minors/minor-certificate-in-writing-public-speaking-and-critical-reasoning>

Policies:

Attendance is mandatory. Unexcused absence or disruptive classroom behavior will affect your final grade.

Please turn off all electronics during class, including phones, notepads, and laptops. Permission to use laptops to access required reading will be given on some occasions; if you do not bring a hard copy to class, take notes on your reading so that you may refer to them in discussion. Do not leave the classroom to answer or use phones.

Reading reflections. Post a brief reflection (one paragraph) according to the schedule, in which you offer a thoughtful response to the reading you have done most recently for the course. You may use this as an opportunity to express whatever significant ideas the reading stimulates in you, including misgivings, disagreements, or connections to topics beyond the scope of the reading. Do not, however, simply paraphrase the reading. Read what others have posted and respond as you are moved to do so, but respectfully and responsibly, of course.

Formal essays: 5-6 pages of well-argued prose in response to an assigned question or a different question about which you have consulted me.

Writing counts. English classes are writing intensive; you are expected to write at your best and use writing to demonstrate and improve your writing skills. Your writing will be assessed both on the quality of the argument and on the quality of the writing itself.

The writing you do for this class will be a direct response to our readings and discussions and will not require you to read secondary sources. Consulting appropriate outside sources can be helpful in understanding references or in providing historical context. If you use outside sources of any kind in your writing, directly or indirectly, you must document those sources properly.

All work you do for this course must be exclusively your own work and done exclusively for this course. Plagiarism or academic dishonesty of any kind will result in a failing grade in the course and a report to the Officer of Student Conduct. Your continued enrollment in this class signifies that you are familiar with the provisions of the Code of Student Conduct.

<http://policies.uoregon.edu/vol-3-administration-student-affairs/ch-1-conduct/student-conduct-code>

Learning Objectives:

- Understanding rhetorical practice as viewed through ethical theories.
- Becoming more able to assess rhetorical discourse in the public sphere.
- Becoming more self-aware of the ethical dimension of one's own use of rhetoric.
- Improving critical reading, speaking, writing and reasoning skills.

Schedule (subject to changes announced in class and posted on Canvas)

M March 28 – Syllabus review – peer interview exercise

W March 30 – peer introductions

F April 1 – peer introductions continued

M April 4 – Glossary: rhetorical concepts

W April 6 – rhetorical concepts

F April 8 – epideictic speech invention: read and discuss VIA Classification

M April 11 – invention continued: values and virtues

W April 13 – speech 1

F April 15 – speech 1

M April 18 – speech 1

W April 20 – discuss speech 1

F April 22 – articulation

M April 25 – forensic speech invention: read and discuss Carr

W April 27 – discuss Carr

F April 29 – speech 2

M May 2 – speech 2

W May 4 – speech 2

F May 6 – speech 2

M May 9 – deliberative speech invention: read and discuss Nussbaum

W May 11 – Nussbaum continued

F May 13 – Facts about your University

M May 16 – reports

W May 18 – reports

F May 20 – speech 3

M May 23 – speech 3

W May 25 – speech 3

F May 27 – NO CLASS

M May 30 – NO CLASS

W June 1 – speech 3

F June 3 – articulation notes due