

Communication 311 - Rhetoric and the Public Sphere
Fall 2017

M/W 2:00-3:20 ASC 204

Instructor Information:

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Office Hours: M/W 11-12, 1-2, and by appointment

Teaching Assistants:

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Course Description:

This course is designed to provide a foundation for the humanistic study of communication. The course will discuss historical and contemporary rhetorical theories and explain their importance to public deliberation, democracy, and the public sphere. The course traces the origins of the study of rhetoric from ancient Greece and Rome up to the modern day. The public sphere is the area in social life where citizens come together to discuss and deliberate social problems and to identify possible solutions and ultimately to influence political action. The vitality of the public sphere is thus essential to a healthy democratic society. This course should empower students to make better public and political decisions and to more effectively exercise their political agency to achieve both personal and societal goals.

Student Objectives:

1. At the conclusion of the course, students will be familiar with prominent theorists and controversies in rhetorical theory.
2. Students will be introduced to a range of perspectives about the public sphere and be able to identify significant features of these constructs.
3. Students will become familiar with constant challenges in rhetorical theory and the influence of changes in social practices, technology and culture.
4. Students will have opportunities to study and critique public speeches and media narratives.

Course Policies:

Academic Integrity - The Annenberg School for Communication is committed to upholding the University's academic integrity code. It is the policy of the School of Communication to report all violations of the code. Any serious violation or pattern of violations of the academic integrity code could result in the student's expulsion from the Communication major or minor. The University presumes that you are familiar with its standards and policies; should you be found to have committed a violation, ignorance of these standards and policies will not be accepted as an excuse. You should be familiar with the following resources:

- "Guide to Avoiding Plagiarism" addresses issues of paraphrasing, quotations and citations in written assignments, drawing heavily upon materials used in the university's Writing Program (by Student Judicial Affairs) <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/docs/tig.pdf>
- "Understanding and Avoiding Academic Dishonesty" addresses more general issues of academic integrity, including guidelines for adhering to standards concerning examinations and unauthorized collaboration (by Student Judicial Affairs) <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/docs/tio.pdf>
- The "2016-17 SCampus" (the student handbook) contains the university's Student Conduct Code and other student-related policies. <http://www.usc.edu/scampus>.
- The USC Code of Ethics is also linked to every blackboard course menu in at the bottom of the left side navigation bar.

Attendance – Students are expected to attend each day and have completed the reading due for that day. Attendance will be taken each day. Attendance will also be taken in your discussion sections, and will along with your participation, impact your course grade. Any absences for medical or university excused reasons should be coordinated with the instructor at the earliest possible opportunity.

Late & Unfinished Work – Students must complete all assignments in order to earn a grade in the course. Any material turned in late will be reduced one letter grade per calendar day late.

Special Assistance - Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure that the letter is delivered as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in 120 Grace Ford Salvatori Hall (GFS) (3601 Watt Way). DSP is open from 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday and can be reached at (213) 740-0776 or at ability@usc.edu

Assignments:

Exams – There are two exams, a Midterm and a Final (each will count 25% of your course grade). Both will occur in-class and will include multiple choice and essay questions. Each exam will be drawn from both the lectures and readings.

Public Service Announcement Assignment: Students will be assigned to groups. Each group is expected to write, produce, film, edit, and present a 3-4 minute public service announcement. The topic should address some campus, community, or national issue deemed important. In addition to presenting the final project, the group will write a brief (2 page-double spaced) report identifying the intended audience, message strategy, and intended persuasive objective for the PSA. This report should explain why this topic was selected and why the group deemed this narrative likely to influence the intended audience. The assignment is worth 10% of the final grade.

Papers-- There are two papers assigned in this class. The first paper should be 5-6 pages long and the second paper no longer than 10-12 pages long including references (the first paper is worth 10% of the final course grade, the second is worth 20% of your final course grade). The first paper is due on **OCTOBER 9**. The first paper should seek to address one or more of the following issues/questions:

The Democrats and Republicans in congress are animated by very different rhetorical narratives and stories of America's history, notions of the current moment, and scenarios for the future as they seek votes during campaigns and as they shape their legislative and policy agendas. Please draw upon class readings and our lectures/discussions as well as outside sources to describe these differences and to assess their effectiveness in achieving their goals. You may choose to focus on one or more key legislative controversies such as the debate over access to health care, environmental policies, foreign policy issues, abortion rights, etc. Or, you may choose to study a recent election campaign. How do the rhetorical choices made by the different parties or candidates impact the health of our democracy and the quality of the public sphere? What have you learned about public discourse, rhetorical theory, the formation of public opinion, and the electoral process in the United States from your study?

The second paper is due on **NOVEMBER 13**. The second paper should seek to address the following issues/questions?

Please select a speech, editorial, media story, or other persuasive rhetorical text that you find interesting, significant, and deserving of critical study (you might choose a text because it is especially convincing or because it fails to convince; it could be an outstanding and exemplary text or a text that you find deserving of condemnation). Drawing upon any of the theoretical concepts that we have read about or discussed in class, you should assess this text. Why do you see it as deserving of study? Was this text convincing? Why? If not convincing, why not? Who was the intended audience? How did the speaker/creator of the text view this audience? Why does this text merit praise or criticism? What do we learn about rhetorical theory and/or the public sphere from this text or from other similar texts?

Participation/Discussion – (10%) – Each student is expected to prepare for class, attend class and contribute to a robust learning environment in both the lecture and discussion sections. This grade will be primarily determined by preparation and participation in the discussions sections.

Quizzes – There are no quizzes scheduled, but the instructor retains the prerogative to give unscheduled quizzes if student engagement with the course materials is lagging. Each quiz would be worth 1% of the overall grade (and all other assignments would be correspondingly reduced in value).

Common Standards for Papers

In addition to providing a quality response to the prompt questions, each paper should be a high-quality product and consistent with the expectations for submission in a university environment. In introducing students to the discipline it is important to appreciate the norms of written culture. Failure to adhere to these standards will result in a lower grade. The expectations include:

- All papers should all utilize common font and margin settings (such as Times New Roman 12 point fonts and 1 inch margins).
- Papers must be submitted using blackboard (to allow use of Turnitin). Do not print copies of the paper.

- **Use of a style manual** - All papers in the course should be submitted using APA style. You should also consult the APA style manual (which is available online) if you have additional questions.
- **Structure** - Quality papers should demonstrate a clear writing plan and basic structure. A clear thesis should be evident early on the first page to preview the fundamental elements of the essay. This section should also preview the organizational structure of the project. Each section should reflect an organizing principle that utilizes previews, summaries, and transitions. Effective essays also should include a quality conclusion that draws together the basic details. Simply finishing your last point doesn't accomplish this task.
- **Focus on specific arguments** - Your essays are all designed to analyze specific political contexts so it is important that you closely detail the relevant articles and texts, including properly citing them, and provide specific analysis. You are free to use your own perspectives to accent these essays, but ultimately they need to provide analysis of the specific artifacts in question as their primary task.
- **Writing Style** - In any essay, the medium of your language is the technique that you will use to make your arguments. Even in our visual culture, the ability to make a professional argument in writing is an essential skill, especially in an argumentation course.
- **Use of qualified sources** – In cases where you need or want to make an authoritative claim, you should utilize a well-qualified source. Suggestions involve experts in the field, scholarly journals, and other professional sources, including our texts. The easiest Google results, especially including Wikipedia, should be treated as starting points for reference and not stand-alone references. When essay topics refer to specific concepts covered in the readings, it is important that these essays display a competent grasp of the material.
- **Evidence matters** - Evidence should be carefully analyzed before usage. Materials offered to support your claims should be timely, relevant, and well scrutinized. Materials should reflect your awareness of the ideological foundations and potential bias of that source.
- **Bibliography & Citations** – All materials either directly quoted or references in your text should be included in your bibliography. Your bibliography citations should be complete (again, follow APA Style Manual), and the reader should be able to readily access the content that you have cited.

Required Readings:

1. Catherine Helen Palczewski, Richard Ice, John Fritch, *Rhetoric in Civic Life*, 2d ed., 2016. Strata Publishing. (This listed in the daily schedule as RCL)
2. Timothy Borchert, *Rhetorical Theory: An Introduction*. Waveland Press, 2006. (This is listed on the daily schedule at RT).
3. Aristotle. (2006). *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*. George A. Kennedy (Translator). Oxford University Press or <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/rhetoric.html>
4. The Course Blackboard site contains a virtual library of other readings listed on the daily schedule.

Tentative Daily Schedule (some adaptations and changes will possibly occur):

Monday, 8/21	Course Introduction
Wednesday, 8/23	Rhetoric as symbolic action, RCL 1, RT 1
Monday, 8/28	Plato and the Sophists, RT 2
Wednesday, 8/30	Aristotle

Monday, 9/4	Labor Day Holiday
Wednesday, 9/6	All roads lead to Rome, RT 3
Monday, 9/11	The study of rhetoric in the US, Friedrich & Boileau, 3-14; Potter, 64-119
Wednesday, 9/13	A public debate
Monday, 9/18	The power of language, RCL 2
Wednesday, 9/20	Electoral politics as a site for Rhetoric, Hollihan, 1-27; Smith 17-36
Monday, 9/25	Group work day to create the strategy and plan for the PSA assignment
Wednesday, 9/27	Group work day for students to shoot, produce and edit the PSA
Monday, 10/2	PSAs are presented to the class
Wednesday, 10/4	Dramatism, part 1, RT 6
Monday, 10/9	Dramatism, part 2, Burke's Definition of Man (First Paper is Due)
Wednesday, 10/11	Narration as human communication, RCL 5
Monday, 10/16	Midterm Exam
Wednesday, 10/18	Publics and Counter publics, RCL 8
Monday, 10/23	The colonization of the public sphere, RT 7
Wednesday, 10/25	Audiences and Rhetorical situations, RCL 7
Monday, 10/30	Social media and networked rhetorics, RT 10
Wednesday, 11/1	Rhetorical criticism, Foss, 3-20; Hollihan & Riley, 336-346
Monday, 11/6	Rhetoric and war, Gross & Ni Aolain, 242-289 http://scholarship.law.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1413&context=cjlpp
Wednesday, 11/8	Rhetoric and cultural memory, Sturken, 44-84
Monday, 11/13	Rhetoric and Feminism, RT 8 Paper is Due
Wednesday, 11/15	No class--National Communication Association Convention
Monday, 11/20	Rhetoric and social movements, pp. 156-243
Wednesday, 11/22	No class—Thanksgiving Holiday

Monday, 11/27 Rhetoric and the climate crisis, Naomi Klein,
<http://www.thenation.com/article/capitalism-vs-climate/>; Lilly,
[http://www.academia.edu/17005635/The Planets Apocalypse Rhetoric of Climate Change](http://www.academia.edu/17005635/The_Planets_Apocalypse_Rhetoric_of_Climate_Change)

Wednesday, 11/29 Wrap Up and Review

Friday, 12/8 2-4 PM Final Examination