

COMM 311

Rhetoric and the Public Sphere

#20340R

Fall, 2019

12:30-1:50 TTh

ASC 204

Professor: [Dr. Randy Lake](#)

Office: ASC 206C

Hours: W 6:30-8:00 pm; Th 2:00-3:00 pm; and by appointment

Telephone: (213) 740-3946

E-mail: rlake@usc.edu (This is the most efficient way to reach me. I check my email regularly during the weekdays when I am in the office. However, other times, particularly weekends and evenings, are much more sporadic so, if you email me at these times, please do not expect an immediate reply. Because improper email format is unprofessional, inappropriate, and communicates a poor image of its sender (which, in rhetoric, is known as *ethos*), please use proper grammar, letter format, and “netiquette” when communicating with me.)

Teaching Assistant: Miles Hubble

Hours: W 2:30-3:30 pm

E-mail: hubble@usc.edu

Course Description

This course introduces the humanistic study of communication, from its origins in public life in ancient Greece to our modern global community. It will trace significant developments in rhetorical theory by (a) looking back to earlier societies’ efforts to cope with their communication challenges and (b) comparing and contrasting them with our own challenges and efforts. Because some, but certainly not all, problems of human communication are perennial, the course proceeds from the conviction that rhetoric is an adaptive communicative art whose ancient formulations continue to speak to contemporary challenges even as it evolves to grapple with novel, emerging issues that earlier societies did not face. The course is structured to introduce key concepts, theorists, and vocabulary that are foundational to understanding the forms and functions of communication in civic life.

Objectives

- At the conclusion of the course, students will be familiar with prominent theorists and controversies in rhetorical theory.
- Students will be introduced to a range of perspectives about the public sphere and be able to identify significant features of these constructs.
- Students will become familiar with constant challenges in rhetorical theory and the influence of changes in social practices, technology and culture.
- Students will have opportunities to begin practicing rhetorical criticism.

Student progress relative to these objectives will be assessed via the methods and tools described under “Assignments.”

Required Texts

- Palczewski, Catherine Helen, et al. *Rhetoric in Civic Life*. 2nd ed., Strata, 2016. (abbreviated RCL below)
- Other materials as assigned (available either online or under the “Content” button on Blackboard)

Assignments

- Paper #1: Rhetoric & Knowledge (130 pts; 13%)
- Paper #2: Rhetoric & Power (130 pts; 13%)
- Paper #3: Rhetoric and Identity (130 pts; 13%)
 - You will note that these broad titles reflect the three basic course units, and point to the materials that each paper should engage. Each paper will ask you to engage these materials in specific, and different, ways. Detailed guidelines and rubrics will be available on Blackboard. Papers will be turned in via the Turnitin tool on Blackboard and are due by *the beginning of class* on the day given.
- Midterm Exam (230 pts; 23%)
- Final Exam (230 pts; 23%)
- Journal entries (6 @ 10 pts [1%] ea; 60 pts [6%] total): Posts are due by *11:59 pm* on the day given, NOT at the beginning of class.
- Participation: This grade will be determined by taking into account a wide range of factors, including the quality and quantity of your contributions to class and any homework activities that may be assigned (90 points; 9%)
- Quizzes: No quizzes are scheduled. However, your instructor reserves the right to give them unannounced should student engagement with the material lag. All such quizzes combined would count a maximum of 10% of your course grade, with the value of other assignments reduced proportionately.

Grading Policy

1000 total points can be earned in the class. Points will be given for each assignment, in the assumption that 90-100% of the points possible are comparable to an A; 80-89% are comparable to a B; 70-79% are comparable to a C; 60-69% are comparable to a D; and less than 60% are comparable to an F. In addition, points in the upper third of each range are comparable to a plus (+), while points in the lower third are comparable to a minus, indicating relatively stronger or weaker work. Final course grades will be calculated by summing total points earned and converting to a letter grade; conversion may employ the same curve (900-1000 = A, 800-899 = B, 700-799 = C, 600-699 = D, with appropriate pluses and minuses), but the instructor reserves the right to employ a different curve.

Points are assigned by applying the following criteria to the work being judged. My assumption is that each grade subsumes the requirements for the grade(s) below it, e.g, that B work meets and exceeds the requirements for C work, as follows:

- “A” signifies superior work that demonstrates original insight into the theories and materials presented in class, the application of these theories and materials, and comparisons among these theories and materials; an unusually clear and comprehensive understanding of course materials; and an articulate, polished, and correct communication style. This grade is difficult to achieve; it requires superior

study habits and writing skills, and superior performance on all assignments and in attendance and participation.

- “B” signifies excellent work that demonstrates a better-than-average comprehension of the course material, as evidenced by greater detail and thoroughness in exposition, and by organized and solid, if flawed, writing or speaking. Even average students often can achieve this grade through hard work, such as utilizing a study group effectively, making a point in class of seeking clarification of difficult ideas or ideas they don’t understand, conferring with the instructor during office hours, writing and revising multiple drafts of papers, and so on.
- “C” signifies adequate work and is considered to be average. It is given for work that demonstrates a basic familiarity and understanding of the course materials, as evidenced by an ability to summarize main points correctly, to identify key figures and main ideas from memory on examinations, and to convey understanding in basic, readable prose. This grade should be achievable by any student with decent study habits and good time management skills.
- “D” signifies deficient work that demonstrates an inadequate grasp of the course materials, as evidenced by unfamiliarity with, confusion about, or misunderstanding of key ideas, persons, and events on examinations, and hastily and poorly written assignments. This grade is often a sign of inadequate study or application, and also may be a sign of a problem in attendance or participation that contributes to inadequate study.
- “F” signifies failing work that demonstrates an unacceptably poor familiarity with or grasp of the course materials, as evidenced by an inability to identify even basic ideas, person, and events on examinations and seriously deficient writing. This grade may indicate an unacceptable lack of participation in the class, such as excessive absences would produce. This grade may be assigned to any work that fails to meet the stated requirements of the assignment, no matter how well done this work otherwise might be. This grade will be assigned to any work that violates the academic integrity standards and policies of the School or University. A grade of “F” in any part of the course should be taken as a sign of a problem in need of remedy.

All assignments must be the student’s original work and cannot have been used previously or concurrently in any other course. All assignments must be attempted and turned in to pass the course. Any work turned in late will be penalized one full letter grade for each calendar day late.

Occasionally, students are dissatisfied with the evaluation of their work or some other dimension of the course. Please bring any grade *discrepancies* (e.g., you were not given credit for a correct answer on an examination question) to Miles’s attention immediately. In the event of a grade *disagreement* (e.g., you believe that your answer should be counted as correct, or that you deserve a higher grade on an assignment), please: (a) wait 24 hours; and (b) submit your complaint/rationale to Miles in writing. He will review your petition, evaluate its merits, and render a decision. Dr. Lake will not consider petitions unless and until this process has been completed. All appeals of grades on specific assignments must be made within one week of the return of that assignment. Only those who submit an acceptable written justification and adhere to this process will receive credit where credit is due. Of course, you are welcome to approach either of us with any general concerns.

Format

It is *imperative* that you complete the material assigned *before class* every day and engage it sufficiently to formulate some thoughts and questions. Why? Although it is large, this class emphasizes collaborative learning, in which we jointly ask questions of the material and each other and explore possible answers. The purpose of lecture is to amplify, clarify, and supplement the course materials, not to duplicate or regurgitate them. Lectures may not cover all important aspects of the readings and may cover materials not in them. Do not expect to sit on your hands and be told everything you need to know. Instead, be prepared to engage the material—to offer comments, ask and answer questions—in conversation with your classmates and your instructors.

Because some of the issues we'll cover are controversial, we undoubtedly will encounter disagreement. Disagreement need not—and should not—be disagreeable. The best policy is to always T.H.I.N.K. before you speak by ensuring that your comment is: Thoughtful, Helpful, Interesting, Necessary, Kind.

Attendance

Roll will be taken in every class; you are responsible for signing in on the sheet that Miles will be keeping. More than two absences *for any reason* may affect your course grade adversely, as much as 50 points per absence (equivalent to one-half of a letter grade), which could even cause you to fail the course.

Arriving late, leaving early, and other activities not conducive to learning—such as turning off a ringing cell phone or leaving the room to answer it—are extremely disruptive, and you may be considered absent that day.

Technology: “Topless,” or “Off the Grid”

Some time ago, the [Wall Street Journal](#) reported, “In Silicon Valley itself . . . some companies have installed the ‘topless’ meeting—in which not only laptops but iPhones and other tools are banned—to combat a new problem: ‘continuous partial attention.’ With a device close by, attendees at workplace meetings simply cannot keep their focus on the speaker. It’s too easy to check email, stock quotes and Facebook. While a quick log-on may seem, to the user, a harmless break, others in the room receive it as a silent dismissal. It announces: ‘I’m not interested.’ So the tools must now remain at the door.” Research supports this policy, including a study called [“Why you should take notes by hand – not on a laptop”](#); a *New Yorker* piece called [“The Case for Banning Laptops in the Classroom”](#); and the studies of the late Stanford professor (and USC Annenberg graduate) Cliff Nass, demonstrating the dangers of multitasking (summarized in a [NPR segment](#)). Or, read Nicolas Carr’s piece in the *Wall Street Journal* called [“How Smartphones Hijack Our Minds: Research suggests that as the brain grows dependent on phone technology, the intellect weakens.”](#) The *Los Angeles Times* published a similar article on this “off the grid” policy in 2015. Most recently, and even more importantly, a [July 2018 study](#) in *Educational Psychology* reveals that technology use during class is detrimental to long-term retention (as measured by lower exam scores), not only among users but among all students. Hence, like smoking, using technology harms not only you but, second hand, those around you.

Accordingly, no electronic devices, including laptops, tablets, and phones, are allowed in class at any time except as an accommodation for a registered disability, or otherwise approved

by me. There will be times when we will want to use them, so please bring them to class but also turn them off before class. You can expect to be called out publicly for violating this policy not because your instructor is an unreasonable, unhip dude but because the policy is in your own best interest.

Tentative Daily Schedule

This schedule is tentative and dependent on several considerations; some revisions may be necessary as we proceed.

Week 1

Tuesday, August 27: Introduction to the course

Thursday, August 29: Introduction to the course, continued

Week 2

Tuesday, September 3: Introduction to rhetoric as symbolic action
READ RCL 1

Thursday, September 5: Introduction to the public sphere
READ Calhoun, "Civil Society and the Public Sphere"
READ Goodnight, "Public Discourse"

Week 3

Tuesday, September 10: PublicS proliferate
READ RCL 9
Journal entry #1 due

Unit 1: Rhetoric and Knowledge

Thursday, September 12: The pre-Socratics and sophists
READ Cahill, "The Philosopher: How to Think," from *Sailing the Wine-Dark Sea*
READ Gorgias, "Encomium of Helen"

Week 4

Tuesday, September 17: Plato's revenge

Thursday, September 19: Aristotle splits the difference

Week 5

Tuesday, September 24: The Enlightenment: Science changes everything
Journal entry #2 due

Thursday, September 26: Language
READ RCL 2

Week 6

Tuesday, October 1: Argument
READ RCL 4

Thursday, October 3: Narrative
READ RCL 5

Week 7

Tuesday, October 8: Conspiracies, information silos, and alternative facts, oh my!
Paper #1 due

Thursday, October 10: Rhetoric and climate skepticism
Guest: Dr. Emma Bloomfield

Week 8

Tuesday, October 15: Midterm Exam

Thursday, October 17: Fall Recess—NO CLASS

Unit 2: Rhetoric and Power

Week 9

Tuesday, October 22: Rhetoric as statecraft—Cicero and the Roman Republic

Thursday, October 24: Rhetoric as training for citizenship—Quintilian and the Roman Empire

Week 10

Tuesday, October 29: God's Word—Augustine and the Christianization of Rhetoric
Journal entry #3 due

Thursday, October 31 (Happy Halloween!): Ideology from Marx to Burke

Week 11

Tuesday, November 5: Foucault's power/knowledge

Thursday, November 7: deliberative democracy/free expression vs. propaganda and "fake news"
Journal entry #4 due

Unit 3: Rhetoric and Identity

Week 12

Tuesday, November 12: Identities and identifications
READ RCL 6 & 7
Paper #2 due

Thursday, November 14: Collective memory

Week 13

Tuesday, November 19: Visual rhetoric
READ RCL #3

Thursday, November 21: Material rhetoric: monuments and museums

Week 14

Tuesday, November 26: Contesting memory
Journal entry #5 due

Thursday, November 27: Thanksgiving Recess—NO CLASS

Week 15

Tuesday, December 3: Rhetoric as the art of the (in)appropriate?
READ RCL 8

Thursday, December 5: Wrap-up and review
Journal entry #6 due

Tuesday, December 10: **Paper #3 due** (may be turned in earlier but not later)

Tuesday, December 17: Final Exam (11:00-1:00)

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

The Annenberg School for Communication is committed to upholding the University's academic integrity code as detailed in the *SCampus* guide. 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 will result in the student’s expulsion from the Communication major or minor.

If you have any doubts about what is and is not an academic integrity violation, please check with me. 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.

Support Systems:

Student Health Counseling Services - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call

suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call

engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) | Title IX - (213) 740-5086

equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help a survivor of harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following protected characteristics: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations.

Bias Assessment Response and Support - (213) 740-2421

studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions for appropriate investigation and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776

dsp.usc.edu

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

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 have the letter delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

USC Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710

studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101

diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.