

COMM 311

Communication and Publics

#20496R
Fall, 2019
2:00-3:20 MW
ASC 240

Professor: [Dr. Randall Lake](#)

Office: ASC 206C

Hours: TBA

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.)

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. These comparisons will center around three topics: *Knowledge, Power, and Identity*. 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)